

# From Social Ecology to Community Economies: Towards Better Livelihoods<sup>1</sup>

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*“We accept the premise that we live in an era of unprecedented and rapid environmental and social change. The recent 10,000-year history of climatic stability on Earth that enabled the rise of agriculture and domestication, the growth of cities, numerous technological revolutions, and the emergence of modernity is now over. We accept that in the latest phase of this era, modernity is unmaking the stability that enabled its emergence. Over the 21st century, severe and numerous weather disasters, scarcity of key resources, major changes in environments, enormous rates of extinction, and other forces that threaten life are set to increase. But we are deeply worried that current responses to these challenges are focused on market-driven solutions and thus have the potential to further endanger our collective commons.”*

— Katherine Gibson, Deborah Bird Rose and Ruth Fincher,  
“Preface,” *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*<sup>2</sup>

This text is a thought experiment. Rather than working with ideological labels, I want to do some mental gymnastics with methods and concepts that inspire me. To work towards an organizing method that is both inspiring (better livelihoods are possible) and anchored in pragmatism. I will start by sharing my understanding of the exploitation and oppression of humans and nature. Then, I will reflect on the ideas put forth by Murray Bookchin and on the application of the concepts of social ecology and libertarian municipalism by the anarchist collective La Pointe libertaire. After that, I will address J.K. Gibson-Graham’s notions of diverse economies and community economies, as

well as the position of the Community Economies Collective (CEC) on social change. Finally, I will come back to Pointe-Saint-Charles to propose a concrete application of these ideas, a method of organisation. My aim here is not to convince, but to spark debate with others working towards building better livelihoods.

### Exploitation and Oppression

I firmly believe that while difference ought to be celebrated, hierarchies must be fought. This idea that men are better than women, cis-gendered people are better than trans people, that white skin is better than black skin, that heterosexuality is better than homosexuality, that being thin is better than being fat. This idea is propagated by schools, the media, families, social and health services, religious institutions. This idea that materializes through dynamics of domination. Because those who benefit from this stratification often find themselves in roles where they are making decisions that affect all of us. They control the production of goods and services that we need to live (survive). They take hostage our security, our physical and psychological integrity.

I believe that the organisation of society perpetuates this stratification (naturalizes it) and is the basis for the exploitation of humans and nature.

All humans work. A good number work eight hours or more per day to get what they need to survive (a wage) and to produce wealth for, more often than not, owners or shareholders of firms. Nature also contributes to this wealth: minerals, non-renewable energies, soil fertility, vegetable and animal species. Wealth stems from the theft of the planet's reserves and from workers' labour. And it is the bosses who decide how that wealth is distributed. Often, these same bosses sail the Caribbean in their luxury yachts while the planet is destroyed and humans struggle to survive.

This is exploitation.

That is not all. Humans, even once home, are not finished working. Doing groceries, weeding the garden, preparing meals, doing dishes, laundry, dusting, sweeping up, washing the windows, disinfecting the toilet, helping their loved ones, helping with homework, participating in the general assembly of the women's centre, mediating,

calling the Housing Board, paying bills.... Who does this unpaid work? This invisible, free, work that benefits the entire family, the community, and society at large? Overwhelmingly, it is women. This is exploitation.

This is not all. Humans, overworked, in survival mode, buy what they need where it costs the least and, ideally, where they can buy it all at once. But what lies behind the low prices of the Wal-marts and Costcos of the world? A plethora of other humans who work in distant lands for miserable salaries in terrible conditions, these other humans who live in the global South, or in poor and racialized neighbourhoods in Northern cities. And an exploited planet that can barely breathe. The survival of humans is dependent on that of other humans and of the natural environment. The exploitation of one fuels the exploitation of the other.

