

# **Challenging the Coloniality of Ecological Livelihoods: Critical Reflections Ten Years On**

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Writing is both wonderful and perilous. We record a moment of thought in a durable form that circulates well beyond us, yet our thoughts are then frozen in time while we, hopefully, learn and change. More than 10 years after co-writing this chapter for the edited collection *Manifesto for Living in the Anthropocene* (included below), and with many new experiences and relationships informing us, we (Ethan and Kath) re-read this piece and found ourselves deeply disturbed. For all its strengths as an initial attempt to think beyond dominant conceptions of “economy” and “environment,” we were struck by the ways that our writing inadvertently reproduced a number of harmful, colonial patterns of thinking and relating. We intend here to take responsibility for these mistakes by describing them, by engaging honestly with their harmful effects, and by offering some of our current, in-process thinking about how we might proceed differently moving forward. We view this as a practice of reparative self-critique that we hope to encourage in ourselves and in other settler-colonial activist-scholars who seek to enact solidarity with Indigenous-led efforts toward decolonization and collective flourishing.

## **Facing our colonialism**

Despite our commitment to challenging and rethinking core assumptions of modernity, our framing ends up reproducing some of its most harmful patterns. Broadly speaking, the paper constructs a “we” that overgeneralizes, inappropriately diffuses responsibility, and erases the realities of Indigenous difference and struggle in our contemporary world. It also upholds a dangerous silence regarding some of the core sources of the harm it purports to name, and therefore proposes strategies that fall far short of what is probably needed in order to radically reconfigure destructive contemporary forms of life.

Considering its performative impacts rather than intentions, the paper risks leveraging ecological crisis and the urgent need to rethink and reconfigure dominant categories to tacitly reinscribe a white, settler-colonial subject as the core agent (savior!) of transformation and to (once again) devalue and marginalize Indigenous agency. While the paper does contain some important thinking that we still stand by, its mode of expression diminishes the potential of these ideas by falling into colonial patterns of thinking

and writing that Kath/Ethan—and probably many others like us—need to leave behind.

Vanessa Machera de Oliveira’s book *Hospicing Modernity: Facing Humanity’s Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism* (2021) is an instructive and sobering guide for us in our attempt to ‘leave things behind’. The book is full of exercises to do on/with oneself to expose the modernist stances that are built into the very fabric of being for white western minority world subjects. She introduces the idea of a bus full of characters with different relationships to dominant modernist ways of being and asks us to see that bus in ourselves, even as those of us critical of the violences of colonization work towards the eradication of such violence. In the Ethan/Kath bus we imagine:

- Our anti-modernist selves up front in the bus offering a new conception of ‘ecological livelihoods’ that displaces the Economy/Society/Environment triad—enthusiastic that this conceptual move is needed and will help to “tilt the assemblage.”
- Our appalled anti-colonial selves down the end of the bus muttering, “Don’t they realize this is nothing new, and that ideas like this have always been central to Indigenous cosmologies”? Indeed, maybe this whole thing is extractive?
- Our observing, non-judging selves tracing our learning, our relationships, and recognizing how depleted our experience and connection with Indigenous people and the work of decolonization has been.
- Our critical, solidarity- and empathy-oriented selves pinpointing what damage this kind of work is doing, might have done, or might yet do, and asking ourselves what we can do to take responsibility.

You can probably identify these different bus passengers in what follows.

### **The colonial “we”**

In classic manifesto-like form, the chapter opens with a bold question: “Can we overcome our hyper-separation”? It lays out a diagnosis: “We have inherited a vision...” And it challenges “us” to “rethink our places in the world.” Applied to the authors and our fellow settler-descended people, this is all right-on. This particular “we” does need to ask these questions and pose these challenges to ourselves, because we are the core inheritors of hyper-separation as a mode of life, and we are in powerful positions of direct and indirect complicity with relationships and institutions that are undermining the well-being of a trillion earthly livelihoods.

