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FROM GREEN ECONOMIES TO COMMUNITY ECONOMIES: ECONOMIC POSSIBILITY IN MASSACHUSETTS

A Dissertation Presented

by

BOONE W. SHEAR

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
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Anthropology

FROM GREEN ECONOMIES TO COMMUNITY ECONOMIES: ECONOMIC POSSIBILITY IN MASSACHUSETTS

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DEDICATION

For Rose

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people who have contributed in many ways to the production of this text. From a certain perspective, this dissertation constitutes an assemblage of different interests, ideologies, aspirations and related social actors, though the assembling was under my control more than most. There are too many people to thank and there is not enough space to do so in a way that adequately accounts for their contributions. I will try my best.

My five-member dissertation committee seems like a reasonable place to begin. Thank you first to Betsy Krause and Art Keene—the best committee-co-chair-adviser combination I could hope for. The support and guidance you have given me has been tremendous. I love you both. Both of you have let me push up against your own ideas even as I learned from them, and in fact you have often invited this. This type of intellectual generosity and openness is unusual I think. Betsy, your insistence that I begin to professionalize myself a bit, even though I resisted, was instrumental in both creating my dissertation project and locating resources for it. Thank you. Art your interest in my well-being and your passion for engagement in anthropology are why I came to UMass in the first place. To my mentor, friend, and collaborator Vin Lyon-Callo, I would not be in this position if I hadn't stumbled onto your class as an undergraduate student during a time when I was politically and intellectually rudderless. You changed my life. Also, you have given me the best piece of advice that I have ever received about how to make it in academia, a maxim that I will share here, "Decide you are going to do some stuff, say you are going to do it, and then do it." I feel so lucky to have met you and to get to continue to learn from

ABSTRACT

FROM GREEN ECONOMIES TO COMMUNITY ECONOMIES: ECONOMIC POSSIBILITY IN MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 2015

BOONE SHEAR, B.S., M.A., WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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Directed by: Professors Arthur Keene and Elizabeth Krause

This dissertation both reflects and constitutes an attempt at theorizing, locating, analyzing, and helping to create non-capitalist possibility among community groups and social movements in Massachusetts from 2010-2013. I began my research working with green economy coalitions that brought together community groups, social justice organizations, and environmental non-profits in order to respond to economic and ecological crisis. As these groups moved forward and transformed, I participated in campaigns, internal discussions, and public representations. I wrote field notes when appropriate and conducted and recorded over 50 interviews. As I did the work, I came to understand economy as a heterogeneous field of economic ideology, practices, relations, dispositions, and desires. In this theoretical context, I ethnographically investigate the ways in which individuals and groups negotiate and contest dominant economic discourses, and create their own meanings of economy. I ask, how are community groups and activists imagining and desiring economy? How are non-capitalist projects being assembled? Under what conditions can people begin to imagine, desire, and create

other worlds? To answer these questions, I mobilize economic anthropology, postructural theory, and Lacanian scholarship, extending and critically engaging with the diverse economies project of J.K. Gibson-Graham. In Chapter 2 I discuss two green economy coalitions whose campaigns brought anti-capitalist and non-capitalist politics into dialogue. I found that a reframing of economy towards economic difference leads to economic possibility for some, but is politically problematic and hinders economic possibility for others. In Chapter 3 I explore the nature of worker cooperatives, finding that social actors involved in non-capitalist development can understand and imagine it in radically different ways; non-capitalism is produced through these differences. In Chapters 4-7 I discuss a community organization that was building its own community economy. I show the effectiveness of performative, ontological politics in proliferating economic possibility. I also show the limitations of such a project when it neglects critical analysis of the forces constraining possibility. I point towards a reconciliation between performativity and critique. In the conclusion I theorize economic possibility in relation to and as part of a cultural-political struggle, a 'war of position', around the nature of economy.

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INTRODUCTION: 'WE CAN'T BE NEUTRAL ON A MOVING TRAIN (BUT HOW DO WE GET OFF IT?)

<u>Snowpiercer</u>

The 2014 film Snowpiercer opens onto a post-apocalyptic earth of the near future. As we learn in the first few minutes of the film, a technological fix to combat climate change has gone awry, causing an apparent ice age in which every living thing has gone extinct, everything except for a small mass of humanity that found its way onto the train—the Snowpiercer. The train is the only place where life can exist. It is a world onto itself, orbiting the earth on a continuous track, each completed lap marking a year's time.

People on the train are distributed in a spatialized, social-hierarchy. In back of the train live the "tail-sectioners"—unproductive masses, disposable labor, disposable humanity—crammed together in close quarters, beds stacked on top of each other, with little room for maneuver. The front of the train is reserved for first class passengers, first class lives.

The tail-sectioners both resent and covet the lifestyles of the first class passengers, as demonstrated in an early exchange by two of the films protagonists, Edgar and Curtis.

Edgar: "Those bastards in the front section, they think they own us, eating their steak dinners and listening to string quartets."

Curtis: "It will be different when we get there."

Edgar: "[But] I want steak."

The tail-sectioners, however, have little control over the conditions that impact and constrain their lives. They are surveilled, governed, and policed by authorities who provide them with gelatinous food-bar rations, and discipline them with violence and displays of torture if they do not stay in their place.

In the midst of this oppression, resistance is growing. A group of leaders await their chance to lead the tail-sectioners to the front of the train and take over the "sacred engine" whose existence both defines and depends on the social order: "all things flow from the sacred engine."

The bulk of the film follows the insurrection as it fights its way from the back to the front, up through the social hierarchy. As they move from car to car, they encounter different institutions which hold together and reproduce the social-symbolic order of the train. They move from the tail end, through the prison car that confines individuals in what look like cold drawers in a morgue, to a car where they discover that the food-bar rations are made out of cockroaches. Here they discover an old friend who used to be a tail-sectioner. He is happy about the insurrection but refuses to participate; he has found meaning in the drudgery of his work-day production, he has found his place.

In contrast, the following two cars house a beautiful greenhouse growing fruits and vegetables and an aquarium that is used for aquaculture; they produce

healthy and fancy food that the tail-enders never see. The aquarium car even comes

equipped with a Sushi bar.

The insurrection enters a schoolhouse car where young boys and girls are

subjected to ideology that justifies and naturalize the social conditions on the train

and help them make sense of the world. Says one little girl upon encountering the

group, "I heard all tail-sectioners were lazy…[and they] slept all day in their own

shit." A moment later the class watches a video that provides a short history of the

train, culminating in a sing-along and a chant that everyone knows by heart. "What

happens if the engine stops? We all freeze and die", they sing, and "Rumble, rumble,

rattle, rattle, it will never die!" Through this indoctrination, the children learn that

train is all that there is. If it stops, so does life.

As they move through the train the brutal, basal, nature of social conflict

reveals itself. The sanctioned authorities physically confront the insurrection in

scenes that are long, drawn out, and hyper-violent. We see, in slow motion and in

great detail, the horrific pleasure the authorities take in beating down the

resistance, as well as the righteous anger of the masses.

Closer to the front of the train, the cars become entertainment for the leisure

class. Here we find excessive, hedonistic pleasures—writhing bodies, drinking,

drugs, and finally a car where desire appears to have run amuck, pure drives toward

pleasure, addictions that numb us to reality.

When the few remaining members of the insurrection finally make it to the

front, they are confronted with a shocking, horrible truth. Their own efforts to resist

oppression and improve conditions for themselves on the train are both known and

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partially orchestrated by those in power. Rather than a threat, is an expected, necessary restructuring of conditions on the train, it releases built up resentment and anger and re-balances social conditions helping the train to continue running smoothly. Resistance, in other words, is not only futile; it is a *necessary* feature of the train. It might challenge the existing social-symbolic order, it is also an integral, constitutive component.

However, all is not lost. During the film's culmination, we are presented with another possibility for salvation. Two members of the resistance—Curtis and Namgoong—have finally reached the door to the sacred engine. Curtis, the defacto leader of the insurrection, implores Namgoong to open the door. Namgoong offers a response that is impossible, a response that is insane:

I don't want to open this gate. Do you know what I really want? I want to open gates. But not that one. I want to open *this* gate." He then gestures to a door that cannot, should not be opened, a door leading off the train.

This, of course, would be certain suicide. Outside the train, life cannot possibly exist. Indeed, the only thing keeping humanity alive is the train. Everyone knows this. In a sense, the train *is* life itself; existence, sensory experience, sociality—the reality in which everyone dwells—only happens within the train.

Nevertheless, Namgoong is not deterred. He has faith. And he has the barest bit of evidence supporting his fealty, an observation that the snow, perhaps, appears to have receded. The audience then, like the characters in the film, begins to see a

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small break, a gap, in what was before the impenetrable reality of the world. Were we simply led to believe, like those on the train, that the train was all that there was? Is it possible that this entire time we were simply unable to believe that another way of life outside the train was possible? Did the desires to maintain or take power, to oppress and resist, to maintain or gain control of the train prevent us from seeing that the snow outside had melted, that life might exist outside the train?

As the film culminates, the Snowpiercer is destroyed. Two survivors remain, a young woman and a boy step hand in hand from the wreckage of the train and out into the cold. They look across a barren, empty landscape. This is a daunting new beginning. The safety and familiarity of the train are gone, but so too are material chains, ideological binds, and libidinal attachments, holding them to that former world. As they, and the viewer, survey the landscape, their/our inchoate hope and possibility begin to take shape. In the daylight of the outside world, a polar bear is seen sauntering off in the distance. Life outside the train is not only possible, it already exists.

Capital Accumulation and a Crisis of Imagination

There is a well-travelled quote attributed to both Slavoj Zizek and Frederic Jameson, *It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.* Snowpiercer is remarkable in helping us to fully consider the profundity of this claim. First, it explores the multiple ways in which the social-symbolic order is held together through oppressive force, ideology, and desire. Even more important, it shows us how the social symbolic order—in this case "the train" in which all social

action, all social life, takes place—constitutes reality and delimits what is possible. As we learn with the insurrection in the film, efforts to improve conditions are also structured in relation to and through this reality (and help constitute it); indeed, they can only take place on the train. Our aspirations for social change run up against the limits of our imagination. And, since possibilities for social life can only be imagined to exist within the confines of the train, the end of the train is not simply easier to imagine, but it is in fact synonymous with the end of the world.

In the United States, whether reviled or revered, capitalism often appears as *the real* economy. It is taken for granted that the economy is a global system that is dominantly capitalist. Capitalism is alternately discussed as something to be lauded, advanced, tamed, resisted, or destroyed, but in each of these cases capitalism appears as all around us; it appears to have no outside.

> On the right capitalism is the bearer of democracy, modernity, and technological innovation, while the left represents capitalism as a self reproducing perpetrator of destruction, a colonizer and penetrator of non-capitalist spaces…every economic practice, relationship, and effect (good or bad) is related back to the same central driver; capitalism (and its consequences or opportunities) (Cornwell 2013).

Capitalism is the social-symbolic order which provides us with meaning, acts on us, binds us together, and shapes our desires; capitalism is the Big Other which gives shape to our desires and in relation to which we forge our identities (Salecl

2010). Thus, capitalism appears to mark the end of history or is understood as the only viable economic system not because everyone or most people think it's great, but because we think, talk, and imagine capitalism to be, in the final instance, all that there is.

Nevertheless, in the epoch of the Anthropocene (Chakrabarty 2009, Crutzen 2002, Dibley 2012, Healy 2014, Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2010, Zizek 2011), imagining and creating a new economic reality is the "impossible" task of our time. Not only are inequalities both within and between nations growing to historic highs, but our economic activity, acting as if it is a "great force of nature" (Steffen, Crutzen, and Mcneill 2007: 614), is staining the geological record and undermining our viability as a species-being. Indeed, as John Bellamy Foster (2013) states,

> It is an indication of the sheer enormity of the historical challenge
> confronting humanity in our time that the worst economic crisis since the
> Great Depression, sometimes now called the Second Great Depression, is
> overshadowed by the larger threat of planetary catastrophe.

Today's interrelated set of global ecological problems including species loss, deforestation, ocean acidification, and of course anthropogenic climate change, lay bare the immanent, dialectical relationship between economy and ecology. Capitalist exploitation and commodity exchange is the culprit for both social inequality and ecological destruction. Indeed, following James O'Connor (1998), I understand environmental degradation and climate change largely as a result of the

"second contradiction" of capitalism, associated with capitalist accumulation. This powerful drive to generate profit through the sale of commodities from capitalist production depletes and pollutes resources, thereby undermining the very conditions necessary for continued production. Thus, capitalism requires the continuing acquisition of new locations for production, the ongoing identification of new resources for extraction, and the continuing generation of increasingly intensive forms of exploitation.

Both the ecological and economic crises, and social movement responses to them like Occupy in the United States and the more recent Climate Justice March in New York in September of 2014, have over the past few years—over even the course of my research that this dissertation engages with—changed public discourse, bringing both inequality and capitalism into mainstream public debate. The mainstream progressive left solution to social inequality and ecological crisis has largely coalesced around a push towards Keynesian type regulations and progressive tax policies that would redistribute wealth, a political position reflected in two recent best selling books—Joseph Stiglitz's (2012) *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* and the even more celebrated *Capital in the Twenty First Century* by Thomas Piketty (2014). Both of these texts see the extreme levels of inequality in the world as not only ethically problematic but also as a danger to the viability of the economy writ-large. Stiglitz locates the problem in the deregulation and strengthening of fiscal and tax policies in ways that benefit the wealthy giving them economic and political power. His solution is re-regulation, social investment, and progressive taxation. Piketty locates the origin of

inequality in the economic principles of capitalism itself, warning us that the system will necessarily continue to generate and increase levels of inequality. Piketty's analysis and critique of capitalism has garnered great attention.

Piketty has appeared on progressive talk shows like the Colbert Report, conservative newsmagazines like *Bloomberg Businessweek,* and launched a speaking tour. Piketty was also invited to my school, The University of Massachusetts Amherst in October 2014. His work does a great service of bringing to light the destructive impacts of capitalism. Interestingly, Piketty's solution is not to call for a different economy, but is quite similar to Stiglitz: progressive taxation, including a global wealth tax. As Rick Wolff (2014) and David Harvey (2014) point out, Piketty describes an economic principle but de-emphasizes the possibility of restructuring social relations that have created the conditions in which that principle emerges.

> [A] statistical regularity of this sort hardly constitutes an adequate explanation let alone a law. So what forces produce and sustain such a contradiction? Piketty does not say. The law is the law and that is that. (Harvey 2014)

This emphasis on economic laws, and concomitant de-emphasis of intervening in the social relations of production involved in making economy, results in Piketty presenting a solution that seeks to regulate or taxes the existing economic system which is seems to largely work on its own.

Though both Piketty's and Stiglitz's stances towards reform and

redistribution would be welcome changes from economic solutions rooted in

austerity and supporting corporate interests, I am interested here in other

possibilities that might be obfuscated. Even more, and taking a historical approach,

efforts to regulate and redistribute wealth and resources can also be understood not

only as band-aid solutions that paper over the violence of exploitation, but as

constitutive processes that maintain capital accumulation.

Pem Buck's 2001 tour de force, *Worked to the Bone: Race, Class, Power and

Privilege in Kentucky* can be of help here. Buck argues that there are historical

moments of possibility, often in relation to economic crisis and restructuring, when

people begin to question and challenge the nature of society and their place in it.

These "forks in the road" - she cites Bacon's Rebellion, the Farmer's Alliance, the

civil rights movement, among others - mark locations of possibility for new ways of

living together, for new collective ways of producing stuff, for sharing resources, for

changing the nature of our economy. These social movements can connect different

communities together and have the potential to aim for something deeper than the

regulation of capitalism. They have the potential to fundamentally transform the

very conditions under which things of value are produced and shared.

However, Buck argues that, rather than taking paths towards fundamental

transformations, the roads that we have historically chosen have primarily led to

limited social and economic reforms, some redistribution of wealth, or access to civil

rights, for particular social groups. These reforms and new social configurations

benefit some. And, along with state oppression, they work to quell unrest for a

while. Enough people are satisfied that they go along with the program. Enough

people believe the stories that justify and naturalize social inequality. But, as more

wealth is extracted and social antagonisms grow, the next crisis emerges.

Economist Rick Wolff (2010) helps to explicate these dynamics in his film

lecture "Capitalism Hits the Fan." In response to the Great Depression, a series of

significant political and economic reforms were made in the middle decades of the

20th century that led to a not insignificant redistribution of wealth up through

1970s, including Social Security, unemployment insurance, government investment

in public works, and a host of regulations on corporations, trade and private capital.

The story today, Wolff says, is that "If we just re-regulate [and reform], then we can

return to the good old days." But there is a critical point that is missing from this

equation. Wolff asserts that while there were indeed significant reforms and

redistribution after the Great Depression, the basic form of capitalist production

was left in place, allowing the boards of directors of private corporations to take and

control the profits that are made by workers. Wolff incredulously explains, "To

regulate is to impose limits on a group of people ... with every incentive to undo

them and all the resources needed to realize their incentives!" According to Wolff,

this is precisely what happened.[1]

Despite my Marxist attachments clearly bleeding through in the above

discussion, I do not believe the political and cultural effects of a redistributive state

are pre-determined by history. For example, reshaping the economic terrain

through regulation and progressive tax policies certainly *could* lead to new

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[1] This discussion of Buck and Wolff also appears in Shear and Healy 2012

imaginings and to more radical possibility. But in any case, ecological and economic sustainability both locally and globally would seem to require more than redistribution and regulation, but rather a more fundamental transformation in the way that we relate to each other and our non-human others. From my perspective, this requires the cultivation, expansion, and proliferation of alternative and non-capitalist forms of economy and sociality.

Is it possible to "step off the train" of capital accumulation and exploitation and begin to imagine, truly desire, and build other economies, other worlds? Where are the doors and how do we make them visible? Who might be ready to step off if they can simply see it's possible? And who are the people already leaving the train of capitalism behind?

Project Summary and Findings

This dissertation both reflects and constitutes a modest attempt at locating, analyzing, theorizing and helping to create non-capitalist possibility—the possibility of multiplying, amplifying, linking up, and expanding efforts engaged in creating ethical ways of producing, exchanging, and consuming stuff. It draws from my ongoing work participating in social movements in Massachusetts that are coalescing around efforts to create new economies. From 2010-2013 I worked alongside and as an active member of community organizations, non-profits, and community developers who were struggling to both understand and respond to the changing conditions around them and to imagine and create new social and economic realities. I began my research working with burgeoning green economy

coalitions in Western Massachusetts, joining together community, social justice, and environmental organizations to respond to economic and ecological crisis. As these groups moved forward and transformed, I worked alongside them as an active member, organizing and participating in campaigns, protests, events, internal discussions and public representation. I wrote field notes when appropriate and conducted and recorded over 50 interviews.

In the dissertation that follows, I argue that economy should be understood as a swirling, heterogeneous field of economic ideology, practice, relations, dispositions, and desires. In this theoretical context, I ethnographically investigate the ways in which community groups and activists negotiate and contest dominant economic discourses, as well as mobilize their own meanings of economy in order to express and actualize economic desires for social equality, ecological sustainability, and especially non-capitalist possibility; I investigate how non-capitalist initiatives are imagined and constructed. I ask, how are community groups and activists imagining and desiring economy in relation to, against, or apart from dominant economic discourses? How are non-capitalist projects being assembled? Under what conditions can people begin to imagine, desire, and create other worlds?

In addition to these analytical questions, this dissertation largely embraces the project of *performing* economic possibility. Building from the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006) and diverse economies scholarship (Erdem 2014, Gibson-Graham, Cameron, Healy 2010, Miller 2006, 2010, Safri 2012, St. Martin 2005,). I want to highlight, make visible, and amplify what already is and what might be. This is a move that requires both theoretical and representational components.

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Theoretically it requires a framing of economy in which economic difference is exposed and capitalism is just one possibility that exists and might exist in the world, alongside others, including ethical non-capitalist practices. In terms of representation, I am concerned with crafting text and narratives that attempt to highlight and amplify people, projects, and movements that are enacting, organizing around, and imagining non-capitalism. I want to carefully cultivate these efforts, looking for and writing about how they are and/or might continue to be possible.

Findings

At the same time, the dissertation reflects upon and, through my research questions and findings, both extends and critically engages with the theory and representational politics of the diverse economies project. In Chapter 2 I show how a politics involving a resubjectification around a framework of economic difference, a central theoretical proposition for Gibson-Graham, can be both limiting and problematic for the emergence of non-capitalism among social movements that are responding to economic and ecological crisis. Just as important, however, I found that interest and support for non-capitalist institutions are not necessarily enacted by social actors who see and desire non-capitalism, but can be understood and desired as part of projects to both resist and even create *capitalism*.

In chapter 3 I continue this exploration of the non-concatenated relationship between individual subjects and the enactment of non-capitalism. Exploring the narratives surrounding and supporting the creation of a network of worker cooperatives in Springfield, Massachusetts, I found that worker cooperatives can

contain and are constitutive of heterogeneous economic subjectivities, including subjects that understand and desire worker cooperatives as part of capitalist development. I argue that the development of cooperatives depends in the first instance, not on shared understandings, values, and desires, but rather the aggregation of difference and the suspension of the resolution of that difference.

In chapters 4-7, I examine the political possibilities and limitations of a performative approach to textual representation and ontological politics through an ethnographic exploration of a remarkable community organization, the Alliance to Develop Power (ADP). Chapter 4 maps out how chapters 5-7 are theoretically situated in relation to each other. Chapter 5 shows (and performs) how a performative reading of ADP—reading and representing ADP in terms of what might be— can indeed have significant symbolic effects for other movements and organizations as part of a discourse of possibility. However, I also found that long-term ethnographic research makes a "pure" performative representation ethically and politically problematic; as ADP moved from a reinvigorated organization and then into rapid decline, I found it impossible to present ADP as unadulterated by powerful, constraining forces. In chapters 6 and 7 I explore and then attempt to reconcile this tension between a performative politics to create new worlds and critical, realist accounts and analysis that shows how things *really* are, and are currently [not] working. In the conclusion I bring together my research findings, situating the proliferation of economic difference as one level of politics that can work to transform the nature of what is possible to struggle over.

In the remaining pages of the introduction, I broadly outline my political and theoretical commitments, contextualizing my project in relation the rich literature in economic anthropology exploring and theorizing economic difference. From this, I trace a trajectory that leads to my own project that draws heavily from and is in critical dialogue with the diverse economies framework of J.K. Gibson-Graham (over the course of my research, I have, in fact, become a member of the CEC over the course of my dissertation research). I then describe my methodological approach and methodologies in relation to the research "fieldsite." Finally, I outline my chapters. I situate them as not only describing different efforts at creating non-capitalism, but also as different theoretical explorations about how to understand, think about, and engage with non-capitalist projects as part of a transformative, even revolutionary struggle.

From Economic Difference to Economic Possibility

The field of economic anthropology is a good place to begin a search for economic possibility. As Hart (2000) explains, from it's very inception economic anthropology has aimed to unsettle the underpinnings of market capitalism.

> The purpose of economic anthropology ("the economics of primitive man")
> was to test the claim of contemporary capitalism that its principles were
> those on which a world economic order must ultimately be founded (1018).

This project of unsettling the ordained rise of capitalism has largely entailed locating and upholding economic difference. Indeed, economic anthropology in the twentieth century can be understood as a critical dialogue with the field of economics, which sought natural laws to explain economy, over the nature of economic principles, practices, and behavior; at it's most fundamental, it's been a discussion about the nature of human nature.

This discussion most vociferously took shape in the formalist-substantivist debates of middle twentieth-century about how to best to approach questions about the economic when studying non-Western societies (Dalton 1969, Frank and Dalton 1970, Wilk and Cliggett 2007: 1-30). Grounded in neoclassical economic theory, formalists argued that all economies, all societies, could be understood in terms of rational, self-interested decision-making of individual actors who sought to maximize resources. Substantivists, on the other hand, argued and began from the premise that, far from being natural, market-economies and resource maximizing *homo-economicus* were recent inventions (Dalton 1961, 1965, Malinowski 1961, Polanyi 2001, Polanyi 1977). Non-market economies do not operate on their own through principles of market-exchange but are culturally embedded; they are constrained and influenced by cultural institutions and principles. Thus, non-market economies and the people in them needed to be understood from their own particular set of culturally relative conditions: economies are culturally produced and culturally specific.

Interestingly, as part of this effort to locate economic difference, substantivists reified capitalist market economies and the figure of *homo*

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economicus, which was understood to dwell within them. Indeed, in unpacking the meaning of "economic", Polanyi[2] identified two meanings, conflated together. The first (substantitive) was concerned with simply the ways that people interact with their environments to obtain needs and wants. The second (formalist) was a particular "logic" of *economistic* utilitarian behavior that was associated with market-economies.

> This [formalist] view of economy as the locus of units allocating, saving up, marketing surpluses, forming prices grew out of the Western milieu of the eighteenth century and it is admittedly relevant under the institutional arrangements of a market system, since actual conditions here roughly satisfy the requirements set by the economistic postulate (Polanyi 1957: 240).

In order to strengthen and validate his project to locate economic difference, Polanyi distances substantivism from formalist research agendas associated with neoclassical economics, which he relegates to capitalist market economies. Thus, as Hart (2000) suggests, substantivists conceded the terrain of societies deemed to be market capitalist to neoclassical economics. Capitalist markets were accepted as coherent and real. The search for economic difference (and economic possibility) was thus directed away from economies deemed market capitalist and towards economies in which other forms of exchange

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[2] Though not an anthropologist, Polanyi is nonetheless most prominently associated with substantivist economic anthropology.

[For Polanyi] Industrial societies have a delocalized economy, "the market" in which individual decision-making rules. This means anthropologists and historians may make concrete empirical investigations of the rules guiding pre-industrial economy, whereas the abstract methods of economists are suitable to understanding the market. In other words, economics can be left with its commanding intellectual position in modern society, as long as anthropologists and historians are allowed to study exotic or dead societies (Hart: 1021).

Both formalists *and* substantivists were challenged by Marxist anthropologists who were less concerned with understanding how existing economies worked, and more concerned with how they were being transformed in relation to global capitalist relations of production. The expansion of capitalist relations (and ideology) called for new theoretical approaches from which to understand and critique what appeared to be a growing "world system" (Wallerstein 1979). Subverting theoretical models of culture and economy as timeless, bounded entities, Marxist anthropologists were concerned with the ways in which capitalist expansion via colonialism and development was taming, oppressing, or negating difference and constraining, articulating, incorporating, and destroying local people and economies (Cole 1977, Godelier, 1977, Mintz 1986, Wolf 1982). Thus, while the substantivist concession directed the search for economic

difference to places and spaces *outside* the West, the emphasis on critical diagnoses of capitalist expansion emphasized an investigation of capitalist reproduction.

From these early debates, economic difference was largely relegated to non-western societies and, even then, shown to be—politically at least—inconsequential next to the power of capitalism. Of course, though some of the currents of these early conversations no doubt still remain, they are long in the past. More recent economic anthropology has looked to denaturalize and de-essentialize capitalism, putting economic difference in productive tension with capitalist reproduction, eschewing notions of capitalism as a homogenous, global-system advancing through universal, deterministic logics (Comaraff and Comaraff 1999, Ho 2009a, 2009b, Maurer 2000, Narotzky 2006, Ong 2006, Ong and Collier 2005, Tsing 2000, 2005, Yang 2000) and emphasizing contested, negotiated relationships between global capitalist forces and non-capitalist, local elements (Colloredo-Mansfield 2002, Isik 2010, Rankin 2004, Yang 2000).

It is useful here to briefly discuss a few key works which can help to move us along a trajectory of economic difference and towards economic possibility. As Sahlins (1994) pointed out, de-essentializing capitalism was in fact one of Eric Wolf's (1982) intended interventions in his seminal work, *Europe and the People Without History*. Among other things, Wolf sought to give agency to the populations and societies that were encountering the capitalist juggernaut destabilizing notions of a monolithic, all consuming force. However, Sahlins argues that Wolf fell short in this project to show non-capitalist societies responding to capitalism "in their own cultural terms" (Sahlins 1994)

One searches here in vain for a sustained analysis of how local peoples

attempt to organize what is afflicting them in their own cultural terms. Wolf

invites us to see the Munduruci and the Meo as historic agents, but what he

actually shows is how they "were drawn into the larger system to suffer its

impact and become *its* agents" (Sahlins 1994: 416 citing Wolf 1982: 23

[emphasis added]).

In contrast, Sahlins endeavors to theorize a global capitalism that has been

partially constructed *by* cultural and economic difference. Focusing on the Pacific

islands and surrounding mainlands, Sahlins explores the ways in which local

cultures mediate capitalist logics. Rather than suffering the fate of incorporation via

the logics and forces of the capitalist market place, Sahlins argues that local cultural

differences still exists as part of the global system.

[The] modern global order has been decisively shaped by the so-called

peripheral peoples, by the diverse ways they have culturally articulated what

was happening to them. Second, and despite terrible losses that have been

suffered, the diversity is not dead. It persists in the wake of Western

domination. Indeed, respectable scholars now argue that that modern world

history since *c.* 1860 has been marked by the simultaneous development of

global integration and local differentiation (418).

Sahlins makes an important intervention. He displaces a homogenous capitalist system, with an economy that is comprised of contingent encounters in which culturally specific practices and ideologies meet, transform, and integrate capitalism. From this perspective, the capitalist system is not internally coherent. It cannot be understood as holding together or advancing purely through capitalist logics.

Still, in Sahlins's schema, does this anti-essentialist rendering of global capitalism bring us towards imagining economic possibility? How close? Two of Sahlins's major argumentative claim are instructive:

1) The most general argument of this chapter…is that the world system is the rational expression of relative cultural logics, that is, in terms of exchange value… Of course, the capacity to reduce social properties to market values is exactly what allows capitalism to master the cultural order. Yet at least sometimes the same capacity makes the world capitalism the slave to local concepts of status, means of labor control and preferences in goods which is has no will to obliterate, in as much as it would not be profitable (421).

2) Western capitalism has loosed itself on the world enormous forces of production, coercion, and destruction. Yet precisely because they cannot be resisted, the relations and goods of the larger system also take on meaningful places in local schemes of things (417).

In the first claim, Sahlins speaks to the heterogeneity of meaning, interpretation, and cultural integration of capitalism from the 'native's point of view.' And, as Sahlins suggests, perhaps this difference sometimes bends capitalism towards the cultural interests of 'native' peoples. Still, it is unclear where possibility for the cultivation and expansion of non-capitalist possibility exists in Sahlins' framework. Following Sahlins's second claim, economic differences appear to be contained in, in the service of, or at least ineffectual in stopping the capitalist "juggernaut" (417) from advancing.

Drawing inspiration from the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham, Yang (2000) brings us closer to a theoretical position in which locating non-capitalist difference helps us to imagine (and enact) non-capitalist possibility. Yang describes the Wenzhou region of China in the late 20th early 21st century as an economically heterogeneous landscape full of non-capitalist and capitalist elements. The introduction of different strategies of capital accumulation exist alongside and in interaction with traditional forms of ritualized consumption—ritualized displays of wealth destruction and gift-giving. This "irrational" consumption of wealth stands in stark contrast with rational-decision making. However, as Yang explains, part of the growth in capital can be attributed to the revitalization of ritual expenditures that require wealth. Thus, rather than posing a conflict, capitalist development is in part *driven* by non-capitalist logics. The obverse implication is that non-capitalism

grows through the expansion of capitalist development which it *appropriates* to its own ends.

This seems largely consonant with Sahlins. However, an important distinction between Sahlins's and Yang's projects can be made here; it's one that Yang, in fact, makes herself. In discussing an analogous interaction of capital accumulation and ritual expenditure among Kwakw<u>aka</u>'wakw Native Americans in the 19th century, Yang explains,

> A native noncapitalist logic of ritual economy made use of capitalist forms of self-renewal. The theoretical significance of this astonishing history…seems thus far to have eluded most anthropologists, although Marshall Sahlins (1994) uses it to illustrate the native's point of view in capitalism. No anthropologist to my knowledge has seen in it a principle in opposition to capitalism (481).

Yang views the rise of ritual expenditures in Wenzhou as posing a concrete challenge to capitalism. Indeed, she envisions how non-capitalist logics might be taken-up more expansively and even *take over* invasive capitalist structures.

> Here a consumer economy has been incorporated into ritual exuberance and generosity but in a way which undercuts the private accumulation…in this meshing of ritual and consumer economies, the question arises whether this is an example of the latter's colonizing and penetrating the former (494).

An outbreak of ritual expenditure and material waste and destruction such as

a bonfire of *real* consumer appliances at an extravagant funeral is not

inconceivable. Once unleashed, the internal principles of rural Wenzhou's

economy of kinship and expenditure could challenge and subvert the

principles of rational productivism and private accumulation of global

capitalism (495).

What encourages Yang to view and treat difference as economic possibility? From my perspective, much of this has to do with her reframing of economy itself. Yang proposes economy as a hybrid. In her model, capitalism is not presumed to be instrinsically dominant in any particular instance. Capitalism does not *contain* non-capitalist difference. Nor is it in a structurally dominant position. Rather, Yang presents a model in which different economies—capitalist and non-capitalist—are situated and interact in horizontal, contingent encounters which are evaluated on their own terms, not simply to capture "the natives point of view" (481) but to show and imagine how difference might lead to the expansion and transformation of ideological and material conditions.

More Theoretical Footholds

Diverse Economies

The diverse economies model of J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006, 2008 and Burke and Shear 2014) fractures and flattens the economic landscape, thus emboldening

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and enticing us to not only see economic difference but to see this difference as a means for re-imagining and creating new economic relationships as well as expanding and proliferating existing non-capitalist relationships.

They present economy as a heterogeneous forms, relationships, and practices scattered across a landscape, different ways of producing, exchanging and consuming stuff. In this frame, they present categories of economy that bring difference to the fore: enterprise, labor, transactions/exchange, property, and finance. Thinking economy through each of these categories shatters any notion of singularity, revealing alternative and non-capitalist forms of economy that exist all around us. For example, non-capitalist transactions like gift exchanges, fair-trade, and bartering; or non-capitalist labor like volunteerism, self/collective provisioning, or cooperative paid labor. Many forms of non-capitalism, but not all, are desirable alternatives to capitalism in and of themselves. Instead of exploitation, individual self-interest, and competition, they embody and encourage ethical values and practices: collective production and decision making around surplus, social-well being, and cooperation. Just as importantly, in the diverse economy frame capitalism is reduced to its most basic form—a capitalist enterprise buying and selling in a capitalist market. Capitalism becomes just one possibility of many.