This is not all. Overworked humans and the exhausted planet are squeezed even more by continued enclosure or non-management of commons<sup>3</sup>—knowledge, property or practice—that is shared by a community. While biophysical commons are stolen and exploited by capitalists at the head of multinational corporations, Indigenous protectors are repressed, bulldozing their sovereignty, their cultures, and their relationship to the Earth. The ozone layer, the boreal forests, endangered species, are decimated. When the social commons are privatized, their accessibility diminishes, health, education deteriorate. When knowledge commons are patented, Indigenous and traditional ecological practices are forgotten. When cultural commons become merchandise, symbols, languages, and heritage are uprooted and disfigured.

### Capitalism, the great culprit?

Some people point their finger at the “capitalocene,” a concept that “signifies capitalism as a way of organizing nature—as a multispecies, situated, capitalist world-ecology [...] the basic historical pattern of modern world history as the “Age of Capital”—and the era of capitalism as a world-ecology of power, capital, and nature.”<sup>4</sup> Here capitalism is an all-powerful, hegemonic, all-encompassing, system. A system to be torn down and replaced. Historically, and still today, despite differing positions on the State, this is the analysis put forth by a majority of Marxists and anarchists. The renowned thinker of social ecology, Mu ofy Bookchin, is no exception: social ecology aims to

bring about a society that will have “eliminated not only capitalism but the Nation-State, not only classes but hierarchies, not only exploitation but domination, and, given that, will have constituted a rational and ecological alternative”.<sup>5</sup>

For more than 10 years, I also believed this. Following Bookchin, I invested time and energy in local activism, fighting heart and soul, in Pointe-Saint-Charles and beyond, to change the world. In 2004, I founded *La Pointe libertaire* with Marcel Sévigny, an anarchist collective whose ideas and practices were inspired from social ecology and “aimed to stimulate self-organization in the neighbourhood and foster the (re)appropriation, by the collectivity, of all powers that concerns it.”<sup>6</sup> In 2005, Marcel and I wrote:

*“We are activists who were trained, for the one, in the autonomous community movement and municipal politics, and, for the other, in the radical feminist fringe of the anti-globalisation movement. Our different paths bring us to the same questions. What to do to challenge, in the long-term, multinational corporations’ growing control over our collective heritage? How to go beyond a perpetual reaction to build a world without racism, sexism, poverty, and homophobia?”*<sup>7</sup>

Following Bookchin, we put ourselves to work to self-constitute a political community in our neighbourhood, in other words, to create decentralized and democratic political institutions. From this process, according to the theory, new “municipalities” would arise as the linchpin of direct democracy, and at their heart would be citizens’ assemblies: “large general meetings in which all the citizens of a given area meet, deliberate, and make decisions on matters of common concern”.<sup>8</sup>

Admittedly, we paid more attention to the political dimension of Bookchin’s thought, libertarian municipalism, without worrying too much about the other dimension of his work, the social dimension. For Bookchin, the so-called social sphere, present in every culture, is of the private domain and includes, importantly, all of economic life. The goal of libertarian municipalism would be to municipalise the economy:

*“A society organized along mutualistic, nonhierarchical, and communal lines would be most rational if it chose to replace the capitalist market economy with a moral economy,*

*one whose members have a high sense of mutual obligation. It would replace classes and private property with cooperation and solidarity. It would replace profit with a recognition of mutual welfare. It would replace selling with sharing. It would replace rivalry and an illusory independence with reciprocity and interdependence. By replacing a profit-oriented economic nexus with an ethical one, it would transform the economy into culture.”<sup>9</sup>*

According to Bookchin, the city is the space for self-management and freedom. Outside of the (private) social sphere, freedom emerges when people meet in public spaces, when they share a civic life: from deliberation on common problems, the environment, education, the economy, the collective appreciation of public art, from the purchase and sale of goods and services, from socializing, from the exchange of information and news. Bookchin believes that:

*“Only the community, however, is open to all adult members qua residents, not to workers and students alone, and can therefore become a broad arena for the management of communitywide affairs. [...] People would move from a state of being isolated monads to that of citizens who see themselves in others, who are mutually dependent, and who, then, take responsibility for their common well-being.”<sup>10</sup>*

