Chapter 10

A Community Economies perspective for ethical community development

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Abstract

Community Economy theory has gained much traction over the past two decades as a language politics and an ethical tool kit for researchers and practitioners in the field of community development. This chapter examines Community Economy approaches to development using two empirical examples from quite different contexts that highlight key ethical concerns. In the two empirical examples we show how communities can move towards surviving well collectively by mapping their existing diverse economic practices and relationships, and how people can shift from focusing on their individual survival to collective survival. We use the Community Economy approach to suggest that ethical questions are best negotiated through relationships and in specific contexts, rather than adopting an individualist or universal prescription of what ethics is, or should be in any given context.

Key words: Relational ethics, community economies, community development, diverse economies, care

Introduction

In our teaching of community development, we have noticed that some students want to be able to define and name 'the community'. They talk about 'the community' as an entity or thing that is somehow 'know-able'. Similarly, many students also express a desire to 'do the right thing' when it comes to working with communities. Most want to act ethically, and some even want a kind of ethical rule-book that they can use to help guide their actions in different situations. These kinds of desires are completely understandable. They reflect teaching materials on community development that emphasise the importance of understanding the demographics, histories and aspirations of communities one might work with. The desire to know how to act ethically and manage uncertainty also makes complete sense when navigating the often complex negotiations and uneven power relations within and between communities, non-governmental-organisations, funders, state agencies, and the private sector.

While these desires to know and act are understandable, they are also sometimes at odds with anti-essentialist or post-structural understandings which suggest that any notion of 'the community' is a fiction or myth (see for instance Bond, 2011; Diprose, 2016; Nancy, 1991). Similar to this idea that a notion of 'the community' is a fiction or myth, post-structural thinking has also queried what it means to be a human subject. So rather than human subjects being understood as individual, stable, autonomous, and rational, post-structural understandings frame human subjectivity as always in a process of becoming (see for instance Cameron and Gibson, 2005). This process of becoming is constructed and understood through relationship, what Nancy (1991) calls 'being-with', which as Popke (2010, p 18) writes, is essentially 'the sharing of being with co-present others in space and time'. A post-structural understanding of both community and human subjectivity therefore, opens us to the possibility that every encounter and relationship carries the potential for an 'agonistic negotiation over the meaning and contours of what we hold in-common with others' (Popke, 2010, p 18). For Negri (2003), this is essentially the crux of ethics. He writes that 'ethics is the responsibility for the common' (Negri, 2003, p 183). In this chapter we draw on Negri's

understanding of ethics, and follow Popke (2010, p 4) who describes ethics as concerns around the:

> nature of our interactions with, and responsibilities toward, both human and non-human others. To speak of ethic[s]… then, is to consider the nature and extent of these responsibilities, both empirically and theoretically, as well as the ways in which our actions and dispositions toward others tend to fulfill or abrogate them within particular contexts or institutional arrangements.

Within our respective fields (human geography and community development) more generally, we have observed shifts over the last few years away from universalising and individualist understandings of ethics, to this more relational and collective approach to ethics that foregrounds caring for, and responsibility towards, others (see for instance; Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, 2010; Hill, 2011; McEwan and Goodman, 2010; Miller, 2013; Popke, 2007; 2010; Pratt, 2009; Chapter 1 in this volume). Feminist geographers like Lawson (2007, p 3) have argued that 'care ethics begins with a social ontology of connection, foregrounding social relationships of mutuality and trust'. For Lawson, care can articulate a particular form of social ethics premised on the collective concern for the wellbeing of others. Popke (2010) suggests that one way to approach and better understand ethics is to focus on the everyday actions and labour that people undertake to care for each other and the more-than-human. He goes on to argue that 'it is important not only to theorize the existence of ethics and cooperation, but to try to cultivate them, through representational strategies aimed at making visible the social relations and connections through which ethical responsibility might flow' (Popke, 2010, p 26-27). He suggests that within human geography, the work of Gibson-Graham (2006) is exemplary in illustrating the various 'ways in which our collective labors create the economic as a field of ethical interdependence and decision' (Popke, 2010, p 27). Through their action research, Popke argues that Gibson-Graham (2006) and others have sought to bring into being what they call the 'Community Economy' (CE) where ethical questions around care and 'economic being-in-common' are central.