Performativity

It's important to point out here that Gibson-Graham do not propose that a diverse economies understanding and representation of economy is any more accurate or true than any other theoretical model. What's salient, however, is the

impacts that different theoretical models have on how reality is understood and constructed. Rendering economy through a diverse economies frame exposes difference and subverts the discursive dominance of capitalism, what they refer to as *capitalocentrism,* and invites us to deliberate about, support, and organize around non-capitalist possibility. This is, of course, not necessarily an easy or comfortable stance to take. It can be a bit of a leap of faith and emotionally unsettling to move from opposition to openness. For example, for many academics invested in work that intends in some way to contribute to a more just, equitable and sustainable world, our identities have been formed through critical theoretical approaches and are bound to narratives about the importance of fighting against an unyielding global capitalist system (Shear and Burke 2013).

But taking this leap and aligning with a theoretical position of a reframed economy, we can invest ourselves in the work of seeing and, in fact *enacting* other worlds. In other words, reframing economy is a performative project (Gibson-Graham 2008). David Stark helps to nicely illustrate the possibilities of performative politics.

> If you show someone a map and say 'this is how people get from point A to point B' *the statement is performative when it creates the behavior it describes.* In this case, a path gets worn in the ground between Point A and Point B. Thus, performative statements don't *reflect* reality (as in the declarative statement 'this is a pen'), but *intervene* in it. Performative language is an

engine, not a camera. A model becomes performative when its use increases its predictive capabilities. (Stark, cited in Harrington 2010).

To put this less eloquently and more simply, epistemological transformations are at once ontological. Or as Gibson-Graham explain, embracing performativity moves us from a political position of "understanding the world in order to change it" to the realization that "to change our understanding *is* to change the world, in sometimes small and sometimes major ways" (2008 and citing Law and Urry 2004: 391). A language of diverse economies unsettles the ontological grounds which hold our identities firm to capitalism—whether for or against it—and offers a new economic landscape for *economic becoming* (Gibson-Graham 2006).

Some Notes on Subjectivity

A politics of economic possibility is also a politics of the subject. It demands that individuals and communities, unhinge themselves from capitalist relations, practices ideologies, and desires and begin to re-imagine and desire other economic possiblities. As I discuss in Chapter 2 and beyond, Gibson-Graham understand institutions, relationships, practices, and, indeed, individual subjects as *overdetermined* in place. This is a concept derived from heterodox Marxist scholars Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff who elaborate on Althusser's anti-essentialist ontology (Resnick and Wolff 1987, 2006, 2013, Wolff and Resnick 2012). Resnick and Wolff propose that every entity cannot be understood, or understood to exist, on its own, singular terms; rather, each entity is constituted by all others all at once.

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Each entity is in continual motion—pushed and pulled, advanced and diminished, changed and reconstituted by all others all at once. At the level of the subject this means that we cannot know how any person will act in any given time. As I explain elsewhere,

> Relationships, practices, and initiatives all become sites of possibility, neither canvasses for an unconstrained free will, nor systematically pre-formed. Capitalist sites and processes become open to transformation and engagement, and non-capitalist sites and processes must be granted their own political and ontological weight (Burke and Shear 2014: 132).

Thus, we cannot presume ahead of time, for example, that a capitalist site or person in it, will always be driven to work in accordance with capitalist logics, dispositions, and desires.

As I discuss throughout, my dissertation embraces Resnick and Wolff's theorization of the subject as overdetermined, joining it with Maussian insights that individuals in economies deemed market capitalist nevertheless want to act in ways that at are collective and social, rather than self-interested (see Chapter 2); and with Latourian understandings of institutions and things as constituted by assemblages of motley, sometimes seemingly conflicting ideologies and desires (see Chapter 3). I view these theoretical framings as complementary in that they allow us to think about openness, possibility, becoming; they encourage us to think about how subjects—how people—can negotiate and be transformed by difference.

Throughout these chapters, I also periodically mobilize the Lacanian concept of fantasy—"narrative frame[s]" from which people experience themselves as "'desiring subject[s]'" (Özselçuk and Madra 2010: 325 in dialogue with McGowan 2007: 24). —and the related Lacanian subject to help understand and propose where economic possibility might be located. The use of Lacan here is not incidental and it serves multiple purposes. First it allows me to discuss my research subjects, collaborators, and friends (and myself) as cognizant, reflective, knowledgeable people who have deep understanding of how they are subjected to various forms of power. Indeed, understanding subjectivity from a Lacanian perspective reminds us that people are attached to their identities, beliefs and practices, not simply through what they know to be "true", but through the pleasure that they receive from the way in which they understand themselves, including their own inconsistencies and frustrations. The salient point here is that Lacanian theory reminds us that people move through the world, not only through logical decisions based on their worldviews, but through the pleasure that they receive through their desire and frustration of desire. This pleasure/pain complex, what Lacanian theorists refer to as *jouissance,* provides some coherence, some imagined wholeness to the subject even if on some level they know that other ways of being and acting are possible. As Healy relates, "I have found that proving that such a subject [homo economicus] is merely a cultural construct with a specific point of origin does little to dampen the belief in it" (Healy 2010: 501). For my purposes, thinking about subjects and social action in terms of fantasy instructs us that appeals to morality, ethical values, new

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knowledge, and empirical logic that exist outside of the subject's fantasy formations may not *always* be particularly efficacious interventions.

For Healy (2010), as well as Madra and Özselçuk (2015) albeit in a slightly different formulation, the transformative, revolutionary intervention involves coming to a different, attenuated relationship to ecomomic fantasy and desire. In Lacanian parlance, this can be understood as "traversing the fantasy," occurring when subjects come to recognize and distance themselves from their fantasies, thus enabling ethical decision making. Exploring how this particular psychoanalytic intervention of 'traversing the fantasy' can manifest in individual subjects is not a primary focus of my research. However, as I begin to discuss at the end of Chapter 2 and theorize further in Chapter 3, I look for the different ways in which non-capitalist spaces that might encourage that attenuation, can be built.

This dissertation mobilizes Gibson-Graham's theoretical framework described above and is explored further throughout the dissertation. I mobilize the diverse economies framework first and foremost to re-orient myself in a new frame of economic possibility. This is explicitly spelled out in Chapter 2 and is a more implicit but nonetheless central theoretical underpinning in chapters 3-7. In Chapters 4-6, I also again bring forward the diverse economies frame to help make sense of, perform, and analyze a collective effort by a community organizing group that is intentionally building a 'community economy.' In addition, this entire dissertation is self-consciously a performative project. Both in my on-the-ground research efforts and in my writing I am concerned with locating, describing—and thus enacting—non-capitalist possibility. At the same time, I am interested—and I

became more interested over the course of my research—in thinking about the

tensions between performing diverse economies and critical opposition to capitalist

exploitation and oppression; the tension between non-capitalist and anti-capitalist

politics. I look for synergies between critique and possibility and question what is

gained and lost through a performative, ontological politics, both theoretically and

in on the-ground movements. In the following section I discuss my project in greater

detail describing my methods and methodology. Finally, I describe my chapters

which focus on particular initiatives towards non-capitalist possibility. I approach

these projects in different ways in an effort to gain more insight and understanding

about the nature of economy in order to better locate, perform, and advance

economic possibility.

Entering with the Green Economy: Massachusetts, Methodology, and Movements

In this section I describe my methodology and methods in relation to the

place and context of my field site. I begin by discussing the initial entry point of my

project: the green economy and green economy coalitions inhabiting and creating

the green economy as a social imaginary. I then describe the field site both as a

material location where I and the groups I worked with spent most of our time, and

in relation to the different ways that place was constructed and conceived by

different individuals and organizations. This is followed by an explanation of my

research methods as well as process of establishing relationships with different

organizations. I then present my methodology as an engaged anthropologist as well

as the types of interventions that I intended to and was able to make in relation to

and on behalf of the groups I worked with. Finally, I discuss some of the complications intrinsic to engaged ethnography, and ethnography writ-large.

This project began with some preliminary research, as part of an investigation of the burgeoning green economy in Massachusetts in 2009 and 2010. As I discuss thoroughly in Chapter 2, the ascension of the green economy as a social imaginary was a response to the economic crisis of 2008-2009 and to growing concerns over ecological destruction and climate change. The green economy, it was hoped, would address both of these crises. For a time, the green economy was largely undefined. Even though there was certainly a dominant set of discourses around green economy, the green economy was nevertheless *in the making* and thus a relatively empty signifier in which new ways of being together in the world could be envisioned; this caused great excitement and energy among policy makers and multiple publics. In Massachusetts, a state at the forefront of green economy policy, research, and investment, this excitement was palpable.

In particular, I was interested in the explosion of activity among activists and community groups who were forming new alliances, new coalitions, and new campaigns in relation to the green economy. Green economy groups were seemingly popping up everywhere to capture massive amounts of government funding that was coming down from the state and most interestingly to me, green economy groups were proposing their own language, narratives, and ideas of what a green economy should be like, their own meanings of economy and green economy writ-large.

By the beginning of 2011 I was regularly working with two green economy coalitions—a statewide coalition and a group centered more in Western Massachusetts—and shortly thereafter a third coalition centered in Central Massachusetts. Each was trying to create their own meanings of economy through policy campaigns, community meetings, public demonstrations, protests, and so on (I discuss two of these coalitions in detail in Chapter 2). As these efforts moved forward and changed, I also began to work with other groups that were attempting to—not just engage with the meaning of green economy in relation to discourse coming from the state—but to create more purposive, intentional economies outside of the green economy frame. These projects included an effort to create a network of Worker Cooperatives in Springfield, Massachusetts, which I discuss in Chapter 3, and a community organizing group that was building a "community economy" in Western Massachusetts through diverse economic practices, which I discuss in Chapters 4-7. Some of these purposive economic efforts, were forged in the coalitions themselves as new social relationships and ideas began to emerge. Others were efforts that coalition members were already involved with. In other cases, I became involved in non-capitalist projects through social networks that moved through the coalitions.

Place

Most, but not all, of my fieldwork took place in Massachusetts, and in particular the cities of Boston, Worcester, and Springfield, the three largest cities in Massachusetts. By some measures, Massachusetts has been doing quite well in

responding to decades of deindustrialization and the recent economic crisis relative

to its rust-belt counterparts and the rest of the nation. For example, Massachusetts

had the sixth highest median income of any state in the nation from 2011-2013

(2014 US Census Bureau Supplements). And, according to a Pew Charitable Trusts

report (2012), Massachusetts ranks higher than the national average in opportunity

for individuals to increase their earnings. At the same time, there is significant,

growing inequality in Massachusetts. Since 2007, homelessness has grown faster

than in any other state in the nation, even as overall homelessness in the country

has declined (Associated Press 2014). Boston, an economic engine of Massachusetts

known internationally as an education and research hub also has high

concentrations of racialized poverty and segregation. And, between 2000 and 2007,

Boston has had the highest gentrification rate of any large city in the United States

(Hartley 2013). Worcester and Springfield are peppered with numerous colleges

and technical schools, but both have had a more difficult time finding new successful

growth strategies and are more obviously suffering the impacts of decades of

deindustrialization and concomitant job loss. The poverty rate in Springfield is three

times the state average (2010b US Census Bureau) and the poverty rate in

Worcester is nearly twice as high as the state average (2010c US Census Bureau);

poverty rates for communities of color are higher than for white majority

neighborhoods and particularly high for women head of households. Springfield was

deemed the 20th most racially segregated city in the country in 2013 (Jacobs, Kiersz

and Lubin, 2013).

All three cities are rife with economic initiatives that are taking place in relation to the conditions described above including the social justice initiatives and alternative and non-capitalist projects that I was involved with over the course of my research. From a certain empirical perspective these initiatives were materially based in Massachusetts and in particular local cities within the state. Often the initiatives that I worked with would situate themselves in cultural space in relation to these cities. At other times, place was constructed at a different scales and imbued with different qualities. For example, the solidarity economy network that I describe as the Central Massachusetts Green Jobs Coalition (CJC) and that I discuss in Chapter 2 and the beginning of Chapter 3, often identified with and located itself Worcester, as an effort to grow a local Solidarity Economy in the city in order to serve the needs and wants of the local community. At other times, however, the CJC constructed a different place—with different social actors, environments, relationships, forces—from which to envision and build economy. At the annual CJC conference in 2012, the CJC made a distinct effort to make it a statewide affair, inviting interested organizations and activists to envisage a statewide solidarity economy together—the place that was present was not simply Worcester, but the state of Massachusetts. During the plenary presentation, the presence of the director of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network moved the sense of place to a national scale. And Daniel Tygell, a leader and activist in Brazil's robust solidarity economy, skyped in to also present in the plenary, bringing Worcester's CJC onto the world stage, as part of a global movement of growing solidarity economy efforts that were

networking together, which was both constituted by and constituting the local

through shared ideas, resources, and support.

Methods and Process

      This dissertation involves research conducted over the better part of four

years during 2010-2013. During this time I worked alongside, with, and as part of

community groups and alternative economic initiatives, involving myself in the

organizational activities of the groups. I attended and facilitated organizational

meetings, I participated in and sometimes led community meetings. I engaged in

protests and actions, lobbied public officials, testified at public hearings, and helped

to draft internal documents, by-laws, and articles of incorporation. During this time

I took regular field notes on these activities when appropriate and conducted over

fifty interviews.

      Of course my position and relationship in each group, both in terms of

ethnographic research access and in terms of group membership, was not the same.

And, in relation to each group, my relationship changed over time; it was one of

continual, ongoing negotiation. Gaining entry into each particular group demanded a

different process and different structural relationships. For example, one green

economy coalition that I was involved in, at its inception existed primarily as a

community roundtable discussion. Anyone could attend meetings and become part

of the conversation, anyone could become a de-facto member. In this situation,

acceptance and level of membership was strongly correlated with the amount of

volunteer time spent with the organization attending meetings, participating in

conversations, and so on. After a time of being involved in the organization this way—though making clear that I was a student interested in researching the green economy—members began to appreciate my efforts and trust that I was interested in working together. Later, when the coalition formalized its structure, I was still invited to come to board meetings as a de-facto board member as both participant and researcher. In contrast, the statewide coalition that I discuss in Chapter 2 consisted of organizational membership only. I was able to work with the coalition through my affiliation with the community group the Alliance to Develop Power where I had been asked to volunteer as their green economy outreach coordinator (see Chapters 4-7). ADP was a member of the statewide coalition and through this relationship I eventually began to serve as a representative of ADP at coalition meetings and events. After a number of months getting to know coalition members, I began to discuss my research project with them in more detail. Agreements around ethnographic research had to be discussed both with coalition leadership as well as individual organizational members.

Activist, Engaged Anthropology

To be clear, I view anthropology and ethnography as an opportunity to make political interventions in all aspects of academic practice (Davis 2003). This is not a radical position; indeed, it's impossible to imagine anthropology today as a disengaged, objective enterprise. The realization of anthropology's role in colonial expansion, complicity with dominant interests, and unwitting participation in the subjugation and oppression of different populations (Asad 1991 (1973), Escobar

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1991, Lewis 1973, Starn 1986) has made a traditional, positivist stance towards

knowledge production difficult to maintain. Knowledge is now axiomatically

understood to be situated, always partial, and produced through relations of power

within which both researcher and researched are positioned (Clifford 1986,

Harraway 1988, Hymes 1972, Lewis 1973, Rosaldo 1989). To put this simply,

ethnographic practice—both research and writing—is already and always political.

In addition to and as part of the performative project described above in the

previous sections, I take an activist approach towards research and writing (Hale

2001, 2008, Hyatt and Lyon-Callo 2003, Lyon-Callo and Hyatt 2003, Lyon-Callo

2004, Juris 2007, Osterweil 2013, Speed 2008). This means putting my own political

commitments into dialogue with and in the service of research subjects during the

research process by working alongside and as part of activist and community

groups. This type of research demands a long-term commitment. As I suggest in the

previous section, building-up enough trust, both in terms of political usefulness and

personal relationships, to support an activist ethnographic encounter takes time.

There is an important epistemological component to activist research as well.

Aligning oneself in shared political-cultural space with social actors provides a

positioning and stance that allows me to *partially* share, experience, and understand

differing epistemological frameworks. Along similar lines, Juris (2007) further

argues that activist ethnography involves "entering the flow and rhythm of ongoing

social interaction" (165).

In order to grasp the concrete logic generating specific practices, researches have to become active practitioners. With respect to social movements, this means helping to organize actions and workshops, facilitating meetings, weighing in during strategic and tactical debates, staking out political positions, and putting one's own body on the line during mass direct actions (165).

Indeed, participating as an active member of activist coalitions, networks, and social movements means voicing one's ideas and opinions. While being cognizant of the ways in which systems of oppression and privilege are being embodied in and structuring any given encounter (Collins 1993), I embrace a dialogical ethnographic encounter in which trust, openness, and exploration is fostered through the development of a collegial relationship in which political and theoretical assumptions can be challenged by both the researcher and researched (Lyon-Callo 2004).

Though I do not claim that simply because of my position as an anthropologist I brought more novel insights to the work than any other activist, my efforts to ethnographically understand and present differing epistemological frameworks were sometimes affirmed as directly beneficial to the work. For example, one member of the solidarity economy network in Central Massachusetts, the CGC, explained to me after the group had gone through a revisioning process (see Chapter 2) that she felt my involvement in helping the group to reflect on the limitations and frustrations of previous efforts of the group had been particularly

useful. "What's been really helpful is you giving us, well, helping us to come up with a discourse (s) from which to think about all this".

Public Anthropology, Networking, and Knowledge Production

All of the organizations that I worked with were involved in their own cultural production—creating and propagating their own ideas and language of economy through social media and blogs, websites, public meetings, research reports, and so on. I participated in internal discussions as a member of these organizations and I also engaged in broader public debates about economy and social change. In addition to helping to develop organizational language for outside consumption, during my research I published seven essays in popular media that were in direct support of ongoing efforts of community groups or were directly informed by my research. Some of these articles were written in close collaboration with the groups that I was working with as part of broader campaign strategies. Other articles were written more independently but the consumption of which suggested interesting impacts on the broader movement. For example, I wrote a few articles with Stephen Healy, an academic colleague who was also involved in some of the same organizations and efforts that I was working with and a part of. One article that we wrote together for a national publication connected these local efforts to a broader context of non-capitalist possibility. This article flew across the internet. It was posted and discussed on different internet sites and blogs— including Occupy sites and the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network. It was also taught

in academic classrooms. The article ended up giving the organizations some additional notoriety while making political interventions in multiple publics. This public writing did not go unnoticed by the organizations that I was working with which linked to the articles on their websites and encouraged me to write more public editorials (Shear and Healy 2011, 2012).

In addition to public writing, I also began to realize that my networking also had value to community groups. I was immersed in non-capitalist politics in Massachusetts for years. And after a time I began to have close, collegial relationships and friendships with members of many different organizations and initiatives. Often, I was able to not only inform different groups about each other but also to help create social connections between and among them. Again, this is not anything particularly different from other activists involved in social justice and non-capitalist politics. Indeed, it was a common occurrence at the beginning of meetings to hear people list off their multiple affiliations during group introductions. However, at least during the "fully-funded" portion of my research, I was particularly effective in making connections between and bringing together different individuals and groups—indeed, this networking sometimes had tangible results. For example, I invited the director of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN) who had become a friend of mine and who was also involved with the Wellspring Initiative mentioned above and described in detail in Chapter 3, to speak at the 2012 CGC Solidarity Economy Conference in central Massachusetts during which she got to know members of the CJC. The CGC, which has subsequently become a member of USSEN, is beginning to organize around a project that is

similar to the Wellspring Initiative, and an organization highly involved with the CGC has formed a relationship with another member of Wellspring in order to draw on his experience in developing a cooperative greenhouse. My activist anthropological approach, then, though positioning me as just one member of the groups I was working with, also put me in a good position to help identify and construct useful narratives and frameworks, write for the public in ways that was useful to the organizations that I was working with, and help build relationships between different groups and individuals.

Of course my relationships with my research subject-collaborators weren't always easy. Though I was often effective at navigating relationships, representing groups in different situations, and often building relationships between organizations, I was sometimes hamstrung by my commitments. Some of the groups (and particular individuals in those groups) I worked with were sometimes suspicious of my relationships with others. And, within groups, internal divisions sometimes cast me in a suspicious light since my ethnographic interests in maintaining relationships would rub against the politics of choosing sides. At these times, my positionality as an academic became quite clear; it was in my academic interest to maintain a bit of emotional and temporal distance from the realpolitik of the organizations I was involved in. And, even more, I was able to do so *because* of my positionality. First, I was not a paid organizer and my livelihood did not directly depend on my involvement with the organizations. Second, everyone knew I was an academic and it was, for many, relatively acceptable for me to move a bit freely within and between groups.

Finally, the multifaceted nature of my ethnographic relationships directed and complicated how I represent the organizations and individuals in the dissertation itself. Just as my access to different organizations and individuals was differentially conceived and structured by the groups themselves, so too was the way in which people wanted to be named and discussed in the dissertation. Different people had different ideas about how they wanted to be represented. In this dissertation, all individuals have pseudonyms except for public figures who are named in articles that I site, as well as Fred Rose and Emily Kawano, the two primary organizers of the Wellspring Initiative. Representation of organizations is a bit more complicated. When organizations are given pseudonyms, the text makes this clear by prefacing their name with the phrase "that I will refer to as."

<u>The Chapters</u>

The Chapters focus on substantially different organizations and initiatives that I was involved with over the course of my research, though each are connected together through shared relationships, projects, and in some cases shared mutual affiliations of member as I noted above. However, they are not intended to be comparative case studies. Instead, they help to explore different aspects of non-capitalist politics among activists and community groups in Massachusetts in order to seek out economic possibility. Additionally each chapter extends, grapples with, poses questions, and presents findings in relation to the theoretical package associated with the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham discussed earlier in the introduction.

Chapter 2 *does* engage in a bit of its own comparative analysis. I describe the efforts, orientations, and aspirations of two green economy coalitions that are trying to intervene in the green economy and create their own green economy discourse and initiatives. I investigate the sometimes competing desires for and stances towards the economy among the progressive left. I show how economic fantasies provide narrative frames from which individuals engage with the green economy through the production or foreclosure of particular economic desires. I argue that a politics of resistance towards dominant green economy discourse, and towards capitalism more broadly, is often sutured to a desire for the reproduction of capitalism. This is consonant with Gibson-Graham's suggestion that capitalocentrism encompasses both an embracing of and resistance to an imagining of capitalism as an unyielding system. At the same time, I show that desires for non-capitalist alternatives can sometimes manifest as parochial, privileged spaces that elide class inequalities and racism. I look for political convergence between a politics of resistance and the creation of non-capitalism through intersubjective transformations in political campaigns, in cooperative development projects, and in the dialogical spaces created by activist and organizer networks.

Chapter 3 focuses on cooperative development and in particular the now widely known anchor-institution model of cooperative development that has traveled from Ohio to Massachusetts. Like the Evergreen Model in Cleveland, the Wellspring Initiative in Springfield, MA involves a diverse, seemingly politically conflicting, range of actors with different understandings of and aspirations about the project. I treat cooperatives here as assemblages of difference arguing that it is

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precisely this difference that *constitutes* non-capitalism. I argue that, in fact, non-capitalism in this case is constituted not around an agreement around values and beliefs, but through the aggregation of difference. I discuss four different instantiations of the Wellspring project to investigate different ways that subjects come to desire and constitute actually existing non-capitalism, different ways that they can constitute and be transformed through economic difference. I mobilize these examples in support of an argument that politics is not always about being right, exposing "the truth", or convincing others of particular values or moral convictions. Instead, I suggest that politics also involves creating the conditions for construction of and careful deliberation around difference.

Chapters 4-7 investigate a remarkable community organization, the Alliance to Develop Power (ADP). ADP was in many ways a traditional, and powerful, community organizing group but ADP was most well known for their innovative economic development model, what they referred to as the Community Economy. ADP was working to create an intentional, alternative economy through cooperative enterprises. These chapters explore the origins, effects, and politics of ADP's community economy. Chapter 4 consists of a narrative that situates me in relation to ADP, and situates ADP in relation to the arguments in the subsequent chapters. The rest of the story unfolds in three parts, divided over three chapters.

In Chapter 5, I briefly discuss the history of the organization, and its innovative organizing model, emphasizing the development of its alternative economic structure and institutions. I then examine the politico-symbolic importance of ADP as a location and example of economic possibility, exploring the

affective and discursive interventions it makes into community-organizing politics, into the broader social justice movement, and in relation to the work of JK Gibson-Graham and the Community Economies Collective as part of a language of diverse economies.

In Chapter 6 I discuss ADP's efforts to embody and grow its community economy model from early 2011 through the end of 2012. I explore some of the dynamics surrounding and constraints on ADP's efforts to imagine and create a new world. I situate ADP in relation to and as part of constellation of philanthropic and funding agencies, social service non-profits, and community and social justice organizations undergirding progressive politics. From this context, I query the political space that exists between the language politics of imagining and desiring new worlds and the concretization of those desires—the distance that exists between imagining community economies and enacting them.

In Chapter 7, I reflect on my own positionality, responsibility, and efficacy as activist ethnographer with ADP. I take Judith Stacey's (1988) provocative, titular question "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" as a starting point to consider and help sort through the ethically fraught and epistemologically messy nature of both ethnography and politics. Here I explore some of the tensions between a performative and realist politics, between a politics of possibility and a politics of resistance, and between an ethnography that seeks to document, expose, and critique "what is really there" and an ethnography that begins with the commitment to look for and amplify possibility. I ask, what is gained and what is lost by adopting a theoretical approach, stance, and representational strategy of radical possibility?

From a certain perspective, the chapters each feature a different *performance* of ADP, a different way of representing and, thus, enacting a particular reality—the first is a hopeful, rendition of ADP as a pure realm of possibility; the second, informed by the proximity of the ethnographic encounter, is more circumspect. The third part analyzes and theorizes these two representational forms in relation to my own political responsibilities and commitments. Thus the three parts constitute a sort of triptych that, in the process of exploring the non-capitalist politics of ADP, can help us to consider some of the possibilities and limitations of performing diverse economies.

In the conclusion, I discuss how non-capitalist efforts, discourses, and actors have grown in Massachusetts just in the past few years. Drawing from major findings in my chapters, I argue that this is due in large part to the proliferation of economic difference at the institutional, symbolic, and subjective levels. Thus, creating new economic worlds begins with creating the conditions in which economic difference can become visible and proliferate. I theorize this as one level of politics necessary for a project that brings the very nature of economy into political struggle and I make a few tentative claims about the nature of non-capitalist politics.

Towards a project of non-capitalist excavation

Slavoj Zizek (2003, 2007) likes to recall the statements of former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as he attempted to convince the U.S. public of a potential Iraqi threat in the build up to the 2003 United States invasion of Iraq. Said Rumsfeld:

"there are known knowns; there are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns; that is to say there are things that, we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns—there are things we do not know we don't know." Rather than dismiss or deride Rumsfled's musings, Zizek argues that they can be instructive. "If Rumsfeld thinks that the main dangers in the confrontation with Iraq are the 'unknown unknowns'… what we should reply is that the main dangers are, on the contrary, the 'unknown knowns'—the disavowed beliefs and suppositions that we are not even aware of adhering to ourselves" (2007) and the "obscene practices we pretend not to know about, even though they form the background of our public values" (2004).

Zizek is referring here to our unconscious, taken-for granted, beliefs and desires that shape and delimit reality; and thus our actions and reactions to it. For Zizek, an essential step in a politics that can adequately address ecological crisis is the intellectual task of "unearthing" all of the ways in which these background beliefs and practices—culture, if you will—attach us to our current course of social action even when we know, on some level, that this course is producing exploitation, oppression and ecological crisis. While Zizek suggests that we unearth, so we can then confront our collective destructive behaviors, I contend that a project of excavating *unknown knowns* should also be called on for a different project. Indeed, our unexamined practices and disavowed beliefs include more than just the social-symbolic coordinates for the production of ecological and economic crisis. They

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include the libidinal, discursive and material grounds for egalitarian and sustainable

worlds. [3]

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[3] A condensed version of this discussion of Zizek and unknown knowns also appears in Burke and Shear 2014.

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CHAPTER 2

MAKING THE GREEN ECONOMY: POLITICS, DESIRE, AND POSSIBILITY[4]

<u>Introduction</u>

On a late February evening in 2009, I went to a meeting of the Western

Massachusetts Green Economy Working Group (Greenwork) at the Central Labor

Council in Springfield, MA, pulling up in front of the one-story, concrete building

located on a commercial strip a few miles east of downtown. I arrived early in order

to meet David, one of the group's founders and a long time activist and community

organizer whose current project was the creation of a non-profit intended to

develop community-owned, renewable energy. We had exchanged emails in

advance of the meeting, and he had invited me to come and talk with him

beforehand to discuss what my "interest in the group was about." I walked in the

front door and down the hall, past the offices of Western Mass Jobs with Justice,

Western MassCosh and a few labor unions. I found him in a small kitchen towards

the back of the building getting refreshments ready for the meeting. As I helped him

set out some leftover snacks and reheat a container of Dunkin Donuts coffee in the

building's largest meeting room, I explained that I was interested in the possible

convergence of green economy discourse and politics with alternative economic

practices and institutions. At this his eyes lit up and we talked fervently about the

possibilities for new political alliances and economic opportunity in the green

economy as meeting-goers began to fill the room: community organizers, union

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[4] This Chapter has been published in the Journal of Political Ecology (Shear 2014)

reps., a couple academics (including myself), a small business owner, a workforce development official, a non-profit director and more. The evening's guest speaker was State Senator Benjamin Downing who had helped usher in a series of much discussed "green" legislation the year before that promised great investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. There was soon to be an incredible amount of green economy money and efforts in the state, Downing explained. "Everything will be green soon", he said. "It will permeate *everything*".

The rest of the meeting was filled with excited talk and questions about how to access grants and funding, how to make sure that community groups, organized labor, people of color, and poor people would not be excluded from these new opportunities, and how to develop Greenwork into a group that could help create a green economy that would serve the interests of local communities. As the meeting was breaking up, I hung around a bit in order to speak with David as well as with the other primary founder of the group, a local community-labor organizer who I had met through my earlier work as a staff member of the graduate student union a few years before. We agreed that it was a fantastic meeting. It was clear that the green economy was bringing together people and organizations who might not have otherwise worked together around a project of influencing the emergence of, and in fact helping to create, a new economy. We talked about the opportunities for alternative economic projects—community ownership of energy, green worker cooperatives and so on. Stating what we were all feeling, David said, "we have an opportunity here to really change things."

The above account reflects the great amount of political energy mobilizing around and through green economy discourse, politics and organizing in 2008 and 2009. In Massachusetts, as in other parts of the United States, coalitions and organizations were seemingly springing up everywhere with names like Greenwork, The Massachusetts Green Jobs Coalition, The Green Justice Coalition, the Worcester Green Jobs Coalition, The Green Jobs Consortium and so on. New political alliances were forming around new campaigns and initiatives to capture funding, influence policy, and create new enterprises. From the perspective of many green economy coalition members and activists, at that time the green economy was something in the midst of being created, its composition not yet complete and its boundaries unknown. Many activists and organizers remember those early days as a time when the green economy offered political openings, possibility and inspiration[5]: "I was hopeful. It seemed like anything was possible"; " [There was] this incredible sense of possibility and it was great. How many hour-long potlucks [discussing ideas]?!; "Man, that was it, that's where it was happening"; "Everyone was excited about it. Things were wide open."[6]

This sense of promise and possibility was perhaps most powerfully expressed by Van Jones, one of the leading figures of the green economy movement,

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[5] See Shear 2010 for my own optimistic performance of possibility in the green economy.

[6] These quotes—from a workforce development organization director, a community organizer working with youth collectives, an organizer for an environmental justice non-profit, and an activist with a former career in local government—are meant to signify the widespread, ubiquitous sense of possibility around the emerging green economy in 2008 and 2009.

whose framing of the political scene was highly influential for many progressive

activists and organizations. In his 2008 bestseller, *The Green Collar Economy*, Jones

proposed the formation of a multi-class, populist alliance—what Gramsci might

describe as a new "historical bloc" (Gill 2008: 60-61, Hall 1987: 21)—in which

progressive interests could articulate around the idea that the construction of the

green economy should benefit all social groups, as well as the environment. Like

Obama, who appointed Jones to his cabinet (before he unceremoniously resigned

while under public pressure fomented in part by the conservative pundit Glen

Beck), the green economy was cresting on a wave of hope for a better world.

   As part of my preliminary research, I been exploring the activities of green

economy groups in Massachusetts since 2009 while participating as an active

member of the aforementioned Greenwork.[7] Shortly thereafter, I began more

formalized participant observation while working alongside two additional green

economy groups. As I discussed in the introduction, these broad-based coalitions

involved community organizing groups, activists, organized labor, academics,

students, environmentalists and small business owners. I took an active,

participatory role in each group. I helped to plan events, organized public meetings,

participated in actions, given public testimony, wrote op-ed pieces, helped to write

organization literature, and engaged in internal conversations and external debates.

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[7] Greenwork has formed into a non-profit entity whose board is comprised of representatives from community organizations, non-profits, and organized labor. Greenwork aspires to help support the creation of a "high road" green economy that is founded on principles of social justice, the right to organize, and community and worker ownership. The group's primary activity since it's inception has been to convene regular "roundtable" discussions in which diverse actors are brought together to deliberate, debate, and network around green economy initiatives.

I took regular field notes (where appropriate and when permitted) and I conducted over two dozen interviews with members from the two coalitions.

In this chapter I explore how social actors, including myself, have been negotiating, responding to, and producing the meaning of the green economy, and the meaning of "the economy" writ-large, through our political efforts. I look to move beyond a project that only critiques capitalism or maps out capitalist hegemony. Instead, taking inspiration and drawing from J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996, 2006), I look to theorize and amplify *non-capitalism*, a concept which I discuss in more detail in the following section but I will imperfectly define here as economic initiatives and enterprises that can encourage collective and ethical decision making rather than individualism, exploitation and market logics.[8] Here, I am particularly interested in thinking about the ways in which the expression of different desires for economy can lead to openings, or closures, for the construction of non-capitalist relationships, initiatives, and enterprises.

In the first section I sketch out the contours of the mainstream, green-economy project emanating from the state that social actors are immersed in and negotiate in Massachusetts. I recapitulate a political- economic account of the green economy and link it to neoliberal governance. I provide this outline of a "strong theory" of capitalism (Gibson-Graham 2006: 5, 204n8), to provide some context that can help to better explain the conceptual pivot that I want to make away from only

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[8] Of course not all non-capitalist practices are necessarily desirable, nor do they all encourage ethical values and practices (for example slavery or feudalism). Non-capitalism here is a sort of shorthand for social relations that can move us past the economic horizon provided by capitalist relations and values.

detailing and critiquing social reproduction and towards economic possibility and social change. Drawing from Gibson-Graham and Marcel Mauss, I then propose a theoretical framework that can help to illuminate non-capitalism and might point towards revolutionary transformation.