### Municipal Libertarianism in Action

In real life though, the theory doesn't always apply, particularly when the majority of us haven't read Bookchin, except for one of the founding members of *La Pointe libertaire*: Marcel Sévigny, who was instrumental in helping the younger members of the collective discover this impressive body of work.<sup>11</sup> We nonetheless took action, following Bookchin's organizing method to a T. Once the political group was created (*La Pointe libertaire*), the objective was to promote the idea of the citizens' assembly by (self-)education, be it by organizing conferences, producing texts, engaging in direct action; in short, seize every opportunity to talk about the citizens' assembly. We published a whole slew of texts that we circulated in the neighbourhood and on our blog, that became, over time, an independent media fed by the *Agence de presse libre de la Pointe*: analyses of urban planning issues and strategies; a proposal for an ecovillage on the CN railyards; an analys-

is of the borough's municipal budget; a non-authorized biography of Vincent Chiara, a capitalist developer who bought the CN land for \$1 (which earned us a notice for defamation!); on free public transit; a memoir on land development of the CN railyards; another on the struggles in the Indigenous community of Tyendinaga; another on racism and ethnic profiling; yet another on direct democracy; as well as a monthly critique of the borough's city council meetings.<sup>12</sup> We organised assemblies and workshops of all stripes: to discuss the film *Spezzano Albanese* on the political action of a libertarian collective in a small village in Italy; to elaborate on strategies to fight against the redevelopment of the Northern Electric factory into condos; to launch the self-managed Autonomous Social Center initiative; to discuss PARECON (participatory economy); to better understand gentrification, etc.

We also organised direct actions: we were able to force the CN to authorize the production of a community-led mural on the wall of its viaduct by starting it without asking for permission; similarly, the borough redesigned a notoriously dangerous bike path after our having issued an ultimatum—we gave them two weeks to fix it, threatening to otherwise pour concrete and install signage ourselves; we cleared the ragweed that had taken over a plot of land on the edge of the Lachine Canal to create the *Garden of Liberty*, today a space free from speculation because of its official recognition as a green space; we participated in the organisation of a squat in the old candle factory on the shores of the Lachine canal. We participated in the neighbourhood fight against the Casino's move to Pointe-Saint-Charles, against the conversion of the old Nordelec factory into condos, against the closure of the post office. We supported the struggle against the deportation of Abdelkader Belouani, notably by singing with him in his refugee sanctuary in the Saint-Gabriel Church; the anarchist choir of Point-Saint-Charles was born from this action and is now woven into the cultural fabric of the neighbourhood. We formed alliances with other anarchist groups in the South-West and, after many years of tension, with many of the grassroots community groups in the area. Other alliances were also forged, notably with the Convergence of Anticapitalist Struggles and Solidarity Against Borders and, as can be expected, we participated in a number of large anarchist gatherings, like the annual Anarchist Bookfair, and in protests, like the anticapitalist protests on

May 1st (in 2011 we organized the first Baby Bloc in Montréal<sup>13</sup>), the March 15th protests against police brutality, actions in support of Indigenous peoples' struggle, and the student strike in 2012. And, to complete the picture, we participated, hearts racing, in the Autonomous Popular Assembly (*l'assemblée populaire autonome de quartier*; APAQ) of Pointe-Saint-Charles. This assembly was born, as was the case for many other neighbourhoods, from the 2012 strike that was, at that point, no longer just a student strike, but a "people's" one. It was about time! We were approaching our Bookchinian vision of a self-managed political institution! But after a promising start and some interesting discussions about austerity, social housing, urban planning, and strategies of struggle, participation dwindled and the flame went out—the APAQ in our neighborhood disappeared.