In their recent book, Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) outlined six key ethical questions relevant for community development. These questions include:

- What do we really need to live healthy lives both materially and psychically? How do we take other people and the planet into account when determining what's necessary for a healthy life? *How do we survive well?*

- What do we do with what is left over after we've met our survival needs? How do we make decisions about this excess? *How do we distribute surplus?*

- What types of relationships do we have with the people and environments that enable us to survive well? How much do we know about those who live in distant places and provide the inputs that we use to meet our needs? *How do we encounter others as we seek to survive well?*

- What materials and energy do we use up in the process of surviving well? *What do we consume?*

- How do we maintain, restore, and replenish the gifts of nature and intellect that all humans rely on? *How do we care for our commons?*

- How do we store and use our surplus and savings so that people and the planet are supported and sustained? *How do we invest for the future?* (Gibson-Graham at al., 2013, p xiii-xiv, original emphasis).

In this chapter we focus on the key question: 'How do we encounter others as we seek to survive well?' And by 'others', we mean both the human and more-than-human world. This chapter begins with a brief overview of CE thinking and then illustrates how a relational CE approach to ethics and encountering others can be applied in grassroots action in two community development case studies. We highlight how a relational understanding of ethics can help us to better consider ethical economic relationships and practices that underpin community development interventions.

Community Economy approaches

CE theory and the Community Economies Collective (CEC, a group of scholars using these approaches) emerged out of the work of J-K Gibson-Graham's (1996; 2006) diverse economic theory. Gibson-Graham (1996; 2006) argued that there are two main issues with conventional understandings of the 'economy'. Firstly, the economy tends

to be understood as inevitably capitalist, and secondly, as separate from ecology or the more-than-human world. To challenge what Gibson-Graham called 'capitalocentrism' (viewing everything either in relation to, subject to, or resistant to, capitalism), CEC scholars understand the economy as a wide range of diverse practices (see Table 10.1), bound up with planetary ecosystem processes and negotiated through various sorts of encounters.

Table 10.1: The Diverse Economy

THE DIVERSE ECONOMY				
LABOR	ENTERPRISE	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	FINANCE
Wage	Capitalist	Market	Private	Mainstream Market
Alternative Paid	Alternative Capitalist	Alterative Market	Alternative Private	Alternative Market
Unpaid	Noncapitalist	Nonmarket	Open Access	Nonmarket

Source: Gibson-Graham *et al.,* (2013) "Take Back the Economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities", p.13.

This focus on diverse encounters - involving a range of transactions, labour and enterprise forms, and different finance and property arrangements, rather than just capitalist ones - encourages people to see the multiple ways of enacting transformation in our societies (Gibson-Graham, 2008). To mobilise this transformation, CEC scholars have worked to: increase the visibility of the diverse economy; encourage communities to experiment with diverse economic practices; and, build connections between ethical economic actors to bring about collective change (see for instance; Cameron and Gibson, 2005; Gabriel, 2013; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Pavlovskaya, 2004; St. Martin, 2005; Gibson-Graham et al., 2017). Drawing on insights from psychoanalytic practice, CEC scholars have used the diverse economy reframing to give new meaning and value to people's lives and construct the

economy as a space for other choices (see, for instance, Healy 2010; 2014). A diverse economy framing can also expand the number of people who see themselves as agents of economic change - reshaping the world in ways that matter for people and planet and that might also prompt a willingness to explore collective actions (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016; Roelvink, 2016). When people can see how their actions are connected through the diverse economy, ethical economic actors can recognize one another in more and more places and relationships, enlarging the field of *collective action* (Roelvink, 2010).

In recent work on collective action, CEC scholars have also used the concept of hybrid networks and assemblages to recognize how human and non-human others can work together as acting subjects (see for instance Cameron et al., 2014; Dombroski, 2013; 2016; Gibson-Graham et al., 2017; Roelvink, 2016). CEC scholars suggest that hybrid networks and assemblages are based on three critical interactions: gathering, which brings together those who share concerns about an issue; reassembling, in which material gathered is rebundled to amplify particular insights; and translating, by which reassembled ideas are taken up by other collectives so they may continue to "do work" in the world (Cameron et al., 2014; Hill, 2015).