In the second section I discuss and compare two, very different political projects undertaken by green economy groups in Massachusetts:

1) A social justice campaign around energy efficiency work; and

2) a project to imagine and create a solidarity economy.

I explore how different desires for and disposition towards the economy animate and circulate through these projects. Finally, I take measure of how green economy coalitions are re-orienting to a changing political terrain, and I look for spaces and opportunities for political alliances around economic possibility.

Green Governmentality?

On a global scale, and from the perspective of international policy-makers, the mainstream green economy project attributes economic and ecological crises to a "misallocation of capital" (UNEP 2011: vi), a mistake that can be rectified through the proper market incentives and the right policy prescriptions. These ideas are not altogether new; the green economy as a named, political project can be understood as both incorporating and extending other, interrelated global-environmental initiatives and discourses that have intended to capitalize and commodify nature including sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and ecological

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modernization (Brockington and Duffy 2010, Escobar 1996, Escobar 1997, Igoe *et al.* 2010, MacDonald 2010, West and Brockington 2006).

Brockington and Duffy explain that while conservation and capitalism have always had a "close relationship", in recent decades "capitalist conservation" and its "aggressive faith in market solutions to environmental problems" (p.470) have become increasingly commonsensical; "the idea that capitalism can and should help conservation save the world now occupies the mainstream of the conservation movement" (470). In a similar vein, Escobar explains that the discourse of sustainable development proposes to commodify nature in order to facilitate conservation efforts and manage the ecologically destructive externalities of capitalist production and exchange (Escobar 1996). In contrast, Macdonald (2010) identifies *ecological modernization* as posing a "challenge" to sustainable development, pushing it past its ostensible imperative of limiting growth through the market and towards a vision that weds ecological responsibility with technological fixes and "new strategies of accumulation" (p.519). Ecological modernization "refuses to see the supposed trade-off between environmental concerns and growth" and instead tends to looks for "win- win" situations (Harvey 1996: 378). A similar marriage of economic growth and ecological health is at the heart of the green economy project. While the green economy includes ideas of conservation and sustainability, it is promised as a remedy to ecological crises while at the same time is "pro-growth, pro-jobs, and pro-poverty-reduction" (UNEP 2010: 6-7). In addition to regulating markets, the green economy finds solutions to social and environmental problems through the expansion and creation of new markets

for capital investment, technological innovation, and job creation (ETC Group 2011, Pollin et. al. 2008).

In the U.S, green economy policy makers have focused on economic growth and job creation in the renewable energy sector, energy efficiency, and green building construction as part of a "clean energy economy". Massachusetts has positioned itself at the forefront of these happenings. In 2008 Massachusetts passed the Global Warming Solutions Act which mandates an 80% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (below 1990 levels), passed the Green Jobs Act which encourages and supports clean energy work, and created the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center–"the first state agency in the nation dedicated solely to facilitating the development of the clean energy industry" (https://www.facebook.com/MassCEC/info). "In addition, Massachusetts based companies and research institutions have received 17%- or $62.8million- of the federal dollars awarded through the first year of the US Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) program." (BW Research Partnership 2011: 2). Employment in the industry in Massachusetts grew by 6.7% from 2010 to 2011 compared to a 1% overall growth rate (BW Research Partnership 2011: 4). And in 2011 Massachusetts jumped ahead of California as the country's most energy-efficient state (ACEEE 2011).

It's interesting to note the different economic philosophies that surface and intermingle, even in this limited recounting of the mainstream green economy project. On the one hand, we can see a concerted shift away from some of the ideology and dogma associated with neoliberal capitalism. The very premise of the

green economy concedes that "business as usual" resulted in economic and ecological crises, and thus we now need something different. Indeed, as a recent UN report on the Green Economy states, "unfettered markets are not meant to solve social problems" (UNEP 2011: 01-2 citing Yunus and Weber 2007). Instead of leaving markets alone, the green economy would regulate and reallocate capital through government intervention. In addition, the green economy has often been put forward as a Green New Deal (Barbier 2009, Dipeso 2009, Pollin 2012; UNEP 2009), in which government intervention, spending, and policy changes would create new jobs and save the (capitalist) economy. This idea, which also suggests a class compromise in which social antagonisms are resolved through economic growth, job creation and a redistribution of resources, has been attractive to organized labor and progressives (Baugh 2009, Apollo Alliance 2008).

On the other hand, the green economy can appear as a neoliberal project, proposing that it is the role of government to create new markets for capital investment and to use markets to manage nature and climate change. Despite its association with laissez-faire economics, neoliberalism involves the active creation of the conditions that will support new markets including the production of particular types of people, "...subjects whose moral quality is based on the fact that they rationally assess the costs and benefits of a certain act as opposed to other alternative acts" (Lemke 2001: 201). At a November 2011 state legislative hearing dealing with the growth in the energy efficiency industry in Massachusetts, a state official suggested that the green economy would be built through individual, self-

interested decision making, "...as people learn they can save money [by doing energy efficiency measures] people are doing it because it makes sense."

In sum, we can see that the green economy—in its state-projected construction—can accommodate elements of both Keynesian regulation and neoliberal development discourse. And it should be no surprise then that both poles of the mainstream economic spectrum can support the creation of the green economy (for example, compare Friedman 2008 and Krugman 2010). Though not a cohesive project, the coordinates in this frame are precisely creating and incentivizing capitalist markets for investment and the creation of wage labor jobs.

It can be useful to understand this state-sponsored green economy project— which envisions a market- economy animated by *homo-economicus*—as a form of governmentality that seeks to discipline and produce people that will then reproduce capitalism. Though not completely cohesive or singular, the mainstream green economy project can aptly be characterized in terms of *neoliberal environmentality* (Fletcher 2010)[9], a form of governmentality that mobilizes and incentivizes people to address "environmental problems... as issues that require cost benefit analysis" (p.176) and in which "economic growth is the chief mechanism through which the aims of bio-power are pursued" (p.175). The mainstream green economy project, in other words, works as a discursive apparatus that encourages people to imagine themselves and behave as self- interested, resource maximizing, rational actors: *homo-economicus*, the subject of economy that capitalism requires.

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[9] As Fletcher (2010) notes, there are certainly other discourses and forms of "environmentality" that overlap and intermingle with the neoliberal variety.

While cognizant of how the green economy discourse might reproduce capitalist relations, I want to be careful in the way that I approach this problem; I am not interested here in simply looking for capitalist expansion and reproduction, or even *resistance* to it. Following Gibson-Graham, I am interested in locating and theorizing possibilities for non-capitalism, both at the level of the subject, and in terms of empirical, objective conditions. So, while acknowledging a discursive apparatus linked to capitalist reproduction that might be described in terms of a "neoliberal environmentality", I want to complicate this formulation in two ways in order extend the political terrain beyond a capitalist horizon.

Non-capitalist practice and desire

First, using Gibson-Graham's language of diverse economies, I choose to theorize the economy not as a homogenous, cohesive system that is capitalist in nature, but as different arrangements of surplus appropriation and distribution, and different forms of exchange, "scattered over a landscape" (Gibson- Graham 1996: xxiv) and overdetermined[10] in place (Gibson-Graham 1996; 2006). In this view of economy, we can treat capitalism as a capitalist firm producing or exchanging for a

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[10] Wolff and Resnick's elaboration of Althusserian overdetermination tells us that there is no essential quality or enduring essence to any particular entity (Resnick and Wolff 2006, 2013; Wolff and Resnick 2012; Burke and Shear 2014). Individuals, sites, and institutions are in a dynamic state, "pushed and pulled" in a multiplicity of constitutive directions (Resnick and Wolff 2013: 342). Thus, we can't always predict how any person, group, institution or business will behave, or how any set of relations will proceed; they are radically contingent and open to intervention. Apropos non-capitalist possibility, we might read this open, unpredictability of overdetermination onto, for example, the choice of a large, successful capitalist business to transition into a worker cooperative (Morgan 2013).

capitalist market; it's just one relatively modest portion of overall economic activity

and relations that includes alternative markets like fair trade, farmers markets, and

localism; non-capitalist relations of production like worker-ownership and

community owned enterprises; CSA's and consumer cooperatives; household

production, volunteerism, mutual aide, and other types of so-called informal

economic activity; and so on. A language of diverse economies, for Gibson-Graham,

is part of a politics that emboldens us to make ethical choices around our political-

economic activity (Burke and Shear 2014). Economic identities, practices and

relations become sites of possibilities for non-capitalism and the normal workings

of capitalism are open for transformation. For example, by understanding class as a

process that is created through different arrangements of production, appropriation

and distribution of surplus, rather than a static social category that is prearranged in

a hierarchy (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2000), exploitation—the

appropriation of surplus from producers by non-producers—becomes just one

possibility for class relations among many. We can more readily see existing

practices and possibilities for new social arrangements in relationship to surplus

that are non- exploitative (for example, the collective appropriation and distribution

of surplus that we find in worker collectives).

Second, I want to attend to Mauss's important insights around economic

subjectivity (1990). Mauss sets out to prove that people can hold multiple economic

motivations, and act on them, all at once. On top of this Mauss suggests, in a

somewhat inchoate way but the insight is powerful, that even in a world that is

understood as dominantly capitalist, people want to and can make efforts to go

beyond individualism and self-interest, efforts to be in common with each other (see Graeber 2001: 161-162). This is an important addendum to Polanyi's denaturalization of market economies and homo-economicus (Polanyi 1977; Polanyi 2001); though market economies depend on a philosophy that constructs individuals as self-interested, rational actors, Mauss tells us that those individuals aren't fully colonized by a "marketing mind" (Polanyi 1977). Indeed, following Mauss, Graeber suggests that we all might already be latent communists, waiting for an opportunity to express that part of ourselves (Graeber 2010a, 2010b).

With an imaginary of economic possibility in place, even in relation to a discursive regime like neoliberal environmentality, the nature of the economy itself becomes a political question. The political field is no longer circumscribed by capitalism, but is saturated by non-capitalist dispositions and desires (in addition to capitalist) and is populated by a full range of non-capitalist practices, enterprises, and relations. We might even be able to begin to understand ourselves—as researchers and as activists—as participating in an alter-hegemonic war of position, a cultural struggle in which we can build, amplify, organize around, and link up non-exploitative forms of *non-capitalism*, thus sucking capitalism of its material and discursive hold.

I now turn to an investigation of the economic desires and beliefs of green economy social actors. What do they want to do to change the economy and their relationship to it? How do particular imaginings of the green economy, and the economy more broadly, foreclose economic desires or help particular desires to be realized? The first project is a campaign positioned as part of a broad effort to create

a socially just green economy by growing new markets and helping to create good-paying, wage-labor jobs. At the same time, this project in part adopts an anti-capitalist stance that situates it in opposition to and resisting the impacts of an economy understood as capitalist, externally imposed, and unyielding. The second project that is attempting to build a green solidarity economy, turns away from capitalism and adopts a stance of economic possibility that points towards a non-capitalist horizon. By stance I mean an ideological-emotional orientation towards an issue that both reflects and influences our thinking and actions (and see Gibson-Graham 2006: 1-11). Following Lacanian theory, I treat these projects as reflecting and rendering fantasies (Stavrakakis 2007, Zizek 1997) that carry particular conceptions of the economy that invest us with particular desires while policing against others. To be clear, fantasy does not imply that people are fooled, misguided or are unaware of the conditions that they are in, quite the opposite in fact. Fantasies construct reality. They provide us with narratives from which to understand our selves and engage with the world. However, these explanations are never able to provide us with a *completely* rational and coherent basis for our actions; thus our identities are never fully complete and coherent. What helps to bridge this gap, and keep us firmly invested in particular fantasy formations, is the enjoyment that we get from our desires, and frustration of our desires, that are structured through fantasy. At the same time, since identities are not coherent, people have the potential to be affected and transformed by different and competing ideologies and discourses, including different understandings of the economy.

Fantasy and Economic Possibility

The green economy and social justice

In the spring of 2011, I took part in an energy efficiency *charette* at a hotel conference center in Eastern Massachusetts. The meeting was hosted by one of the major private energy utilities in the state and attended by representatives from other major utility companies, service providers, policy makers, and about 10 representatives, including myself, from a group that I will refer to as the Statewide Green Economy Coalition (SGC). Over the course of two days, we broke out into working groups to discuss ideas about how to solve the problem of "hard to reach, hard to serve" communities that were being excluded from energy efficiency and weatherization (weather proofing) programs that the utility companies were mandated to implement. These programs were in line with the state's energy efficiency goals, and would presumably lower energy bills and make homes more comfortable to live in. But, as the coalition argued, a huge segment of the state's population—primarily low-income communities and communities of color— that were paying monthly mandatory charges into the program, was unable to access it because of financial, language and cultural barriers. We in the SGC argued that, in effect, the system was compelling the lowest income households in the program to subsidize everyone else. To solve this problem, we proposed more effective forms of outreach that could also create good, green jobs and we argued that a redistribution of money in the program was needed to help more people afford weatherization costs. This in turn would increase the demand for energy efficiency services and thus create more good green jobs.

This meeting was the result of ongoing, multifaceted campaign efforts of the statewide coalition. The coalition, made up largely of community organizing groups, organized labor, and environmental groups formed in 2008 in order to intervene in the green economy to try and make sure it was socially and economically just. A campaign around energy efficiency work came together first because of the widely held belief by policy makers and progressive organizations that weatherization was the "low hanging fruit" for both job creation and carbon reduction; there was a great amount of resources and political attention directed towards energy efficiency. Over the two years leading up to the meeting, the coalition had engaged in a variety of tactics to move our issues forward including public demonstrations, public hearings, membership organizing, lobbying efforts, and pilot projects that were intended to model how energy efficiency work could create good jobs for organized labor, low-income communities, and communities of color; as well as ensure equitable access to the savings and comforts of weatherization. In short, it is a campaign for social and economic justice.

Indeed, the campaign engaged with the green economy as a way to counter the effects of and intervene against the broader economy. In contrast to the socially just, green economy the SGC was endeavoring to create, the nature of the broader economy was publicly described by the coalition, and was often discussed by members, as a force that creates social inequalities and structures individual and social suffering. For example, outreach materials included the description of economic and heath inequalities in Massachusetts and stated that "low-income

communities and communities of color have been overburdened by our unsustainable economy".

To put this another way, for the SGC, the green economy was a vehicle for organizing around social, economic, and environmental justice principles that are in response to, and stand in opposition to, '*the economy*.' Without opposition or intervention, the economy would continue to create inequalities and hardship. As the SGC warned in our outreach materials, growth in the green economy would not automatically benefit everyone. And green jobs would not automatically be good jobs - "without strong advocacy" green jobs could end up being low opportunity, low-paying, and unsafe. In other words, the SGC, and individual members of the coalition, positioned the economy as an inequality generator.

The SGC includes over a dozen organizations and hundreds of members, and people have different ideas and politics, as well as different conceptions and analyses of the economy. But for many of the primary organizers, the economy was synonymous with a conception of capitalism that is intrinsically exploitative and oppressive. As one organizer related to me on more than one occasion, "everyone I know is against *capitalism*, they just don't always call it that [publicly]", because of the possibility of being labeled a radical, being easily dismissed, or not be taken seriously. Though the SGC can be understood as having adopted a stance of opposition towards the capitalist economy in this campaign, the objectives of the campaign—to increase the amount of wage labor jobs and regulate capital—directly mapped onto the coordinates of the mainstream green economy project. In this campaign at least, the coalition supported and hoped to create the type of economy

that the dominant green economy frame suggests, a growing and managed market-capitalism populated by self-interested rational actors. From this frame, social justice concerns would seem to be resolved through maintaining and growing of the capitalist economy (and see Fletcher 2010: 176). Indeed, this strategy suggests that more equality *requires* the expansion of capitalism.

Economic fantasy and anti-capitalism

So what is going on here? Are green economy coalition members simply drawn up and produced through a neoliberal environnmentality, and turned into knowing or unknowing subjects? It's both difficult and problematic to try to explain the actions of the coalition, and subjectivities of coalition members in terms of an interactive binary of structure and agency which forces people into categories of, on the one hand, production by or compliance with structure and thus social reproduction, or on the other hand, resistance or evasion of structure and thus social change. Among the coalition members that I struggled alongside, it just doesn't work like that. Coalition leaders and members are extremely savvy and sophisticated. The discursive structures of the state-sponsored green economy project are not unseen and the political constraints that ideology poses are examined and scrutinized. Many coalition members and leaders are long-term organizers, and are highly educated, both experientially in on-the-ground politics and in terms of formal education. In my interviews and conversations with SGC organizers, they are quick to acknowledge the "reformist" elements of the project and profess to desire a different form of economy, one in which capitalism isn't

dominant or doesn't exist. In short, many coalition members are fully aware of the

multiple contradictions related to capitalism that we are caught up in. People *know*

that it is "the capitalist economy" that is creating inequality, exploitation and

exclusion.[11] And they would like something different. Yet, we were invested in a

campaign that intends to reproduce capitalist relations, and the subject of *homo-*

economicus that inhabits these relations, through the expansion of capitalist markets

and commodity exchange.

Understandings the SGC's campaign as reflecting and rendering a social

fantasy in relation to the economy (Byrne and Healy 2006, Healy 2010, Özselçuk and

Madra 2005, Özselçuk and Madra 2010), might help to better explain these apparent

contradictions that can keep people invested in capitalist reproduction even while

opposing it. As Özselçuk and Madra explain, a "fantasy formation offers a narrative

frame for the 'subject to experience itself as a desiring subject' in so far as it finds

'solutions' to the problems of the subject's desire by providing a rationale for

dissatisfaction" (2010: 325 referencing McGowan 2007: 24). In other words, we

create and participate in social life through narratives that make sense of our

feelings of dissatisfaction or unease; they provide a basis for identity and social

action. However, because we take pleasure in the entire fantasy, in both the idea and

desire of achieving satisfaction as well as the frustration of reaching that goal,

fantasies can have the perverse outcome of working to shore up the problem that

we seek to confront.

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[11] This is not to suggest that other relations of oppression are not relevant to or
discussed by coalition members, but the campaign itself focuses on the economy—
an economy that is understood as rife with different forms of oppression—as the
system to oppose and improve.

In the SGC campaign, one ultimate goal that animated activists and gave meaning to our work was social equality. Social justice work was made necessary in part by an imagining of the economy as an unyielding system which is structuring inequality, creating poverty and so on. Thus the economy must be resisted and opposed. At the same time the realization of social equality was and is frustrated by the very same capitalist economy which has the first and last word. It is this fantasy formation from which SGC members, including myself, experienced themselves and were motivated through in relation to this campaign.

For example, in explaining why good green jobs haven't been created at the rate that was initially hoped for, some coalition members expressed a grim resignation, as do green jobs supporters more generally, to the fact that this situation is simply the result of an unassailable economic system. As one coalition member explained, "on the national level, we are all [green jobs organizers and advocates] bummed that we didn't create as many jobs as we wanted, and we are just going to keep slogging away until the economy picks up." In other words, though our campaign objective is to create more equality through efforts in the green economy in order to create a socially just economy, on some level we *know* that this is not really possible since it is at the mercy of the [capitalist] economy, which is ultimately in charge.

One community organizer asserted after a campaign meeting that capitalism was a central cause of those racialized inequalities and environmental injustice that the campaign was addressing. It was capitalism that the campaign was opposed to and hoping to change. A few minutes later I asked her if she thought that the

campaign was going to be able to transform the capitalist economy that was creating these problems; she responded vehemently; "...of course the campaign isn't trying to change capitalism! We are trying to create good jobs." Capitalism here can be both the cause of social inequality while at the same time also looked to as the solution to inequality.

Another coalition member explained her investment in the coalition as an opportunity to help ensure a "...sustainable economy, something that we can see continuing into the future...an economy that raises the standards of living for all people and makes good use of our resources". When asked what it would take to create this fair and just economy she leaned in conspiratorially and said; "I actually think we need to break the economy!" Then more resigned; "It's going to take maybe the market just imploding altogether. I don't know (laughter)." Here, the desires for another economy, even though they are present, remain outside of the imaginary, outside of what is actually possible, unless "the market just implod[es] altogether."

In the above examples, we can see capitalism enter as the Lacanian 'Big Other', the believed in symbolic order that 'tells' the subject how and what to desire (Salecl 2011: 58-60). The desires for another economy besides capitalism that many members hold and sometimes express can be made to seem laughable and unimaginable by capitalism's symbolic authority. Though capitalism might be impossible to transform, we can at least busy ourselves and take pleasure in what the Big Other permits. For example, we can take pleasure in doing the work of "slogging away" against capitalism and towards social justice, as well as take some

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'pleasure' in "the capitalist economy" which frustrates and makes possible our desire to oppose it, or we can even desire capitalism as a solution to itself, even when we *know* on some level that it is really no solution at all. Of course, slogging away against capitalism is certainly commendable, important work, which can result in very tangible and substantial reforms and benefits. My interest here, however, is in how "enjoyment" in taking action to achieve our desire, and the frustration of our desire—our enjoyment in opposing capitalism—might also have the perverse effect of investing us in a project to reproduce it.

Green solidarity economies

In the spring of 2011, I joined the planning committee of a very different project and intervention in the green economy, a planning committee for a conference to discuss and help to build a green solidarity economy in Central Massachusetts. Over the next few months, at weekly meetings, held at local coffee shops, cooperative houses, and community organization offices, I participated in debates and discussions about how to best educate about, represent, and build relationships around green solidarity economy activity which the committee ultimately defined publicly as:

> ...commercial and non-commercial activity oriented to meet individual and collective social needs over profit maximization. It is organized through various kinds of voluntary or cooperative associations within communities. The definition (re)centers the principles of solidarity, sustainability, equity,

participatory democracy, and pluralism as the core values of interpersonal
relationships and exchange.

The summer conference was held at a local youth center and featured over
20 sessions including workshops on cooperative culture, financing cooperatives,
solar barn-raisings, alternative currencies, food justice, and building an alternative
economy. Close to two hundred people participated in these sessions, chatted in the
hallways, ate lunch together, created new friendships, and learned about each
other's projects. In a grassy area outside that ran the length of the building, people
traded clothes, housewares and other stuff at a barter market, took home clothes
and books from a "really, really free market", traded expertise in a skill exchange, or
just sat around and talked and soaked in the warm, summer sun.

The conference developed out of a group that I will refer to as the Central
Massachusetts Green Jobs Coalition (CJC) that emerged in 2009. The coalition was
spurred in part by a desire to amplify the activity that groups in the area were
already doing, and link up to the growing movement. As one member said, "we felt
like we were already doing green economy and green jobs work, we just didn't call it
that." Indeed, the lead organization of the CJC is a grassroots collective that houses
an environmental justice and youth cooperative, and a co-op development program.
This organization itself is nested in an artist and activist collective that includes a
number of alternative economic and non-capitalist programs and organizing groups
like a Food Not Bombs chapter, a cooperative bicycle program, and independent
media.

Like the SGC campaign, the CJC held a vision of social justice, but one that was inflected with an additional and different set of economic desires. One of the main organizers and leaders of the CJC stated their view of a green economy: "it's about local autonomy" and "we want to own our own jobs." And in describing how we can live in solidarity and sustainably in relation to the green economy, he said "people need to commit to each other. I'll be there for you; you'll be there for me. That's the idea of solidarity for me." For the CJC, the green economy was not primarily a strategy to oppose the existing economy, or solely an effort to try and make the capitalist economy more equitable. It was a frame from which to make a new economy, one that largely dis-identifies with capitalism. In other words, the economic desires put forward here were for something in addition to or other than the values of individualism, competition, and economic rationality, something other than those ascribed to *homo-economicus*; they are about control of economic activity, ethical decision making, and being in common with one another in and through our economic practices. Prior to the conference, the coalition and its members had worked hard to put those values into practice through the energy and ideas around a green economy. For example, different organizational members developed two community gardens. And, a bio-diesel cooperative and a volunteer weatherization barn-raising organization also emerged in relation to green economy discussions and efforts.

Whereas the SGC campaign rendered a fantasy that administered desires for capitalism, possibilities and desires for non-capitalist values and practices circulated freely at the solidarity economy conference, and within the CJC in general.

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Indeed, after the conference, the CJC more formally adopted solidarity economy

principles and embarked on a re-visioning process that resulted in removing the

words "green jobs" from its title. A community organizer who first proposed this

change explains, "green jobs doesn't really fit with what we want to do. We don't

want to just create capitalist jobs within capitalism." And "it [the term 'job'] signals

that someone else needs to provide employment for us."

Race, class, and economic desire

At the conference, the dominant narrative that was put forward allowing us

to experience the economy as desiring subjects was one of economic possibility.

Rather than a capitalist economy that was externally imposed, the economy was

something to be defined, something in the making. Could we not, in fact, if we chose

to do so, *create* the types of economic relationships that would allow us to be in

common with each other rather than compete against each other, to make ethical

decisions through our formal economic practices, and to value people and the

environment over profit? This narrative flowed naturally from organizations and

individuals that got involved from the CJC, who were already creating and

participating in non-capitalist and alternative economic endeavors. Moreover, a

number of the more consistent members of the planning committee were familiar

with the ideas of, or had even studied under J.K. Gibson-Graham.[12] I joined the

planning committee of the conference more than mid-way through the planning

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[12] Julie Graham taught geography at the University of Massachusetts Amherst from 1984 until her death in 2010. She and Katherine Gibson, University of Western Sydney, Australia used the blended pen-name J.K. Gibson-Graham.

process and also contributed to the discussions, planning, and promotional text. As the conference began to take shape, it become apparent that the vision for a solidarity economy that would be performed included a full range of non-capitalist possibilities and in many ways paralleled the diverse economies imaginary of Gibson-Graham. Like most involved, I was generally quite excited.

At the same time, there was some shared concern leading up to the conference about what might be missing or excluded. A few of us noted that, though our promotional literature framed the conference as an attempt to locate solutions to the problems created by "corporate capitalism", there didn't appear to be many sessions or planned events focused on *organizing* for change, or confronting "power". We wondered if this might create an apolitical frame that elided or deprioritized racialized economic inequalities and social oppression. Others in the group suggested that the language we were using to promote the conference and talk about politics had an academic tone to it that indexed a middle class, college-educated audience. Even more apparent, and much discussed both prior to and after the conference itself, was the lack of racial diversity in the composition of the planning committee and among session facilitators and presenters. We worried and anticipated, correctly, that most people attending the conference would be white and/or would be of a particular social class: "middle class", "college educated", "academics", "progressives".

A few organizers and leaders from base-building community groups comprised of poor people of color, and a few community-labor organizers from outside the CJC participated in the conference, including some from the SGC. Those

that I spoke with and interviewed reported similar reactions; though appreciative of the invitation and the opportunity to participate, they were at the same time generally turned off. The high percentage of white faces was unanimously remarked upon. But described as even more problematic was the feeling that there was little recognition, let alone discussion, of the ways in which social and economic processes were structuring inequalities and oppression.

Brian, a staff member of an organizing group led by low-income people of color described the conference this way.

> It was okay. It's great that people can have the time to 'imagine another world' [making finger quotations] but that's just not the reality [for people in his community organization]. I think that what they [most of the people at the conference] don't realize is that it's really, really hard for poor people and people of color to do what they are proposing.

This claim deserves further thought, both in terms of its subjective meaning and its empirical validity. In describing the origins of the solidarity economy in Latin America, Miller (2006) identifies two distinct social groups who were its primary progenitors: the very poor who had been systematically excluded from the capitalist economy and were "forced to develop" non-capitalist institutions and relations, and relatively privileged people who were dissatisfied with the "culture of the dominant market economy" and sought "new ways of generating livelihoods and providing services." For the very poor, non-capitalist practices were a necessity; for the

privileged, non-capitalism was a choice, a luxury of privilege. However, neither of these categories seem to adequately capture the situation of many people in low income communities in Massachusetts who are intensively exploited and oppressed but not yet completely abandoned by the state.

Brian went on to argue that people who are working two part time jobs and are scrambling each month to pay bills and hold their families together don't have the luxury of getting involved in alternative economic projects, or have the same type of invested interest in doing so; "it's not simply 'a choice', he said. "[at the conference] there was no discussion of racism or class even...no discussion of racial or economic disparities...it was like a solidarity economy was all about individual choice, like a buffet of options that you could choose from, 'here's a worker co-op, here's a time bank, everyone can just choose!'" Brian made this final, sardonic point with the knowing cynicism of a person sharing in the daily struggles of low-income communities and low-income communities of color who are particularly oppressed and whose choices are particularly constrained.

Brian's statements suggest multiple material and affective constraints on non-capitalist politics. First, he is indicating that the degree and intensity of exploitation and social oppression imposed on low-income people and people of color is much more likely to be greater than, for example, middle-class, college educated white people. Indeed, the lives and bodies of low income people and people of color are often under more direct social and economic constraints, are under more state regulation and surveillance, are targeted for more violence and experience more stress and illness via social hierarchies than the general population

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(Alexander 2010, Davis 2006; Nguyen and Peschard 2003; Velez 2013). It would be a mistake, however, to assume that these conditions necessarily diminish the possibility for non-capitalist practices and visions. Indeed, oppressed communities and individuals in the United States "have a long and rich history of participation in unpaid activism and volunteerism" (Hyatt 2011: 116), have created resilient economies through reciprocal ties and mutual aide (Stack 1975), and have created cooperative and alternative economic structures as development strategies and as part of socially transformative movements (Gordon Nembhard 2006, 2014, Shipp 1996, The Black Panther 1967). Nevertheless, facing and experiencing structural violence complicates and constrains daily life, nevermind efforts towards the creation of new economic ideas and projects.

But the concerns that Brian and others expressed are not simply about presumed structural differences between differently positioned socio-economic groups. What is also at issue here are the ways in which particular social fantasies attract or repel individuals and groups through their libidinal investments. Without a more concerted discussion of how the solidarity economy can be organized to oppose impacts of capitalist exploitation, racism and other forms of oppression, the conference produced a fantasy frame in which people were implored to take pleasure in simply choosing to engage in alternative economic activity and cooperative relationships; not doing so would prevent a coherent, cooperative economy from emerging. This fantasy formation can invest some people with desires to participate in alternative economic initiatives, but also can have the effect of eliding desires for anti-capitalist, social justice work, and undermine efforts at

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alliance building. A community organizer in the CJC who has been involved a wide

array of resistance efforts as well as cooperative development gave shape to this

concern when we discussed the criticisms of the conference. "I see it quite a

bit...[people involved with] cooperative and sustainability, they don't show up for

events and campaigns" that are more about social and economic justice. He went on

to explain that he thought that the interest for some people involved with

alternative economics is just about themselves individually participating in a co-op.

From this perspective, 'solidarity economy' work is imagined as the domain of the

relatively privileged who aren't as intensively subjected to daily policing, precarity,

and surveillance, and who are relatively free to enjoy engaging in self-indulgent

economic experiments.[13]

Conclusion: A Politics of Economic Possibility

For conceptual clarity, up to this point I have treated the two projects as

fairly separate and discreet entities, in order to mark and explore how different

desires circulate in and around particular conceptions of the economy, and animate

subjects in different ways. In the CJC, desires for non-capitalism freely come to the

fore, sometimes occluding interests and desires for oppositional politics and social

justice concerns. In the statewide campaign, an anti-capitalist stance in relation to

social justice can lead to an investment in and attachment to capitalism.

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[13] A favorite easy target are time-banks which some of my organizer friends dismiss as "a game" for progressive white people who want to "trade reiki for ballroom dancing lessons."

These narrative formulations, these economic fantasies, are powerful. They can work to fix identities and create desires for particular types of social action and disperse others, thereby creating divisions and disarticulations that can constrain political movements and limit economic and political possibility. Thankfully, real life is messy. Individual organizers and members encounter and embrace a variety of competing stances, positions and desires that are activated as identities are challenged and shift in relation to different and changing social discourses, contexts and encounters. The social fantasies emergent in the projects are not always life consuming and are not the only ones that coalition members invest themselves in. For example, while discussing the green economy, social justice project she was involved in, an SGC staff organizer reconciled her misgivings about the reformist elements of the project by distinguishing the professional and paid side of her political identity from her unpaid political self which was reserved for what she described as a more radical politics that included desires to create alternative economic structures.

Progressive politics in Massachusetts appears to be getting even messier, helped along considerably by the green economy. As promised, the green economy has brought together new progressive alliances and interests in new ways. As these alliances form, different people with different interests have conversations, learn from each other, build relationships and politicize each other new conversations about and initiatives for economic possibility emerge. Indeed, despite the campaign's investment in social and economic justice through market regulation, redistribution and capitalist reproduction, some discussions about community

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ownership and cooperatives have been with the SGC since its inception. Initially, there was even an effort among some organizations in the coalition to create an energy cooperative, which was ultimately unsuccessful. But the seeds from this failed effort, as well as ongoing conversations from different coalition members with growing involvements in alternative economics are transforming the political (and economic) terrain. More recently, a campaign has developed around recycling involving a few organizational members of the original coalition of the SGC, the goals of which involve the creation of worker cooperatives. And, conversations about alternative economics, cooperatives and solidarity economy are increasingly taking place both informally, and in formal discussion groups. According to one of the group's participants, these efforts are an outcome of the relationships built and ideas exchanged in the SGC and related networks.

For its part the CJC has redeveloped its political platform in direct relation to internal and external critique of the 2011 conference. After numerous conversations and reflection in meeting after meeting, as well as with allies who were critical of the conference, the CJC decided that in order to be transformative, in order to be able to actually create the economy that we wanted, a solidarity economy must explicitly include more than a vision and desires for non-capitalism. Reflecting this re-theorization, the 2012 conference was based on the development of a tripartite model that includes:

1. Alternative economics-initiatives, enterprises, trade and finance that privilege community and ecological well being over individual gain (e.g.

worker cooperatives, community ownership, fair trade, time-banking, credit

unions, community land trusts and commons management, and so on).

2. Resistance and reform- working against environmental degradation, social

    inequality, and poverty by improving policies around existing system[s] (e.g.

    living wage ordinances, union contracts, immigration reform, energy policy,

    progressive taxation, environmental regulation, social welfare programs, and

    so on).

3. Social inclusion- efforts to end racism, sexism and other forms of oppression

    and exclusion (affirmative action and hiring policies, popular education and

    workshops, and so on).

With this new model, the CJC is attempting to create a narrative frame which

can encompass multiple economic stances and desires and from which we can build

the relationships that can bridge and merge non- capitalist and anti-capitalist

politics[14]. After the 2012 Conference, the CJC began an initiative to map-out the

solidarity economy in Worcester and through this mapping exercise, and engaged in

relationship building and organizing in order to continue to broaden the frame and

expand the CJC.