But none of this is ever actually specified. What “we” are we talking about? What unity are we assuming here? When our writing confidently enrolls a vast, generic collectivity into our proclamations, whose differences are erased? Undoubtedly there are few humans on the planet, at this point in time, who don’t have to confront the effects of the modernist, extractivist, colonial form of life that has become so pervasive. But these confrontations are crucially different depending on our places, histories, and embodied inheritances. Our lack of acknowledgement of these differences does not serve to unify; it serves to render them invisible in a way that reinscribes the white settler as the normative center. It is a familiar move in the dynamics of colonialism that we reproduced, and our not noticing this is a clear indicator of our ongoing complicity.

Made invisible here, marginalized by our discourse, are the myriad, historical and ongoing struggles over who counts as a human and what it even means to center the human as the privileged site of value (Wynter 2003, Weheliye 2014). The closest we come in the entire paper to acknowledging human difference is to vaguely refer to “certain humans” as those who accrue agency and subjectivity while the rest of the living world is rendered as objects. But these “certain humans” have actual identities and locations that matter profoundly for our understanding of what Olufemi Taiwo calls “the accumulated result of history’s distributive injustices” (2022, 11). These “certain humans” are specifically white, settler-colonial, minority world people—including us, the authors of this chapter—who have benefited from the accumulated generational violence and plunder that produced and sustained the ecology/economy separation over the past 500+ years.

*At this time (2010) J.K. Gibson-Graham and others in the Community Economies Collective were realizing that our human-centric vision of the subject was no longer tenable within a post-capitalist politics and an imaginary of community economies. The mind-shifting impact of the idea of the “anthropocene” challenged us, prompting us to recognize that our work didn’t take adequate account of global ecological devastation. In the weirdly hyper-separated world of scholarly endeavor, the political ecologists had taken on environmental destruction/extractivism, the political economists had taken on human exploitation, and both foregrounded capitalism as the driving force. But Gibson-Graham’s critique of capitalocentrism focused on representations of ‘economy,’ and the subject of history was still the Marxian human subject. The idea of a more-than-human subject was challenging and liberating; it opened up new ways of thinking politics, engaging with assemblage thinking, and experimenting with hybrid research collectives—inspired by science and technology studies and environmental humanities. Ethan’s work on livelihood as a way of breaking down the economy/environment dualism and redefining community as more-than-human becoming was a new approach for our community of thought and seemed to offer a repositioning that would be productive. But in our rush to think (to us) the new, especially in the absence of real relationships of accountability and solidarity with Indigenous people, we reproduced old harms.*

There's one related move in this chapter that particularly hurts. We could chalk it up to an editing mistake, but that lets us off the hook too easily. At one point, we propose that "the big difference between those who have economy and those who don't is our symbolic capacity to represent ourselves as constituting a distinct sphere of existence." What we meant by "those who don't" is nonhumans, which could then imply that those who do "have economy" are humans (in general) —once again mobilizing the difference-erasing "we" that leaves out the historical human majority who have never made such a distinction until it was forcibly imposed on them. But another possible implication here is that those humans who invented and imposed "the economy" actually have some special access to a "symbolic capacity" that defines who may be considered properly human. Non-economic humanity is then aligned with nonhumanity in a move that we would utterly condemn as a white supremacist narrative had it come more directly from some other author.

So how did we miss all of this when editing? How did we even conceive to write this way in the first place? It's not that we didn't have access to critical tools and perspectives that we could have mobilized. It's not that we hadn't yet learned to critique totalizations, generalizations, and tacit re-inscriptions of dominant subjects. What was going on? Undoubtedly, we were captured by the blinding effects of being white, settler-descended people who have not had to continually survive the effects of colonial erasure. We had not done the necessary work to apply tools learned in feminist and queer struggles to whiteness and coloniality. Perhaps most importantly, we were not in accountable relationships with people and communities most impacted by our practices of discursive erasure and marginalization. We were not reading our own work from a place of active solidarity. We will return to this further below.