It is not my intention here to do an evaluation of these 10 years of struggle. But I do have an intuition to share. In retrospect, I call into question the starting-point of our organizing practice. For Bookchin, the starting-point is the political sphere. Eventually, the theory goes, a community, self-constituted into a libertarian "municipality" can decide to municipalize the economy or, in other words, to transform all the enterprises/organisations of the social sphere into public propriety.<sup>14</sup> My experience leads me to conclude that if, in Pointe-Saint-Charles—this dynamic, oppositional urban village, organized from the center to far-left—we have not, after 10 years of effort, succeeded in growing *La Pointe libertaire*, nor even have we constituted even the embryo of a political institution, it's that we have erred. This has led me to wonder what would happen if we took as a starting point not the political, but the socio-economic sphere.

### Economy as Ecology

What would happen if we thought of the economy not as an objective category, but rather as a discursive product? If, instead of considering economic activity as an area of human activity separate from others, we thought of it as being of the social, the political, the ethical, the ecological?

*“What if we were to see the economy as ecology—as a web of human ecological behaviors no longer bounded but fully integrated into a complex flow of ethical and energetic interdependencies: births, contaminations, self-organizings,*

*mergings, extinctions, and patterns of habitat maintenance and destruction? (...) How might we cultivate genuinely ethical ecological-economic sensibilities? How might we reconfigure our notions of economy and ecology in ways that help us take responsibility for being alive together as life?"*<sup>15</sup>

This vision is the cornerstone of the Community Economies Collective (CEC), based on J.K. Gibson-Graham's work,<sup>16</sup> that now consists of more than 170 researchers around the world.<sup>17</sup> This collective seeks to bring about a political economy centered on the practice of self-determination, motivated by the idea that "another world is possible" and aspiring towards post-capitalist futures.

J.K. Gibson-Graham and Ethan Miller propose three ways forward: rethinking being, rethinking the economy, and deliberating according to ethical coordinates to create *more-than-human* economies.<sup>18</sup>

*Rethinking being* (or existence). "Life does not exist without community as a process of connection-amidst-difference, without being-in-common." (p.10) They invite us to put into question the idea that *being-in-common*—that is to say community—is composed uniquely of humans. They suggest rather that we broaden the spectrum and conceive of multispecies communities, built on interrelated relationships of interdependence. This brings us to the second point: *rethinking the economy*: "Let us try to think 'economy' not as a unified system or a domain of being but as diverse processes and interrelations through which we (human and more-than-human) constitute livelihoods." (p. 12). The economy (*oikos*—habitat; *nomos*—negotiation of order) could therefore be thought of as constituted of the diversity of subsistence activities within a community. Imagine then diversified human economies coexisting, not only amongst themselves, but also with diverse economies of salmon, bees, bacteria, etc., as well as with larger community economies, communities that together, they produce and sustain. Ecology (*oikois*—habitat; *logos*—account of) thus becomes a way to understand the whole, or more precisely, to see the aggregation of interactions of diverse economies. "The ecological entry point forces us to step back from the temporary centering operations of economics and ask how relations of livelihood creation and collective provisioning interact, conflict, co-constitute each other, and generate emergent properties." (p. 12)

We have redefined economy as ecology from the standpoint of actors constituting a community and producing livelihoods together, and ecology as the interactions of different diverse community economies. We arrive, then, at the ethical questions that lie at the heart of our economic and ecological relations: “How do we live together with human and non-human others?” (p. 14)

It’s here that we find the idea of looking to identify spaces for ethical negotiation, or in other words, the *ethical coordinates*. Gibson-Graham and Miller suggest that an ethical stance for the Anthropocene demands that each person become skilled in negotiation: of participation, of necessity (or surviving well), of surplus (production, appropriation, distribution, and mobilisation), of commons.

If community is what emerges as living beings make and share worlds together, then community economies are the sites where we imagine and struggle—as increasingly-attentive members of a community of life—to balance our needs with the needs of others, to account for and to offer recompense for the gifts of surplus we receive from the earth and earth others, and to begin to build together an ethical practice of economy for living in—and beyond—the Anthropocene. (p. 15).