Gibson-Graham suggest that the subject of anti-capitalism, immersed in

capitalocentrism, needs to be overcome. To move away from the economic fantasies

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[14] It should be noted that an embracing of and emphasis on social justice and efforts towards social inclusion is not uncommon to other solidarity economy groups in theory and in practice (Kawano 2013). Indeed, the CJC model was inspired in part by conversations with a practitioner of Brazil's solidarity economy.

that position a systemic capitalism as the dominant symbolic order—the Lacanian Big Other that defines the parameters of our actions—they propose a language of diverse economies in order to cultivate new economic subjects and desires. This is a powerful intervention, and one that is particularly suited for a certain type of Marxist that is unable to imagine actually existing revolutionary politics. From my perspective, this means the development and proliferation of the type of post-capitalist politics that Gibson-Graham propose, in which communities can collectively make ethical economic choices depends on making visible, supporting, and organizing around non-capitalist enterprises and practices (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013). What's interesting, however, is that efforts and desires to create non-capitalist relations don't always correspond to a post-capitalist, or even non-capitalist political imaginary. For example, Terry, an SGC community-labor organizer describes cooperatives as "having an important place in the movement" and as constituting good, secure jobs. "I have really come around to your [mine and others who are proponents of alternative economics] way of thinking about worker cooperatives", Terry said. "It's because of conversations that I have had with people like you, Linda, and Carl...[now] I see co-ops as helping to build power in places where unions don't exist", and "it's another way to grow the movement". This was a significant change for Terry who just over a year earlier had laughed off the possibility of worker cooperatives as a socially transformative strategy. "Oh yeah, co-ops are *so* revolutionary!" he would say sarcastically, when I would suggest that co-ops and other diverse economy relations and practices could be a way to move beyond reform. What's significant here is that, though Terry's new interest in co-ops

can be attributed in part to conversations that he has had with people who understood cooperative development as creating a new economy, his own economic identity is still securely fastened in opposition to capitalism; capitalism remains as the *real* economy that must be contended with. Indeed, Terry positions co-ops here as part of an anti-capitalist politics that can help build "the movement" and/or provide good jobs for people that need them; his interest does not emerge out of a desire to build 'new economies.'

This exercise can even be taken a step further to consider the ways in which non-capitalist enterprises and practices can be understood and desired within a frame of capitalist development. For example, the Evergreen Cooperatives network in Cleveland (http://evergreencooperatives.com/about/) has begun to create worker-owned cooperatives whose employee-owners come from low-income communities and communities of color in which the businesses are located. It is particularly interesting is that the primary actors behind the network's development include some of the local political establishment. Planning and resources for the businesses was largely marshaled through the efforts of philanthropic foundations, and the enterprises are intended to be supported through the purchasing power of local "anchor institutions" (hospital, university and so-on) who agree to buy co-op products and services.

A similar initiative to develop green worker-owned enterprises is now underway in Springfield, Massachusetts. One of the project founders, a local community organizer, has been integrally involved in all of the planning meetings and conversations involved with the different establishment players involved in the

project, including developers and potential anchor institutions. In considering the motivations of the more establishment individuals and organizations involved in the project, he said that it was apparent that there was more going on than only market logic and economic self-interest; they also cared about the well-being of the community and the people that lived there, "their reasons [for being involved] are pretty complex, more complicated than you would think." And if we choose to be more cynical, this project can also be positioned as neatly fitting into a vision of capitalist values and development. Indeed, the idea of creating businesses that people own and operate themselves is supported by capitalist values of entrepreneurship, individual responsibility, and hard work. And, during a public announcement of the project, Springfield's Mayor explained that this initiative answered the demand for the city's economic growth and "jobs, jobs, jobs".

Despite the predominant discourses associated with the mainstream green economy project, the green economy is a contingent, undetermined, economic space full of circulating desires, ideologies and fantasies, and a full range of capitalist and non-capitalist relationships and practices. Like the economy writ-large, it's in the process of being made, its shape and contours are contingent and open to transformation. Following Gibson-Graham, a primary task for activist scholars, and political actors more generally should be to punch a hole in the discursive dominance of capitalism which helps to confine the field of possibility to opposition and resistance to capitalism, and ultimately its reproduction. Activists and scholars are interested in creating a world in which economic relationships and practices encourage and enable us to act ethically and be in common with each other—

instead of forcing us to exploit each other and adhere to market logics. As attempts are made to open up economic possibilities and desires through discursive intervention, it's important to attend to the ways in which anti-capitalist, and even capitalist, fantasies and desires might articulate with a project to create objectively existing non-capitalism. In the case of the latter, we might quietly help to build the economic enterprises and relations that enable people to operationalize their latent non-capitalist values and dispositions. In the former case, we can help strengthen alliances for both anticapitalist and non-capitalist political struggle.

CHAPTER 3

A WELLSPRING OF DESIRE: NON-CAPITALISM AS A MATTER OF CONCERN

In the previous chapter, I explored how anti-capitalist narratives and desires can perversely attach subjects to and invest them in efforts to reproduce capitalism through particular fantasy formations. This is consonant with Gibson-Graham's insights around what they describe as capitalocentrism, an ontological condition in which capitalism appears as extra-discursive, real, and co-extensive with economy. Inside this "reality", anti-capitalist projects can only aim for more equality of opportunity and a more equal distribution of resources *inside* the "real" capitalist economy. As a solution to this phantasmatic condundrum, Gibson-Graham argue that subjects need to disidentify with capitalism through a resubjectification around a language of diverse economies thereby making economic possibility visible and truly desirable. As I discuss in Chapter 2, a post-capitalist politics of possibility that eschews an anti-capitalist stance and submerges other forms of power and oppression in favor of economic possibility may also work to repel particular social actors and inhibit alliance building. Of additional interest, however, is that, as I noted, non-capitalist relations and practices can be desired and practiced as part of and in accordance with anti-capitalist politics and capitalocentric fantasies for social change. Indeed, exposure to and discussion about economic diversity—to alternative and non-capitalist possibilities—have led some activists and organizers to incorporate non-capitalist initiatives into their anti-capitalist politics, even though they maintain their capitalocentric narratives and subjectivities.

In this chapter I investigate and analyze in greater detail the ways in which variant narratives and desires for economic and social transformation work to constitute non-capitalism. Drawing from interviews, participant observation, reflective analysis, and archival work, I focus on Cleveland's Evergreen Cooperative model, an innovative development initiative to build a network of worker cooperatives owned by low income workers and located in low-income neighborhoods. Evergreen has been widely lauded in academic and popular media as an exemplar of innovative, local economic development that offers up the creation of cooperative businesses as an alternative to the neoliberal development model (Burns 2011, Gibson-Graham 2011, Shear and Lyon-Callo 2013, Alperovitz et al. 2009, Alperovitz and Bhatt 2012) that has enscribed social inequalities into a post-industrial landscape. Inspired in part by the Mondragon Cooperatives in Spain, Evergreen also aims to use the purchasing power of locally rooted non-profits, hospitals, and government facilities—"anchor institutions"—to help support the development of a network of environmentally sound worker-cooperatives situated in and hiring from low-income neighborhoods, including a "green" industrial laundry facility, a hydroponic greenhouse, and a solar instillation business. It is a model that has provoked both support and critical conversation from social activists, grassroots organizers, academics, community and economic developers, local government, and philanthropic agencies. Indeed, this model has played a significant role in the non-capitalist politics in Massachusetts spurring a similar effort in Springfield, the Wellspring Initiative, and discursively circulating through organizational meetings, conference sessions, and everyday conversations.

As an activist ethnographer, I have played a not insignificant role in this replication and discursive circulation of the model. I joined the Wellspring Initiative in 2011 as an organizational member through my affiliation with Greenwork (see chapter 2). As a member, I participated in conversations around promotion, development, organizing, and publicity. For a short time, I served as the chair-facilitator of the communications committee; I was involved in both creating and deliberating around language for our by-laws and articles of incorporation; and I spearheaded the development of our website (http://wellspring.coop). I discussed both Evergreen and Wellspring with other organizations and initiatives I was involved in, and invited Wellspring members into a variety of personal and public conversations and relationships. Indeed, though this is not the explicit aim, a secondary theme running through this chapter is the significant role that engaged academics can play in helping to build networks and conversations in relation to and as part of non-capitalist politics.

The chapter involves four different instantiations of the Evergreen Model: 1) a workshop at the 2012 CGC Solidarity Economy conference that I helped to organize and participated in, 2) an account of the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland that I researched through popular and academic literature as well as participant observation during a 3 day "tour" with members of the Wellspring Initiative, 3) my discussion of the Wellspring Initiative , and 4) my presentation (and subsequent discussion) of the Wellspring Initiative to Worcester Roots, a primary actant in grassroots politics in Worcester and heavily involved in the CGC. I begin with the workshop at the 2012 conference, placing us in the midst of an agonistic

discussion that reveals the discursive complexity—what Jon Law describes as a

"mess" (Law 2004)-- involved in non-capitalist politics (and of course, politics writ-

large) in Massachusetts. Out of this mess, I begin to theorize a politics that attends to

the aggregation and negotiation of difference, rather than focusing on its immediate

resolution, nudging us in the direction of a generative, compositionist politics

(Latour 2010), that requires attention to difference and deliberation, a politics that

in the conclusion of the dissertation I situate as a strategic component of non-

capitalist politics in relation to what Gramsci referred to as a 'war of position '.

A Mess of Non-capitalist Politics: From Critique to Construction

In the fall of 2012, activists, community organizers, and students; as well as

cooperative worker-owners, developers, and educators, filled a brightly lit

classroom at Clark University. The workshop, entitled *Envisioning a Transition

Economy*, was one of a dozen sessions at the 2nd Annual Solidarity and Green

Economy Conference put on by the Central Massachusetts Green Jobs Coalition.

The session began with a presentation from Emily Kawano, the director of

the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN), who gave a quick overview of a

solidarity economy framework, connecting principles and values with

corresponding alternative economic practices in different economic sectors. She

was followed by Penn Loh, a longtime community activist and organizer and

founder of a powerful environmental justice organization Alternatives for

Community and Environment (ACE) in Boston. Loh is a faculty member of the Public

Policy Program at Tufts University and was involved in the SGC (see Chapter 2). He

spoke about the significant tensions and opportunities between the interests of base-building community organizing groups and cooperative economic development. Stephen Healy, a local academic and activist in Worcester spoke last, putting forward one possibility for building a solidarity economy, the much-ballyhooed model of cooperative development in Cleveland, Ohio, the Evergreen Cooperatives described above.[15]

After the initial presentations that laid out a particular Solidarity Economy frame, considered questions around on-the-ground politics, and provided a concrete example of transition towards a non-capitalist, new economy, a fascinating, emotionally charged conversation took place. A seemingly muddled mess of optimism and curiosity, frustration and anger, and both recognition and suspicion flooded the room. People's investments in their own politics and projects propelled them into particular relationships with and understandings of ever-present questions of strategy, power, and social change. How do we create a new economy? Do we build a new economy and then confront the old, or do we take over from within? What is the role of government in building a new economy? Who can and cannot be our allies? And who exactly is the "we"?

In a revealing exchange that spanned the length of the discussion, a local activist and member of an intentional, collective workspace brought questions of power and resistance into the conversation:

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I think a lot of us would agree that policies that are already existing and the system that is already in place are part of the problem, you know, things like banks, money, universities. Things like Wal-Mart and multinational corporations are not just going to go away, they are not going to decide to go out of business, they are going to continue to destroy the environment and peoples lives around the world so I think that part of our strategy should have some thinking about how to confront systems of power.

A local government official responded with serious concern about the use of a language and politics of conflict.

We talk about the corporations like they are "over there" and that they are all bad. Multinational corporations are bad…but corporations aren't over there, some of us work at corporations, lots of us do, in fact millions of people do and they are good people, and they actually you know, working at Wal-Mart isn't a mark against you and shouldn't be perceived as that…
 If I work at Wal-Mart or any large business and you say we gotta resist corporations…I work at that corporation I'm not going to help you out. I'm not trying start waves here but I do think that unless that conversation happens, nothing happens here.

The activist answered back, setting off a quick, heated back and forth:

I think that [the point you are making] talks to exactly what this conference is

about. Whether we want to continue the economy as it stands with

multinational corporations that are raping the earth, or whether we want to

start something that is a little better for everybody…

Incredulous, the official interrupted,

"So the person that works in that company is raping…?"

The activist interrupted "That has nothing to do with the people that work there."

The coordinator of a community garden and CSA offered a corrective to the

conversation,

They [people working in corporations] are cogs in the wheel they are not the

wheel…we need to decide if we are going to ask for permission from that

executive if they are going to shift the way that they throw their trash out or

are we going to just demand something better.

In response, a staff member of a community-organizing group in Massachusetts that

has involved itself in the creation of alternative economic projects erupted.

Or [we can just] *do it*. We don't have to ask permission from anyone to do

anything and we are the arbiters of our own economy. We create our own

economy. Capitalism is the problem. Big corporations are the problem. We
don't have to come in and make nice and ask politely to our government to
do the things that we elected them to do and appointed them to do…We can
all sit around here and be in a bubble but, people are dying everyday…the
new economy is ours for the taking and we don't have to ask anybody
permission to do it.

This short harangue was met quickly by two different audience members, one who
said that we needed to make sure to treat everyone, including the people at big
corporations, with respect even though we disagreed with them and another
arguing that we needed to make "the distinction between individuals" and the
system.

To this, a local environmental activist replied, suggesting that individuals are
indeed responsible for exploitation and environmental extraction, "The planet's
being raped, the people that are doing it have addresses and, you know, W2's and
shit".

What to do with this tangled discussion? How to make sense of this motley
mess of people and ideology? And how can and should I insert myself into this
politics? One possibility is to understand the people in the room as bringing forward
conflicting ideas, political investments, and desires that might prevent a collective
project of transformation, in this case an economy based on ethical values that
privileges people over profit. Approaching it from this analytical angle, I would be

tempted to analyze and expose the ways in which different subjects are produced

through and are reproducing particular discourses that are tied to relations of

power. I would then be in a position to side with particular narratives and

understandings that were the most righteous, or to expose and oppose those that I

found to be problematic both in my on-the-ground dialogical encounters and in my

writing. However, I contend here that it's also possible to understand these

differences as important, negotiable considerations in a common project—but not

necessarily commonly held language, subjectivity, and desire—for a new economy

and a new world.

Let me try and explain this proposal a bit further by returning briefly to the

workshop discussion in which the edges of just such a political project begin to

emerge. In direct response to the presentation on Evergreen, a cooperative

developer pushed back,

> I want to present a challenge and some feedback about the Evergreen model.
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> The Evergreen model, the people that designed and implemented the
>
> Evergreen model were mostly a group of intellectuals and well-connected
>
> white men who all didn't live in the neighborhood and mostly lived outside of
>
> Ohio. I just wanted to put out a challenge that instead of replicating what
>
> they've done…is to think about building infrastructure for cooperatives that's
>
> led by the communities they are operating in. I think the Evergreen project
>
> would have looked a whole lot different if it had been led by people on the
>
> ground. And the guys who designed and got the ball rolling will tell you

themselves that it was a non-democratic, top down kind of thing and that

they are hoping replication models will be more democratic, which I think

our friends in Springfield understand and are approaching it that way.

Her challenge does indeed contain a critique of and even antagonism towards

the Evergreen project. She differentiates herself from the dominant identities

involved (elite, white, men), the type of political process that created it (top-down),

as well as the contingent outcomes that have followed. However, this division is

then followed by an openness to the possibility for an ethical negotiation and

adjustment of values and practices around a continued mobilization of the

Evergreen model, and a continued movement towards the creation of non-

capitalism. This is of significance to me for two reasons. First, rather than rejecting

the Evergreen project and the people that put it forward because of their differently

held identities, ideologies, and values, she suggests a possible connection to them

through these very differences and their investments in a shared matter of

concern—the creation of non-capitalism. Second, she suggests that by participating

through difference in common projects, dialogical space can then be created for

individual and collective transformation in affect, values, and practices. Indeed, this

is not only what she is attempting to do at this meeting, but, as her statement

implies, some of her ethical concerns are *already* being considered in the iterative

Wellspring initiative in Springfield, and even in the Evergreen model itself as it

moves forward in dialogue with a broader movement. It is precisely this complex

interplay between the proliferation of difference and political transformation that is of interest to me here.

Getting what we want through the heterogeneity of things

As Latour (2004, 2005) and others have shown, "things"—institutions, objects, people, ideas—are never self-consistent. Despite their apparent singularity, they are assemblages of and constitutive of a multiplicity of differences, including different narratives, beliefs, and desires. At the institutional level, this means that seemingly incongruent or even conflicting desires can be enrolled into a common project. At the level of the subject, this suggests that we understand collectives and individuals in terms of their heterogeneity as well. Indeed, Latour's formulation of things as constituted by difference, resonates strongly with Resnick and Wolff's (2006, 2013) theorization of the overdetermined subject. In an elaboration of Althusser, Resnick and Wolff argue that the subject, like all other entities, is immersed in a dynamic field, pushed, pulled and constituted by all other entities all at once. Thus, the overdetermined subject is unstable, dynamic and capable of transformation. Existing—but disavowed and submerged understandings and desires—can be activated and come to the fore through the appearance of new social possibilities, and new desires can emerge through exposure to and dialogical encounters with the other. What if political efficacy can be found not only through exposing and opposing power, but can be found, in part, through the workings of assemblages that allow for and attract difference through their heterarchic qualities. What if, in fact, (revolutionary?) politics is not about exposing the truth or

convincing people of the error of their ways, or building a coherent, cohesive

political project but rather attending to the ways in which radical difference can be

uncovered, can aggregate, and can be mobilized towards a particular aim? Following

James Ferguson (2010), what if politics is not about proving that we are right,

denouncing injustice, or opposing what is wrong—what he describes a politics of

"the antis" (166)—but is more fundamentally about "getting what you want" (167)?

Allow me to follow Ferguson a bit more to help develop this line of thought.

In *The Uses of Neoliberalism*, Ferguson (2010) considers this provocative

question in relation to "neoliberal" development in South Africa and Africa more

broadly. He argues that one possible response to problematic conditions for

progressive scholars is to look for the ways in which "discursive moves" associated

with neoliberalism and neoliberal ideology might be repurposed for unexpected,

progressive ends. To illustrate, he examines two proposed progressive measures,

the Basic Income Grant (BIG) and direct cash transfers for food aid, showing how

these progressive reforms are supported in part by "neoliberal themes". For

example,

> One of the most important themes in arguments in favor of a BIG is
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> the idea of 'investment in human capital'. A BIG, supporters say, would
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> enable poor South Africans to increase their spending on such things
>
> as nutrition, education, and health care. And this, advocates insist,
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> should be understood as 'investment' in a kind of 'capital'. Such
>
> 'investment', they insist, will bring handsome returns, in the form of

productivity gains. The poor individual is in this way conceived, in

classic neoliberal fashion, as a kind of micro-enterprise, earning a rate

of return on invested capital (176).

In addition to human capital, a BIG is also supported by the idea that big

government should get out of the way of the workings of individual actors in the

capitalist market,

The BIG would be paid to everyone; citizens would access their funds

(in the ideal scheme) by simply swiping their national identity cards

at an automatic cash dispenser. They would not need the government

to tell them how to spend their funds. They would use them (like good

rational actors) in the way that they saw best (177).

Ferguson offers up these examples of the BIG and direct transfers for food

aid not to make any particular claims about their efficacy, but in order to sketch the

outlines of what he describes as a progressive "arts of government". Rather than

exposing and critiquing the ways in which people are oppressed, exploited and

discursively constructed through "neoliberal" forms of governance (see for example

Goode and Maskovsky 2001, Hyatt 2001, Harvey 2005, Lyon-Callo 2004, and Shore

and Wright 2011) politics can mobilize and reconfigure the cultural materials that

are already available—discourse, ideas, political players, values, existent resources

and so on—towards progressive ends, toward "getting what we want." Ferguson

locates his project in the field of the possible and opposes it to revolutionary politics: "there is much to be said, as I have here, on mundane, real world debates around policy and politics, even if doing so inevitably puts us on the compromised and reformist terrain of the possible, rather than the seductive high ground of revolutionary ideals and utopian desires" (181). In contrast, I claim that a politics of the immanently possible need not let go of revolutionary aspirations. Rather than resign ourselves to a politics circumscribed by a particular reality, we can open, locate, and build spaces in which other realities might emerge.

In the rest of this chapter, I attend to Ferguson's proposal that engaged scholarship and politics writ-large can and should involve more than a critical stance towards and opposition against harmful social processes—a position consonant with a growing number of scholars who are calling for participation in social and economic experiments and generative politics (Cameron 2007, Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy 2013, Ferguson 2010, Graeber 2013, Healy 2014, Hardt 2011, Latour 2010 Povinelli 2012)—by exploring the constitutive nature of non-capitalist enterprises. In particular, I discuss the aforementioned Evergreen Cooperative model as it was established in Cleveland, as it is newly emergent in Springfield, MA, and, in the short concluding section, as it circulates as a discursive construct in Worcester. I mobilize these examples in order to illustrate the radically heterogeneous arrangements of cultural materials—subjectivities, desires, discourses—that can constitute non-capitalist projects. I am not endeavoring to present a comparative case study and I do not claim to comprehensively account for all of the heterogeneous narratives and subjectivities involved in each project.

Rather, I use each iteration of Evergreen to highlight different aspects of non-capitalist construction, different possible routes towards economic possibility.

In the section, **Evergreen Cooperatives**, I illustrate the ways in which different discourses and desires, some of which are often associated with neoliberal capitalism and capitalism writ large, are able to support and, in fact, constitute non-capitalism.

In the next section, **A Wellspring for Non-capitalist Desire**, I discuss the structure and history of the Wellspring Initiative. I then focus on the story of how one member of Wellspring came to be involved in the organization, showing how the realization of non-capitalist enterprises can capture and actualize existing, latent desires for non-capitalism that circulate around and through us.

In the section **Non Capitalism as a Matter of Concern**, I argue that both Evergreen and Wellspring might be best understood, not as coherent projects, but as assemblages of radical difference. I claim that it is the aggregation of difference—and not necessarily its immediate resolution—that allows for these assemblages to flourish. Even more, I suggest the possibility that it is in these assemblages—these "micro-public" (Amin 2002) gatherings of divergent subjects, ideologies, and desires—that people can be transformed and "learn to be affected" (Latour 2005) through dialogical encounters of difference.

Finally, in the section **Non-capitalist Composition and Other Thoughts** I show how the Evergreen model is mobilized in Worcester as part of a "compositionist" (Latour 2010) politics, a politics that consciously and carefully deliberates around and collectively imagines what might be possible, rather than

simply working within, critiquing, or policing ideological boundaries. I conclude by

considering the dialogical role that activist anthropologists might play in such a

politics to help circulate, envision, and perform non-capitalist possibility.

Non-capitalism and Post-capitalism

Before I proceed further, it will be helpful to briefly restate and discuss how I

am conceptualizing non-capitalism in this chapter, and in particular its relation to

post-capitalism and post-capitalist subjectivities. As discussed in other places in this

dissertation, non-capitalism refers to the range of economic activities and relations

that emerge when capitalism is reduced from a global system to its basic

components: a capitalist enterprise producing for a capitalist market. When

capitalism is tamed and brought down to size, non-capitalist practices and relations

emerge from which new, non-capitalist subjects can emerge. The non-capitalist

relations I focus on here are in the form of worker cooperatives in which workers

collectively produce, appropriate, and deliberate around and distribute surplus; in

other words a communist class process (Resnick and Wolff 1987).

Of course, worker cooperatives are not pure, autonomous spaces free from

outside forces and internal struggles (Burke 2010, Monteagudo 2008). As

anthropologists have shown, cooperative enterprises are not intrinsically free from

inequalities and oppressive relations (Kasmir 1996), and there is of course no

guarantee of success (Fisher 2010). My concern in this chapter, however, is not

focused on the individual success of particular projects but rather on the

possibilities that worker cooperative relations and practices hold for subjective

transformation. In contrast to capitalist production and exchange which subjugates sociality to profit, cooperatives—like other non-capitalist economic arrangements including fair trade, community ownership, alternative currencies, and so on—recognize and encourage the enactment of collective, ethical values (Cornwell 2011, Hart et al 2010, Kawano 2013, Miller 2010). According to Cornwell (2011) worker cooperatives create the conditions for the emergence of subjects who make collective, ethical decisions. For example, the spaces and structures in cooperatives encourage democratic, collective decision making over surplus which "cultivates a connection and mutual support (rather than alienation) among members and the communities they live" (Cornwell 2011: 736). Rather than being driven by individual self-interest and profit motive, cooperators can act as economic subjects through opportunities to make decisions in relation to personal, collective, and community well being. And, in the cooperatives that Cornwell studies, this resubjectification results in further political action as "the space of collective decision-making cultivates subjects committed to maintaining their own co-operative and reaching out to participate in the wider worker co-operative movement." (739).

Byrne and Healy (2006) argue that the structures and processes intrinsic to cooperatives can create new identities and a new sense of agency in relation to the economy that enable worker-owners to move beyond the imperatives of capitalism; "coop members understand, in their own way, the Lacanian insistence that 'the Big Other doesn't exist'" (251). In other words, worker-owners are situated in social space in felicitous ways to be able not only to imagine and desire non-capitalism, but

to *disidentify* with capitalism, and thus fully embrace a practice of collective, ethical deliberation.

Non-capitalism, then, and in particular worker-cooperatives, are sites in which non-capitalist values visibly circulate, but even more important for this chapter they are fertile grounds for the generation of *post-capitalist* subjects who can imagine, and desire what Gibson-Graham describe as *community economies*, "economic spaces or networks in which relations of interdependence are democratically negotiated by participating individuals and organizations" (627). In other words, these are relations which enable an intentional, reflexive, and ethical practice of what Jean-Luc Nancy refers to as the inexorable human condition of "being-in-common", or communism (Nancy 2000).

For Gibson-Graham, generating and accessing non-capitalism involves making it visible, imaginable and desirable through a language of diverse economies that provides an alternative to capitalocentric discourses. In this chapter, however, in addition to locating non-capitalist desires, I am interested in exploring some of the different, possible discursive and libidinal routes that might be taken towards the enactment of non-capitalism, including narratives, values, and desires typically associated with capitalism.

Evergreen Cooperatives: "Neoliberal" Discourse and Non-Capitalist Possibilities

In the Spring of 2012, I took a bus ride through Cleveland with about 20 other people from Western Massachusetts—non-profit officials, the president of a local community college, local business leaders, a few other academics, and other assorted community leaders. We were there together as part of the Wellspring Initiative, a project in Springfield, MA to create a network of worker cooperatives owned by and located in low-income communities. The inspiration and structural model for Wellspring was in fact, Cleveland's Evergreen Cooperatives and the bus tour was part of a three-day conversation with Evergreen representatives that Wellspring hoped would be instructive for our own efforts.

We drove from a rooftop solar array on a municipal building, installed by Ohio Solar Cooperative, an Evergreen business, and headed towards the site of Evergreen Cooperative Laundry a high tech, green commercial laundry facility. As we passed through one of the wealthier areas of the city, our tour guide remarked, "this is all the wealth that is still here." White flight, deindustrialization, and neoliberal development schemes had resulted in ongoing dramatic population loss and social inequalities. Cleveland has lost over half of its population since 1950 and Cleveland's median income rate was the second lowest in the country in 2012. At the same time, there has been a sizable amount of public and private wealth directed towards some areas of the city intending to spur economic growth, including the University Circle district, self described on its website as "Ohio's most spectacular square mile … [a] premier urban district and world class center of education, medical, and arts & cultural institutions." Developed around hospitals

and universities, it's a consumer destination center with a "museum and cultural institutions.", "boutique hotels, lively restaurants, and hip coffee shops" that offers concerts, festivals, movie nights, ice skating and so on. In contrast to this island of wealth and consumer paradise, our destination, the Evergreen Cooperative laundry facility, was located in a low-income neighborhood—contiguous to University Circle—from which capital had been systematically divested. The industrial laundry facility, with a beautiful painted mural on its façade, stood out in bold relief amidst houses with peeling paint and loose shingles, foreclosed homes, and vacant businesses. As one member of Wellspring delegation said to me after the tour, "It was difficult to see any [commercial buildings] that appeared to be occupied."

The Evergreen Cooperative Initiative was developed to address these particular conditions—high rates of poverty, population loss, years of problematic [under]development, and extreme social inequality. Spearheaded by the Cleveland Foundation, which used its financial and political influence to leverage dollars and support from other non-profits, investors, businesses and government, Evergreen is the most publicized and celebrated portion of a broader, philanthropic development project that attempts to build community and economy in a new spatial imaginary, the Greater University Circle area, which now encompasses the contiguous, low-income neighborhoods, thereby extending planning and investment to the low income neighborhoods surrounding the well-capitalized center.

The idea behind Evergreen is this: worker cooperatives provide products and services to "anchor institutions"—local hospitals, government, non-profits—that are permanently rooted in place, thus providing a new, captured market for the

businesses. The co-ops are located in low-income neighborhoods, and hire and train

residents of those communities to develop the workplace skills, management skills,

and cooperative skills needed to be successful worker-owners. Relatively good

paying jobs, with good benefits are created, as well as individual and community

wealth since the worker-owners share in the profits of the business. Each

cooperative is part of the broader network of cooperatives; a portion of the surplus

from each cooperative business then goes into a development fund, which helps to

create new worker cooperatives.

Though it is not even half a decade old, Evergreen has been much discussed,

lauded, and scrutinized by academics, community developers, and activists. Its

pioneering development model is inspiring and the composition of its benefactors

and proponents is intriguing. By most accounts, Evergreen was largely a "top-down"

process, driven by the well-heeled Cleveland Foundation, leveraging its financial

and political power to shape local development. However, this is an uncanny

initiative that is substantively different than the dominant neoliberal development

model embraced and employed by cities over the past few decades that directed

public resources towards the interests of private corporations in a global

competition to attract and retain people, jobs and capital (Ruben 2001, Lyon-Callo

and Hyatt 2003). Instead of attempting to draw and retain businesses via tax

abatements, privatization, and corporate welfare, the local establishment marshaled

resources to help generate worker cooperatives—communist class processes— in

low-income neighborhoods in their own city. Even so, and of particular interest,

understandings and narratives associated with neoliberal development have not

disappeared; "neoliberal' discourse appears to be not incompatible with this project.

During our three day stay, Wellspring participants met in boardrooms, at

worksites, and in offices with Evergreen worker-owners, project managers,

foundation representatives, and the research and think-tank involved in the project,

each of whom expressed their hopes for what this project was accomplishing or

might accomplish.

One powerful narrative that emerged was the importance of individual

transformation in relation to social change. For example, in a board-room

presentation, a non-profit representative explained how the Greater University

Circle project that included "cultural enrichment" programs would "expose and

inspire" kids from the surrounding low income communities. "Bringing a kid into a

positive culture…it's a game changer, " the presenter said. We can see the

beginnings of a "culture of poverty" argument emerge here in which problematic

social conditions are understood as the result of engrained, problematic beliefs and

behavior of a group of people in a spatially bound setting. In this frame, the solution

to poverty and social well-being is to make interventions that can elicit new values

and practices; to change the "culture" of individuals and communities. (Lewis 1966,

and see Goode and Maskovsky 2001 and Wilson 1987 for explanatory critiques)

A narrative around the importance of individual behavior and

transformation appeared during a presentation discussing the individual, personal

development of worker-owners who come from low-income

neighborhoods/communities. One representative said, "when we are working with

people at Evergreen, we are working with people with a lot of needs. They come into the system with some baggage. A worker-owner elaborated, Evergreen "creates self-esteem that [was] lost along the way. I have been there. It's a terrible place to be. Most of us [worker owners] have had to endure many barriers in life to get to where we are." Attention to the contextual realities and lived-needs of worker-owners who live in disinvested, low-income neighborhoods is important for the success of the cooperatives and the individual well-being of worker-owners, including emotional well being. At the same time, this attention to and emphasis on individual transformation can quite easily articulate with and accommodate a social fantasy in which individual responsibility appears as the symptom of social well-being. As anthropologists and other scholars have argued, a primary discursive move of neoliberal governance is to absolve the state from the responsibility of social welfare by shifting the burden of social well being onto the individual thereby obfuscating political economic processes structuring inequalities (Hyatt 2001, Lyon-Callo 2004). In this frame, individual responsibility and individual behavior appear as both the cause of harmful social conditions when individuals are understood to be unwilling or unable to make good choices, and the solution to social harmony when individuals are making good, responsible, self-interested choices. To be clear, I do not claim here that culture of poverty narratives and neoliberal fantasies were the only discursive motivators in Evergreen; I simply wish to point out here that they are not incompatible with and can even support the development of the project.

Another narrative that came to the fore was the important role of

philanthropy in generating innovative, economic development. Philanthropic giving

was discussed by foundation representatives in meetings, not simply as charity, but

as an agentive, economic development effort itself. Philanthropy can and should

begin to take a leading, assertive role in social change and "move from being

responsive to being proactive." "If philanthropy can't take risks, then who can?" The

idea that philanthropy can and should play a central role in shaping development

and social conditions can be understood as structurally linked to changing economic

conditions associated with "neoliberal" capitalism. The retraction of the welfare

state from and privatization of certain social services has given rise to a non-profit

development and governance structure, what some describe as the non-profit

industrial complex, and helped to accommodate the philanthropic, "liberal

communists" that Zizek (2008) warns of (and see Shear and Lyon-Callo 2013). For

Zizek these philanthropists are the "enemy of every progressive struggle" (37)

because of how they both embody and naturalize capitalist relations of production.

Indeed, we might read these philanthropic narratives and desires as part of a

fantasy formation in which non-profit spending and governance are understood as

the solution to social ills, thereby suturing over the political economic relations that

have given rise to this set of conditions in the first place.[16]

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[16] Interestingly, Peter Buffet, philanthropist son of billionaire Warren Buffet, begins
to make a similar argument about the relationship between philanthropy and the
reproduction of inequality in a 2013 op-ed in which he discusses the subjectivities
produced through what he terms "philanthropic colonialism". "It's what I would call
'conscience laundering' — feeling better about accumulating more than any one
person could possibly need to live on by sprinkling a little around as an act of
charity."

Other discourses and desires circulated through our discussions over the course of the trip, bringing forward themes such as local consumption, social justice, entrepreneurialism and of course simply economic growth and job creation. And though a discussion of cooperative development being part of a movement to intervene against or replace capitalism was not something that was explicitly discussed in our meetings, this does not mean that these political desires and aspirations were entirely absent from the project. Indeed, the Democracy Collaborative (as well as other cooperative organizations) played an important role at Evergreen. The Democracy Collaborative is home to Gar Alperovitz who has written extensively about the possibility of cooperatives as an alternative to capitalist production and the organization is a member of the New Economics Institute, a broad coalition of organizations that are attempting to educate about and enact non-capitalist alternatives (http://democracycollaborative.org/) .