*Kath's reflection: An embodied/visceral appreciation of violent colonialism was just not there for me then, I realize. It was coming to live at Picnic Point in SW Sydney and listening to the river and experiencing the presence of Aboriginal people all around me in what I saw as a familiar and loved environment that started the change. It was a shocking realization—that I was so complicit in the erasure of Aboriginal people in my city, and that my privilege was so connected to past and on-going injustice...*

*Ethan's reflection: I had lived in unceded Wabanaki homelands for more than 15 years, organizing and teaching as an activist around all kinds of ecological and "social justice" issues, but in all that time I had built no relationships with Wabanaki people. Colonialism was theoretical, not something I felt every day (or, at least, I didn't yet know I felt it). Shifting my organizing to center Wabanaki solidarity and rematriation (land return), and building real relationships of love and care, has meant a shift in my own sense of who I'm writing in relation with, who I'm accountable to/with. It's meant that my sense of the stakes and impacts of colonialism has fundamentally shifted, and also that my care in reading—my own work and others—has shifted. Because who we're in relationship with matters for how we read, how we write, and how we think.*

## Colonial silence

The entire paper is actually about colonialism, but we never mention this once. We imply it in a few places, hint at it, but it remains an unspoken presence. From what ongoing historical process did “we” inherit a world that appears to be made of “resources”? *European colonialism*. When we talk about “agricultural and industrial revolutions”—mobilizing a frame that is itself part of colonial modernity’s linear mythology (Graeber and Wengrow 2021)—from whose lands and livelihoods were their driving sources of energy and growth appropriated? *Indigenous lands and livelihoods*. What processes of genocidal theft and displacement are we leaving out when we center “legal enclosures of the commons” as our model for the emergence of the enclosure of “the economy”? *The processes that founded European settler-colonies in places like the U.S. and Australia*. Who are we actually referring to when we say that “sociality was reserved only for those who count as ‘human’”? *Colonizers who defined the human in terms that elevated their (our) forms of thought, embodiment, and living over all others*. Why did we refrain from naming colonialism and white supremacy as core dynamics at the heart of the separations we purport to address? Why use dog whistles here? Who does this vagueness serve? *Those who benefit from maintaining colonial relations*.

Not everything gets weaker when we refuse to talk about it. Critical discourses may, at times and in certain forms, function to reinscribe the power of that which we’re trying to undo. This is what J.K. Gibson-Graham has described relative to many “capitalocentric” critiques of economy: that by finding capitalism in every nook and cranny, we risk performatively closing off space for seeing and imagining other practices of livelihood. It can be deeply generative to step back from a “paranoid” focus on capitalism and explore other languages for world-making. But sometimes the act of avoiding critique—even, and perhaps especially, in the name of “positivity” or “possibility” ends up maintaining complicity in relations of power that function by seeming invisible or inevitable.

We would never say of colonialism what J.K. Gibson-Graham said of capitalism: that “it is the way ‘capitalism’ has been thought that has made it so difficult for people to imagine its supersession” (1996, 4). “Capitalism” functions, in part, as a discourse that unifies in order to erase difference and construct its own seeming inevitability. It works by very boldly enrolling us all in its pervasive reach. Colonialism, on the other hand (particularly settler colonialism), most often functions through erasure and silence. It seeks to remove Indigenous people and their histories from the land, to re-write the story of the land in colonial terms, and then to remove itself from its own history. Nothing to see here, move along. It’s always happening in some past era, or in some other far-away place, to some other people we don’t know (but whose ceremonies we’ll happily re-enact in a weekend sweat lodge for a fee). It is sustained in an ongoing way by, among many

other dynamics, what Tuck and Yang (2012) call “settler moves to innocence.” Our chapter is an exemplary instance of such a move.