The interconnected foci of making visible the diverse economy and enlarging the field of ethical collective action allow us to imagine the postcapitalist world as something we can enact in the here and now. So, rather than giving over to pessimism, or waiting for some future revolution, CEC scholars look to the everyday, diverse practices of people and the more-than-human, and seek to amplify these. This emphasis on the everyday (or in other words, 'starting where we are') resonates with work in community development to help practitioners think beyond fixed notions of both subjects and communities. CEC scholars have used action research and research activist methodologies (see Cameron et al., 2011; Diprose, 2016; Dombroski, 2016; Gibson and Cameron, 2001; McKinnon et al., 2016; Werner, 2015), participatory action research (PAR) approaches (see Cameron and Grant-Smith, 2005; Cameron and Gibson, 2005; Cameron, 2007; Hwang, 2013), and asset based community development (ABCD) approaches in a range of contexts - from minority world post-

industrial regions with high unemployment and corresponding socio-economic issues (see Cameron and Gibson, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Newbury and Gibson, 2016), to majority world urban and rural contexts (see Hill, 2011; Mathie et al., 2017; McKinnon, 2011).

As CEC scholars we understand community as 'a never-ending process of being together, of struggling over the boundaries and substance of togetherness, and of coproducing this togetherness in complex relations of power' (Gibson-Graham et al., 2017, p 5). Some have argued that CEC scholars are 'Pollyannas' who naively gloss over, or neglect to explore the uneven power relations in communities (see Fickey and Hanrahan, 2014, for further discussion). However, increasingly CEC scholars are focusing on the ongoing democratic struggle involved as people seek to collectively negotiate and renegotiate their material and cultural survival in different contexts (see for instance; Borowiak et al., 2017; Diprose, 2016, Diprose et al., 2017; Mathie et al., 2017). We find CE approaches to community development useful for understanding the never ending process of being in community, where subjects and communities are un-fixed and constantly in a state of becoming. The focus on mapping diverse and everyday practices, and starting 'where we are', helps to shift attention to ethics and relationality during this ongoing process (and struggle) of becoming.

In the two case studies that follow, we highlight how CE approaches can be useful when thinking about ethics and relationships in specific contexts. In case study 1 we illustrate how mapping a diverse economy can open up ethical questions and identify existing and emerging relationships and opportunities for alternative community development trajectories. In case study 2 we show how subjects come together around *shared* ethical concerns (that include the more-than-human world), to pursue collective action, and in the process move from an 'I' to a 'we'. We use these case studies to illustrate how CE thinking can open up ethical questions around how we encounter others (including the more-than-human) when negotiating challenging questions of community development. We suggest that rather than thinking of ethics as individual and universal (in that there is necessarily a 'right' way to act), ethics is

best negotiated through relationships – with humans and the more-than-human world upon which our collective survival depends.

Case study 1: City of Powell River, British Columbia, Canada

Like many regions in the post-industrial minority world, the City of Powell River has been struggling with how to respond when a major industrial employer goes into decline. For Powell River, this was an industrial mill and pulp and paper factory run by the Powell River Company. From the end of World War II until the mid-1970s, the mill was the largest employer in the region, employing 2527 people at its peak in 1974. However, due to international competition and financial difficulties that began in the 1990s, production and employment has decreased to approximately 400 people, posing significant 'material and symbolic challenges' for the region (Newbury and Gibson, 2016, p 185. In what follows we draw on a book chapter by Newbury and Gibson (2016) to show how a CE approach to mapping the economic diversity in the region can open space for ethical reflections on the possibilities for uncertain futures.