What is salient for this section, however, is that discourses and desires that are often associated with neoliberal restructuring and market capitalist development circulate around and through Evergreen, a project that creates non-capitalism, a project that creates communist class processes. To sum up, the curious case of Evergreen demonstrates that people who might otherwise be interested in reproducing capitalism or are invested in some ways in neoliberal governance, can also be attracted to and help to produce non-capitalist institutions from which subjects who desire non-capitalism can then emerge. But this is not the only unexpected route towards non-capitalist possibility. As I discuss below, the creation and visibility of these seemingly unlikely assemblages, can also work, in and of

themselves, to capture and actualize latent desires for non-capitalist values and practices that were previously unable to be imagined and desired

A Wellspring for Non-Capitalist Desire

The Wellspring Initiative emerged out of conversations between two, progressive-left community members in Western Massachusetts. Fred, a white community organizer/researcher who has spent most of his career doing anti-poverty work in Springfield, MA—a city that has experienced and suffered from similar processes of deindustrialization, white flight, and neoliberal development as other "rust belt" cities like Cleveland—and Emily Kawano a heterodox economist who is deeply involved in popular education and solidarity economy teaching and organizing. Though largely embracing the major components of the Evergreen model— including the importance of anchor institutions, the location of cooperatives in low-income neighborhoods, and hiring worker-owners from those same neighborhoods—the Wellspring Initiative is differently constituted than Evergreen. By their own calculations, Wellspring isn't a purely "grassroots" project. Nevertheless, and in contrast to Evergreen, Wellspring developed from and involves a broad, decentralized community base. Organizations with representatives on the Wellspring Collaborative—the working group that has made decisions about the project and have moved the project forward—have included the Regional Employment Board, the Latino Chamber of Commerce, the Center for Public Policy at University of Massachusetts Amherst, two community colleges in Springfield, the

New England Cooperative Fund, and Western Massachusetts Jobs with Justice, and a number of community advocacy groups (http://wellspring.coop/?page_id=69)

This diverse collaborative includes a few individuals and organizations that are involved in alternative economic projects and/or the cooperative movement outside of Wellspring, but others were entirely new to the idea of cooperatives before becoming involved with Wellspring. One of the people working on Wellspring is Greg. Greg is a late middle-aged, African American, a long time resident of Springfield and an administrator in a Springfield non-profit. This particular non-profit is emblematic of the profound neoliberal restructuring of Springfield and other urban areas in the United States over the past few decades which, among other things, has encouraged the proliferation of non-profit community organizations that provide services and development plans for local communities, filling in the void left by capital disinvestment and welfare state retraction—a situation some describe as the non-profit industrial complex (see ADP chapter). Indeed, Greg's non-profit's mission is to help other non-profits find funding for community development by bringing them together as community stakeholders in order to develop projects that might be funded by a *third* set of non-profits (ha!). This is, in fact, Greg's role with Wellspring.

Before coming to work on Wellspring, by his own admission Greg knew nothing about worker cooperatives. And he is not alone in this. The Wellspring collaborative, the group that developed the project, has involved representatives from community organizing groups, organized labor, the cooperative movement, and academics who had different degrees of exposure to and familiarity with

cooperatives as business models and as part of a movement. In addition, Wellspring participants included community development organizations, regional employment officials, and others who were either initially entirely unfamiliar with cooperatives or were invested in conventional development projects.

However, after a short time working on Wellspring Greg became convinced that worker cooperatives can be a successful community development model.

In fact, he says "[I can see] a time when we have a dozen businesses operating as cooperatives through Wellspring. Twenty years from now we will have a dozen cooperatives" [in Springfield]

Greg attributes his optimism to two things. First, he thinks that it is becoming clear to people that business as usual simply does not work and people are ready to try other ideas. "Springfield has endemic poverty, the rates get more concentrated and deeper every year. I came to Springfield in 76 and every 10 years since then it gets worse and worse if we look at what's happening in the community and try to figure out what to do about it...[we don't do it by giving out tax breaks to corporations] you give them and they won't come anyway. And you don't do it by building casinos that [won't benefit] low income and poor folks."

Second, Greg believes that the collective, ethical decision making that Wellspring encourages through its cooperative structure—worker owners make decisions about working conditions and surplus and a board of directors of the network involves majority worker-owners but also organized labor, and non-profits—will make Wellspring businesses strong and durable.

Compared to typical capitalist economic development, Greg says "there are a range of things that will be different in Wellspring. [The way people] make decisions…we might be willing to take less profit and share the benefits with others, or across businesses." And Greg sees this ethical decision making within Wellspring extending into the community, "So imagine that if they decided as a business to 'adopt' a school, or take on social issues as a collective. I'm not sure about what that says about the competitiveness of the business but I've got to think that makes them more competitive…they have commitment to each other, commitment to community, "

What's particularly interesting is that Greg's desire for cooperative economic development, his desires for non-capitalism—and belief that it can be successful— was actually prefigured by his experiences working in his "neoliberal" non-profit which is charged with getting different stake-holders to stop competing for grants and find common-ground to go after them together. Greg says that he *knows* that cooperative development is possible precisely because he has seen and experienced corporations being willing to negotiate and give up some of their own interests, he *knows* that people are not only self-interested and competitive, but can also cooperate on behalf of the collective, greater good.

Greg's existent desires to be in-common, and Greg's knowledge that other people have desires to be in common, finds expression in this project that has allowed him to believe that cooperation can exist, not just as a means to support economic development, but as an economic enterprise, the economy itself becomes a space of possibility for cooperative, ethical deliberation. To put this more simply,

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latent desires for non-capitalist values and practices were activated once he "saw" that it was possible to enact them in economic enterprises themselves. Looking to David Graeber, Greg's desires for non-capitalism shouldn't be the least bit surprising. Graeber, following Marcel Mauss suggests that in any one society, a full range of economic practices and subjectivities *already* exist including those of mutual aide and cooperation—what he refers to as "baseline communism"; they just exist in different arrangements and to different degrees (2010a, 2010b). In fact Graeber goes further and claims that these qualities are necessary for economy and society to exist at all. From this perspective even capitalism is simply "one way of organizing communism. Any widely distributed principle must be a way of organizing communism since cooperation and trust intrinsic to baseline sociality will always be the foundations of human economy and society" (2010b: 209). If this is the case, if on a certain level we are already disposed to trust and cooperate with each other, then one important project becomes helping to explore and create the discursive structures and institutions where these dispositions can be realized, felt, and practiced in the most felicitous way.

Non-capitalism as a Matter of Concern

Of course, not everyone involved in Wellspring, even those who are familiar with cooperatives, understands or values the importance of cooperatives in the same way. During the development of the project over the past few years, some members have expressed reservations about making worker cooperatives an essential ingredient to the model. For others, a primary motivation is about

increasing entrepreneurial activity in Springfield. For still others, cooperatives are fine, but they aren't necessary. Indeed, a large attraction to the project is simply job creation, cooperative or otherwise. Says one academic involved in the project, "I just want to see good jobs. If they are cooperatives, that's fine. But I think what people really need are good jobs."

What's interesting though is that, despite these different understandings about what's at stake—about what Wellspring is, and what it is for—these differences have not prevented the development of Wellspring. In fact, it could be proposed that Wellspring, and Evergreen, both exist not in spite of these differences, but because of them. Indeed, if these differences, that are at once subjective, ideological, and libidinal, had been policed in advance of the development of the initiatives, it's safe to say that neither project would exist (in their current formations). Instead, the projects attracted, aggregated, and were constituted by these differences. I claim here that it is the aggregation of difference, and not necessarily its resolution, that allows for these projects to flourish, grow, and in a shared project, create the conditions for intersubjective transformation.

Wellspring has been largely driven by the energies of Sharon, George, and Greg who are also all being financially compensated for their time and work in different ways. But formative discussions and decision-making have taken place at general collaborative meetings and committee meetings, both of which embody the spirit of the cooperatives that we are trying to create. Indeed, because of the open nature, and horizontal discussions and decision-making, there is considerable room

for people to be able to say what they want to and express how they feel as the project moves forward

For example, in a general collaborative meeting in the spring of 2013 intended to codify articles of organization for the first Wellspring cooperative, participants—including academics, business leaders, non-profit representatives, and a college administrator—were asked by the day's facilitator to reflect on the process and the project leading up to this significant moment. The first few participants focused mainly on their own thoughts about the practical development of Wellspring, and the challenges and opportunities for the effort moving forward. Then Sharon, the heterodox economist, intervened saying that she liked to think about this effort as part of the larger picture for social justice and a more democratic economy, and went on to talk about how she understood Wellspring as part of the global solidarity economy network that she is involved in. The political, deeply felt nature of Sharon's comment interrupted and shifted the frame of the conversation away from a discussion about the pragmatic and even instrumental concerns about how to get the project off the ground, clearing space for others who followed to reflect on how they saw this project impacting the world, and their relationship to it. One participant said that he felt like he was young again, and that he was part of a movement that was trying to change the world. Another participant became overwhelmed with emotion as he talked about what this project of cooperative ownership might mean for the low-income residents in his community.

Sharon's intervention impacted that particular meeting, but it also speaks to broader dynamics of the Wellspring project. The fact that she, and everyone else in

the collaborative, was able to and are encouraged to express their visions, concerns, and hopes for the project amidst a heterogenous group with very different and even seemingly conflicting positions is very important. As Sharon explained, "I have to be thoughtful about when and where to talk about (her politics). It's important though. A big part of [Wellspring], a big part of this process is about mutual education, it's about learning from each other." Sharon is referring here not just to the different technical skills that people in the collaborative bring to the table, but learning about and becoming impacted by the different ways that people understand themselves and their relationship to world.

The importance of these dynamics can be better considered if we understand Wellspring as an assemblage comprising a particular issue, a shared "matter of concern" that attracts and is constituted by difference (Latour 2005), rather than a project or object that coheres through any particular alignment, shared values, or commonly held essence. As Evergreen and Wellspring illustrate, the creation of non-capitalism, non-capitalist subjects, and new non-capitalist imaginaries does not require the pre-existent agreement around a coherent political project. In addition, Latour's proposition suggests that assemblages around and constitutive of shared matters of concern can create opportunities for people to be transformed by each other through new shared experiences and dialogical encounters. Since there are no isolated, or even self-consistent, individuals either, what's conceivable, what coheres as reality—whether individual, society, or economy—is a product of how agents act on human beings and how these human beings are *affected* to understand and produce reality. In other words, people can *learn to be affected* through the

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acquisition of new knowledge, through encountering difference (Latour 2004,

Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009, Roelvink 2010). This opportunity requires that

difference not only aggregates, but that it is able to be expressed in a shared project

and truly experienced by others who are able to take in, not just new ideas and new

epistemologies, but the deeply felt hopes and desires that make particular

knowledges meaningful.

Wellspring meetings provide just such an opportunity. In the example above,

one of the project founders and leaders was able to voice a radical political position

and it did nothing to derail the project. No one left the room. Sharon's intervention,

in fact, created a more open and yet politicized space for people to share their own

feelings and commitments. Everyone actively participated in the meeting process

(even those who were still not entirely convinced about cooperatives) and, in just a

few hours, the documents creating the first worker-cooperative business for

Wellspring were agreed upon and codified as people encountered and experienced

difference.

Of course, social encounters writ-large are power-laden (Krause 2005) and

there is no guarantee that dialogical and/or embodied encounters lead to

transformation. In response to Stuart Hall's problematic that "the capacity to live

with difference is…the coming question of the 21st century" (1993: 361), Valentine

(2008) takes on what he describes as the "contact hypothesis" (323), the idea that

the best way to mediate difference and reduce problematic interactions between

social groups is through "social integration" (323). Valentine is dubious of these

claims and argues that it is not enough for people to simply come into contact with

one another to produce individual and collective transformation, that, in many cases social encounters "can leave[s] attitudes and values unmoved, and even hardened"(325). In the midst of his critique, Valentine refers to Ash Amin's work around "micro-publics", sites of "purposeful, organized" (Valentine 2008: 334) activity places where people come together to participate in common projects. Like Valentine, Amin (2002) argues that encounters, even habitual encounters, can "entrench group animosities and identities" (969). For Amin (2002), a key for transformative encounters is that people engage each other within the context of a common activity that offer a "banal transgression" to the normative relations in and of daily life. These "micro-publics" can be as mundane as "sports associations and music clubs…they are spaces of intense and passionate interaction, with success often dependent upon collaboration and group effort" (970). These spaces and interactions create the possibility for "cultural destabilization, offering individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions, and through this, to learn to become different through new patterns of social interaction" (970). Of importance is that transformations do not occur through an insistence on a particular way of being or valuing others or the common project but rather, "the transgression here is based on small accommodations that work their way around, or through, difference, rather than on any conscious attempt to shift the cultural identities and practices " (970).

In his arguments, Amin is concerned primarily with the mediation of and transformation through cultural difference and identities associated with particular social categories including race, class, gender and the like. In contrast, do not make

any claims about authentic, singular, or commonly held values and identities based on prescribed social categories; rather, I am concerned with transformations around understandings and desires related to economic possibility that interact with social identities in messy, complex ways. In Wellspring at least, different desires and understandings about the economy, development, and social change are converging around and constituting a project to create non-capitalism. There is no consensus on *why* the project is important, and on a certain level, what this project actually is. Nevertheless, different understandings and desires are able to co-exist, intermingle, and perhaps, transform individuals as we move forward in a shared project to create a non-capitalist enterprise.

Wellspring's governance structure is similarly set-up to attract difference in a common-project. As of the fall of 2014, Wellspring had generated one operational worker-owned business, Wellspring Upholstery Cooperative with another, an industrial scale urban greenhouse, in development. Wellspring cooperatives will be owned and governed by the worker-owners. But, the cooperatives themselves will be linked together through the Wellspring Cooperative Corporation (WCC). The WCC will be elected at annual general assemblies and governed by a broad group of community organizations including the Wellspring cooperatives (who will have the most seats) and anchor institutions, but also community organizing groups, organized labor, and other cooperatives from outside Wellspring. Through this governance structure, Wellspring is attempting to ensure that its governing practices are not only democratic but also bring together multiple interests to discuss and deliberate *through difference* over the purpose and direction of the

cooperative network in relation to the needs of Wellspring and the broader community (http://wellspring.coop/?page_id=58).

Non-Capitalist Composition and Other Thoughts

"*What performs a critique cannot also compose.* It is really a mundane question of having the right tools for the right job. With a hammer (or a sledge hammer) in hand you can do a lot of things: break down walls, destroy idols, ridicule prejudices, but you cannot repair, take care, assemble, reassemble, stitch together."—Bruno Latour (2010: 475)

"Politics…is not a dependent sphere. It is where forces and relations, in the economy, in society, in culture, have to be actively *worked on* to produce particular forms of power, forms of domination. This is the production of politics—politics as a production. This conception of politics is fundamentally contingent, fundamentally open ended"—Stuart Hall (1987: 21) describing Gramscian political sensibilities.

On an early summer evening in June of 2013, a few weeks after the Wellspring meeting that codified our Articles of Organization, and about a half a year after the 2nd Annual Solidarity and Green Economy conference which introduced the Evergreen model to many activists and which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, I prepared to give a short presentation in a well-used

meeting room on the 3rd floor of an office building in downtown Worcester, MA. Sitting at the end of one of two folding tables that were pushed together in the center of the room, I quickly looked over my notes while Jon, a prominent board member and staff collective member of an organization that I will refer to as Grassroots Change, brought in a white board to help with my presentation. As 12 other people looked on—board members, leaders, and a few community allies—I sketched out the anticipated organizational structure of the Wellspring Cooperatives. In the preceding months, the first cooperative, a re-upholstery business, had developed quickly, pushing the Wellspring participants to make some basic agreements around structure of both the business and the non-profit that would connect and support the development of future cooperatives. I jotted down central points in blue marker on the white board, while I explained, in broad strokes, the tentatively agreed upon structure: The boards of both the cooperative business and the non-profit would be linked together, the worker-owners would have majority control in both business and non-profit boards, and the anchor institutions would have some limited seats on the non-profit board, but not on the cooperative boards themselves. I discussed how the non-profit would function as a service provider and fund for the businesses; a portion of the surplus generated and controlled by each cooperative business would be designated to an investment fund that would be used to help create more worker-cooperatives.

Munching on pizza and salad, board members jotted down notes, and asked questions, while thinking about how Wellspring might relate to Worcester's own cooperative initiatives, and what role Change could play in a growing solidarity

economy.[17] Grassroots Change, is at the center of and a political catalyst in the

grassroots political scene in Worcester. At its inception, Change's primary activities

centered around youth leadership and environmental justice. As Change has

developed, these interests have been folded into a more encompassing project of

cooperative and solidarity economy development. In addition to taking a lead role

on the Solidarity and Green Economy Conference discussed at the beginning of this

chapter and in Chapter 2, Change has been very active in the Central Massachusetts

Green Jobs Coalition and discussed in Chapter 3, has been cultivating and affiliating

with new co-operatives and alternative economic organizations, and, indeed, has

developed a "co-op academy" that provides educational support and resources to

start-up co-ops. I had been asked to become a board member of Change in the

Winter of 2013 after working with the Central Massachusetts Green Jobs Coalition

for two years helping to plan conferences, develop materials, propose projects and

engage in conversations and debates. It was because of this work, and because of

my connections with and knowledge about other groups involved in cooperative

and alternative economies throughout the state, like the Wellspring Initiative, that I

was invited to be on the board.

　　After my presentation Jon reminded everyone, "the reason Boone is

presenting this is because we talked about how we wanted to think about different

models of cooperative development that we might want to use here in Worcester.

This isn't the only model for co-op development. WAGES in CA, for example, grows

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[17] I use solidarity economy here not as a precise term that would designate a coherent, agreed upon political agenda, but as an imprecise label that signals a network of alternative economic initiatives and politics in Worcester, in Massachusetts, and beyond.

co-operatives by focusing on a particular industry and getting really good at having successful businesses in that industry. But the idea is that we can talk about and use what we like from this model and others".

Another board member said, "I like it because it gives some sustainability, and some stability by linking these groups together [financially and structurally]."

Stuart from The Shop, a collaborative work-space and community center, who is also a board member of Change, remarked that Change already seemed to be in some ways creating a structurally connected network of alternative economic enterprises. He pointed out that the new landscaping cooperative that he was a part of, as well as the Barnraisers—an organization that worked to weatherize buildings through mutual aide and skill sharing—already gave portions of their surplus back to Grassroots Change, which they were affiliated with. Even more, attending the meeting that night were two representatives from the urban farm that Jessica, also a member of the SHOP, had started two years before. They were there to make a final agreement with the board around their own desired affiliation with Roots, which would include both financial and structural linkages to Change.

Another board member said that, if Change was going to more fully adopt this model we probably wouldn't want it to be so "top-down." Others eagerly nodded their heads. And, indeed, the cooperatives and collectives associated with Change—a youth development collective, a soil remediation cooperative, the Barnraisers, a media collaborative, the landscaping cooperative, the urban farm, and a new, yet to be named worker-cooperative owned greenhouse in a neighborhood where Change had an ongoing organizing presence—had each emerged from the

energy and ideas of the cooperative-owners or participants themselves. However, this precedent didn't prohibit the consideration of new possibilities. Another member said later, as he has said to me on previous occasions, it might be important to think about ways that we could work with universities and other institutions to help support co-operatives in addition to growing them from the grassroots.

What's important and interesting to me here is the way that Change situates itself in the political field as part of a growing, non-capitalist economy that is in the midst of being created, an economy that they are *themselves* creating. Non-capitalist politics—constructing new, ethical economies from which post-capitalist subjects might emerge—depends on careful deliberation, consideration of new possibilities and allies, and the assembling of diverse understandings and desires for social change as constitutive of non-capitalist relations. In other words, it begins with the presumption that politics is about "getting what we want" which, in any particular instance may or may not involve speaking truth to power or attempting to prove that a particular idea about the world is "right". As the above narrative demonstrates, central to Change's politics is an effort to, collectively, think carefully about how to use, form relationships with, and benefit from divergent practices, actors, and ideologies that are attached or might be drawn to non-capitalist possibility.

Like Ferguson, I am not arguing in this chapter for the efficacy of any one particular project, though certainly small experiments like those discussed in this chapter have worth in and of themselves and can be very important for the material and emotional well being of their participants. Even more, I do not wish to displace

or discount the tremendous importance of community organizing, both in the abstract and in terms of on-the-ground politics in Massachusetts. Indeed, community organizing is an area of great concern for many involved in non-capitalist politics in Massachusetts who wish to be more effective in building power and the movement. I do, however, wish to position my arguments here with the Gramscian notion that political struggle is cultural struggle. Our political actions are limited and enabled by how and what we know, believe, and desire. I mobilize these examples of non-capitalist initiatives to show the divergent and seemingly unlikely ways that actually existing non-capitalism can be constructed: through discourse and desires often associated with neoliberal restructuring and market capitalism, through the actualization of latent desires for non-capitalism that exist despite the discursive dominance of capitalism, and through the creation of micro-public spaces of difference, where people can learn to be affected in a common-projects to create non-capitalism.

CHAPTER 4

PROLOGUE TO CHAPTERS 5, 6, and 7

On a weekday morning in early fall in 2012, I sat in a comfortable, corner

chair in a Springfield, MA Starbuck's, nursing a large coffee with soy milk while

pouring over meeting notes. Adjacent to the interstate on-ramp and close to the

Alliance to Develop Power (ADP) headquarters, this particular Starbuck's was

convenient, a place where ADP staff would often come to meet off-site or to fuel-up

in between meetings. On this morning, I was preparing for a meeting with Jen, a

longtime ADP member, turned leader, turned organizer and staff member. We

planned to discuss the development of a community newsletter, a project that we

had been working on for the previous few months. Jen had been excited about this

project from the beginning. It was an opportunity for her to more fully develop and

put into practice some ideas that might help strengthen and expand communication

in ADP, ideas that she had been brewing since even before she had become ADP's

communications director earlier that year.

I was eager to finally work closely with Jen. Jen and I had always been

friendly. Jen had been receptive to and interested in the ethnographic aspect of the

work that I was doing; she had given a couple of very helpful interviews and—both

in those interviews and in more informal conversations—she had been generous

with her own ideas and was curious about mine. And we had, in fact, often been

involved in the same efforts or activities at ADP; we had shared ideas and

information during staff meetings and during large, organization-wide events. But,

we had yet to work closely together on a particular campaign or project. I was

excited to get to know her better, learn from her, and help to develop what seemed like a viable and important project.

We had been tasked with thinking creatively and expansively about what a community newsletter might accomplish and how to bring this idea into reality. We had taken our charge to heart and our excitement and investment in the project grew over a series of meetings as we collected more information, brainstormed, and formulated our plan. We investigated other organizational newsletters in terms of their scope and purpose. I had brought in copies of a community newsmagazine that I had worked on in Michigan to help spur thinking around formatting, publication logistics, and content. We also began to gather information about the overall costs of a printed version of the newsletter, as well as consider some ways to generate revenue. By the time we were ready to present and discuss the developed idea to a few other staff members, we had come to conceptualize the newsletter as a multifaceted project that would involve leadership development opportunities, would help to bring new members into the organization, and would be a valuable way to spread and share information throughout ADP's sprawling, multifaceted organization as well as communicate ADP's vision outside the organization.

ADP was first and foremost a community-organizing group, steeped in the Alynskyite tradition (see Alinsky 1971) and the organizing approach of Shel Trapp. It was a base-building organization, focused on organizing low-income people and low-income people of color around their self-interests in relation to concrete social justice issues. But in addition to conventional community organizing approaches that seek to build power and build an organization through campaigns directed at

policy reforms, ADP was also involved in community development, and—most

notably—alternative economic development including four "community owned"

affordable housing complexes, a cooperative business, United for Hire, and a worker

center.[18] Its membership base, pulled primarily from its own institutions, which

were foundational to ADP's much lauded community economy, spanned the length

of the Massachusetts Pioneer Valley region. Owing in part to the scope and range of

the organizations activities, ADP's different members and constituent groups were

not as informed as they could be about ADP activities, and its membership base had

varying levels of awareness of and investment in ADP. Jen and I envisioned a

regular, monthly newsletter, with email and print editions that would be distributed

to ADP members and beyond. The newsletter would communicate ADP's model and

vision for social change to less active members, potential members, and to other

progressive organizations, as well as serve as a community forum for issues and

interests that members wanted to surface and discuss. Moreover, it afforded an

opportunity to involve members in every phase of production—content

development, writing articles, publication, and distribution. These were

development activities that could then move members towards leadership

positions. Moreover, it seemed to be a prime location for increasing interest

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[18] ADP's efforts combining community organizing with alternative economics were
on the cutting on edge . However, even just during the time I volunteered with the
organization, ADP's uncanny combination of community organizing and alternative
economic development became less of an obscurity.   For example, the network of
community organizing groups, National People's Action (NPA), of which ADP was an
affiliate began to be more involved in alternative economic development as an
aspect of community organizing, in particular as part of the New Economy project
(http://npa-us.org/files/long_term_agenda_0.pdf, http://neweconomy.net/new-economy-coalition, and see Engler and Engler 2014).

between the volunteer members who comprised the organization and the professional staff who were paid to administrate the organization, serve members, and organize members around issues and into positions of leadership and governance.

Our initial presentation to other ADP staff didn't go over as we had planned or hoped. Even before we could finish our presentation, we were shot down. We were told that we were being too ambitious, that there was no money available to do what we wanted to do, and that there was no staff time available to do what we were proposing. In short, we were given the message that we needed to think more realistically. Initially, Jen was despondent. We thought we had a green light to run with this project, and just as we were gaining momentum, it felt like the rug had been pulled out from under us.

So, as I was preparing to meet Jen that morning, I was thinking of ways that I could be useful to help get the much-scaled-back newsletter off the ground. And I wanted to be ready to provide some emotional support for Jen. Our agreed meeting time passed and Jen, uncharacteristically, still hadn't arrived. I called her and she said that she had simply forgotten about the meeting and suggested that we meet at the office. A bit deflated, I got in my car and made my way a half-mile eastward to ADP headquarters, past convenience stores and other small businesses dotted in among apartments and old housing stock, as well as new construction projects—a reminder of the devastation wrought by three tornadoes that ripped through Western Massachusetts a little over a year earlier, overturning cars and destroying businesses and homes, one of them sweeping through the South End.

I walked into the old, spacious, two-story industrial building and hopped up the steep flight of stairs to a large, open room with tables pushed together in the center, where much of the office activity, meetings, and daily work took place. I said hello to a few staff that were busily working on their laptops, and found out that Jen was waiting for me downstairs.

I had understood Jen's forgetfulness about our meeting as signaling some waning enthusiasm around the newsletter, and so I was surprised to find her animated and full of ideas for both getting the newsletter off the ground, and developing it as part of a larger vision. She said that the though we would start small, this would just be the beginning. "I am still thinking big on this Boone. I am thinking that we [ADP] are the experts, that people come to us for information. I am thinking that news outlets will read our publication. I am thinking that this becomes another ADP institution: ADP Media."

Jen talked excitedly about how this newsletter could be a spark that was needed to build more community and democracy inside ADP, and that could help ADP's community economy model fulfill its promise. Inspired and inspiring, she continued, "And just think, this started with a small newsletter. We'll come back and say that we had these ideas when the small newsletter started. And, you know, the economic crisis we are in, it makes it hard to dream big. It makes it difficult to think about how to do this. [But] this is what I want my job to be".

By economic crisis, Jen was referring here to ADP's own ongoing, precarious financial situation that over the summer of 2012 had indeed reached crisis levels. The very financial viability of the organization had problematically become the

driving concern of the organization. The extent of ADP's economic crisis culminated and was made transparent in a "100 day, 100k" fundraising campaign in which the organization would suspend most of its campaign work and all non-essential activity in favor of fundraising.

This new course-heading, it turned out, was difficult to maintain as staff felt compelled to continue to organize and "do good work" in addition to fundraising. Additionally, the sheer momentum of the organization's extensive investments in various projects was hard to slow down. What remained constant, however, was the escalating economic insecurity and concomitant feel of escalating crisis in the organization. Staff members were told that meeting payroll each pay period was a difficult ordeal and was not guaranteed. People were worried about job security, but they were also concerned that the work they were doing was becoming more about their own individual well-being than the interests of low-income community members who they were working with and organizing. Everyone was stressed out. Everyone was on edge. People were trying desperately to save an organization that they were politically and emotionally invested in, that they believed in, that held so much promise; while simultaneously engaged in time-consuming and demanding day-to-day administrative work, development, and organizing.

The organization and the people in it were stretched to the limit. Tension between staff members was palpable—always bubbling at a brisk simmer and sometimes boiling over—and ADP became an increasingly stressful and fraught place to work. Since I had begun working with the organization through a campaign around green justice in 2011, my own relationship with the organization had

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changed considerably. By the late summer of 2012, I was spending less time involved with ADP in general and I had become much less involved in organizing and political work. This was due, in part, because it was becoming more difficult for me to effectively navigate my activist-ethnographic relationship—a relationship that necessitated conversation about what my role should be—in such a pressurized and, intermittently, chaotic environment. It was becoming difficult for me to figure out how to be useful to the organization and the people in it when the organizations efforts were becoming more opaque and more problematic. Even so, like many members and staff, I was deeply invested in the promise of the organization too, and I cared about and for the people in it—my research subjects, my colleagues, my friends. I wanted continue to be involved and do more than observe, if I could figure out how to do something useful and feel ethically okay about what I was doing. In addition to the opportunity to work with Jen, working on the newsletter resituated me as a useful ADP volunteer, in a way that both the organization and I felt comfortable with.

However, conditions at ADP continued to worsen through the fall. The contradictory messages that Jen and I received in quick succession about the newsletter—that we should first dream big and develop a robust plan and then that we needed to be realistic and scale back—was symptomatic of the increasingly schizophrenic behavior of the organization. The direction and purpose moved haphazardly from one project to the next, staff responsibilities were shifted and realigned, and everyone scrambled to stay afloat. Staff began looking for other employment. Some quit and others were fired.

By the end of the year, Jen too was thinking about leaving. During a conversation over lunch, Jen told me how strongly she believed in ADP and that she was feeling incredibly conflicted.

"I've had some hard conversations with myself. I look at this organization. I came on as a leader, I learned a lot. I think ADP finding me, has really come to help me understand who I am. I personally have roots and attachments to this organization's successes. I speak about it from the heart. I really, truly do have this investment here. I still want it to transform people and communities. I think I also have planted some seeds. I don't feel like if I was going to walk away today or tomorrow it would be this catastrophic thing, I know that I am valued and I would be missed. I am thinking about that too, and my future. When is it time for me to walk away? It's exciting, but also scary. It's scary well, because I know that the power, the ability that I had to succeed with ADP, I know that it has been a journey, so [it would be] different from what I have done. But also, I have always felt successful here. I have felt, some kind of shared power, being at ADP. How will I continue to have that strength and the same values outside of ADP?"

She went on to discuss how much she wanted the organization to become more democratic, more cooperative, and better able to understand and respond to "the world as it is" in order to "create the world as it should be" but that "lately, we aren't moving in that direction."

All the other stuff going on right now makes that hard. I don't want to think

about how I am going to solve some [office or organizational] crisis. But I

have to. And by mid-week I am totally exhausted and I can't remember

anything, other responsibilities, dealings with people that I am [supposed to

engage in]

Jen attributed her desire to change the world, and her belief that she could do

so, to her own personal and political development as a member of ADP, an

organization that prided itself on and was well known for its innovative organizing

and development model—a model that I will argue can be read as both representing

and engaging in an ontological politics to create a new reality. Understanding and

working in "the world as it is" while "creating the world as it should be" is a broadly

held community organizing trope which encourages a clear analysis of the relations

of power and oppression in the present moment that need to be understood,

navigated, and fought in order to reach a more socially just world in the future.

However, ADP's efforts to build a community economy, resituates this mantra as

part of a politics that intends to not only fight for policy reforms to improve

conditions within a circumscribed set of relationships, but to imagine and create an

entirely new world in the present moment. The tension and internal conflicts that

Jen, and all of us at ADP were experiencing point to the phenomenological

contradictions inherent in the process of attempting to imagine and create other

worlds while emotionally, discursively, and materially immersed in and tied to the present, materially durable and symbolically dominant one.

In the following three chapters I discuss the emergence, development, and decline of a remarkable community organization, the Alliance to Develop Power, which I worked with for the better part of two years, from 2011-2012. Initially, my work involved helping to plan and facilitate a series of community meetings around the energy efficiency industry. These meetings were linked to a statewide green justice campaign, and I soon began to attend campaign meetings as a representative of and liaison to ADP. In this coalition work I took part in protests and demonstrations, gave public testimony, lobbied state officials with ADP and coalition members, and participated in policy discussions; I engaged in community organizing around green economy issues and helped to develop language and strategy for local and statewide campaigns. By the summer of 2011, my role and efforts at ADP also expanded, and over the next year and a half I participated in a wide range of activities, though the intensity and extent of my involvement fluctuated. I attended staff meetings, participated in formal and informal strategy discussions, helped to prep leaders for presentations, researched information for particular campaigns or projects, helped to write and edit campaign literature and other documents, and networked ADP with other organizations and movements in the state. During this time I interviewed staff and leaders about the green economy, about the economy writ large, about ADP's relationship to both, and about their relationship to ADP. I took field notes where appropriate, recorded my own

thoughts and feelings around the efforts of ADP, and reflected on my own role in relation to those efforts.

This story unfolds in three parts, divided over three chapters. The first two parts each feature a different *performance* of ADP, a different way of representing and, thus, enacting a particular reality—the first is a hopeful, rendition of ADP as a pure realm of possibility and in this way it is an iteration of and works in part to recapitulate previous performative accounts (for example Graham and Cornwell 2009); the second, informed by the proximity and duration of the ethnographic encounter, is more circumspect. The third part analyzes and theorizes these two representational forms in relation to my own political responsibilities and commitments. Thus the three parts constitute a sort of triptych that, in the process of exploring the non-capitalist politics of ADP, can help us to consider some of the possibilities and limitations of performing diverse economies. In the first part, Chapter 5, I briefly discuss the history of the organization and its innovative organizing model, emphasizing the development of its alternative economic structure and institutions. This is a performative account of ADP, unadulterated by narratives and accounts of the forces that are working against ADP's emergence and development as a community economy. I then examine the politico-symbolic importance of ADP as a location and example of economic possibility, exploring the affective and discursive interventions it makes into community-organizing politics, into the broader social justice movement, and in relation to the work of JK Gibson-Graham and the Community Economies Collective as part of a language of diverse economies.