The call to “take responsibility for being together as life” is one that we still believe to be crucial, but without an accompanying analysis of the violent, world-making operations of colonialism and white supremacy, this framing risks making the same move that many advocates of “deep ecology” made in the 1980s: to imagine that once “we” bridge the alienating gap between “humanity and nature,” we’ll have achieved liberation (Plumwood 1993). The liberated subject here is tacitly a white, minority world, cis person who has no chains to lose other than their longed-for inability to merge with Gaian wholeness.

There is no taking of responsibility for “being together as life” that does not pass through critical, generative, and transformative confrontations with colonialism and all other forms of patterned domination. There is no real undoing of the economy/ecology distinction that does not involve acknowledging and dismantling the conceptual and material processes of violence by which a small group of self-designated “white people” have sought to elevate themselves above all others, attempted to erase indigenous forms of life, extracted life and labor from enslaved people, sought to forcibly and universally impose a particular, local mode of thinking and being onto all others, and turned major portions of land from animate relations into “resources” available for extraction and sale.

Our novel proposal to see economy as ecology should not be framed, therefore, as a general revelation. Even if we, as settlers seeking to avoid yet another round of appropriation, needed to turn to Jean Luc-Nancy and Lynn Margulis (all due respect to these two excellent thinkers) to help us think beyond an individualized humanity ontologically divided from the rest of the living world, we should at least acknowledge the myriad, lived Indigenous ontologies that have been enacting ethical modes of ecological worlding—in active resistance to the separations we are just now seeing—for more than a thousand generations.

### **Lessons & commitments**

Here are a few things we’re learning and committing ourselves to as we continue our work:

- The question is not “critique or no critique” (just as the question has never been whether to be “post-capitalist” or “anti-capitalist”!). The question is about whether our thinking and storytelling practices have the performative effect of closing down our capacities to desire, to imagine, and to enact other forms of collective life; or whether they open up space and release capacity for creative possibility and creation. Some forms of critique close down possibility; others open it. For us,

learning to recognize and name our complicities in colonial ways of thinking and relating is a necessary part of cultivating our capacities for enacting the kinds of worlds we long to live in.

- There is no substitute for, and no shortcuts toward, relationships of solidarity and accountability with Indigenous people and communities. Writing from this place changes how we write, because it changes who we imagine as our community of possible readers, and it changes the structures of our ethical obligations to ourselves and others.
- Decolonization can only be led by colonized people. Those of us who are settler-descended have our own decolonization work to do, relative to our own histories of colonization (Europe invented colonialism internally before extending it elsewhere, as our Irish ancestors can attest). Relative to Indigenous people in settler colonies, we show up in solidarity with their work, and we commit ourselves to *anti-colonial* thought and practice. Anti-colonial practice is the solidarity that opens space for colonized people to do their own work, on their own terms, toward decolonization.
- We can't shy away from critique, even as we remain vigilant about the ways it can capture us and close off pathways toward transformation. In the context of colonialism and white supremacy, in particular, reparative critique—especially self-critique that changes us, opens us to new ways of being and becoming—is essential. We encourage our communities of practice to affirm this kind of critique and to actively practice it alongside all of our other tools for imaginative change-making.
- We affirm our intuition to challenge the concepts of economy and environment, because these are, indeed, colonial constructions. Developing frameworks that center relationally, the diversity of livelihoods, and human and more-than-human ethical negotiation as constitutive of life and community is part of an anti-colonial practice, if done carefully and in ways that are accountable to Indigenous people and struggles.
- Such frameworks should emphasize land relations. We have not adequately done this so far. “Commoning,” for example, while a useful concept, is not adequate here, especially given historical complicities between commons and colonialism (Greer 2012). We have so much more to learn from non-appropriative engagement with Indigenous land relations.

