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Diverse economies: performative practices for 'other worlds'

J.K. Gibson-Graham[1,2]**

[1]Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia
[2]Department of Geosciences, Morrill Science Center, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA 01003, USA

Abstract: How might academic practices contribute to the exciting proliferation of economic experiments occurring worldwide in the current moment? In this paper we describe the work of a nascent research community of economic geographers and other scholars who are making the choice to bring marginalized, hidden and alternative economic activities to light in order to make them more real and more credible as objects of policy and activism. The diverse economies research program is, we argue, a performative ontological project that builds upon and draws forth a different kind of academic practice and subjectivity. Using contemporary examples, we illustrate the thinking practices of ontological reframing, re-reading for difference and cultivating creativity and we sketch out some of the productive lines of inquiry that emerge from an experimental, performative and ethical orientation to the world. The paper is accompanied by an electronic bibliography of diverse economies research with over 200 entries.

Key words: ethical practice, knowledge commons, ontological reframing, performativity, scholar activism, thinking practices.

I Introduction

It is tempting to open this paper by heralding the arrival of a new academic subject – but that might give too much substance to what is as yet an enticing possibility. Instead, more modestly, we would like to announce the birth of a 'diverse economies' research community in economic geography. In what follows, we explore the work of this nascent community and its implications for academic subjectivity, practice, power and politics.

A new moment seems to be upon us, coinciding with the emergence of 'diverse economies' in geography. Certainly the times are markedly different from when we first published *The end of capitalism (as we knew it): a feminist critique of political economy* in 1996. That book was attempting to open up an imaginative space for economic alternatives at a point when they seemed to be entirely absent, even unwanted. In the mid-1990s there was no conversation going on,

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**Email: katherine.gibson@anu.edu.au, graham@geo.umass.edu

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and seemingly no community to interact with. The heady burst of experimentation that was the London Industrial Strategy (enrolling British industrial geographers, among others) had come to a sudden halt when the Greater London Council was summarily dissolved by then prime minister Thatcher in the late 1980s. At the same time the collapse of the European world socialist experiment heralded the end of national level 'alternatives' to capitalism. A new regime of accumulation appeared to be consolidating the hegemony of capitalist relations and all that we could hope for was a more efficient or humane capitalism – flexible specialization or Blair's Third Way.

But at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century we find ourselves in an altogether different landscape. Projects of economic autonomy and experimentation are proliferating worldwide and there is a burgeoning cultural infrastructure of conferences, books, websites, blogs, films, and other media to support and spread them. The World Social Forum, begun in 2001, has been a main focus for showcasing and aligning these experiments. In its annual gatherings activists, academics, public intellectuals, community practitioners, politicians and just plain people come together to re-present and re-engineer the global/local economy.

None of this, of course, is sufficient to identify a transformative conjuncture, and for those who remember the 1970s it may seem like nothing new. What is new, we would argue, is the actual and potential relation of the academy to what is happening on the ground. Not only are academics becoming more involved in so-called scholar activism but they are increasingly conscious of the role of their work in creating or 'performing' the worlds we inhabit. This vision of the performativity of knowledge, its implication in what it purports to describe, its productive power of 'making', has placed new responsibility on the shoulders of scholars – to recognize their constitutive role in the worlds that exist, and their power to bring new worlds into being. Not single-handedly, of course, but alongside other world-makers, both inside and outside the academy.

This paper is about how we might begin to perform new economic worlds, starting with an ontology of economic difference – 'diverse economies'. We ask and try to answer a number of questions: how might we, as academic subjects, become open to possibility rather than limits on the possible? What would it mean to view thinking and writing as productive ontological interventions? How can we see our choices of what to think about and how to think about it as ethical/political decisions? How do we actually go about performing new economies – what are some techniques and technologies of performance? And, finally, how can we participate in what is happening on the ground from an academic location? Throughout the paper we draw on the work of economic geographers and others to explore these questions, starting 'where we are' to engender other worlds.