Similar to feminist inspired scholarship (see for instance England, 2006), Newbury and Gibson are explicit about their role and relationships with the Powell River region. Newbury describes how she has been a resident and 'insider' of Powell River for seven years and a founding member of Powell River Voices: 'a civic organisation aimed at widening the debate about Powell River's social and economic future' (Newbury and Gibson, 2016, p 185). Gibson describes how she has participated in public conversations around post-capitalist community economy approaches as a visiting scholar. Newbury and Gibson describe their approach as 'participant activist research', noting that it differs from more classic participatory action research (PAR). They write: 'PAR typically works with vulnerable and marginalised groups and has an emancipatory focus', whereas participant activist research involves 'working on matters of shared concern with already mobilized collectives of researchers' to explore emergent possibilities (p 194). CEC scholars often use Eve Sedgewick's concept of 'weak theory' to explore ethical questions around community development trajectories that welcome uncertainty and surprise, 'rather than structural dynamics of

transformation' or blueprints for change that rest on strong critiques or pre-conceived outcomes (Newbury and Gibson, 2016, p 194).

The CE approach of focusing on the 'here and now' reflects asset based community development (ABCD) approaches to exploring a community's existing assets, strengths, and more-than-human attributes. One of the risks in focusing solely on the 'here and now' though is that people (including community development workers) may neglect to consider the history of certain places and communities. Working in Aotearoa New Zealand, Bargh and Otter (2009) point out that in post-colonial communities, a key ethical concern relates to understanding what came before and what was dispossessed if intergenerational ethical issues of redress for indigenous people are to be truly considered. They argue that there is no blank space in terms of engaging with communities, and nurturing indigenous people's politics of place may actually involve the exclusion of colonising discourses and certain people from accessing land, resources, or community development projects. This exclusion may be needed to allow indigenous people the chance to reclaim what has been lost through colonisation. What this highlights is that beginning with the 'here and now' also requires some knowledge and recognition of the historical processes that contributed to creating the 'here and now'.

So, what did this mean for Newbury and Gibson in Powell River? Firstly, it meant developing understanding of the indigenous groups (Tla'Amin people) who had lived in the region prior to colonisation. Newbury and Gibson outline how colonisation, and the logging industry in particular, prompted the forcible removal of indigenous people from their land onto a small reserve. They describe how the introduction of diseases by European settlers led to further Tla'Amin people's deaths, and how damed rivers and logged forests altered the life-sustaining ecosystems Tla'Amin people depended on. Finally, they describe how more recently the negotiation of a treaty in 2012 between the Tla'Amin people and the Province of British Columbia and the federal Canadian Government, has shifted the nation from being under the jurisdiction of the "Indian Act' to self-government. This enables significant changes with increased land ownership and expanded hunting and fishing rights for Tla'Amin people.

Secondly, it meant gaining an understanding of how the Powell River Company had contributed to shaping the lives of people in the region. Newbury and Gibson describe how the mill provided a certain prosperity and material job security for many during its boom, albeit structured around capitalist and gendered hierarchies that shaped the very design and structure of the city. Similar to many single industry towns, the Power River Company exerted a certain paternalism, contributing wealth that flowed into education and infrastructure services in the region through local taxation. For these reasons, many of the mainstream responses to the decline of the mill have focused nostalgically on replacing the mill with another large industry.

Finally, it meant gaining an understanding of more recent demographic changes in the region. Newbury and Gibson describe how during the 1960s, U.S. Vietnam draft avoiders moved to Powell River, contributing to a certain counter-culture in the otherwise relatively conservative working class community. They also note that more recently, retirees and wealthy urbanites from Vancouver have bought property in the region, further changing the demographics.

Through this description of the Powell River region, Newbury and Gibson hold the history of the place and community (including the uneven power relations and dispossession of colonisation) in tension with the understanding that subjects and communities are in a constant process of becoming and can never be fully 'known'. What their work usefully highlights is the importance of background research and building relationships to better understand some of the politics and processes that have contributed to shaping a community in the 'here and now'.