### A Method of Organisation

For a community organiser like me, who is always interested in the application of theories and concepts, it is clear that we need to make this language more accessible. This is easier said than done:

While not theorized as such by Gibson-Graham, “community economy” can be read in her work as a polyvalent term that condenses three conceptually distinct, yet interrelated, moments. I will call these “CE1,” “CE2,” and “CE3”. To summarize, CE1 is the “ontological moment” of community economy, an essentially negative and unfixable space characterized by a sharing of the very impossibility of fully capturing or mastering the nature of our being-together. CE2 is the “moment of ethical exposure”, the affirmation of a demand to render visible and contestable the dynamics and consequences (and thus responsibilities) of our interrelationships. CE3 is, finally, the “moment of politics” in which the inevitable positivity of our collective ethical negotiations is made explicit and becomes a site of connection, exclusion, struggle, and active transformation.<sup>19</sup>

Let me try.

The construction of community economies (CE) is a continuous and non-linear process that is articulated in three key moments that we'll call here CE1, CE2, and CE3. To avoid ossification and exclusion (or the naturalisation), the process implies a constant back-and-forth (*va-et-vient*) between these different key moments. Each moment is animated by its openings, its closings, its tensions, its voids, its substance.

To start, in CE1, it's about working to put into question, to undo, to shake our certainties when it comes to the existence of one, fixed, common, community. To put into question our preconceived notions of what is "natural," of the unity or division of "our" collectivity. In other words, to take the time to examine this "us,"<sup>20</sup> to see its diversity, the differences that hide within it, the tensions that are at play.



Figure 1. Source: Diverse Economies Iceberg by Community Economies Collective is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License.)

This process allows us to see what surrounds “us” with a(n always) fresh look, and in **CE2**, to perceive the diversity of activities that “we” perform that ensure “our” subsistence, “our” livelihoods.

Our job is thus to map what hides under the surface of the water (see figure 1), to name it, explain it, and value it. It would be, according to J.K. Gibson-Graham, a first step “toward imagining and enacting economic heterotopias—community economies in which well-being is produced directly”.<sup>21</sup> To understand, together, that the economy is not in fact “a machine governed by immutable laws or mechanical principles.”<sup>22</sup> In doing so, we eject capitalism, this all-powerful, hegemonic, system from the driver’s seat. By broadening the economy, we see appear a multitude of ways to (re)appropriate it. Because these activities are familiar, intimate even. They are what make us live. They support us. We realize that we are the economy. We become economic subjects.

And here we are hit with a strange feeling.

If we are the economy, is it up to us to shape it? To create livelihoods that are not rooted in competition, each-for-their-own, greed? To put an end to oppression, to the exploitation of humans and the planet?

Here is the “political” moment (**CE3**), the moment of negotiation of livelihoods, of common subsistence, the meeting of individual and collective subjects that “seek to sustain and struggle for spaces in which interdependence is visible and collectively negotiated as they oppose processes of uncommoning or enclosure in all their forms,”<sup>23</sup> the (re)construction of self (the individual), and of us (the collective).<sup>24</sup> It is impossible, following to this school of thought, to know in advance what this livelihood will look like. This being-in-common emerges from deliberation, from tension, from struggles, from consensus, from tearing apart (and is transformed during this back-and-forth).

J.K. Gibson-Graham proposes ethical coordinates, as well as a series of tools,<sup>25</sup> to help us identify points of intervention. These tools permit us to understand that work is more complex than an activity to earn our bread and butter. Housework, in the community, on a volunteer basis or as mutual aid, is a facet of our lives that diversifies our experience and that contributes to satisfying different dimensions of our well-being (material, occupational, physical, social, and community). Following this same logic, our communities are supported by different types of enterprises/organisations. By increasing the diversity

of enterprises/organisations, who direct their surplus toward the well-being of humans, communities, and our planet, we create a more viable future for everyone. Similarly, we meet our needs through encounters in markets, but also in other contexts within which we barter, offer gifts, or enter into relationships of mutual aid. By diversifying our encounters, our connections between each other and with the Earth are enriched and we become more apt to take care of one and other, especially in times of threat and scarcity. Next, the commons are not limited to one type of property; different types of property can be transformed into commons, that is to say, through the process in which a community takes responsibility for them and defines their use, access, and benefits. By enlarging the diversity of commons, we increase the chance that they are preserved and developed. Finally, it is also about leverage different forms of investment which subvert the logic of capitalist financing, in particular by the means of sweat equity and gifting, and to highlight, in our "financial" reports, rather than so-called economic degrowth, the growth of intact ecosystems, communities that share common goals and accumulated know-how.