II Diverse economies as a performative ontological project

As graduate students in the 1970s, we were schooled to see social scientific work as a political intervention. Joining with other economic geographers to theorize capitalist restructuring – the current hot topic – we focused on the nature and dynamics of a globalizing economy, with the goal of 'understanding the world in order to change it'. This familiar Marxist prescription turned out to be difficult to follow, especially when it came to changing the world; our understandings seemed to cement an emerging world in place rather than readying it for transformation. But when we encountered poststructuralism in the late 1980s, our interventionist view of social knowledge was re-energized. Untethered from the obligation to represent what was 'really going on out there', we began to ask how theory and epistemology could advance what we wanted to do in the world. Tentatively at first, we dropped our structural approach to social explanation

and adopted an anti-essentialist approach, theorizing the contingency of social outcomes rather than the unfolding of structural logics. This gave us (and the world) more room to move, enlarging the space of the ethical and political (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). At the same time, we embraced a performative orientation to knowledge rather than a realist or reflective one. This acknowledged the activism inherent in knowledge production and installed a new kind of scholarly responsibility (Butler, 1993; Law and Urry, 2004; Callon, 2005). 'How can our work open up possibilities?' 'What kind of world do we want to participate in building?' 'What might be the effect of theorizing things this way rather than that?' These became the guiding questions of our research practice.

Our goal as academics was still to understand the world in order to change it, but with a poststructuralist twist – to change our understanding *is* to change the world, in small and sometimes major ways (Law and Urry, 2004: 391). Our specific goal was to produce a discourse of economic difference as a contribution to a politics of economic innovation (Healy, 2008a). But, before we could embark on a project of theorizing economic diversity, we had to confront the understandings of capitalism that stood in the way. In *The end of capitalism* we addressed familiar representations of capitalism as an obdurate structure or system, coextensive with the social space. We argued that the performative effect of these representations was to dampen and discourage non-capitalist initiatives, since power was assumed to be concentrated in capitalism and to be largely absent from other forms of economy. In the vicinity of such representations, those who might be interested in non-capitalist economic projects pulled back from ambitions of widespread success – their dreams seemed unrealizable, at least in our lifetimes. Thus capitalism was strengthened, its dominance performed, as an effect of its representations.

As a means of dislocating the hegemonic framing of capitalism, we adopted the entry point of class and specified, following Marx and Resnick and Wolff (1987), a number of class processes (independent, feudal, slave, communal and capitalist). Alongside these co-existing ways of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus in its many forms, capitalism became slightly less formidable. Without its systemic embodiment, it appeared more like its less well-known siblings, as a set of practices scattered over a landscape – in families, neighborhoods, households, organizations, states, and private, public and social enterprises. Its dominance in any time or place became an open question rather than an initial presumption.

From the outset, feminist economic analysis provided support and raw materials for the emerging vision of a diverse economic field. Over the past 20 years, feminist analysts have demonstrated that non-market transactions and unpaid household work (both by definition non-capitalist) constitute 30–50% of economic activity in both rich and poor countries (Ironmonger, 1996).[1] Such quantitative representations exposed the discursive violence entailed in speaking of 'capitalist' economies, and lent credibility to projects of representing economy differently.

Since the publication of *The end of capitalism*, we have been less concerned with disrupting the performative effects of capitalist representation, and more concerned with putting forward a new economic ontology that could contribute to novel economic performances. Broadening out from Marxism and feminism, we began to repopulate the economic landscape as a proliferative space of difference, drawing eclectically on economic anthropology, economic sociology, institutional economics, area studies, and studies of the underground and informal economies. We were buoyed in our efforts by the growing interest, among geographers and others, in representing and documenting the huge variety of economic transactions, labor practices and economic organizations that contribute to social well-being worldwide, in both positive and unsavory ways. The diverse economies

framing in Figure 1 groups a sampling of this variety into three columns – transactions (including all the market, alternative market and non-market transactions that circulate goods and services), labor (including wage labor, alternatively compensated labor and unpaid labor) and enterprise (including all the non-capitalist and capitalist enterprises that produce, appropriate and distribute surplus in different ways). This framing is an open-ended work in progress and could potentially include other columns indicating the plurality of private and common property forms or other dimensions of difference such as relationships to nature or forms of finance. When specified for any particular locality or sector, the entries in the boxes will vary (often widely) from those shown here.[2]

Figure 1 is of course susceptible to a number of different readings. Those working with a structural ontology, for example, might construe the lower cells as subordinate or complementary to capitalism, which seems to be in a position of dominance in the top line. To an ethical and performative reading, on the other hand, the diagram is not a window on a transcendent ontology but simply one technology for performing a different economy, bringing into visibility a diversity of economic activities as objects of inquiry and activism. The familiar binaries are present but they are in the process of being deconstructed. In this reading, the diverse economies research program is a performative ontological project – part of bringing new economies into being – rather than a realist epistemological project of capturing and assessing existing objects.