A key practical CE method Newbury and Gibson have used to prompt ethical questions about potential development trajectories is reading the landscape for economic difference to identify 'existing ethical economic practices that are oriented directly to the growth of wellbeing' (p 198). For example, Newbury has been working with other local people and groups to map the diverse modes of work (including un-

paid), different forms of enterprise, and various transactions that occur in the region. This has included creating 'cultural capital' maps that highlight the many and various festivals and events, accounting for the volunteer labour that supports these, and documenting the forms of property and resources that support cultural activities (including privately and publicly owned spaces such as galleries, studios and halls). All of these activities and forms of exchange intersect with the money economy in different ways – through ticket sales, art and handicraft sales, wage payments, and the hiring of venues. However, they also generate a whole range of non-money exchanges through gifts, cooperative exchange, bartering and borrowing. Newbury and Gibson note that at the time of writing, a project was underway to begin mapping the diverse food economy in the region. They describe the annual Seedy Saturday where participants swap and sell seeds, and engage in food related workshops to map how food security can be strengthened. They then describe some of the community groups and services (such as church groups, sports clubs, thrift shops, public libraries, the Youth Resource Centre, and other extra-curricular activities provided for youth), to highlight the often overlooked work, particularly by women, in these kinds of community organisations. The usefulness of mapping economic diversity is that it is creatively descriptive – highlighting and making connections between what is already occurring in a community to provide a more holistic picture of their economic landscape.

These diverse economic maps can then be used as a starting point for communities to consider what matters of concern and existing practices already connect people, and, what they might want to build on and amplify. Such maps also help to illustrate the wide range of existing relationships and forms of encounter that already exist within communities. Newbury and Gibson note that this method is about nurturing multiple entry-points within a diverse economy rather than a community relying on one employer/industry/practice or relationship to sustain themselves. Creating diverse economic maps is not about covering over or ignoring disagreement and uneven power relations within relationships and communities. The maps for instance, may actually help people in certain communities to identify relationships, encounters and practices that are unhealthy for them, or limit their sense of autonomy. Ultimately, diverse economic maps can help people to identify shared ethical concerns to build

relationships, and make visible the diverse ways communities sustain themselves through interconnections with each other and the more-than-human world. To put another way, mapping economic diversity provides a helpful representation of the diverse ways people are already encountering each other in any community. To connect this back to Negri's (2003) understanding of ethics, diverse economic maps can help to show how people are already taking responsibility for, and caring about, what they hold in common.

Case study 2: The neighbourhood of Banaba, Manila, The Philippines

Like many neighbourhoods decimated by sudden severe storms and extreme flooding, *barangay* (neighbourhood) Banaba, Manila struggled to cope when Typhoon *Ondoy* (or *Ketsana* as it is internationally known) devastated the area in 2009. The nearby Marikina River broke its banks in rapid time. 450 mm of rain fell in just 12 hours. Metro Manila recorded its highest rainfall since the 1960s. An estimated five million households were affected citywide with infrastructure damage of 69 million U.S. dollars. Barangay Banaba was one of the hardest hit areas. Banaba is particularly susceptible to severe flooding because it lies between two rivers, the Marikina and the Nangka, and it is the end destination of two creeks and most settlements are located on floodplains. Many of the 20,000 plus neighbourhood population live in congested informal settlements and have been relocated through government schemes from other crowded parts of Manila. In what follows we draw on empirical research by one of the authors (Ann) who visited Banaba nine months after Ondoy with one of her research partners, a community development worker who was part of the post typhoon livelihoods rebuilding efforts. Drawing on Ann's participant observation and write up the project as part of her doctorate, we show how people in Barangay Banaba came together around shared ethical concerns, including concerns for surviving well within a more-than-human world of extreme weather, waste, and waterways management considerations. We show how collective action was pursued and in the process how Banaba residents moved from an 'I' to a 'we' in their community development efforts.

International donor organisations responded immediately to the 2009 disaster situation. HEKS, (Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz /Swiss Interchurch Aid), Swiss Solidarity and Christian Aid, worked with Manila based NGO, COPE Foundation, and Banaba based People's Organisation *Buklod Tao*, to provide relief and re-building funding to the amount of 10,000,000 Philippine peso (PHP) (approx. 200,000 US Dollars (USD); 47 PHP equivalent to 1 USD in 2009). Initially, the thought was the donor funding would be distributed on a household-by-household basis once a livelihood damage assessment had been conducted to determine who was eligible for assistance. What is interesting about this case is that the Banaba community broke with this classic tale of household-based development assistance and intervention. Instead, over 1200 households agreed to waive their rights to a PHP 5000 household cash handout and to pool their funding to develop an experimental community-based social enterprise cluster (Hill, 2013, Hill and Rom, 2011).