This testifies to the fact that, like in nature, economic activity for one is intimately related to economic activity of another. And like in the natural world, economic change is path-dependent (that is, determined by observable preconditions) and capable of amazing deviations. The economy is not a solitary vessel that follows a predetermined path. Although we can adjust the helm to follow the course we have chosen, nothing guarantees we'll arrive at the port on time, or even at all. Currents, cyclones, mutinies, or refugee boats can make us change our course. Changing one element has an influence on the whole, as do unexpected events. All we can do is observe, adjust, and revise our actions in order to reach our goals.

There is therefore no model to perfect, no revolutionary moment or *Grand Soir* to anticipate, no rupture, no abolition of the system, no unique vision. Rather there is a broadening of the spectrum of emancipatory economic activities in a process of creation of community economies. Community economies are political spaces of ethical deliberation, of open process, both sensible and adaptable, that enable different communities to enact ways of being, of thinking and doing, to live their interdependence. None of this is static, because the challenges and preoccupations of one and other are diverse and change over time.

## Back to Pointe-Saint-Charles

In Pointe-Saint-Charles, groups and individuals want to imagine, dream up, and experiment with “emancipatory” economic activities, activities that contribute to their subsistence, to better livelihoods. The activities/initiatives organised grassroots community organisations, anarchist groups, or a joyous mix of the two, abound: non-profit grocery stores, fruit and vegetable public markets, underground breweries, collective gardens, thrift stores, cafe-restaurants, alternative schools, maker-spaces. Bâtiment 7, an emergent “factory of collective autonomy,” is a building that was expropriated from a capitalist developer<sup>26</sup> and today, chugs on quietly towards the creation of an autonomous and self-managed space organised around four poles: local services and collaborative workshops; family and health services; urban agriculture, and contemporary art.<sup>27</sup> And we must not forget to mention all those autonomous institutions, managed by neighbourhood folks, that take care of legal, advocacy, health, and education services; these historical commons that make Point-Saint-Charles a close-knit community that can buckle down and rise up when the situation demands it.<sup>28</sup>

From my perspective, it’s already a community economy, albeit latent. It’s waiting for us to make it visible, for folks to actively, intentionally, name and embrace it. Let us imagine CE1. CE1 is all those moments of meeting, formal or spontaneous, of conflict, of tension between different aspects of the neighbourhood (Working-class neighbourhood? Popular neighbourhood? Revitalised neighbourhood? Gentrified neighbourhood? A chauvinistic neighbourhood?) and their coexistence (Traditional population? *Bobos*? Young, middle-class families? Irish? French-Canadians? New immigrants? *Kanienkeha:ke*?). With this new look, let us imagine CE2.

CE2 are those moments we take to make visible all of the diversity of economic practices that already exist in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Imagine an assembly or a virtual participatory tool that would allow us to map all of the activities that are usually hidden, under the water. The initiatives listed above, but also all the whole *caring economy*, institutional or more organic, individual or collective (networks of families that trade-off child care; friends that are there for us when we have a crisis or need a shoulder to cry on; grand-parents who care

for their sick grand-children when they can't go to school...). Or still, these transactions with others, these more or less formal networks of barter/exchange (tenants in collective housing recuperating bread, for example, and then redistributing it amongst their neighbours; children's clothing circulated from one family to the next; massage therapists and estheticians that exchange their services against a stay in the countryside). And, for example, all these forms of work that break with the logic of capitalism but contribute to the well-being of the population (volunteers who serve low-cost dinners on a daily basis in charitable organizations; health professionals who provide free services to the penniless; people who remove ragweed from a green space). Once this dimension is made visible, we get to CE3.