Our research has begun performing different economies by specifying this diagram for particular sectors and regions, using it as an imaginative starting place for brainstorming and building 'other economies'. But our action research projects (like our other academic efforts) face the challenge of credibility. While people have little trouble accepting that all these activities and organizations exist, it is harder to believe they have

Transactions	Labor	Enterprise
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
ALTERNATIVE MARKET *Sale of public goods* *Ethical 'fair-trade' markets* *Local trading systems* *Alternative currencies* *Underground market* *Co-op exchange* *Barter* *Informal market*	*ALTERNATIVE PAID* *Self-employed* *Cooperative* *Indentured* *Reciprocal labor* *In kind* *Work for welfare*	*ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST* *State enterprise* *Green capitalist* *Socially responsible firm* *Non-profit*
NON-MARKET *Household flows* *Gift giving* *Indigenous exchange* *State allocations* *State appropriations* *Gleaning* *Hunting, fishing, gathering* *Theft, poaching*	*UNPAID* *Housework* *Family care* *Neighborhood work* *Volunteer* *Self-provisioning labor* *Slave labor*	*NON-CAPITALIST* *Communal* *Independent* *Feudal* *Slave*

Figure 1 A diverse economy

any real or potential consequence. They are seldom seen as a source of dynamism, or as the so-called driver or motor of change (except as fuel for capitalist development). What is intriguing, however, is that 'marginal' economic practices and forms of enterprise are actually more prevalent, and account for more hours worked and/or more value produced, than the capitalist sector. Most of them are globally extensive, and potentially have more impact on social well-being than capitalism does – though the latter claim is speculative, unlike the quantitative assertion above. In the absence of studies to support this claim, we offer a brief and selective inventory of globally local activities to convey something of their magnitude and effectivity. Consider, for example:

- Practices that are centered upon care of others and the provision of material well-being directly – like the non-market transactions and unpaid labor performed in households around the world that account, as we noted above, for up to 50% of economic activity in both rich and poor countries.[3] In the USA alone, the value of unpaid elder and health care is estimated at US$200 billion annually, more than home care and nursing home care combined (Arno *et al*., 1999).
- Enterprises like consumer, producer and worker cooperatives that are organized around an ethic of solidarity and that distribute their economic surplus to their members and the wider community. The International Cooperative Alliance estimates that this sector provides over 100 million jobs around the world – 20% more than multinational corporations (http://www.coop.org/coop/statistics.html, cited in Kawano, 2006).
- Movements that place care of the environment, landscapes and ways of life at the center of economic activity, such as Community Supported Agriculture, a small but growing movement in the USA, but very large elsewhere. In Japan 5,000,000 families participate in supporting local agriculture though their ethical market commitment to CSA products (http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/, cited in Kawano, 2006).
- The growing number of local and complementary currencies that help people satisfy needs directly and constitute community differently. In Japan (once again) there are approximately 600 currency systems, including 372 branches of government-initiated *fureai kippu* using smart cards to credit and debit elder care (Lietaer, 2004: 25). An individual might care for his disabled neighbor to earn credits that can be transferred electronically to his mother across the country, so that she can hire someone to care for her.
- The social economy (sometimes called the Third Sector) made up of cooperatives, mutual societies, voluntary organizations, foundations, social enterprises, and many non-profits that put social objectives above business objectives. In the wealthier EU countries this sector has been estimated as contributing 10% or more of GDP (CIRIEC, 2007). Acknowledging that the sector plays an important role in creating social well-being, the EU requires member governments to earmark funds to support the social economy (http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/coop/index.htm, cited in Kawano, 2006).
- Informal international financial networks that supply credit or gifts directly and democratize development funding, such as the migrant remittances that rival the size of foreign direct investment in developing countries and show much more steady growth (Bridi, 2005).