There are a number of reasons and circumstances that led to this collective decision. Firstly, there was recognition that many local livelihood strategies were not working particularly well before Ondoy struck. For example, there had been a glut of *sari-sari* (convenience stores) and other small businesses along the main road in Banaba, many of which were established via high interest micro lending schemes. Making loan repayments, let alone generating sufficient income, was difficult for many of these small business owners. So, rather than rebuild what was there before, for many people in the community there was openness to experimenting and trying something new. Secondly, there were catalysts and change agents working with the community who were already practised at nurturing meso-level change and fostering community economic experimentation. For example, *Bukload Tao*, the local people's organisation, which oversaw the post-Ondoy livelihood assistance programme had been active for a long time in the local area lobbying against mining activities, and campaigning for environmental protection. The NGO worker employed by COPE was a social enterprise innovator already practised at community-based experimentation. Lastly, a 'Cash for Work' programme implemented by the international donor organisations, COPE and *Buklod Tao* to provide some immediate relief and household income, also helped generate a collective identity and collective consciousness around improving local wellbeing. While initially small work teams of workers in the

'Cash for Work' programme were assigned different tasks in different areas, when they discovered a vast amount of rubbish illegally dumped in the Nangka River, all 166 workers combined forces in a collective clean up. Through this clean-up people in the neighbourhood were connecting with each other and also with the river, and out of this project many began to develop a new community consciousness and interest in surviving well together.

The 'Cash for work' programme was therefore important in cultivating a 'together' or collective mindset. Workers in the 'cash for work' programme were paid PHP 382 (about USD 8 a day as at April 2018 — the minimum daily wage in Metro Manila — and were asked to contribute PHP 50 each (about USD 1 as at April 2018) to cover the cost of tools and gloves. By making this contribution they became financial contributors in their own right and had something to show for it in the form of quality shovels and rakes which they could then re-use and share via a community borrow and lend tool library. This initial exercise in working together and sharing tools helped generate a new sense of civic 'we-ness' (Hill, 2011) that proved very useful in the next project steps.

In the months that followed the typhoon, 1232 Banaba households that waived their rights to an international donor agency handout, including those households that had been part of the 'Cash for work' programme, signed over their allocation for use in group enterprises. They formed groups of at least ten members, attended various training workshops on enterprise ideas and submitted loan applications with business plans for livelihood projects they were interested in. Applications were screened against social and environmental criteria and for economic viability. The focus was on drawing on existing community assets such as people's labour and skills, and waste raw materials, including large quantities of tetra-packs and river silt discovered in the river clean up. The various groups utilised these local assets and the donor funding to develop enterprises that centred on investing directly into human and more-than-human community survival and wellbeing. The environmental and economic criteria used to determine what projects received funding, focused on the wellbeing of people and ecological systems such as waterways.

Five community based-social enterprises were established out of this process. These were urban container gardening (350 member households); organic compost production (150 member households); tetra-pot production (432 member households); fibreglass fabrication (100 member households); and green charcoal trading (200 members). The 'scale up' implications of pooling human and financial resources were significant. For example, the start-up capital allocated to tetra-pot production of PHP 1,447,000 enabled the group to buy sewing machines and to set up a small factory in Banaba. The start-up capital of PHP 847,000 allocated to urban container gardening enabled the group to develop multiple urban container garden sites with purpose built plant risers and to purchase the tetra-pots and compost soil required for larger scale production.

Image 10.1 provides a pictorial representation of three of the enterprises and gives some clues as to how they work together in an enterprise cluster. Featured top left and right is the tetra-pot factory where discarded waste tetra packs are sewn into 'tetra-pots'. These pots are then sold to the urban container gardening enterprise which in turn creates container vegetable gardens ready for sale, featured bottom left and right. The growing medium in the pots is made by the compost enterprise from Banaba household biodegradable waste, sand, silt and other soil, and sold onto the urban container gardening enterprise.