## Conclusion

We still stand by many of the ideas and aspirations that are articulated in “Economy as Ecological Livelihood.” We are committed to a project of challenging the concept and material construction of “the economy,” and to working collectively to build forms of life and livelihood that do not rely on separation, invisibility, and violence to generate (temporary) well-being for some at the expense of most others. We still like to read Jean-Luc Nancy and Lynn Margulis, and we take bee economies very seriously. But we also know now that none of this work will achieve its ethical aspirations if it does not center the work of decolonization at every turn.

This is not just because complicity with colonialism calls us to respond, as an act of solidarity for and with those most impacted. It is also because colonialism is a name for a web of violence that ensnares us, too. We were born into lives we did not choose, and have emerged into consciousness only to realize that we were enrolled against our wills into complicity with relationships and patterns that we oppose, and that are also currently undermining possibilities for the flourishing of billions of beings and communities across the planet—including those we know and love intimately. To turn away from this complicity, once seen, would be an affront to dignity, and would render us even more complicit. It would also betray our commitments to possibility, because it turns out that our attachments to colonialism—to private property, to whiteness, to linear temporalities, to dualist ontologies and realist epistemologies, and to certain notions of security and entitlement—are some of the greatest barriers to our participation in building the “other worlds” we believe to be possible. In committing ourselves to anti-colonial thought and action, and in allowing our other commitments and practices to be transformed by this, what possibilities for ecological livelihood, ethical transformation, and collective healing might open that we have not before imagined?

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## Economy as Ecological Livelihood

J.K. Gibson-Graham and Ethan Miller

Can we overcome our hyper-separation from the more-than-human world and take up membership in a thoroughly ecological community of life? While the demands of “the economy” are set in opposition to the needs of “the environment”; while the economy is seen as a vulnerable system that cannot accommodate allocations of social wealth to earth-repair and species protection without risking collapse; while the economic “we” continues to squander and ignore the gifts of the more-than-human world that gives us life, the answer seems to be a depressing “No.” To answer “Yes” we must begin to rethink and re-enact the relationship between economy and ecology.

We have inherited a vision of “the economy” as a distinct sphere of human activity, marked off from the social, the political, and the ecological as a domain of individualized, monetized, rational-maximizing calculation. This economic sphere rests upon and utilizes an earthly base of (often invisible) ecologies that are swept up into its domain to become “resources,” passive inputs for production and consumption measured primarily by their market value. Economy is “naturalized” in the sense that it is presented as a realm of objective, law-like processes and demands; yet this naturalization is at the same time a process by which the more-than-human world is affirmed as external to our economic lives, and the complexities of our interdependencies are rendered invisible and unaccountable. The economy thus assumes a presence and dynamism—manifest, for example, in the demand for endless growth—that appears to be independent from the living world upon which it depends.

This powerful and abstracted construction of the economy emerged from and enabled agricultural and industrial revolutions that gave rise to urbanization, increased standards of living for many, and vast and unprecedented mobilizations and transformations of energy and matter on the part of certain humans. But it also produced and legitimated tremendous violence and inequity, and has generated unforeseen impacts that are undermining the long-term viability of earthly survival not just for humans, but for myriad other species and more-than-human communities. Enabling as it has been for some, this view of economy-ecology relations now stands squarely in the way of imagining and enacting an ethics for living in the Anthropocene.

Recognizing “the economy” as a historical, discursive production rather than an objective ontological category (Mitchell 1998, 2008; Callon 2007) can enable us to begin exploring different ways of thinking and experiencing our processes of livelihood-making. What if we were to see economic activities not in terms of a separate sphere of human activity, but instead as thoroughly social and ecological? What if we were to see economic sociality as a necessary condition of life itself? 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-organizing, mergings, extinctions, and patterns of habitat maintenance and destruction?