In the second part, Chapter 6, I discuss ADP's efforts to embody and grow its community economy model from early 2011 through the end of 2012. In this chapter I show how the proximity and duration of the ethnographic encounter problematizes the notion of a distanced, performative account of economic possibility. I explore some of the dynamics surrounding and constraints on ADP's efforts to imagine and create a new world. I situate ADP in relation to and as part of a constellation of philanthropic and funding agencies, social service non-profits, and community and social justice organizations undergirding progressive politics—a political formation that can be read in two ideologically and affectively contradistinctive ways: 1) as constitutive of a growing social economy from which ethical, non-capitalist arrangements can be built or, more critically, 2) as part of the non-profit industrial complex—an institutional arrangement and form of governance manifested through what we might describe imperfectly as "neoliberal" restructuring. From this context, I query the political space that exists between the language politics of imagining and desiring new worlds and the concretization of those desires—the distance that exists between imagining community economies and enacting them.

In Chapter 7, I explore the political limitations, possibilities, and relationship between critical realism and performativity. I reflect on my own positionality, responsibility, and efficacy as activist ethnographer with ADP. I take Judith Stacey's (1988) provocative, titular question "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" as a starting point to consider and help sort through the ethically fraught and epistemologically messy nature of both ethnography and politics. Here I explore

some of the tensions between a performative and realist politics, between a politics of possibility and a politics of resistance, and between an ethnography that seeks to document, expose, and critique "what is really there" and an ethnography that begins with the commitment to look for and amplify possibility. I ask, what is gained and what is lost by adopting a theoretical approach, stance, and representational strategy of radical possibility? Though I argue for an investment in *ontological politics*—a politics that engages in making other worlds—I suggest that performing diverse economies can benefit from representations that include not only the expanding edges and outlines of new worlds, but a critique of the forces and relationships inhibiting their concretization and proliferation in particular locations.

CHAPTER 5

THE ALLIANCE TO DEVELOP POWER: A DISCURSIVE, PERFORMATIVE INTERVENTION

ADP is often understood and represented as an exemplar of political and economic possibility. As such, it proposes an innovative way forward for community organizing practitioners; it is of great symbolic significance for the broader movement for social justice, and it is of great importance to community economies and diverse economies scholarship and politics. In this chapter, following, informed by, and inspired by such accounts (for example Graham and Cornwell 2009) I discuss, and thus perform, ADP in a similar fashion.

The story of ADP[19] in its recent incarnation begins with Caroline Murray who, after years of civil rights and electoral politics experience, became ADP's executive director in 1993. At the time of her hire, ADP was an advocacy organization, the Anti-Displacement Project. A primary activity of ADP was fighting to maintain affordable housing for low-income residents in the Pioneer Valley through a policy campaign geared towards preventing private developers from converting public housing into more profitable ventures. However, in a move that would seem to augur and prefigure the organization's direction in the coming decades, ADP went beyond policy reforms to do something novel. Over the course of a long, multi-year campaign, ADP organized residents to buy out the imperiled housing themselves, eventually bringing about 770 units of affordable housing, in

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[19] This brief recounting of ADP's initial history is informed by multiple sources. In addition to the references directly cited this includes formal and informal interviews, casual discussions with ADP members, ADP's former website, and Graham and Cornwell 2009.

four different complexes in the Pioneer Valley—in Greenfield, Westfield, and Springfield, Massachusetts—under tenant control.

The affordable housing "cooperatives" then affiliated with ADP as dues paying organizational members. This affiliation created a structural tie between the organization and the tenant controlled housing which, it was hoped, would encourage the building of relationships between different institutions and a shared identity. Soon after the housing complexes helped to finance the purchase of ADP headquarters in Springfield, thereby deepening the connection with and commitment to the organization, and vice versa. Moreover, members of the board of directors of each housing complex also gained seats on the board of ADP, which would be constituted entirely by ADP members.

This new configuration offered an expansive, ready-made organizing base, linked membership to governance, and was emergent from a campaign that sought both policy reforms and community-based, creative solutions to social problems; it laid the symbolic and material groundwork for ADP's innovative model for social change and well-being, what came to be known as ADP's Community Economy, a moniker and vision that was also influenced in part by ADP's relationship with Julie Graham.[20] Out of this new configuration, ADP continued to organize and launch new organizing campaigns, engender and strengthen social ties through intentional community building events and programs, and—most saliently for this chapter—

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[20] The work of J.K. Gibson-Graham and Julie Graham certainly had significant influence on the organization. For example, Murray has publicly referred to Julie Graham as not only a friend but a mentor. A longtime ADP member describes the influence thus, "we were already building our community economy, but she helped to affirm what we were already doing."

envisage and develop alternative socio-economic institutions to meet community

needs, some of which I will describe below.

The worker cooperative that would eventually become United for Hire is

perhaps ADP's most discussed and most lauded project. Launched in 2001, United

for Hire began with a conversation with members around the housing maintenance

and service work at the ADP affiliated housing complexes a few years earlier. As

Murray recounts,

> I remember one of our first budgeting meetings after a successful buyout. We
>
> were reviewing the operating budget and got down to the landscaping line
>
> item. One of the members said, "why don't we pay ourselves to mow the
>
> lawn?" And it was like a lightening bolt hit. In that moment, all the questions
>
> changed and an infinite number of possibilities became clear. And so we
>
> decided to create a landscaping business. ([http://community-](http://community-wealth.org/content/caroline-murray)
>
> [wealth.org/content/caroline-murray](http://community-wealth.org/content/caroline-murray))

As was the case with the ADP headquarters, the start up capital for United for

Hire was also financed through the housing cooperatives. After an initial period

operating as a worker cooperative, United for Hire decided to restructure as a

community-owned enterprise, and subsidiary of ADP. In this new arrangement, day-

to-day operations and working conditions were still held under worker control—for

example workers set hours and wages. However, the generated surplus was then

appropriated, not only by workers as in a worker-ownership model, but by the

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organization itself. The surplus was then "recycled" back into the community through more organizing efforts, more community programming, and more economic development efforts. As United for Hire grew and expanded to include multiple crews, it developed other services like snow removal, painting, and light construction. These new dimensions of the business were also rooted in the needs and interests of the membership base.

Shortly after the creation of United for Hire, the possibility of a worker rights center began to be discussed. The center, Casa Obrera, officially founded in 2005, emerged from a successful campaign to recover over $100,000 in wages owed to Springfield construction workers, many of them Latino immigrants. In addition to the recovered backwages, ADP created Casa Obrera to educate about and empower members to collectively fight for worker and immigrant rights. An ADP staff member explains,

> In the process of organizing workers, the ADP found out that there was more
> than worker rights issues, many of those workers were immigrant[s].[ADP
> then] combined two campaigns, workers rights and immigrant rights…A real
> important piece or aspect that happened during that campaign [was that]
> …when the organizer said instead of $16 an hours you should have been
> getting $24, that was a real important piece telling them that their employer
> was stealing money. But also [through] meetings, and 1 on 1 meetings,
> basically ADP succeeded in that campaign, we won. We created a worker

center as creating a solution, it was the result of running a campaign, creating

the solution. That's why they created the worker center.

The worker center brought in hundreds of members to ADP, involving them

in many campaigns and projects beyond worker and immigrant rights. [21] Casa

Obrera itself has provided worker rights trainings, immigrant rights training, and a

'legal clinic', which marshaled a network of immigration and labor lawyers for Casa

Obrera-ADP members to access. In addition, Casa Obrera has hosted ESL classes,

low-cost debit cards (as an alternative to same day check cashing schemes), and

access to the ADP food pantries.

These food pantries were established in the housing complexes, and on-site

at ADP headquarters, helping to provide food security to ADP members and families.

By 2007, the food pantries were distributing the equivalent of one week's worth of

food to participating individuals and families. For ADP staff and leaders, the food

pantries were not simply acts of charity. They were a political act, meeting basic

needs so members could participate with the organization in civic-life. In addition,

the food pantries were positioned as a community building activity that attempted

to address social well-being and foment social solidarity. Other community building

activities included block parties, community dinners, and the annual distribution of

hundreds of free turkeys. These activities relied on the volunteer labor of ADP

members, bringing them together and implanting them in ADP community vision

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[21] By 2009 there were 100 dues paying members through Casa Obrera (Graham and Cornwell 2009) According to an interview with ADP staff there were 500 dues paying members in 2011.

and practice. For example, a program to create a safe space for girls to talk with each other and with older women was hatched by an ADP member who was exposed to ADP's community efforts via the food pantry; her idea for "Girl Talk" was validated and gained immediate support from a friendship she had made with an ADP leader through their interactions at the food pantry. In 2012, 17 pre-teen and young teenaged girls participated in the program. [22]

The institutions, programs, and activities delineated above are some of ADP's more visible projects, but this is by no means a comprehensive list. Numerous other socio-economic institutions and projects have been proposed, explored, and developed to different levels including ADP ATM/credit cards, ATM banking, mobile health clinic, community computer centers, weatherization businesses, involvement in community supported agriculture, and on and on. The breadth and depth of ADP's work over the past decade is breathtaking and would be difficult even to simply list. Indeed, the discussion above excludes much of ADP's bread and butter, its community organizing work (often intimately tied to its socio-economic institutions). In addition to worker rights, green justice, and housing campaigns mentioned above, ADP has had success in organizing campaigns around electoral politics, immigrant rights, transportation, and public education.

Community Organizing, Development, and Diverse Economies

As the scope of its work suggests, ADP was well-known in activist circles as a powerful, influential organization; ADP has made an indelible mark in the world of

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[22] This story is recounted in an ADP promotional video, "Women Light the Way" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCMwnySFVrI

community organizing in Massachusetts and beyond. The size of its membership

base and its ability to mobilize its members was always impressive. At meetings,

protests, and actions, the call and response of "Who Are We? ADP! Who Are We?

ADP!" shouted by dozens of members clad in matching ADP shirts interrupting and

claiming public space signaled ADP as a force to be reckoned with. From the

perspective of some activists and organizers, the collapse of ADP left a vacuum in

Western, MA for community organizing and social justice politics. For example, an

organizer who had worked closely with ADP on a statewide energy efficiency

campaign said, nearly a year after ADP shut down its operations, "It's such a shame.

There is no other organization like ADP in Western Mass that is as powerful, that

has such a strong base."

As much as ADP was known for its organizational presence and power in

Massachusetts, it was ADP's experiments and innovations merging community

organizing with community economic development that garnered the most

attention, both in Massachusetts and nationally. As Stoecker (2001) points out,

historically there exists an ideological divide between community development and

community organizing. Community organizing is rooted in conflict, resistance, and a

stance—an affective orientation in political-social space—of opposition to power.

In contrast, community development is often associated with cooperation,

collaboration, bridging difference, and a stance of creation. ADP's efforts to bridge

this divide have been the object of much discussion and often have been looked to

for inspiration. Indeed, community organizing practitioners, community

development scholars, and student-activists have made visits to ADP, have

volunteered with the organization, and have consulted with ADP to learn about ADP's model. For example, a community organizing group in San Francisco, *People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER),* approached ADP in 2011 asking to hear more about ADP's work and share information. A short time after an initial conference call between ADP and PODER, an article on social justice and alternative economics was published which quoted a PODER organizer stating that they "aspire to be ADP when they grow up."

(http://www.shareable.net/blog/an-economy-turned-upside-down)

ADP's alternative economic efforts in particular have been positioned as a beacon of hope and possibility, even beyond activist circles in Massachusetts. ADP's work has been used to help argue for the possibility and importance of socially-just food systems (Liu 2012), and displayed as one of many organizations and projects that point the way towards a deepening of economic democracy in society (Alperovitz and Bhatt 2013). ADP has been written about in a who's who of progressive media including *The Nation*, *In These Times*, *The New York Times*, T*ruthout*, and *Colorlines.* And ADP has been situated alongside other alternative economic projects and as part of various movements and frameworks to create new economic worlds including The New Economy (Scher 2012), The Sharing Economy (Luna 2011), The Cooperative Economy (Alperovitz and Bhatt 2013), and The Social and Solidarity Economy (Graham and Cornwell 2009, Shear and Healy 2012).

In short, ADP's innovations hold an important symbolic place in the movement and capture the imagination for radical social change. From the perspective of the Community Economies Collective and other diverse economies

scholars, ADP is an organizational exemplar of economic difference and possibility

that can be mobilized as part of a politics that helps interrupt the discursive

dominance of capitalism in two ways. First, and as the projects discussed above

indicate, ADP can be read as constituted by an astonishing array of diverse

economic relationships, imaginings, and practices, a language that can destabilize

hegemonic understandings of a monolithic capitalism. Second, ADP demonstrates

the potential for the enactment of an intentional, post-capitalist politics in which

people are enabled and emboldened to collectively make ethical choices around

economy.

Diverse Economy

That the economy is heterogeneous is at once both an obvious, mundane

observation and a radical claim. Though economic anthropologists and other

scholars show us, and common sense tells us, that more is happening than market

capitalism—that people are motivated by more than self-interest; that people work

in their homes as well as for wages; and that in addition to market-exchange, people

trade favors, give each other gifts, and make ethical purchases—much of this

economic activity is considered unimportant, uneconomic, or subsumed within the

"real", capitalist economy. In a helpful visual metaphor, Gibson-Graham show

capitalism as the visible, tip of a heterogeneous economic iceberg, dominating our

imagination and suppressing other existent economic relations from coming into

view (figure 1)

Figure 1: The Diverse Economy Iceberg (Miller http://www.geo.coop/node/722, derived from original by Ken Byrne in Gibson-Graham 2006)

A core issue here for Gibson-Graham, and what helps to keep capitalism dominant, is the performative nature of language. Economy, just like politics, society, and culture, is not extra-discursive; it does not exist somehow outside of our representation of it. Capitalism proliferates and coalesces, is conceded power, and takes hold of our imagination and desires, in large part because of the way that we talk, write, and think about it. Capitalism is often discussed as synonymous or coextensive with economy, as a system that works on its own—structuring and

producing people and events, or as a closed system that contains difference. These capitalocentric discourses and understandings are not simply a description or reflection of an economic reality, they are constitutive of it. To put this another way, capitalism maintains its hold—maintains hegemony—in large part because we are unable or unwilling to imagine and desire other economies that are in some way not at the mercy of the real economy, capitalism. Thus, a politics that wishes to transform existing and create other economies might need to involve a rethinking or reframing of economy in order to unleash radical possibility (Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy 2013).

If we reject an understanding of economy as filled by or co-extensive with capitalism, and instead read economy for difference, an array of economic practices begins to emerge. For example, if we choose to, we can understand and begin to see the economy not as a capitalist system containing, dominating, and controlling everything else; but rather as a heterogeneous terrain—populated with different ways of organizing businesses, labor, property, exchange, and finance—that people animate and can create (see figure 1).

This framing of economy as constituted by diverse elements decenters capitalism, allowing economic difference to come to the fore. Economic elements associated with capitalism are shown to be one possibility among many. For example, within the domain of labor, working for wages is joined with different types of alternative paid work, like cooperative work, unpaid work, and volunteerism. And capitalist markets are shown to be one possible way of exchanging goods and services along with different alternative market forms, like

free trade and localism, and non-market exchanges like gift-giving and state

appropriations.

ENTERPRISE	LABOR	PROPERTY	TRANSACTIONS	FINANCE
CAPITALIST	WAGE	PRVATE	MARKET	MAINSTREAM MARKET
ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST State owned **Environmentally responsible** **Socially Responsible** **Non-profit**	ALTERNATIVE PAID **Cooperative** Reciprocal labor In-kind Work for Welfare	ALTERNNATIVE PRIVATE **Publicly accessible** State managed assets **Collectively Owned** Customary (clan) land Community Land trusts Indigenous Knowledge	ALTERNATIVE MARKET Fair Trade Alternative Currencies **Local Markets** Barter **Captured** **Ethical Market**	ALTTERNATIVE MARKET Cooperative Banks Credit Unions **Government Supported Lending** **Community-based Financial Institutions** Micro-Finance
NON-CAPITALIST **Worker cooperatives** **Community enterprise** Feudal Slave	UNPAID Housework **Volunteer** Self-provisioning Slave labor	OPEN ACCESS Atmosphere International Waters Open source IP	NON-MARKET **Household sharing** **Gift giving** Gleaning **State Allocations** Hunting, fishing, gathering Theft, piracy, poaching	NON-MARKET Sweat equity Family lending **Donations** **Interest-free loans** **Community Supported Business**

Figure 2: Diverse Economy Diagram (based on diagram found in Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy 2013)

Reading ADP through the lens of diverse economy highlights the wide range

of non-capitalist activities that comprise ADP's activities in different economic

domains. ADP *enterprises* have been for-profit and non-profit and have been

organized around principles of social and environmental justice. In addition to paid

staff and cooperative labor, campaigns, programs, and development activities

depend on a considerable amount of volunteer *labor*. The housing cooperatives

together form, not only a built-in membership base for ADP organizing, but also a

captured, market in which ethical *transactions*—such as living wages for workers—

take place. ADP's work is in part supported through gifting of individual donors,

funding agencies, and state allocations. ADP also *financed* its operations by

leveraging the financial resources of the housing cooperatives and partnering with

community-based financial institutions.

Finally, ADP was engaged in many projects that attempted to build a

commons, "a property, a practice, or a knowledge that is shared by a community"

(Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013: 130), including the community building

projects described above, the cooperative housing, and the ADP organization itself

which strived to be member driven and governed. [23]

From Diverse Economies to Community Economy

Though *any* organization can be understood as constituted through and by

economic difference, ADP is a particularly strong example of heterogeneity and non-

capitalist possibility functioning as a "spur[s] to the theoretical imagination"

(Graham and Cornwell 2009: 37). Indeed, what is particularly interesting about

ADP—to diverse economy scholars in particular—is that this was an organization

that was not only comprised through an extraordinary range of diverse economic

practices, but that it was consciously striving to create ethical socio-economic

relationships as solutions to social ailments by marshalling resources towards,

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[23] See Graham and Cornwell's (2009) reading of ADP as diverse economy Pp. 43-53.

organizing around, and creating diverse economic practices, including those that are often hidden, suppressed, deemed undesirable, or remain unimagined.

> The unique successes of…the ADP have allowed (and even lured) us to rethink both economy and economic development, placing the diversity of economic activity and the ethical practices of subjects at center stage. In the activities and achievements of these two organizations, we have discerned the emergence of "community economies" where interdependence is acknowledged and built upon to increase social well-being (Graham and Cornwell 2009: 62).

In their article locating ADP as part of the Social Economy, Julie Graham, one half of the composite scholar J.K. Gibson-Graham, and Janelle Cornwell, a member of the Community Economies Collective, discuss and position ADP in the quote above as part of two, distinct but interrelated interventions. The first is a broad, discursive intervention into capitalist hegemony, more precisely into capitalocentric framings and understandings of economy. In other words, they mobilize ADP as part of a language of diverse economies that is intended to cut through and interrupt the resignification, and thus the reproduction of capitalism. The existence of ADP helps supporters, allies, and observers of the organization to throw off ideological blinders, and begin to imagine and desire a type of development and a form of economy that are not at the behest of capitalism's symbolic authority.

The second intervention makes a claim on the subjectivities and subjective transformations of ADP staff and members themselves. Gibson and Cornwell suggest that the organization's development model is emergent with subjects —presumably ADP staff and members—who are not at the mercy of or attached to desires or constraints associated with a capitalist economy, but are instead motivated by and able to deliberate around collective, ethical concerns.

Similarly, Byrne and Healy (2006), allying themselves with the work of Gibson-Graham, propose that ADP is an organization that has moved beyond capitalocentric thinking, suggesting that ADP's non-capitalist institutions cultivate subjects who are capable of engaging in a politics in which choices around economic difference are not always and already foreclosed by the material-symbolic power of capitalism.

> In our view, the ADP is an organization that is constantly looking for and finding unusual opportunities to expand its political and economic power— beyond the fantasy of inevitable failure through the cooptation by capitalism or beyond the motivation of a future Utopic resolution of contradictions (255).

Byrne and Healy are describing ADP, and by extension the people involved with ADP, as being able to "traverse the fantasy" of a systemic, all consuming capitalism. In other words, they are able to come to a different, distanced relationship with their desires and dwell in "the lack", the empty, negative condition

of being that engagement with the symbolic world works to fill through ideology. In this subjective condition, people are able to consider possibilities and make choices that would otherwise remain unavailable to subjects who are filled by and driven through fantasy. Thus, traversing the fantasy enables people to make collective, ethical decisions amongst a heterogeneous collective; it allows for the animation of "'community economies' where interdependence is acknowledged and built upon to increase social well-being." (Byrne and Healy 2006)

For Gibson-Graham, the language and framing of diverse economy—and any representation of economy—is provisional and experimental. They do not claim that it is more accurate or more "real" than any other representation. They are less interested in attempting to accurately represent "what is really there" and instead are interested in decentering market capitalism, and bringing into being the possibility of a new economy, or more precisely, new economies. From this perspective, the representation of ADP can be understood as more than a reflection or depiction of reality, but rather as constitutive of a performed reality. In fact, both Graham and Cornwell, and Byrne and Healy mobilize ADP as part of an ontological politics that invites and enlivens subjects—other academics, students, policy-makers, activists—to imagine and make new worlds, in this case an economy beyond capitalocentrism.

The hopeful, optimistic stance taken by the diverse economy scholars, and also by me in the above section, is supported by a representation largely free of critique, considerations of constraint, or possibilities of failure. Adopting this performative position requires a sort of distancing from data that might complicate

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this picture. In my years at ADP, this is a distance that became more difficult for me

to maintain as I more familiar with the organization and grew closer with the people

in it, and as conditions at the organization began to deteriorate. In the next section, I

give a thicker, more ambivalent account of the non-capitalist politics existing on-

the-ground at ADP through an ethnographic narrative drawn from interviews, field

notes, and my own experiences working with ADP from the winter of 2011 until the

fall of 2012. My intent here is not simply to ally myself with a representational

politics that presumes to *only* reflect and account for "what is really there" nor to

add to the symbolic power of capitalism by performing it through critique. While

maintaining fidelity to ADP's importance as a powerful discursive intervention and

seeking to highlight ADP's role in an ontological politics (on multiple levels), I

temper a representation of ADP as an unvarnished location of possibility with a

consideration of some of the constraints and challenges that ADP—and indeed much

of the institutional left in the United States—must navigate in relation to non-profit

based community activism. From this discussion, I begin to build an argument that a

politics of economic possibility is not undermined by, and in fact can benefit from a

touch of ethnographic realism, a dose of strong theory, if it is taken within the larger

body of ontological politics.

CHAPTER 6

THE DURABILITY OF THE WORLD AS IT IS?: COMMUNITY ECONOMIES, THE SOCIAL ECONOMY, AND THE NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

On a crisp, fall afternoon in 2012, l attended a state-level hearing on energy efficiency programs in Boston, giving testimony on behalf of ADP and as part of the statewide coalition around energy efficiency and social justice. As one tactic in the campaign, ADP had participated in a pilot program to help residents access weatherization resources and, as a result, had gained first hand, experiential knowledge of the economic and cultural barriers facing many low-moderate income communities. After the hearing, James, an activist and organizer with an environmental justice non-profit that was also a coalition partner asked me to walk and talk with him before I headed out of Boston.

I knew James well. In addition to our work together on the coalition, James had become deeply involved in an effort in Boston to create a worker-owned recycling cooperative and was doing a lot of thinking around alternative economies; and, initially through my invitation, James had become involved with the 2012 Worcester SAGE conference. James had given me a number of extended interviews and conversations over the course of the previous year discussing green politics, activism, social theory and alternative economics. And James had come to visit me for the day earlier in the year to see a bit of Western Massachusetts and talk politics. We had become friends, allies, and collaborators. So it was not a surprise that, even before we had walked the few blocks to Dewey Square where Occupy Boston had set

up camp the previous fall, James launched into a story that brought us into intense

conversation.

He told me about a relative of his, also an activist, who was facing a difficult,

political choice. A number of the members of her national social justice organization

had recently quit the group, specifically over issues about internal process and lack

of transparency in decision-making. In an email sent to many in the organization,

one of the dissenters had asked others to join him, writing a manifesto against the

"non-profit industrial complex." James recounted that the manifesto critiqued the

high salaries paid to executive staff and that it argued that as long as they—and

other social justice organizations and by extension "the movement" writ-large—

took money from foundations, they would be relegated to only doing reform and

amelioration of problematic conditions.

As we wended our way from South Station towards Boston's financial

district, James continued, offering his own analysis. James was dubious of non-profit

based political activism that depends on philanthropy as being able to do anything

more than address the impacts of capitalism. At the same time, James said, there

was no denying that there was lots of good, important social justice work being

done by non-profit organizations thanks in large measure to philanthropic

foundations and government resources.

"I think that [the dissenter] is mostly right", James concluded despondently

"What do you think?"

I responded that, yes, I thought that there was certainly a problematic

relationship between the institutional left and the philanthropic foundations whose

financial resources were available because of the very same extractive relationships creating the conditions on the ground that we (organizers and activists in the movement) were attempting to respond to. On the other hand, I said, there was something subversive about taking money from the funding agencies and the state and using it to try and fight injustices or even, like ADP, begin to create other economies and other worlds.

The streets got darker and quieter and we continued to talk, extending our conversation longer than either of us had planned. We made a quick stop at his organization's offices before heading through Beacon Hill's cobblestone streets towards the Boston Common, where I had parked my car. Before we parted, we came to a provisional agreement— it was possible for non-profit organizations to use monies to work towards creating more—as James puts it—" autonomous and empowered communities" through worker and community control of economic and political institutions; it was possible to imagine the institutional left as part of a revolutionary politics. But this was treacherous terrain. Certainly not all organizations had a vision of radical transformation and those that did had to be very careful not to get sucked into projects and activities that they didn't want to be doing as they chased down funding.

This conversation was not the first time that either of us had engaged in extended, emotional exchanges about the relationship between activism, non-profits, and capitalism, and it certainly wouldn't be the last. Indeed, the increasing reliance on a non-profit model for political activism is an ever-present concern and preoccupation for the progressive left in the United States. This particular

conversation, however, had added resonance and was especially timely for me in relation to ADP. Funding and fundraising—always a prominent concern at ADP— had become an increasing obsession in the preceding months. As ADP sank deeper into crisis and struggled to stay afloat, funding had become the driving focus of the organization, more clearly influencing activity and diverting energies away from community development and organizing, away from imagining and working to create another world.

The ambivalence and tension between radical possibility on the one hand, and reform and complicity on the other, can be further theorized in relation to two different theoretical framings that attempt to make sense of the formative location of the institutional left—ensconced as it is in the non-profit sector: 1) the social economy which envisions non-profits as constitutive of ethical and non-capitalist activity and implores us to look for and politicize difference and possibility, and 2) the non-profit industrial complex which positions non-profits as inherently compromised by, at the mercy of and folded into processes of capital accumulation; it calls out for critique and ask us to look for social reproduction and the role that power plays in non-profit activities. I introduce these two frameworks here to help think concretely about the contradictory political forces and possibilities at play in the non-profit worlds, as well as the co-existence of two possible worlds entangled together. In the following section, I briefly outline the political and ideological contours of each discursive formation in order to better position ADP as a non-profit organization inspired by and open to economic possibility, attempting to create a

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new economy while facing pressures and being pulled along by cultural forces tied to capitalist reproduction.

The Social Economy

The Social Economy (SE) refers to a range of economic activity located "in between" the public sector and the private sector, in between state-planning and untrammelled market competition. This includes a range of non-profit based activity that privileges social and environmental well-being over profit, including voluntary associations, community development organizations, social enterprises, social service providers, mutual-aide organizations, as well as for-profit social enterprises and cooperatives. As a response to increasing inequalities, austerity, and social and ecological violence brought about through capital accumulation, the SE is a vision for a new economy. SE institutions prominently include non-capitalist enterprises, forms of labor, and exchange. And SE activity values collective control over private ownership, social solidarity over individual competition, and local, situated needs and resources over the imperatives of global capital. Though there are theoretical and political disagreements, SE is associated with the project of Solidarity Economy (Allard, Davidson, and Matthei 2008; Amin 2009; Lechat 2009; Lewis and Swinney 2008); sometimes the two terms indicate a common project (Laville 2010, Kawano 2013). The social and solidarity economy as concepts and movements have developed alongside the increased recognition and coherence of activity in the so-called "third sector" in some nation-states, but also are used to describe less robust—and less self-aware—SE activity in other countries.

The extent to which SE constitutes a legible economic entity or movement is both a geo-political and a theoretical question. In Canada, France, and Brazil, for example, SE movements have forced their recognition and led to some degree of political influence over policy or state support (Amin 2009, Lechat 2009, Mendell 2009). In other locations in the majority world, like the United States, a coherent SE does not yet exist, though the non-profitization of social service, community development activities, and activism is robust. Recently, in some locations in the United States, SE-type activity is becoming more self-aware and incorporated into social movements, organizing activity, and community development projects; sometimes taking on monikers that attach them to broader projects including solidarity economy, the cooperative movement, and the New Economy (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation, Shear 2014, and Loh and Shear 2015).

Though economic pluralism is a foundational principle to the SE, there is no consensus around the relationship that SE has to the public and private sectors. Some assert that SE is best understood as a relatively bounded sector or system, separate from the private and public sectors (Pearce 2009) while others claim that SE is a hybrid, "poised between for-profit markets and public-sector objectives of general interest…involving a hybrid mixture of commercial, non-commercial, and non-monetary resources" (Laville 2009). Making a distinction between SE and solidarity economy, Lewis and Swinney (2008) argue that SE principles and values can and do exist outside of the "third sector", and thus the solidarity economy should be imagined as "existing in all three spheres" (35).

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The political, or transformative role that SE should play in relation to economy and society writ-large is also unsettled. On one end of the spectrum, Hausner (2009) views the SE as the "sector of the economy which helps to streamline the state and market" (208), thus, "the purpose of the SE should be to…solve social problems more effectively and indirectly contribute to a more efficient state and economy" (228). In contrast, Amin (2009) warns that "policies that value social enterprises for their market worth are likely to force practices that could compromise the core mission of the social economy to tackle social disadvantage and meet social needs (17). Kawano (2013) uses the term Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) to join "the more radical end of the social economy" with solidarity economy which "seeks to change the whole social and economic system… it pursues the transformation of the neoliberal capitalist economic system from one that gives primacy to maximizing private profit and blind growth, to one that puts people and planet at its core".

Graham and Cornwell place non-profits, and ADP in particular, squarely in the midst of the SE, which they describe as offering a "pool of exemplary resources for communities at every scale…a treasure trove of innovative governance, social service provision, community-based resource management, conservation and restoration initiatives—indeed, an endless list of socially and environmentally beneficial activities in every site and sector" (63). For Graham and Cornwell (2009), it is this very acceptance of and re-orientation around possibility that is what is at stake. The proliferation of a vision of social economy—as comprised of diverse, ethical economic relationships and enterprises to be assembled by and for

communities—is an important political act; showing and demonstrating the

successes of existent SE activity can open up radical economic possibility for

academics and on-the-ground movements, "If researchers were truly open to the

radical and experimental energies of the social economy, 'another world' could

potentially arise from social economy research and the training of social activists

and entrepreneurs. Actually, the world is already here—it's just waiting to be

strengthened and enlarged" (64).

From Gibson-Graham's perspective, the social economy presents a new

economic imaginary, an ontology in which capitalism no longer suffuses and

saturates the economic field at the expense of the diverse economy; in this open

expanse new ideas and desires can take hold and ethical economies, what Gibson-

Graham describe as "community economies" in which subjects make collective,

ethical decisions, can take root.

The Non-Profit Industrial Complex

Others approach the political location of non-profits from a more critical

perspective, theorizing the relationship between non-profits, state actors,

philanthropic foundations, and volunteerism as less of a route towards accessing a

hodge-podge of resources from which communities and movements can build a new

ethical economy, and more of a hegemonic constellation that manages, tames and

steers political energies towards social-economic reproduction on behalf of capital

accumulation and elite interests, a formation that some refer to as the Non-Profit

Industrial Complex (NPIC) (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2007.)

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The NPIC is the set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive-leftist social movements since about the mid 1970's (Rodriguez 2007: 21-22).

Today, non-profits and non-profit funding, have become an integral, even natural, feature of progressive-left politics. Indeed, Rodriguez asserts that "forms of sustained, grassroots social movements that *do not* rely on the material assets and institutionalized legitimacy of the NPIC have become largely unimaginable within the political culture of the current US Left" (27). Grassroots politics, voluntary organizations, and the like certainly have a long-standing in US history. And government and philanthropic funding of grassroots movements and community development non-profits have existed well before the latter half of the 20th century. But the depth and nature of this relationship has dramatically changed as non-profits and funding agencies have grown in numbers and scale (Gilmore 2007, Kwon 2013, Rodriguez 2007, Smith 2007, Wolch 1990). Following the authors cited in the previous sentence, we might recognize two waves of non-profit growth. The first wave occurring mid-twentieth century, was a consequence of social movements making demands on the state for rights and redistribution of resources. The second wave is coincident with "neoliberal" restructuring and the withdrawal of the state from directly providing social service provisions beginning around 1980.

A look at the numbers bears this out. Kwon (2013) recounts that non-profits grew from "12,500 in 1940 to just under one million in 1989" and then more than doubled to "over two million" by 2013 (59). "In 1993 nonprofit organizations accounted for approximately 7.9% of the gross domestic product, and the operating expenditures of nonprofits increased almost fivefold between 1977-1988. As of 1998, the non-profit sector employed about eleven million people, making up over 7% of the workforce" (62). Smith (2007) shows that charitable and philanthropic giving has followed a similar trajectory. "By 1955, donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations totaled 7.7 billion, according to the American Association of Fundraising Counsel Trust for Philanthropy. By 1978, that total had grown to $39 billion. In 1998, the last year of available data, total giving had risen to $175 billion" (4). This increase in philanthropic giving is coincident with increasing levels of inequality and increasing concentrations of wealth into the hands of the elite as exploitation has intensified over the past three decades. Philanthropic giving then, acts as a material and ideological relief valve, softening or even obfuscating class contradictions by redistributing wealth and positioning the elite as beneficent and generous members of the community (Shear and Lyon-Callo 2013).

Non-profits themselves have become big business. Non-profits handle everything from education to community development, from child care to conservation, and from disaster relief to grassroots activism. While some warn of the way in which volunteer labor is enrolled into circuits of capital accumulation through the NPIC (Adams 2013), others are wary of the professionalization of activism produced through the NPIC.

When you start paying people to do activism, you can start to attract people

to the work who are not primarily motivated by or dedicated to the struggle.