CE3 is the moment of deliberation, of radical democracy, of action as related to the diverse economy that has been made visible. What relations of interdependence emerge between humans, between humans and the more-than-human-world? What choices can we make, individually and collectively? How can we broaden the spectrum of economic practices that improve the life (survival) of everyone? And that of the planet? It is at this moment that we take stock of the obstacles. The rent is too high. Zoning is difficult to change. A capitalist supermarket has its eye on a local one. It is the moment to talk about power, domination, and influence. To understand together how capitalist activities hurt our neighbourhood. Even if the development of non-capitalist economic activities improves the well-being of individuals, communities, and the planet, we observe, for example, that the municipal council still has a tendency to legislate in favour of the interests of capital. However, groups of people constituted as community economies build their strength, their power to act in common, they establish alliances with other communities, temporary coalitions, or more permanent federations around specific issues, according to the needs of the moment. We can then conceive of the different territories as part of a vast set of spaces connected by a web of meaning, ideas, and practices that are propagated by everyday contact or by virtual networks. Remember, CE3 is never fixed, never definitive. The back-and-forth between CE1 and CE2, by way of CE3, is a revolutionary process by which individuals transform themselves, by which new subjectivities emerge; the individuals and the groups mutually transform themselves.

## Last words

The political institution is not separate from the economy (the social). The point of departure is peoples' economic (social) activity in a given territory, this tangible, real, activity; from here emerge a politics. The political subjects are not "citizens", but wear all sorts of hats—gardener, mother, neighbour, municipal councillor, worker-owner, student, therapist. And these territories, constituted as community economies, create networks with community economies elsewhere, following the needs and desires of one and the other. The economy is diversified, not municipalized. Now, not "after." This allows us to see that we are not fighting against a global, abstract, capitalism, but against specific and visible capitalist activities. Education is not a preliminary step, but is rather done in action. In thinking and practicing the economy, we transform ourselves. Our way of imagining and talking about the economy influences our actions. Our actions create the economy. The economy, or in other words, ecology, this process of auto-constituting diverse communities, within which humans and more-than-humans interact to assure the subsistence and the livelihoods of each other, and of the generations to come.

Maybe you, reader, want to contribute to this thought process? You'd like to explore this method of organising? Don't hesitate. A better world will not be the fruits of someone else's labour. It is the fruit of our labour, right here, right now.

## Endnotes

1 Because of my overly busy life, it is likely that this thought experiment would never have been made available to an English-speaking audience had Sean Devine not gifted of their precious time to its translation. I am truly grateful. This piece was originally published in French: "De l'écologie sociale aux économies de communauté: Pour un autre vivre-ensemble». In Collectif, V. Lefebvre-Faucher & M.A. Casselot (Eds.). *Faire partie du monde: Réflexions écoféministes* (pp. 53-73). Les éditions du remue-ménage, 2017.

2 K. Gibson, D. B. Rose et R. Fincher, «Preface», *Manifesto Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, Brooklyn, Punctum Books, 2015, p vi.

3 The practices of enclosure and non-management are contrary to commoning. Enclosure restricts access and use of commons, while privatizing benefit and responsibility. When commons are not managed, access is far and wide, without restrictions, but, on the flip side, there is no community to take on responsibility and care.

4 J. W. Moore, «Introduction», dans J. W. Moore (dir.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, Oakland, PM Press, 2016, p. 6.

5 J. Biehl, *Le municipalisme libertaire: La politique de l'écologie sociale*, Montréal, Écosociété, 1998, p. 20.

6 A. Kruzynski et M. Silvestro, «Proximité physique, vie de quartier et luttes anarchistes», dans R. Bellemare-Caron, É. Breton, M.-A. Cyr, F. Dupuis-Déri et A. Kruzynski (dir.), *Nous sommes ingouvernables: les anarchistes au Québec*, Montréal, Lux, 2013, p. 130.