Starting from this premise, we might begin to see the history of economic thought as a discursive enclosure of ecological space analogous to—and, in fact, historically parallel to—the material and legal enclosure of commons from the 16th century to the present (Perelman 2000). Just as the discourse of individual private property emerged with its legal rules of ownership, use and transfer, divorcing property (as a thing) from social relations, so the discourse of a separate economy evolved with and through terms, techniques and disciplinary practices that increasingly differentiated and distanced it from other spheres of human and non-human behavior and interaction. Economy, then, was produced when discursive boundaries, at once symbolic and material, were drawn around a particular configuration of ecological relationships—specifically those between certain humans and a world made into resources for their instrumental use. Diverse processes of human livelihood were reduced to narrow logics. Sociality was reserved only for those who count as “human.” And all more-than-human life was relegated to the domain of passive objects.

By making a certain kind of sense of the world, this discourse of “the economy” literally made sense transforming our sensual perceptions and experiences, altering the material and conceptual conditions of possibility for our identifications with others, and changing our abilities to see, think and feel certain inter-relationships and the responsibilities that come with such experiences. Our challenge is to engage in

forms of thought and practice that undermine the conditions of possibility for thinking “the economy” as a hyper-separated domain beyond the reach of politics, ethics and the dynamics of social and ecological interdependence. 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? We suggest three strategies that might bear some ethical fruit.

### ***Strategy 1: Rethinking Being***

For political theorist Jean Luc Nancy, the individual emerges from an essential sociality, rather than the other way around as is often conceived (2000, 44). He suggests that we replace the singular philosophical conception of “Being” with a “being-in-common” that does not reduce us to a unity or shared essence. For theorist of evolutionary biology Lynn Margulis, the process of symbiogenesis suggests that “individuals are all diversities of co-evolving associates” (quoted in Hird 2009, 65). Life does not exist without community as a process of connection-amidst-difference, without being-in-common. “Life,” write Margulis and Sagan, “is an orgy of attractions” (Margulis and Sagan 1995, 157).

If we cease to think of ourselves as singular, self-contained beings and begin to think alongside, for example, the multiple communities of bacteria and bacterial symbionts from which we continually take shape and of which we are but fleeting, temporary manifestations (Hird 2009; Hird 2010); or if we place our activities in the context of the billions-of-years-old, emergent, planetary-scale process of biological self-construction known as “Gaia” (Lovelock 2000; Harding 2006; Volk 2003), it is no longer possible to identify a singular “humanity” as a distinctive ontological category set apart from all else.

What difference might it make if we accept that from the scale of Gaia, to the scale of the microscopic bacteria that form the laboring basis for nearly all biological energy production and transformation, there is a “we” bound together in myriad interrelationships that are themselves the very conditions of existence for our sense of a human “we”? Being-in-common—that is, community—can no longer be thought of or felt as a community of humans alone; it must become multi-species community that includes all of those with whom our livelihoods are interdependent and interrelated.

From this standpoint, there is no more ground for the construction of a human “economy” separate from its ecological context than there would be for ecologists to consider the provisioning practices of bees as an independent “system”—with its own internal laws and imperatives—wholly separate from their constitutive interrelationships with flowering plants, other pollinators, soil mycorrhizae, nitrogen fixing bacteria, seed dispersing birds and mammals. Human sociality is simply a particular

manifestation of the mutual interrelationships between and among species and between and among communities of living beings that implicate lives ranging from the mitochondria in our cells to pollinators that make agriculture possible. If, to paraphrase Foucault, there is no “outside” to ecology (1980, 141), the big difference between those who have economy and those who don’t is our symbolic capacity to represent ourselves as constituting a distinct sphere of existence in which sociality is reduced to individual desire. In other words, we are separate only by virtue of our ability to conceive of these separations.

We might say, from a Gaian perspective, that we humans are a manifestation of the self-organizing processes of planetary life experimenting with particular forms of self-consciousness. Certainly this makes members of our species distinctive and allows us to generate previously impossible ecologies. But by thinking and building ourselves into self-conscious separation from ecological interrelationships and the sociality of life, we have made many of our livelihood processes into enemies of ecological resilience. Our acknowledgement of this history, and our commitment to rejoining a community of life through both our concepts and our actions is a crucial step toward a more robust ethical engagement with the world.