In addition, getting paid to do the work can also change those of us who are

dedicated. Before we know it, we start to expect to be paid and do less

unpaid work than we would have before. This way of organizing benefits the

system, of course, because people start seeing organizing as a career rather

than as involvement in a social movement that requires sacrifice. (Thunder

Hawk 2007: 105)

The reliance on state and philanthropic funding positions non-profits in

competition with each other, encouraging them to also conform their operations

and activities to the expectations and interests of funders (Adams 2013: 153-175).

The need for grants and donations can deradicalize existing movements (Allen

2007, King and Osayande 2007) as "social change campaigns, organizations, and

aspiring movements increasingly articulate their vision through the *imperatives of

obtaining the financial support and civil sanction of liberal philanthropy and the

state"* (Rodriquez 2007: 33). Social actors are thus inhibited from being able to

imagine or act on new ideas that might appear too radical. For example, Lyon-Callo

(1998) explains how the financial precarity of a homeless shelter dependent on

public and private donations worked to discipline social actors who worked there.

Consequently, any action that might alienate a potential donor or granting

source was seen as risking the future of the shelter. Even if this were not

actually the case, the perception of great risk was strong enough to curtail

the activist impulse among most staff and to suppress most expressions of

discontent among homeless people (4).

In addition to potential co-optation and acquiescence, successful grant

writing sucks time and energy away from other, more mission-based activities,

sometimes leading to a restructuring of operations and resources. As Rodriguez

(2007) explains, "the very existence of many social justice organizations has often

come to rest more on the effectiveness of professional (and amateur) grant writers

than on skilled—much less "radical"—political organizers and educators" (27).

As noted above, the most recent expansion of the non-profit sector in the

United States, is concomitant with the state relinquishing itself from direct

responsibility for social welfare. The non-profit sector has emerged in part to

address unattended social needs by providing community level development and

services made possible by non-profit organizations, volunteer labor, charitable

giving, and state support as well. Following Foucault, Kwon understands this "shift

from a welfare to a neoliberal state, in which responsibility for social services is

increasingly transferred to nonprofit organizations" (12), as coincident with

neoliberal governance which produces new subjects that imagine themselves and

act in accordance with neoliberal values (and see Lyon-Callo 2004, Hyatt 2001).

For citizen-subjects of a liberal democracy under neoliberalism, citizenship

and political activeness do not mean just acknowledging one's responsibility

for economic growth and self-governance, but also the active and voluntary

involvement in the management of one's potential for social risks (see for

example, poverty, unemployment, and disempowerment). In other words,

this mode of governance or 'bio-politics'...is amplified within a neoliberal

regime that encourages self-responsibility and empowerment. (Kwon 2013:

10)

As Kwon (2013) points out, "under neoliberalism, empowerment is not only

a personal responsibility; it is also a community responsibility "(12 and see Joseph

2002). Thus, "the mutation to community governance foists state responsibilities

onto individuals and their communities, who now are responsible for their own—

and their community's—economic well-being" (12).

Following the framework of the NPIC, it would seem that this new terrain, in

which individuals and communities are charged with and are encouraged to

understand themselves as being responsible for their own well-being might work to

facilitate the dissolution of the welfare state and naturalize the ideology of free-

market capitalism.

However, it is precisely this discursive shift—towards community

responsibility for well-being—that has set the stage for activists and communities to

organize around and build new economies. Indeed, since communities are now in

charge to address the vagrancies of economy, rather than the state, it amounts to a

de-facto concession that there is more to economy than market solutions and a redistributive state. Positioning communities as responsible for their own social and economic well-being invites activists and communities to imagine creative solutions towards social problems; it sets the stage for imagining and desiring economic difference and enacting economic possibility.

What are the possibilities for addressing social and economic well-being for the institutional left who are financially wedded to philanthropic organizations and the state through the non-profitization of politics? What are the constraints and dangers? To what extent can non-capitalism be imagined and desired? To what extent can non-capitalism be enacted? In the following section, I explore some of these questions in relation to the Alliance to Develop Power.

Embrangled Between the Social Economy and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex

In the spring of 2011, a few months after I began to get involved with ADP, Caroline Murray parted ways with the organization, marking a significant period of transition. Caroline was a powerful and visionary executive director, a skilled organizer and a redoubtable political force.[24] Her departure was met with great surprise by those from outside the organization.

Shortly after Caroline left, an organization-wide, day-long retreat was convened, bringing together the motley group of individuals and groups that comprised ADP—staff and leaders, United for Hire workers and ADP members

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[24] After leaving ADP, Caroline went on to work as Organizing Director of Rebuild the Dream, a "21st Century Think Tank", headed up by Van Jones.

employed in the cooperative housing complexes, congregational leaders associated with ADP and members of the worker center—to take measure of where the organization had come from and where it should head. From this meeting, and other meetings and conversations amongst and between staff and leaders in the coming weeks, a general ambivalence about the state of the organization was expressed from which plans to develop and move forward began to take shape.

First, there was a shared feeling among staff and ADP leaders that the organization had already accomplished a great deal and that ADP had developed a powerful and innovative vision for social change. One prominent leader, in explaining the successful development and workings of ADP's community economy, voiced great confidence that ADP was poised to continue to push forward and grow the organization.

> [After the housing buy out] you know, there were folks that were looking to get jobs, and you know the economy wasn't always like this but there was a sense that folks needed livable wage jobs and they needed jobs that were not going to be, where they were not going to be abused by their employer so we did a series of campaigns to win back wages for employees who were abused and exploited, but also you know the need, we came to see, the kind of economy that recycles wealth back into the community and that's where the birth of the ADP community economy came and the idea of that was that we would create liveable wage jobs for people that lived within the community and that would create wealth and we would also be able to inject monies

[into the local economy]... That's basically how I see ADP, I don't know of any other [community organizing group] that has a community economy, where we have created institutions that break away the barriers that keep people from that kind of engagement...and our model really does work with that because these folks subscribe to the values that we all feel collectively is what is needed in this world.

An active leader who was also a member of the cooperative housing board and the ADP board of directors stated, "ADP members own and control this [organization]. We can do anything."

Another leader succinctly summed up the general direction and aspiration.

"We need to be a family, we are a family. Staff, leaders, United for Hire, I don't care. We are all here for each other to [make] the world as it should be."

ADP staff had similar feelings of allegiance to the vision and excitement about what was possible. One staff member, and former union organizer, hired in 2011 shortly after the Executive Director transition, explains that she came to the organization because "it was doing cool shit that I had never heard of before."

Another staff member who began to work with the organization felt similarly, "When I joined, I was very excited, very inspired, I felt like my dream job had been handed to me," because of the way that alternative economics and values were involved in the organizing work.

After a few months on the job in 2011, another organizer said,

I didn't really understand what we were doing here at first. I wanted to be

here, I was excited to be here. But now I get it. In other community

orgnaizing groups you are doing these things and maybe winning these

campaigns and then you are going over to the next issue. We are not only

organizing against power or [trying to make] small changes to the existing

system. We are actually making 'the world as it should be'.

While there was great confidence, almost a celebration, in what ADP had

done and where it was headed, there was also a sentiment that there was still much

to do continue to actualize ADP's evolving model—ADP's community economy—in

terms of three, interrelated areas: member involvement and governance, financial

stability, and development of the organization.

There were questions about how and the extent to which "community"

existed in the community economy, and questions around the extent to which ADP

was currently member driven and governed. ADP claimed an organizing base of

5000 people. Undoubtedly, ADP had a large, active membership. Many of ADP's

activities were member run—either volunteer members or paid employees. And

ADP was well known for turning out large numbers of members to rallies,

demonstrations, and public meetings. However, many individuals in the different

institutional bodies of ADP—like the housing co-ops—either did not fully identify

with or did not know much about the organization. In addition, members of ADP's

different institutions had their own shared identities and interests, that needed to

be negotiated—for example, the tenants on the governing board of a housing

cooperative, who marshal rent surplus and make decisions about how to spend it; and the workers at United for Hire, who are paid to do work at the housing cooperatives by the tenant boards. As Jon, a long-time staff member of ADP, who was hired as interim executive director (and would subsequently lose the interim label) said to a group of staff and leaders after an informal conversation about the state of ADP, "we need to stop talking about it as if they are all "active" members" and instead "do the [internal] organizing work we need to do to become a real community."

In addition to membership growth and a shared identity, hopes were expressed for more fully becoming a community-governed organization. Shortly after the transition, a prominent leader expressed her pride in being part of a democratic community organization and as well as the ongoing aspirations of the organization to reach this vision. "What's different about ADP is that the organization is member-led. The prime example of that really is the board of directors." As evidence that ADP's board was atypical and important, she noted that an ADP ally failed to recognize this structure, "I don't think that that they realized that there was a board of directors, who were leaders, that really [is supposed to] govern the organization. I think that, in and of itself is a good example of that. And it's still a work in progress…and where we want to be with ADP to get to the next level."

Jon shared a similar vision, one in which membership, through the member-filled board was more fully directing day-to-day operations. "I just want to get it to a place where the board is making [more decisions] where I am taking directions from

the board. Where [the board] can be a place of leadership development and can [direct] ADP. Jon also saw his role as executive director as a temporary one that would ultimately begin to be filled by ADP leaders as they developed through the organization as volunteers, employees, and board members. "I don't want to be the executive director three years from now and it shouldn't be an [external hire]. It should be [a prominent ADP community leader] who has lived and grown in ADP."

The observations and hopes of ADP staff and members around increasing membership involvement, democratic governance, and a shared, negotiated identity and needs, point towards a recognition of the need and a desire to engage in what might be described as *commoning* "the ongoing production and reproduction of a commons" (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, Healy 2013: 138) through negotiated use, shared access and benefits, and community care and responsibility (132). Any property, or practice, or knowledge can be oriented either towards individual interest and the accumulation of individual wealth, or towards the shared interest and benefit of a community: a commons. ADP aspired to be an organization that served, was comprised of, and was led by its members. ADP's institutions, and ADP itself, aimed to generate wealth and resources that members "owned and controlled". A commons, however, takes careful effort to produce and maintain. As Caffentzis and Federici (2014) state, "commons are not essentially material things but are social relations, constitutive social practices." For ADP staff and members, the ability and need to expand and strengthen these social relations was what was at stake.

Like many other non-profits, the lack of financial security and economic stability were ongoing concerns at ADP; inhibiting efforts to organize and build the organization. As suggested in the previous section, grant writing is time consuming and can be politically problematic since grant-makers can have different ideological and political commitments than their recipients. ADP staff were reflexively aware and savvy in relation to the ways in which funding streams carried ideological constraints. Indeed, grant writing was a negotiated process. Sometimes grants were not pursued because of ideological conflicts. Sometimes language was developed to articulate ADP activities within a different ideological frame. The uncertainty and inconsistency of grant-based income added another layer of difficulty. Planning activities and events, and carrying out particular projects when budgets are dependent on the opinions and goodwill of outside parties is problematic at best. Unlike other non-profits, however, ADP's operations were funded not only through grants and donations, but also through the surplus generated by United for Hire which accounted for huge portion of ADP's operating budget. ADP staff and members were conscious of this burden and intended to not only grow United for Hire to generate more community jobs and wealth, but also shore up its grant-writing and fundraising operations in order to alleviate pressure on United for Hire and, in general, create a more stable organization and favorable conditions that would help the organization do

Finally, staff and leaders expressed a deep desire and commitment to further develop and grow the community economy internally and to share the model and work outside of ADP. Development inside the organization meant continuing to do

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the organizing and campaign work to grow a membership base, providing and improving services through community building activity, and looking for new opportunities to grow United for Hire and to envision and create new ADP institutions. Getting better at discussing and sharing ADP's work outside of the organization was important for fundraising. Even more, it was an effort to become a more visible part of the movement, a more active collaborator, and to make more of an effort to more effectively "play in the sandbox" with other social justice groups.

So, in 2011 and the early months of 2012 ADP was alive, crackling with energy. Being involved with ADP was thrilling. It was special. We *knew* that we had a unique, important vision for social change. At the same time, we also had a sober view of what was in front of us. Staff and leaders were hopeful and committed. In the months following the transition, tremendous energy and effort was put towards addressing areas of concern and taking advantage of opportunity even as crisis hit the organization.

Indeed, on June 1, less than a month after the transition, three tornadoes ripped through Western Massachusetts, destroying homes and businesses, displacing hundreds of people, and resulting in three deaths and hundreds of injuries. Springfield's South End was particularly hard hit, and ADP's building sustained significant damage, forcing staff to relocate to temporary offices just north of Springfield in Holyoke. The tornado was shocking—tornadoes are extremely rare in New England—and traumatizing to those affected. These included staff and members of ADP, a handful of whom were in ADP headquarters when the tornado hit. Described one ADP board member,

All I can hear is it's like a freight train. I can hear all of the windows being

smashed in and things falling ... When I went outside and saw what I saw and

I walked up the streets to see people just roaming the streets, they had this

lost expression..and then we pulled together, to help each other, to let

everyone know it was going to be okay.

Like many community organizations in Springfield, ADP took on the task of

helping to provide immediate relief for those impacted by the tornado, including

counseling services. In the days following the tornado, leaders and staff gathered in

the storefront office space in the mornings, bearing witness to the hardship and

suffering that ADP members, family, and friends were going through, and making

strategic plans for a response. These meetings and ADP's rapid response to the

tornadoes brought staff and leaders closer together, reaffirming commitment to

each other and the organization.

Although responding to the tornado took up a great amount of time and

resources beyond what was already accounted for, the organization was determined

to develop the organization, even during this period. Two new staff were hired to

coordinate and help grow two aspects of ADP's community economy—a director of

economic development and a director of community building. A professional

fundraiser was brought on board first as a consultant, then later as an employee of

the organization. A new organizer from outside the organization was brought on

board. And three longtime ADP leaders—who lived in ADP cooperative housing—

were hired on staff as community organizers. Creating these linkages between staff and leaders, it was hoped, would help to efface boundaries between staff and membership and encourage a stronger group identification as ADP.

At the end of the summer, ADP held a smaller retreat to bring together this new staff—which had more than doubled to nearly a dozen—to generate concrete plans around the internal restructuring that had emerged during the transition. One major project coming out of the retreat was a 1:1 campaign intended to continue conversations around organizational direction and restructuring, bring more members into the organization, and bring existing members into more active, directive roles. Each staff member, whether officially an organizer or not, would act as an organizer, committing to a set number of individual meetings each week with ADP members—this included longtime members and leaders, as well as people in the membership base who knew little about ADP.

Over the course of the summer and early fall of 2011, a visual model of the ADP community economy was developed that explained ADP's complex, heterogeneous efforts as part of a cohesive, dynamic whole.

The ADP Community Economy model was envisioned as a three circled, venn diagram, constituted by three overlapping strategies: 1) community organizing, which built and harnessed collective power for campaigns that resulted in both policy reforms and help create alternative economic institutions; 2) community building, which provided programs and events to build solidarity and meet peoples basic needs so they could participate more fully in their community and 3) economic development, which would create good living wage jobs, build community assets,

and create surplus for the community to put towards more community organizing and community development. Each strategy was further connected by, and provided an opportunity for, three "drivers" of the organization: leadership development (personal transformation), base-building (growing the membership), and civic engagement.

This model was important. It was discussed and shared by staff and leaders to members in group meetings and 1:1 conversations and ADP leaders and staff used it to engage with other publics in a range of different settings. In late summer of 2011, ADP staff and members participated in the first Worcester Solidarity and Green Economy Conference, discussing ADP's community economy and related organizing work (and ADP's executive director Jon would participate again the following year in the plenary session). Another staff member gave a presentation of ADP's model at the Union for Radical Political Economics conference in New York. ADP discussed the community economy at a 2011 organizers conference in Chicago and leaders presented on the model at the 2012 National Peoples Action conference—a meeting of affiliated community organizing groups. Jon and I worked on an academic paper, which we co-presented at the 2012 Society for Applied Anthropology conference. I was also enlisted and enrolled myself into other efforts to perform ADP's model to other publics and networks. I worked on the narrative language for an animated short that would promote ADP's model. I represented ADP on a conference call to an alternative-economy organization, explaining ADP's model and vision. And I wrote about ADP to the popular press, touting ADP's

accomplishments and politics or listing ADP as part of a broader movement towards economic possibility.

The amount of effort discussing ADP's model was not simply about trying to get people to understand how ADP works, it was itself a discursive intervention, or more precisely, multiple discursive interventions. First, internal discussions about ADP's model were intended to help generate a shared identity. However people fit into and participated in the organization—volunteering at food banks, coming to a worker rights training, living in an affiliated housing complex, leading or participating in a direct action, working on a United for Hire maintenance crew— they were all ADP. Whether worker, volunteer, resident, or consumer, their participation was made possible by—and helped to enable—the participation of other ADP members in different parts of the organization. Second, discussions of ADP's model—both internal and directed towards other publics—worked as a form of "cultural politics" (Escobar 1992b) intended to intervene against and reframe dominant meanings of development and, especially, economy. Instead of an externally imposed, exploitative global-system in which individuals were forced to compete against each other over scare resources; economy was shown to *also* be something that took place at the level of community; a process that we all participated in and contributed to, that we could collectively generate ourselves, that could provide living wage jobs, and that could be constituted by alternative, non-capitalist institutions and relations.

Envisioning Possibility

During ADP's great efforts to more fully concretize and share its vision in 2011-2012, there were numerous moments of possibility; moments in which "the world as it is" melted into air[25], revealing an open terrain, an unfinished world ready to be created. In these moments, the world around us did indeed appear as "a pool of exemplary resources" from which communities via non-profits could gain control over surplus, where social value meant more than market value, where development was about community well-being not individual profits, and where the only thing preventing us from creating a new, community economy was the limits of our imagination. I will give three, particularly instructive examples.

1) South End Hope

Concerned about the ongoing well-being of South End residents in relation to the type of redevelopment efforts that might be pushed by the city onto ADP members and low-income communities in Springfield, ADP, in collaboration with a radical architecture professor and his students, held a meeting in later summer of 2011 with key members and leaders to talk about what to do. The meeting was grounded in a historical analysis of city development strategies: gentrification,

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[25] This is an intentional allusion to Marx's famous quote in the Communist Manifesto suggesting the power of capitalism to incorporate difference and reproduce itself vis-à-vis exchange value. "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. *All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his, real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind*." In contrast, I am referring here to moments in which ADP's model as a discourse, enabled staff, leaders, and community members to "sweep away" the ideological constraints of capitalism.

white flight, and more recent neoliberal restructuring (which I helped to present) as well as a discussion of the current, problematic development plans of the city. In this context, the meeting then turned to ideas for alternative community development. A simple, open-ended question was posed by a long-time ADP leader, "how can we?" which turned into a rallying cry and slogan for the entire project (see http://www.howcanwe.org). To help open discussion, the architecture professor presented different ways that existing buildings had been re-envisioned and repurposed, as public, politically-engaged art. From this context, ADP staff and leaders broke into groups, discussing different possibilities for turning ADP into a public art project that could help foment new ideas and action for community and economic development in Springfield. What emerged from this and subsequent meetings was a public art project, the South End Hope Initiative (SEHI), made up of a series of "pop-up projects" that were designed to engage the broader Springfield community around sustainable community development and economic possibility: a community green space that would replace some of what was lost in the neighborhood and ground future conversations about urban blight, a film series dealing with alternative community development that would engage ADP staff, members and the broader community through post-film discussions, a public mural created by area youth depicting their visions for community development, and the centerpiece of the effort, a projection that would display the ideas of community members—ideas that ADP members and organizers would collect through participatory research—on the front of the building. What's interesting here is that instead of opposing and protesting the city's efforts, as other groups and activists

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were doing—though this was certainly one possibility—ADP decided to develop its own agenda that would help ADP and the community have some control over the conversation.

As a long-time ADP leader succinctly stated "we need to make sure that the people that live in Springfield get to decide what their city is going to be like." For ADP, this meant not simply intervening in existing conversations so community members could have a voice in an existing discussion, but creating a new development frame altogether, one in which community members could imagine and begin to work towards sustainable community development that was not circumscribed by capitalism.

2) Transportation and Economic Possibility

In the Spring of 2012, ADP brought over 50 members and allies to a local hearing of the Pioneer Valley Transportation Association (PVTA) to protest the proposed rate hikes and service cuts to the bus system in the region. Supported by chants of "PVTA rate hikes we won't pay" and surrounded by signs condemning the proposed changes, an ADP member, who like many low income people in Springfield, is transit dependent, testified that she might lose her job if the changes were implemented because she would no longer be able to get to work on time. Others spoke about the inequities in the system and injustice of the proposed changes. It was a powerful show of collective power and demonstration of an oppositional stance. Like many transit systems across the country, the PVTA had been disinvested in by the state. In addition, funding that comes from the state of

Massachusetts is delivered after the operating year, forcing the PVTA to borrow money from private banks, which costs tax payers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in interest alone. To confront these conditions, ADP had joined in a statewide campaign to connect local issues to systemic problems and fight for a redistribution of resources towards the needs of low income communities and communities of color. For the coalition, the focus of the campaign was geared towards making demands on the state for policy reforms, pushing back against the system in order to secure more funding which could lower rates and expand transit services. For ADP, however, this was only part of the solution. Indeed, during the initial statewide strategy session, the campaign's lead organizer widened the frame of possible solutions to transit inequity beyond securing funding for policy reform. "Just to be clear," she said, "we are an organization that creates alternative economic institutions as part of our campaign work. Our members might decide that we should just own our own bus line." A few weeks later, a meeting was held for ADP leaders and members in the film screening room at ADP—created through SEHI—to discuss how transportation might become part of ADP's community economy. Members, staff and allies engaged in a mapping exercise that visually showed where, how, and what kind of transportation we used in our daily lives. After seeing how we moved and discussed what limited our mobility, we engaged in a wide-ranging visioning session, discussing new forms of transportation that we could use: bike sharing, community-owned shuttles, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT's) and other innovative transportation initiatives were brought up and discussed as viable options. One of the meeting organizers explained that the idea was to get creative and think outside

the box, "These [particular] ideas might not fit our needs, but we want to discuss them as possibilities to help us think of different possible solutions" [as we move forward in the campaign].

3) Expanding the Community Economy

In early summer of 2012, ADP organized a community meeting in Holyoke, MA to discuss the development of a community-owned Bodega. With financial backing from a socially conscious investment firm and funding from the USDA, this was to be the first of three Bodegas launched throughout the pioneer valley that would bring fresh produce to food deserts, contribute to the local economy, and create good paying jobs. About 100 Holyoke residents—including kids, families, and local business owners—joined ADP leaders in a downtown meeting hall, hearing an overview of the project. Recently elected Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse expressed the city's support for the project, "we're very, very excited and happy and willing to do everything we can." After a presentation on ADP and ADP's model, meeting-goers broke out into small groups. ADP staff and leaders facilitated discussions, encouraging conversation around what a community bodega might include beyond healthy food and convenience. The Bodegas, like United for Hire, would be owned by ADP and workers would have control over workplace conditions but the rest of the structure and business model was to be determined through community discussions and involvement. Each group sketched out ideas on butcher paper thinking freely and openly about what might emerge: a public meeting space, a musical venue, a retailer for local craftspeople, an institutional relationship with local and organic

food producers, a hybrid cooperative model, and so on were discussed and then presented to the larger group. This visioning exercise was paired with a discussion of how people could continue to stay involved in the project and help to further plan and implement the project, from finance, to design, to store-opening. The meeting pulled the broader community from outside of ADP into a shared discursive space in which the community could imagine, discuss, and negotiate together what our economy should be like.

The above examples demonstrate the effectiveness of ADP's cultural politics to do more than oppose or critique existing conditions, but rather to interrupt dominant discourses by creating a new discursive terrain from which to envision and enact social change. This distinction has important political ramifications. Raiter (1999) explains that the act of opposing or critiquing dominant discourses operates within the symbolic referents of the very same dominant discourses and thus works to affirm them. Indeed, following Foucault, Raiter argues that it's important to remember the productive, generative nature of power as and through discourse, "the dominant discourse is not part of an authoritarian device: it never excludes, always includes. Its strength lies not in the suppression of other discourses...all statements reinforce the reference system, consolidating the accepted meanings and values of signs while granting at most a different affective slant" (92).

Instead of (or more precisely, in addition to) opposition and critique, ADP's cultural politics involved retaking what Raiter refers to as the *discourse initiative,* in

an effort that worked to "change the existing references and initiate a different discourse formation" (97).

In their discursive interventions, these reframings through discourse initiative, ADP staff, members, and community members were reoriented and transformed, enabled and encouraged to surface and entertain dormant, suppressed, or previously unknown desires for economy. The economy could be envisioned as something other than an externally imposed, capitalist market that works on its own. Instead, economy was articulated as diverse, full of non-capitalist possibility, and open to transformation through collective action. On this ideological terrain of economic difference, community organizing could be put to use towards creating new socio-economic institutions rather than only making demands on existing ones. Economic development could be envisioned as a cooperative endeavor undertaken by community members to meet community needs and desires, rather than a process, proposed by experts from the outside and geared towards the interests of capital.

In these efforts towards imagining and creating a new economy geared towards collective control, solidarity, and local needs and desires, ADP enlisted the support and resources of elements of what could be understood as constitutive of the "social economy"—foundations, government resources, other non-profits, volunteer labor, and the broader community. At the same time, as ADP made strides to mobilize these elements towards the creation of institutions and relations that might coalesce into something like a "community economy"—into creating the world as it should be—we were also materially, ideologically, and affectively pulled

back in other directions, into formations, practices, and identities that carried all too familiar values and commitments. This tension was of course always present. Indeed, ADP's community economy was, quite remarkably, built amidst practices and relations that often constrained and misdirected the organization's intentions. By the summer of 2012, however, the 'world as it is', began to more forcefully and immediately assert itself.

Crisis and Uncommoning

It was early fall 2012. Taylor and I arrived for our meeting at nearly the same time. A staff organizer, Taylor had scheduled a 1:1 meeting with an ally in Amherst, just before our own meeting and so he had, quite generously, suggested that we meet on the campus of the University of Massachusetts since he was going to be close by. When we made plans, we were just going to hang out a bit: a relaxed, check-in conversation, a casual 1:1 meeting. Taylor had some specific things that he wanted to ask me about around Marxist scholarship and how it might relate to community organizing and I wanted to talk to him about how he was doing and feeling in relation to the fundraising work that he and all staff of ADP had been charged with about a month before.

He was quieter than usual. He looked tired. I asked him if he was okay, and suggested that we could certainly meet another time. He said no, that he wanted to meet, and then he erupted, "I can't stand it anymore…everyone is so stressed out and angry!" "This shit is unsustainable. There is no place to talk about it, no time to talk about it." He went on to discuss how his role had been changed, "yet again", and

he was having a hard time figuring out how to do organizing work. "I get asked to do one thing [campaign] and then another [a short time later] and I can't actually organize." When he tried to ask/talk to upper-level staff about it, "I felt like I was facing the triumverate! I mean, what is this? I just don't know how much more I can take of this." This overwhelming frustration, marked a drastic shift in stance for Taylor who, just six months before, had been so bubbling with enthusiasm about the organization and his work in it that he was talking effusively about making a career with ADP and immersing himself in alternative economic, cooperative living.

The working environment, the atmosphere at ADP had indeed changed through the spring and into the summer, and we all felt it. ADP was always intense. People cared deeply about the work and about each other. Staff and leaders were committed, opinionated, and strong. Negotiating personalities and personal politics was part of the job. But, now, everything was sped-up. People were less compromising and more combative. Enthusiasm for the work waxed and waned. There was less cooperation and discussion and more hierarchy. The staff had grown and restructured significantly since the beginning of 2012 including the hiring of three new organizers that were added to the already substantial growth of the organization from the previous year. New administrative and management hierarchies and concomitant hierarchical practices had also been established. Added to the general staff meetings was a regular directors meeting for upper level staff. General staff meetings too had changed. ADP had always been efficient, on-time, and well conducted. But as the organization grew, staff meetings became more about reporting information—reports often reduced to a rapid regurgitation of numbers

in terms of dollars raised or member turn-out for a particular event. There was

much less time for discussing ideas, envisioning new projects, or dreaming together

as a group. As the feeling of crisis grew, some staff were reticent to give input or

even ask questions. Said one staff member, "I mean, I know we [the paid staff] aren't

a cooperative, but I don't see how we can be trying to create a cooperative economy

[under these conditions]." What had been an incongruent but workable dynamic—a

staff that was organized as a hierarchy with an executive director at the top

attempting to facilitate the creation of a community economy with cooperative

structures—was now taking center stage, exacerbated by the organization's need to

more efficiently structure time and resources as the financial situation of the

organization deteriorated.

Anxiety around and concern with generating revenue was not new of course.

As a non-profit community organization, ADP had always been quite

characteristically, in a precarious financial situation, dependent in large part on

unpredictable funding streams. Post 2011 transition, financial stability was a major

concern and priority, but the organization had instead reached a new level of crisis.

Indeed, despite a renewed focus on fundraising, beginning in the fall of 2011, ADP

had lost a number of expected funding opportunities and grants that had come

through previously or that seemed like particularly good bets. With the increase in

payroll size and budget shortfalls, by the summer of 2012 there was mounting

pressure on the organization to each month, each week, simply find money for

payroll, never mind transformative projects. Staff members were told that their jobs

were at-risk and that the organization might have to close. In response, an all out

effort to raise one hundred thousand dollars was launched; the 100Day 100K

campaign. ADP scaled back or pulled out of many of its projects and proceeded on a

multi-pronged fundraising campaign including grants, corporate donations,

"grassroots" fundraising, and house-parties.

Initially, the invigorated focus on fundraising, in some ways, felt good. It felt

like a relief. Though some staff may have been surprised by how close the

organization was to insolvency, everyone knew and could feel that the organization

was under great strain but most staff felt powerless to do anything about it. Making

the situation transparent both relieved the pressure and restored some degree of

personal agency. As one staff member explains, "The 100 day 100k campaign. We

were excited about it. We wanted to do it. It felt like a good way to get us financially

secure so then we could go back to doing the organizing work we needed to do to be

a community economy." However, as this same staff member describes, this sense of

agency and purpose was promptly supplanted by feelings of unease. "It began to not

really feel right. At those houseparties, it felt like we were selling our stories in

order to pay ourselves." Reflecting back on the summer and fall of 2012, another

staff member remarked, "that's when my work really lost its meaning" and went on

to explain that, from her perspective, the work had become primarily about saving

the organization and that it felt like she was simply "fundraising to pay myself!"

Part of this was due to the fact that much of ADP's work had stalled, largely

because of funding shortages and inconsistencies. Explained an organizer at a large

meeting in the summer of 2012 discussing how economic problems were affecting

the organization, "Every time we have to run around to find the budget for the

bodega, or lost some work from one of our properties for United for Hire, or lose a grant, we become in danger of losing the momentum that could drive us forward and create this new vision."

Indeed, after capturing the imagination and support of Holyoke community members, the Bodega was held hostage by funding shortfalls and logistical setbacks. SEHI had been able to produce some interesting, initial discussions around its film series, but many of its other pop-up projects had lost momentum or had never gotten off the ground. For example, the plans for a community garden and green space, though they had been greatly scaled back, were nevertheless "waiting on funding."

Perhaps most problematically, as the organization lurched from one project to the next and more time was consumed with fundraising, ADP's efforts to increase membership involvement, interaction, and governance—ADP's efforts in *commoning* the organization—were in glaringly problematic states. The ADP Board was not as active or directive as everyone wanted it to be. As the executive director Jon lamented to me, "the board needs to be overseeing us (staff), so we can be held accountable" but that this still wasn't happening. Even more, no agreed upon process of appointment or election had been put into place. As another staff admitted, "we have really dropped the ball on that one."

In addition, one of the housing cooperatives that had relationships with United for Hire and had produced strong ADP leaders had disaffiliated with the organization in late Spring. This was due in part to tension around pay rates and work for United for Hire on the co-ops properties. As one organizer explains, the

high rates for United for Hire's work relative to other maintenance, cleaning, and landscaping services made "the housing co-ops [feel] like they were having their resources plundered." This tension could have provided an opportunity, not only for an instructive conversation about how the different elements of ADP's community economy fit together, but also for a discussion, an ethical negotiation between community members as part of a shared, heterogeneous, community economy. But, as one organizer explained, this latter effort at least "never happened. There was no discussion between the co-ops and United for Hire. The housing co-ops had no say in that, the workers had no say in that", because of expediency, because of the increasing need to generate revenue from United for Hire in order to help maintain ADP's viability.

Indeed, United for Hire itself had become less a space of ethical negotiation and more of a revenue generator. More pressure was being put on the organization to find work for employees and to generate surplus for the organization to stay afloat. One staff member felt that there was a definite shift that took place in the spring of 2012. Up through this time, he claimed, "United for Hire meetings had a lot of discussion and democratic decision making around working conditions. There would be meetings, with everybody (all the United for Hire workers), at least once a month. The workers would run the meeting and talk about what needed to happen…and things would actually change." For example, two female workers, who had been relegated to a cleaning division, came to the meeting to explain that they should be trained to do other jobs, and that it shouldn't be only women who were on the cleaning crew. "This was discussed, and totally lifted up and addressed. The

entire group bought into it and cross-training began and things actually changed." But, by the summer of 2012, "that [sort of collective self-governance] wasn't really happening anymore."

However, as a staff member asserts, United for Hire "was just being asked to make money." As another organizer reflected, by the fall of 2012, "we weren't doing much except trying to make money and with the work that we were doing, the United for Hire members weren't really connected and weren't really involved in ADP." Indeed, with the process of commoning interrupted and organizational efforts geared towards making payroll, United for Hire felt like less of a community owned, worker controlled enterprise and more like exploitation.

The shift in affect, stance and practice at ADP from an organization poised to fulfill its aspirations to an organization that was simply struggling to stay afloat happened quite rapidly. A long term ADP member sums up the feelings of disappointment and confusion that many of us felt. "Everything should have been guided by our cooperative principles and balancing the needs of the workers, the community, the environment. And we often did that. But, [pause] I don't know what happened. I can't quite put my finger on what happened. There is no room for capitalism in our model. But somewhere along the way we went from putting the people first to being about profit." As is often the case while immersed in a particular situation, it was difficult for anyone to know what was happening, let alone prevent anything from happening. And, even amidst deteriorating conditions and confusion, staff and leaders held on, hoping that the organization would turn the corner, find economic solvency, and be able to more effectively work towards

fulfilling its aspirations. For example, a few weeks after letting out his frustration

and despondency, Taylor had recommitted himself to the organization, telling me

that ADP was going to get through, that it was an innovative, groundbreaking

organization and that "it [was] going to work." Taylor could not maintain this

commitment, however, and quit the organization shortly thereafter. Taylor reflects,

"I really wanted to believe it, [but then] things just got crazier."