7 A. Kruzynski et M. Sévigny, «Réhabiliter la politique : Une option libertaire», *Possibles*, vol. 29, no 1, 2005, p. 28-45.

8 Biehl, *Le municipalisme libertaire*, p. 102.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 211-212.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

11 See M. Sévigny, *Trente ans de politique municipale: Plaidoyer pour une citoyenneté active*, Montréal, Écosociété, 2001 et M. Sévigny, *Et nous serions paresseux? Résistance populaire et autogestion libertaire*, Montréal, Écosociété, 2009.

12 See [www.lapointelibertaire.org](http://www.lapointelibertaire.org).

13 La Pointe libertaire, «Parents et enfants participent en grand nombre à la manifestation anticapitaliste du 1er mai!», communiqué de presse, 2011, <http://archive.lapointelibertaire.org/node/1624.html>, visited on June 20, 2017.

14 I doubt that a community could decide to municipalize the economy as a whole, without destroying itself in the process. Imagine that this decision is not unanimous, but adopted by majority. If the libertarian “municipality” chose to do it anyway, does this not represent an authoritarian act?

15 J. K. Gibson-Graham et E. Miller, «Economy as Ecological Livelihood», in Katherine Gibson, Deborah Bird Rose et Ruth Fincher (dir.), *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene*, Brooklyn, Punctum Books, 2015, p. 8.

16 J.K. Gibson-Graham is the penname for Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson, feminist geographers specialising in political economy. Their theoretical and empirical body of work is immense.

17 Surprise! Cisgender white men are not the majority as is often the case in the field of economics.

18 These explanations come from a free-mix and paraphrasing of ideas present in Gibson-Graham and Miller's “Economy as Ecological Livelihood”.

19 E. Miller, «Community Economy: Ontology, Ethics and Politics for Radically Democratic Economic Organizing», *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 25, no 4, 2013, p. 519-520.

20 I put the “us” in quotation marks to signify that there is no united and homogenous “us”, but rather many diversified “I”s that come together.

21 J. K. Gibson-Graham, «Being the Revolution, or, How to Live in a “More-Than-Capitalist” World Threatened with Extinction», *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 26, no 1, 2014, p.81.

22 J. K. Gibson-Graham, J. Cameron et S. Healy, *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Communities*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2013, p. 189.

23 Miller, «Community Economy...», p. 526.

24 J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2006, p. x.

25 See <http://communityeconomies.org/>

26 This history is recounted in the book, produced by *La Pointe liberaire : Bâtiment 7: Victoire populaire à Pointe-Saint-Charles*, Montréal, Écosociété, 2013.

27 A. Kruzynski, L'autonomie collective en action: du Centre Social Autogéré de Pointe-Saint-Charles au Bâtiment 7, *Nouvelles pratiques sociales, L'action communautaire: Quelle autonomie? Pour qui?*, 29(1), 2017, pp. 139-158.

28 Kruzynski, A. Commoning property in the City: the on-going work of making and remaking. In Kelly Dombroski & J.K. Gibson-Graham, *Handbook of Diverse Economies*, Edward Elgar Publishing, in press. ; Collectif CourtePointe (Isabelle Drolet et Anna Kruzynski (dir.), *Pointe Saint-Charles: un quartier, des femmes, une histoire communautaire*, Montréal, Remue-ménage, 2006; K. Triollet, «Une décennie de luttes urbaines à Pointe-Saint-Charles: Vers une réappropriation citoyenne», *Nouveaux Cahiers du socialisme*, no 10, *Occupons la ville!*, 2013, p. 129-143.

**TAKE  
THE  
CITY**

**Voices of Radical Municipalism**

**Edited by Jason Toney**



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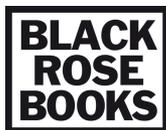
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