Image 10.1: Banaba group enterprises established after Typhoon Ondoy (photos by Ann Hill)

The Banaba enterprises are a community economy experiment in how to survive well with human and more-than-human others. Specifically, they are an experiment in how to survive well in a typhoon prone economically vulnerable region. A key aspect of this experiment is that it required people to shift their disposition from 'I' and individual household concerns, to 'we' and collective concerns for community economic development and ecological systems health. People in Banaba drew on waste materials and their own willing labour to experiment together with new enterprises in the aftermath of extreme weather.

The criteria used to fund certain ideas was holistic in that socio-economic wellbeing was integrated with ecosystem/environmental wellbeing and the enterprises that emerged were all interconnected and supported one another. In this way the very process of community organising in Banaba after Typhoon Ondoy, helped to foster the movement from a focus on individual/household survival to a collective or community sense of 'we' and what was needed for common wellbeing. To connect this back to Negri's idea, through community organising and engaging with the donor funding, people were moved to consider what they held in common and how they wanted to maximise their collective wellbeing.

Conclusion

Community Economies thinking has evolved out of a critique of the grand narratives of modernist development, and a re-framing of the hopeless cul-de-sacs of strong Marxist critiques of neoliberal capitalism that shut down hope, desire for, and the belief that change is possible (Gibson-Graham, 1996; 2006). As CEC scholars we are well aware that there are 'powerful forces that attempt to enclose common resources, exploit and dehumanise people for profit, and reduce the beauty of the non-human world to commodities' (Gibson-Graham et al., 2017, p 4). However, we also seek to 'cultivate representations of the world that *inspire*, *mobilize*, and *support* change efforts even while recognizing very real challenges' (Gibson-Graham et al., 2017, p 4). In this chapter we have drawn on two case studies to illustrate how CE approaches can be used to explore ethical questions around how people encounter others (including the more-than-human) to collectively survive well. We have argued that mapping diverse economic practices within communities can help to make visible the existing relationships and practices that people already engage in and care about, while also creating space to consider different development trajectories. We have shown how people can come together to experiment through collective action by detailing some of the ways individuals move from a sense of 'I' to 'we' to create more sustainable economic practices. Finally, we have shown how concerns for the more-than-human can be used to open space for debate and imagine new economic practices amidst uncertainty in a climate changing world.

The two case studies illustrate a willingness and openness to experimentation that foregrounds the crucial role grassroots economic actors and collective action can play. A CE approach to ethics does not prescribe a 'one size fits all' course of action. Rather, ethical actions are understood as being context specific and negotiated through relationships between people and the more-than-human world. Popke (2010, p 37) writes that around the world:

> communities are being constructed around the social geographies of being-in-common, and in ways that respect local difference and autonomy. The goal for the twenty-first century, perhaps, is to provide the space for the expansion of such projects, and to support the proliferation of new ones, not in order to decide in advance the contours of the in-common.

So, what does this mean for those of us concerned with ethics and community development? For us it means being open to the multiple ways communities can coalesce around what they hold in-common, while being mindful of the debates and negotiations that follow as they seek to manage what is held in-common. This includes being mindful of the subjects and voices who might be excluded from, or silenced in such debates and negotiations. For as Popke (2010) notes, these debates and negotiations are increasingly going to involve re-thinking the agency we as humans ascribe to the more-than-human world, and also the spiritual world. While this understanding of ethics and action can sometimes mean uncertainty for community development practitioners, students and researchers, it also allows for a certain softness and acceptance that 'we don't always know' what to do or how to proceed. This softness and acceptance can be productive, opening space for the unexpected and hopeful. For, as Negri (2003) notes, ethics is the responsibility for the common, and also 'the terrain of possibility, of action, of hope' (1996, p 170). Our CEC 'mode of being' and our experience in teaching and practice inspire us to continue in an 'always work-in-progress' vein and we encourage our readers to do the same. Just as community itself is 'a never-ending process of being together, of struggling over the boundaries and substance of togetherness, so too is community development. So let us continue in this vein, an ever unfolding journey.

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