Through the fall of 2012, ADP continued to show signs of crisis and

deterioration. Conflict emerged when a high-ranking staff member asked for board

approval on a previously agreed upon substantial raise during a time when layoffs

had been threatened. Two organizers quit and three more were fired unexpectedly

the day after the completion of a huge GOTV organizing drive in an effort to stay

afloat. An ADP Board restructuring process was begun and aborted. Finally, in the

Spring of 2013, came the end of ADP as it had been known to the world. The

executive director resigned. United for Hire ceased to operate. ADP shut its doors.

In this brief discussion of ADP's efforts in 2011-2012, we can see that both

the Solidarity Economy and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex can help account for

the political-cultural dynamics at play. Indeed, from one vantage point, these two

different theoretical frameworks can act as heuristics, helping to better reveal what

is "really happening", on-the-ground at ADP. On the one hand, its location as a non-

profit allowed ADP to assemble the resources of private foundations, charity,

volunteer labor, and the state, towards imagining and creating a new, diverse, non-

capitalist economy. On the other hand, ADP as an organization, did "fail" in part

because its efforts were inhibited and ultimately undermined *because* of its location

and activities as a non-profit, dependent on philanthropy and the state, in competition with other non-profits for funding, and largely dependent on a division between paid staff and volunteer labor. Indeed, ADP's dependence on grant-based funding as well as its desire to develop the organization internally and externally, prompted the growth of its staff heavy structure which eventually led to more hierarchy. Losing out on funding placed ADP in financial crisis, driving the organization to focus on fundraising at the expense of its transformative goals. Even more salient, well before the dissolution of the organization, it was clear—to everyone in the organization—that ADP's valiant, internal efforts to concretize its ambitions and create a community economy, its work in *commoning* itself, was *always* under constraint.

From another vantage point, SE and NPIC can be understood not as frameworks to help uncover and explain what is really happening, but as representing two different, possible worlds that ADP and other non-profits are or could be a part of; two different worlds with ideological, material, and emotional attachments. Following Gibson-Graham, a performative politics of diverse economies should entail a representation that carefully nurtures and cultivates worlds where non-capitalist relations can flourish, showing them as real possibilities rather than showing how and why they can't or didn't work. And, of course, this is precisely what I did in Part 1, joining the previous efforts of other CEC scholars. However, my ethnographic experience working at ADP, as I recount in Part 2, compelled me to temper this performance with a bit of "realist" critique. Does an unvarnished, unsullied performance of other worlds, always expedite their

emergence? Conversely, can a critical look at what might prevent the emergence

and animation of other worlds help to support, rather than subvert, a performative

politics of diverse economies? In the following chapter, I address these questions by

reflecting on my own thinking and decisions about how to represent ADP.

CHAPTER 7

ONTOLOGICAL POLITICS

In this chapter, I assess the political limitations, possibilities, and relationship between critical realism and performativity. Here I explore some of the tensions between a performative and realist politics, between a politics of possibility and a politics of resistance, and between an ethnography that seeks to document, expose, and critique "what is really there" and an ethnography that begins with the commitment to look for and amplify possibility. I ask, what is gained and what is lost by adopting a theoretical approach, stance, and representational strategy of radical possibility? Though I argue for an investment in *ontological politics*—a politics that engages in making other worlds—I suggest that performing diverse economies can benefit from representations that include not only the expanding edges and outlines of new worlds, but a critique of the forces and relationships inhibiting their concretization and proliferation in particular locations.

Before I attempt move my analysis and arguments forward, let me first take a moment to clear and construct (or perhaps more accurately, as will become clear, "enact") the ethnographic stage. I want to briefly consider and address some of the political forces, social relationships, and ethical commitments constraining and producing the text that has come before and that which will come after. These are concerns that apply both, though perhaps somewhat differently, to a *realist* ethnographic approach that attempts to describe, interpret, or critique what is really there as well as to an ontological approach that concerns itself with difference at the level of existence, or more precisely existences.

In the 1998 essay, "Can There be a Feminist Ethnography", Judith Stacey succinctly describes the ethical conundrum at the heart of ethnographic praxis. It's axiomatic that good ethnography involves forming relationships with research subjects; ethnography involves not simply observing, but participating together in a shared experience, an experience that can lead to intersubjective recognition, meaningful relationships, and, quite simply, friendship. Stacey suggests that, from a feminist perspective, the closer the relationship between researcher and researched, the better.

> Discussions of feminist methodology generally assault the hierarchical, exploitative relations of conventional research, urging feminist researchers to seek instead an egalitarian research process characterized by authenticity, reciprocity, and intersubjectivity between the researcher and her "subjects" (22)

However, the closer the relationship—i.e. the more trust established, the more that closely held beliefs and events are revealed to the researcher, the more the ethnographer *knows* about the lives that take place beyond their publicly staged presentation—the more muddled and turbulent the social-methodological waters become, both at the level of fieldwork and during the production of ethnographic texts. Confidential, illicit, or scandalous information or opinions disclosed by one research subject can place the ethnographer in an awkward, "inauthentic" relationship with others in a community or organization. And, during the production

of the ethnographic text the ethics of interpersonal relationships between ethnographer and subjects can come into conflict with broader political commitments. To explicate, Stacey recounts one of her own ethical entanglements in relation to a closeted lesbian affair that was disclosed to her in confidence by her research subjects. Knowing this information while others did not, forced Stacey into an "inauthentic" relationship with some of her research subjects. Moreover, it created a contradiction in her own political commitments during the construction of the ethnographic text.

> What feminist ethical principles can I invoke to guide me here? Principles of respect for research subjects and for a collaborative, egalitarian relationship would suggest compliance, but this forces me to collude with the homophobic silencing of lesbian experience, as well as consciously distort what I consider a crucial component of ethnographic "truth" in my study. (24)

ADP, like any organization, was full of sometimes contentious, interpersonal politics and sticky social relationships that required negotiation, both as volunteer member and as ethnographer. As ADP fell deeper into crisis and tensions mounted, I was increasingly placed in awkward situations and relationships with others in the organization. I became privy to peoples emotionally charged opinions and criticisms about each other as well as to the micro-politics and internal machinations of

different parties. Interpersonal politics became more difficult to navigate as did my role as engaged researcher, prompting me to become more detached and less involved at times.

This ethnography is not an expose' or a tell-all, and I am not interested in revealing interpersonal dramas. At the same time, there is no denying that the shape of this ethnography is impacted by the paradox that Stacey describes. Though the scope of the narrative is informed by the nature of my research questions, the interests and aspirations of my research subjects, the negotiated access I had to information, and contingent happenings in the fieldwork process, there are many things that I am simply unable or unwilling to write about because of the different friendships and unspoken agreements that have to be considered and balanced. This certainly impacts the stories I am able to tell and the details I am able to, or want to, provide.

Ethnography becomes even more fraught when we consider the reflexive critiques of critical and post-modern anthropologists aimed at power and representation in and of the ethnographic encounter. Ethnographic accounts are never neutral and can never be complete, not simply because of ethical decisions made to include or exclude data, but because of the positionality (Rosaldo 1989, Taylor 2000) of the researcher and researched. The ethnographic encounter and the people in it are historically produced; what we know and how we know it promises to be a culturally situated, epistemologically "partial" understanding and account (Clifford 1986, Harraway 1988). As Stacey argues, the general stance of critical, reflexive anthropologists has been to "fully acknowledge the limitations of the

ethnographic process and reduce their claims." So, while it has become self-evident that ethnography is "always caught up in the intervention, not the representation, of culture" (Clifford and Marcus 1986), critical, reflective approaches are wary of this intervention, often seeking to turn inward and account for the processes shaping the ethnographic encounter or compensate for "partiality" through collaborative methods and representational experiments.

As discussed in the opening of the dissertation, my own methodological approach was dialogical and collaborative. And, as an activist anthropologist, I sought to align myself with my research subjects in order to (partially) share political-epistemological space. Related to this, I strove to be continually aware of how my positionality was structuring the research process while attempting to be of political and pragmatic use to my research subjects. All of this amounted to a process of ongoing, continual negotiation and reflection. However, my primary aim here—in this chapter and in the broader dissertation—is not to find out what is *really there*, nor is it to investigate, further theorize and intervene against the external forces that are producing those conditions. Rather, my aim, like many of my research subjects, was and is to help bring a new economy, a new world, into existence.

The Ontological Turn

In the field of anthropology, this concern with the nature and production of existence itself is sometimes discussed as the "ontological turn" (Holbraad, Pederson, and Viveiros de Castro 2014, Holbraad 2014 and Pedersen 2014). This

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project involves two interrelated matters of concern. The first is an interest in decentering the symbolically dominant, naturalized ontology that continues to press on the world(s); one that many of us find ourselves immersed in, and from which much of anthropological theory, method, and analysis is conducted. Here I refer broadly to modernity: its dualisms and hierarchies of culture and nature, objective and subjective knowledge, man and woman, the West and the rest; as well as to the political-cultural forces that emanate from, animate, and provide modernity with coherence including representational democratic politics, development, and, of course, market capitalism (Escobar 2012, Latour 1993). The second is a commitment to expose and explore *other* realities, other worlds that operate with a different set of ontological underpinnings.

So far, my description of the ontological turn perhaps does not seem all that distinct from the overall historical project of anthropology which is grounded in uncovering and exploring difference across time and space. For example, an effort to expose ontological difference was at the root of—rather it was *precisely*—the project of substantivist economic anthropologists who not only sought out economic difference—e.g. societies practicing gift economies rather than market exchange—but argued that these economies, and the people in them, needed to be understood on their own, relative terms, from their own unique set of cultural suppositions and motivations, rather than those that were believed to be underpinning market economies.

Crucial to the ontological turn however, and what enables an ontological politics to pivot on more than cultural relativism, is a theoretical kernel that moves

us into a new metaphysical position. With the ontological turn, reality is understood

not as a single, relatively coherent universe containing difference, but as a

multiverse in which any number of realities exist, all at once, and in any particular

location. To be clear, this is not a position that envisions a landscape in which a

plurality of social worlds exist, separated by time and/or by space; it is not echoing

the anachronistic, essentialist view of cultures as discreet, bounded entities (Wolf

1982). On the contrary, it treats ontology itself as heterogeneous and contingent.

    This metaphysical position is substantiated in at least two ways. First is a

commitment to take seriously, from an anthropological perspective, not just

epistemological difference and subjugated knowledge, but the very metaphysical

foundations of many non-western ontologies (Escobar 2012, Viveiros de Castro

1998). Escobar explains,

> There is an interesting convergence of among certain philosophical,
>
> biological, and indigenous people's narratives in asserting that life entails the
>
> creation of form (difference, morphogenesis) out of the dynamics of matter
>
> and energy. In these views, the world is a *pluriverse*, ceaselessly in
>
> movement, an everchanging web of interrelations involving humans and
>
> non-humans. It is important to point out, however, that the pluriverse gives
>
> rise to partial coherence and stability of given practices that have a lot to do
>
> with meanings and power; in this way it can be seen in terms of a multiplicity
>
> of worlds (2012: xxvii, emphasis mine).

So what we see—or rather what we do not see because it is natural, self-referential and constitutive of our mode of being—is only one possible reality that has, for the moment, found symbolic coherence. This coherence presents a reality that neglects, diminishes, and obfuscates the remaining multiplicity of worlds—a realm that Elizabeth Povinelli refers to as *the otherwise* (2011, 2012, 2014)—that exist "outside" of the hegemonic, social-symbolic order.

From a different direction, ethnographic work of scholars in Science and Technology Studies (Law 2004, Law and Urry 2004, Latour 1987, Latour and Woolgar 1986, Mol 1999, 2002), has demonstrated that objects do not exist in any singular sense prior to their emergence but rather they exist as multiple potentialities; objects are made real and given coherence (partial, contingent) as they are brought into reality, as they are brought to life through their very methods of investigation. More simply, there is no reality waiting to be discovered; "realities are produced along with the statements that report them" (Law 2004: 38, following Latour and Woolgar 1986). In a certain sense, this means that *there is no there, there*; unless and until it is enacted in any one particular moment. To put this another way, and I think perhaps more usefully, we can understand the situation in terms of a multiplicity of '*theres', there* that *could* be enacted. Some realities are made just as others are left as scattered traces; unrealized and diminished.

Ethnography, then, is not simply an effort to describe, understand, intepret or critique some aspect of what already exists, but a performative practice that helps to bring into being a possible reality. Ethnography is irrevocably implicated in an ontological politics.

Let's unpack ontological politics a bit further. Says the sociologist Annemarie Mol (1999), "*Ontological Politics* is a composite term. It talks of *ontology*—which in standard philosophical parlance defines what belongs to the real, the conditions of possibility that we live with. If the term 'ontology' is combined with that of 'politics' than this suggests that the conditions of possibility are not given" (74-75) but are instead, as we have seen, immanently mutable.

Mol continues, helping to separate out and distinguish what is at stake. "To be sure, it has always been assumed that 'reality' is not entirely immutable. Such was the point of technology—and indeed politics. These worked on the assumption that the world might be mastered, changed, controlled. So, within the conventions of technology and politics the question of how to shape reality was open: at some point in the future, it might be otherwise" (75).

And here we come to the nub. Politics that proceeds without the insights of the "ontological turn" approaches the creation of new worlds—approaches revolution—as occurring in a distant horizon, *after* the presumed given, current reality is transformed and new conditions of possibility become available. It follows then that politics should be about critiquing the existing social order. However, if the conditions of possibility are not given and singular, but are multiple and contingent; if ontological difference exists not somewhere off on a distant horizon, but rumbles around, in the "here and now" alongside other realities; if ethnography doesn't simply describe what's *really there*, but helps to *enact* particular realities, then politics become differently inflected. It takes on added meaning, suggests additional responsibilities, and presents new possibilities for ethnography.

Holbraad, Pedersen, and Vivieros de Castro describe such a project thus, "this, in our understanding, is what the ontological turn is all about: it is a technology of description (Pedersen 2012) designed in the optimist (non-skeptical) hope of making the otherwise visible by experimenting with the conceptual affordances (Holbraad forthcoming) present in a given body of ethnographic materials" (2).

Performing Diverse Economies

Experimentation, hope, optimism: these are affective dimensions that Gibson-Graham also claim as essential qualities of their own performative, ontological politics. For Gibson-Graham (2008), performing diverse economies— enacting their existence through thinking, writing, and other research practices— first involves the cultivation of a new subject, one that eschews what they describe as critical "strong" theories that are "tinged with skepticism and negativity" (618). Critical theory encourages us to look for failure, enclosure, ontological reproduction; it encourage us to map out and *know* how things *really are* (and see Shear and Burke 2013). Under the habits of mind and with the affective stance of strong theories of capitalism, "experimental forays into building new economies are likely to be dismissed as capitalism in another guise or as always already coopted; they are often judged as inadequate before they are explored in all their complexity and incoherence. While such a reaction may be valid as the appropriate critical response to new information, it affirms an ultimately essentialist, usually structural, vision of what is and reinforces what is perceived as dominant." (2008: 16). Thus, following Gibson-Graham, in order to bring new possibilities to life, we need to approach the

world and our research with an open mind, as beginners, looking to illuminate a new world—a new, diverse economy—and *not* illuminate structures and relations of power that could (or *do?*) undermine non-capitalist and post-capitalist projects. Exposing and critiquing the forces and relations that produce a particular world can work to perform, and can thus reproduce, those very conditions.

As I suggest in Part 1, this is precisely how Graham and Cornwell, and Byrne and Healy have approached and theorized ADP, as an unadulterated site of economic transformation and becoming. In their descriptions, they accentuate the positives and possibilities and omit references to shortcomings or potential failure. This is how I also presented and performed ADP in Part 1, suggesting that such a representation and might be discursively important not only for the work of the community economies collective and diverse economy theory, but also for the broader movement. However, as I recount in Part 2, ADP—as an organization—*did* fail; this was a "fact" that is difficult to ignore, leave unaddressed, and thus perform away by omission. Even more, in the process of choosing to *include* an ethnographic description and a partial explanation of ADP's dissolution, I began to attribute ADP's collapse, in part, to an ontological condition of being embrangled in between two worlds, ensconced in a set of relationships and processes that attach it to one world, while attempting to create another, a condition that was *always* constraining ADP's efforts to build "the world as it should be."

Let's stop here for a moment to consider the possible consequences of my description of ADP in Part 2 in relation to Gibson-Graham's arguments. Does describing and thus performing ADP, not as an unvarnished, discreet, location of

possibility and exemplar of a post-capitalist economic imaginary, but rather as an ambivalent, *realistically* flawed organization, partially constrained by its political location as a non-profit that is linked to a formation—the NPIC—which is itself linked to capitalist reproduction, inhibit or dissuade the further enactment of non-capitalist and post-capitalist economies? I am not completely sure. But I don't think so. In fact, I think in this case at least, it might be precisely the opposite.

Part of what is at issue here is a particular way of thinking about and engaging with power. As Miller (2013) explains, perhaps the most prominent critique of Gibson-Graham's work is their "perceived lack of direct engagement (524)" with power. Gibson-Graham, of course, recognize power including "patterns and habits of differential power relations" (524), they are "deeply wary of placing pre-specified notions of power into our theories" (524) that might foreclose possibility. Not theorizing, not looking for, and not performing the ways in which possibility is foreclosed by the state, class interests, particular forms of governance, and so on is an ethical and strategic choice for Gibson-Graham. Says Miller, for Gibson-Graham "it is thus not a matter of denying power but rather of focusing on the cultivation of capacities instead of on the ways in which such capacities might fail or fall short" (524). However, I wonder if this positions presents a bit of a false dichotomy. I claim here that focusing on the "the cultivation of capacities" for other worlds can, or perhaps even *should* include a critical, sideways glance at the forces that are constraining or closing off the spaces where cultivation of capacities for other worlds can take place.

Let me support this claim from an ethnographic perspective. In

Massachusetts, a critical investigation and discursive analysis by activists of their

own social location as being bound up in what is often referred to as the NPIC

doesn't seem to have prevented many activists from *also* recognizing this very same

location as a possibility from which to build non-capitalist, ethical economies. For

example, amidst a growing imaginary around social and solidarity economy in

Massachusetts in 2013, a non-profit was created in Boston, headed up by a

community organizer, which was aimed at researching and creating community-

owned funding sources for social justice and alternative economic projects (Loh and

Shear 2015). In the summer of 2014, this led to a set of structured conversations,

regularly scheduled "classes" for organizers and activists to learn about and share

resources around alternative financing for non-profit based activism and economic

development. The dynamics of this project are instructive. Its formation was the

direct result of the broadly shared experience and *critique* of the institutional left in

Massachusetts around its constrained location in relation to private foundations and

the state. At the same time, activists are able to move this project forward precisely

because they *also* recognize and discuss the possibilities that are intrinsic to this

situation. In other words, experiencing and recognizing a structural pattern of

constraint did not discursively reproduce a perceived permanence of structure or

elide the possibility of the creation of other economies.

Staff and members of ADP, too, continue to imagine and desire another world

even *after* the dissolution of the organization. Indeed, the subjective

transformations that took place in relation to ADP's cultural politics have seemingly

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had lasting effects, even beyond the life-span of the organization. For example, an

organizer who now works in the labor movement says that ADP permanently

changed his understanding of what was possible and that he now wants labor to be

involved in more than economic reforms and bargaining. "I actually have

conversations [about creating a new economy] with people a lot. And I feel like it's a

really effective organizing tool." Jen, who still lives and works in an affordable

housing complex that used to affiliate with ADP, says that she and others in the

housing complex, talk about creating cooperative jobs to do work there, "all the

time" and that she is recently starting to "think more seriously about exactly how to

get it started." And finally, ADP's efforts in the broader movement, at least locally,

continue to resonate, even though it's known that ADP has ceased operations.

Recently, an alternative media site in Holyoke—commenting on the ongoing

discussion around the possible development of a co-op in the area and wary of its

gentrifying effects—recalled ADP's proposed effort in 2012 as one possible way

forward, despite the fact that the first effort never got off the ground, even posting

some of ADP's documented plans for the Bodega.

     Among activists in Massachusetts, the lived-experience of limitation and

constraint on efforts to create new economies, critiquing and theorizing these

constraints in terms of the NPIC, and even discursively *performing* these constraints

has not seemed to dissuade efforts for new economies—non-capitalist politics are

exploding in Massachusetts (Loh and Shear 2015, Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

Instead, critical awareness and investigations of the way that power operates to

limit economic possibility has begun to bring together activists and non-profit

organizations in an effort to address this pattern of constraint. In other words, critique has led to an effort to change the existing conditions within a (relatively) cohered "reality" in order to expand the space in which economic possibility might proliferate. My concern then, as an academic interested in helping to create other economies, is not only the unintended performative effect of engaging in critique, but the limiting effects of *not* doing so.

Gibson-Graham's anti-essentialist reading of economy—the overdetermined subject, pushed, pulled and constituted by all other entities all at once in a heterogeneous economic space—flattens the political field, allowing us to not presume ahead of time how power works, helping to prevent discursive closures of possibility before they are even imagined, let alone attempted. How then do we theorize and perform an ontological politics to enact new economies while critiquing the forces that constrain, misdirect, and scuttle the concretization and development of these possibilities?

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Non-capitalist Politics: Towards a Post-Capitalist War of Position

An ideological and libidinal shift took place among the institutional left in Massachusetts over the course of my research. When I began my preliminary research in 2009, it seemed to me that the green economy was a promising place to investigate economic possibility. Green economy discourse was bringing together a range of divergent social actors into common projects while at the same time suggesting an economy that was on the horizon that was to yet to be built. In this formation, non-capitalist projects like cooperatives, community gardens, community supported agriculture, ethical markets, and so on, were beginning to be discussed and proposed as green economy initiatives. As the ongoing economic crisis continued from 2009-2013, and ecological crisis became more fully realized as immanent, economic difference proliferated in green economy circles and beyond. By 2013 visions of solidarity economies, the social economy, the new economy, sharing economy, cooperative development, building the commons, participatory budgeting, local living economies, and community economies were now circulating in the conversations and minds of organizers and activists who were critiquing them, propagating them, and involving themselves in these projects, as well as in an array of non-capitalist practices, many of which I have discussed here.

This deepening of economic possibility and the expansion of economic difference was brought home to me during a brief phone conversation with a Boston

community organizer and activist in the summer of 2013. He had called to check in

about the status of a few different social justice and non-capitalist projects that we

were involved with or had interest in and, as part of this conversation, we discussed

how plans for the upcoming, annual solidarity economy conference in Worcester

were coming along. As we exchanged information about who might be coming and

what workshops and discussions we hoped would take place, we began to marvel at

how many of our friends and allies were now talking about or including the creation

of non-capitalist institutions and relations in their plans and strategies. Was it our

imagination, or had there in fact been something of a sea change in the preceding

few years in terms of activists and organizers thinking about economic possibility?

Of course, it was a both. Our imaginations *had* shifted, allowing us to see economic

possibility more readily. However, as we affirmed to each other, this was not unique

to us. 'Everyone' seemed to know about, was talking about or, was involved in

alternative economic projects, though not in the same way or for the same reasons.

As I described in Chapter 2, green economy coalitions were answering economic

and ecological crisis with visions of solidarity economies, as well as social justice

campaigns which brought anti-capitalist and non-capitalist politics into dialogue. I

found that a resubjectification around diverse economies leads to economic

possibility for some, but is politically problematic and hinders economic possibility

for others. In Chapter 3, I explored the nature or worker cooperatives, finding that

non-capitalist institutions are amenable to and supported by a range of

understandings, desires, and commitments towards economy, including

commitments towards capitalist development. In Chapters 4-7 I discussed the rise

and decline of a remarkable community organization, ADP, that was building it's own community economy. I show the political effectiveness of performative, ontological politics in proliferating economic possibility. Narratives that highlighted ADP's successes, and described ADP as an adulterated space of economic becoming had powerful impacts, inspiring others to think about economy and community organizing and development in unconventional ways. I also show the limitations of such a project as far as it neglects critical reflection and analysis that can locate ideological and material forces constraining possibility and I point towards a reconciliation between performativity and critique, in which critique is situated as part of an optimistic stance towards possibility.

In the remaining few pages of my dissertation, I want to make a few modest claims about economic possibility—and the advancement of economic possibility that I researched and was part of in Massachusetts—in relation to Antonio Gramsci's great insight that political struggle is at once cultural struggle. Social relations are held in place or challenged, not only through coercion and oppression, or resistance to coercion oppression, but through an ongoing struggle over ideas, beliefs, and practices that are produced contested and negotiated in a multiplicity of locations throughout political and civil society (Buttigieg 1995).

Gibson-Graham's major contention—and one that I have been working with throughout this dissertation—is that capitalism is dominant because people are unable to truly imagine and desire other economies. Capitalism appears as everywhere, all at once, all consuming and inevitable. From this perspective, people are *unable* to struggle over capitalism—over the nature of economy—because it

appears as self-evident or, to put it another way, it doesn't *appear* at all. When capitalism is everywhere, it's possible to be against capitalism, to oppose it, to work against it, to attempt to constrain it and ameliorate its impacts, but it is more difficult to *politicize* the economy itself; it is more difficult to imagine, want, and work towards different econom(ies) since they seem impossible, undesirable, imagined to be doomed to failure, or aren't even able to be thought about in the first place. How then to bring the nature of economy into political struggle?

Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) can be helpful here. They make a distinction between ideology and hegemony (19-27), the two "dominant forms" (22) in which they conceptualize power as entering into "culture." Ideology, they argue, is an "agentive" form of power. It is deployed in a contestation of wills and interests between different social groups within a field of visible meanings, beliefs and practices. In dialogue with Bourdieu, the Comaroffs suggest that ideologies—as a set of discourses and signifiers—may be either orthodox or heterodox projects. Although never complete or total, a dominant group's ideological package is at any one time able to seem more viable or convincing, in other words, orthodox. Heterodox ideologies can work against or provide alternatives to dominant ideologies. Thus, ideologies can strengthen dominant structures and relations or they can present resistance and alternatives to the orthodox and challenge their dominance. In all cases, ideologies are visible and "open to contestation" (24). Hegemony, in contrast, "at its most effective, is mute" (24). It's everywhere, shared among and between social groups, homogenizing and internalized and is thus,

rendered invisible. It conceals itself (see Dougherty 2004 for an excellent brief explication).

Kate Crehan situates the Comaroffs theorization of hegemony as "hegemony lite" because it "understands hegemony as referring simply to ideas, beliefs, meanings, and values" (2002: 172-173). Though I am less certain than Crehan that the Comaroffs fit her characterization, Crehan does remind us that, for Gramsci, the realm of ideas and the realm of materiality are inseparable; one does not determine the other, but both constitute and structure the field of politics and reality in shifting, complicated ways. And, indeed, though my research shows that capitalism is not extra-discursive—it exists because we talk and think like it does—it also shows that re-imagining economy with a stance towards possibility is not always an end in itself. Indeed, in Chapter 6 I describe how ADP's cultural struggle to produce a new economy while having to contend with another is at once ideological, material, and emotional.

In any case, I find the Comaroff's distinction between ideology and hegemony to be useful in thinking through different dimensions of a post-capitalist politics. From their theorization, we can posit two levels of political-cultural struggle. At one level is the struggle that takes place within the existing political-cultural terrain— through the existing social symbolic order— which holds exploitation in place, shapes relations of consent and oppression, and structures violence. At another level, there is the struggle to change what is possible to struggle over (as well as the nature and terms of "struggle"), or as Badiou (2010) might say, it's a struggle over the 'possibility of possibilities'. This level then corresponds with an ontological

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politics to spring open new realities. At its most fundamental, this second level of struggle would seem to involve politics that changes the cultural resources—ideas, discourses, institutions, social arrangements—that are available and recognizable to social actors engaged in the first level so people can have new possibilities to discursively construct, organize around, critique, and struggle over. Key to this intervention is the exposure to and proliferation of economic difference. How then does economic difference proliferate?

1) Discursive Interruption, Performativity, and Resubjectification

As I show in chapter two, activists who understood capitalism to be co-extensive with economy had a difficult time imagining and desiring a world outside of capitalism and took pleasure in opposing and ameliorating its impacts. And on a certain level, they took pleasure in capitalism itself despite (or better yet, as part of) their opposition. In contrast, activists who began to see economy as a heterogenous field of possibilities that they could involve themselves in and create were enlivened to imagine new worlds. These dynamics are consonant with Gibson-Graham's claims around the fixing of identity via capitalocentric discourses and the importance of resubjectification through a diverse economies frame—or other frames of economic difference—in order to see, imagine, and desire new economies and new worlds. This is where, I believe, Gibson-Graham largely situate their performative, ontological politics of diverse economies—a project targeting an immanent, revolutionary transformation of the subject in relation to economy.

2) Institutional Visibility: Difference Begets Difference

What was also interesting and significant to me, however, was that exposure to economic difference also had other generative effects beyond a resubjectification towards new economic imaginings and desires. Indeed, as I begin to discuss at the end of Chapter 2, some activists became interested in non-capitalist economic relations and institutions not because they viewed economy differently—capitalism remained a dominant, unyielding system—but because non-capitalist projects were made sense of and embraced in relation to their already existing economic and political identities. For example, for some activists, the creation of non-capitalism became part of their social justice narratives and desires to ameliorate the impacts of capitalism, or as part of projects to build power and organize against oppression

Indeed, as I explore further in Chapter 3, non-capitalism proliferated and traveled in Massachusetts and beyond simply because non-capitalist institutions and initiatives became visible, existing options for divergent social actors to engage with through their existing narratives about economy and their relation to it. Indeed, the anchor institution model of cooperative development has gained traction in both community development circles and among the institutional left. However, different instantiations of this model have involved different sets of social actors. Evergreen's origin can be traced in large part to well-heeled non-profit foundations. In contrast, Wellspring was taken up and initiated by a community organizer and the director of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network. Subsequently it was organized in a more horizontal way involving a broad range of community organizations. As was made clear at the meeting which I describe at the end of

Chapter 3, Worcester Change approached the model from a more grassroots and bottom up approach. This was further reinforced at the 2014 Solidarity Economy Conference, in which Change plays a major role, when a campaign to organize around an anchor institution model of cooperative development was agreed upon. The starting place for this campaign was explicitly around social justice (as opposed to community development.) Indeed, early discussions indicated that the campaign intends to organize people from low-income communities and communities of color who will help to drive the campaign and subsequent development from the very beginning.

3) Aggregation Not Immediate Resolution

In addition, each of these instantiations of the anchor institution model of cooperative development gathered together and, in fact, attracted different ideologies, desires for, and claims about what cooperative development actually was. While some involved in these efforts view cooperative development as part of a project to create and expand non-capitalism, or as part of a generative politics to create other economies from which to act cooperatively and ethically; others see it as social justice, or simple job creation, or as a means to intervene in a "culture of poverty", or as good, charitable work. What's important is that these radically different narratives are assembled together and *constitute* these projects. In other words, constructing non-capitalism in these cases requires the careful negotiation and construction of difference, not necessarily agreement over ideas and values, or a resolution of difference. In fact, it's safe to claim that Evergreen and Wellspring

would not exist if significant political differences were contested and attempts were made to resolve those differences in advance. I have argued that it is in these assemblages of difference where divergent values, aspirations, and identities aggregate, where people can begin to learn from each other and transform through dialogical encounters. It is in this *process* of moving towards a common goal through a shared project, in this case the creation of non-capitalism, where transformations can take place. Furthermore, I posit that non-capitalist relations and practices that *encourage* the well-being of people and planet over profit most felicitously lend themselves to intersubjective negotiation of difference and consideration of the other; they are where imaginings and desires for 'being in-common' can be more fully realized. Thus, cultural-political struggle in this case is not so much a struggle to change people's ideas about, understandings, and desires for economy, but rather the careful construction and composition of assemblages that gather together around and constitute non-capitalism.

Economic Possibility and a 'War of Position'

If capitalism's durability can in part be attributed to a crisis of imagination, to our collective inability to imagine and desire other worlds, then one task is to look for and cultivate the edges, contours, and spaces where those worlds—and desires for those worlds—are emerging, as part of an ontological politics. This means stepping away from a critical realist account of the world in which the goal is to find out and record what is 'really going on' and turning towards a performative project in which the aim is to uncover and discover new possibilities. This is a task that I

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have significantly embraced. As part of my dissertation research and writing, I have carefully made decisions to open up and discover possibility rather than look for closure. In this type of project, however, questions remain about the relationship between ethnographic critique and performativity, between resistance and possibility, and between difference and power. In Chapter 7 I tried to situate some of these questions as productive tensions, not to provide concrete answers to them, but simply to point out that performing diverse economies can ironically sometimes have the unintended effect of closing off economic possibility; I suggest that ethnographic critique *can* indeed help to not only resist existing, but to construct new, economies.

A complementary project, which I have tried to briefly systematize in the few paragraphs above, involves something seemingly more modest: simply helping to proliferate economic difference—non-capitalist institutions, relationships, formations, ideas—so new cultural resources become available for political-cultural struggle. The more exposure to economic difference (symbolically, materially, institutionally), the more resources become available to marshal for non-capitalist politics, and the more ability people have to struggle over the meaning and nature of economy itself. To put this back into Gramscian terms, cultural-political struggle no longer remains confined to an ideological terrain coextensive with and circumscribed by capitalism. The very nature of economy becomes the field of an ongoing "war of position" that can move us from "protest to power."

The challenge for any revolutionary movement is to move from protest to power and it is here that Gramsci's ideas come into play. Gramsci argued that the multi-dimensional forms of capitalist rule would necessitate a long march through civil society. Therefore, class struggle would be characterised by a transitional period in which the battle over politics, culture and ideology was key. Gramsci termed this a war of position in which popular social forces need to build counter-hegemonic institutions that contend with capitalism and occupy autonomous social and political space. (Harris 2007: 3)

From my perspective, Harris's explanation of a war of position corresponds with both levels of cultural-political struggle that I stake out earlier in this chapter 1) struggle over what already exists in the political field and 2) the struggle over what might yet exist, the struggle to increase the possibility of possibilities. It is this second level of struggle that has most concerned me in this dissertation; in order to move beyond protest and resistance to the impacts of exploitation and capital accumulation, people need to be able to imagine and truly desire other economies that seem impossible. This means creating, locating, and amplifying economic difference in its institutional, symbolic, and subjective forms. As more difference is brought into and made visible in the cultural-political field, the very nature of economy becomes contestable, constructible, and negotiable through ideas, beliefs, desires, and practices in a multiplicity of locations throughout political and civil society. People can begin to choose, to enact, support, organize around and defend ethical economic relations and practices as part of a politics to self-consciously

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create economic possibility, but also in relation to their existent understandings of and desires for economy. As capitalism loses its coherence, doors to the outside become visible. Passengers begin to catch a glimpse of possibility, some fleeting signs of life. And, leaving their attachments behind, they step outside into the open, unformed world.

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