### ***Strategy 2: Redefining 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. “Economy” (*oikos*-habitat; *nomos*-negotiation of order) might then become a conceptual frame or theoretical entry point through which to explore the diverse specificities of livelihood creation by a population (members of the same species) or a community (multi-species assemblage). Economic analysis might then trace and track practices of community survival/management, including processes of co-existence and interdependence with all other populations or communities. Now, if we imagine the co-existence of diverse human economies, diverse salmon economies, diverse bee economies, diverse bacterial economies, and so on, along with the spatio-temporal community economies that they create together, “ecology” (*oikos*-habitat, *logos*-account of) becomes a conceptual frame from which to view the articulated whole of interacting 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.

Clearly such an approach would challenge us to rethink our places in the world, and to re-imagine the identities and social categories through which we’ve grown accustomed to view our interrelationships. What other differences can this redefinition make? For one, it might enable us to develop stronger conceptualizations of livelihood processes that are shared across species and from which we might have a

great deal to learn. Jacobs' (2000) application of ecological concepts to regional economies, experimental practices of biomimicry (Benyus 2002), and the application of ecological wisdom through permaculture design (Mollison 1990; Holmgren 2002) are all examples of sites where the livelihood work of bees, grasses and bacteria become spaces of inter-species learning.

This redefinition might also offer pathways for developing more robust understandings of the complex interconnections between specific human livelihood practices and the more-than-human world from which they emerge (and which they transform). It might lead, for example, to a different analysis of the ethical and material implications of interdependence between diverse bee economies and diverse human agricultural economies—from the vast agri-business economy that promotes monoculture and dependence on the industrial reproduction of non-native pollinators (Mathews 2011a) to the integrated community farm that cultivates resilient polycultures of human, plant and bee life. When we begin to recognize that we are not alone in our livelihoods and that our human economies are inextricably linked with the economies of more-than-human others, might our ways of understanding and experiencing economic crisis, development and well-being begin to fundamentally shift?

### ***Strategy 3: Ethical Coordinates for More-Than-Human Community Economies***

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?” Here we might turn to the work of identifying key sites of ethical negotiation—what we have elsewhere called the ethical coordinates of community economies (Gibson-Graham 2006, Ch. 4; Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2010). Building on and adding to these, we suggest that an economic ethics for the Anthropocene calls us to become practiced in negotiating:

- **PARTICIPATION:** Who is the “we” that participates in the constitution of livelihoods and community economies? This involves cultivating forms of knowing and becoming that open us to the complexities of our interdependencies, to their animate interactions with us, and to the forms of responsibility this calls forth.
- **NECESSITY OR SUFFICIENCY:** What do “we” need for survival? What constitutes “enough”? This includes asking about what is necessary for the dignified survival of all living beings and

communities with whom we are interdependent, and about how we might consume in ways such that one species' or community's consumption does not compromise the survival chances of others.

- SURPLUS: How do “we” produce, appropriate, distribute and mobilize surplus? Our new accounting must include surplus that is generated not just by human labor, but by the work of plants, animals, bacteria, fungi and dynamic energetic systems.
- COMMONS: How do “we” make and share a commons, the material commonwealth of our community economies, with this new, more-than-human “we” in mind? Can we, for example, begin to see the chickens, bees and fruit trees of a cooperative farm not as part of that farm's commons (as shared resources), but rather as living beings participating in the co-constitution of the community that, together, makes and shares the farm?

Imagine an economics in which these kinds of questions were placed at the forefront of theory, public debate, and practical action—an economics in which the dynamics of livelihood were understood not in terms of a narrow range of monetized maximizing (human) activity unfolding according to the dictates of market forces, but as dynamics of appreciative inquiry into diverse forms of interdependence, complex relations of community-making, and ethical negotiations of multiple rationalities and ways-of-living. 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.

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