Many more economic activities and movements could be included in this list, including squatter, slum-dweller, landless and co-housing movements, the global eco-village movement, fair trade, economic self-determination, the relocalization movement, community-based resource management,

and others. But their status as marginal and unconvincing is difficult to budge. It is here that we confront a choice: to continue to marginalize (by ignoring or disparaging) the plethora of hidden and alternative economic activities that contribute to social well-being and environmental regeneration, or to make them the focus of our research and teaching in order to make them more 'real', more credible, more viable as objects of policy and activism, more present as everyday realities that touch all our lives and dynamically shape our futures. This is the performative ontological project of 'diverse economies'.[4]

III Becoming different academic subjects

We are arguing that the diverse economy framing opens up opportunities for elaborating a radically heterogeneous economy and theorizing economic dynamics that foster and strengthen different economies. It also provides a representation of an existing economic world waiting to be selectively (re)performed. But a problem remains – it seems that we need to become new academic subjects to be able to perform it. At present we are trained to be discerning, detached and critical so that we can penetrate the veil of common understanding and expose the root causes and bottom lines that govern the phenomenal world. This academic stance means that most theorizing is tinged with skepticism and negativity, not a particularly nurturing environment for hopeful, inchoate experiments.

Bruno Latour expresses a similar disquiet when he likens the practice of critical theory to the thinking of popular conspiracy theorists:

> In both cases … it is the same appeal to powerful agents hidden in the dark acting always consistently, continuously, relentlessly. Of course, we in the academy like to use more elevated causes – society, discourse, knowledge-slash-power, fields of forces, empires, capitalism – while conspiracists like to portray a miserable bunch of greedy people with dark intents, but I find something troublingly similar in the structure of explanation, in the first movement of disbelief and, then, in the wheeling of causal explanations coming out of the deep dark below. (Latour, 2004: 229)

In more psychoanalytic language, Eve Sedgwick identifies this as the paranoid motive in social theorizing. She tells the story of Freud, who observed a distressing affinity between his own theorizing and the thinking of his paranoid patients. Paranoia marshals every site and event into the same fearful order, with the goal of minimizing surprise (Sedgwick, 2003). Everything comes to mean the same thing, usually something large and threatening (like neoliberalism, or globalization, or capitalism, or empire).

The paranoid stance yields a particular kind of theory, 'strong' theory with an embracing reach and a reductive field of meaning (Sedgwick, 2003). This means that experimental forays into building new economies are likely to be dismissed as capitalism in another guise or as always already coopted; they are often judged as inadequate before they are explored in all their complexity and incoherence. While such a reaction may be valid as the appropriate critical response to new information, it affirms an ultimately essentialist, usually structural, vision of what is and reinforces what is perceived as dominant.

If our goal as thinkers is the proliferation of different economies, we may need to adopt a different orientation toward theory. But the question becomes how do we disinvest in our paranoid practices of critique and mastery and undertake thinking that can energize and support 'other economies'? Here we have turned to what Nietzsche called self-artistry, and Foucault called self-cultivation, addressing them to our own thinking. The co-implicated processes of changing ourselves/changing our thinking/changing the world are what we identify as an ethical practice. If politics involves taking transformative decisions in an undecideable terrain,[5] ethics is the continual exercising of a choice to be/act/or think in certain ways (Varela, 1992).

How might those of us interested in diverse economies choose to think and theorize in a way that makes us a condition of possibility of new economic becomings, rather than a condition of their impossibility? Once again Eve Sedgwick shows us the way. What if we were to accept that the goal of theory is not to extend knowledge by confirming what we already know, that the world is a place of domination and oppression? What if we asked theory instead to help us see openings, to provide a space of freedom and possibility? As a means of getting theory to yield something new, Sedgwick suggests reducing its reach, localizing its purview, practicing a 'weak' form of theory.[6] The practice of weak theorizing involves refusing to extend explanation too widely or deeply, refusing to know too much. Weak theory could not know that social experiments are doomed to fail or destined to reinforce dominance; it could not tell us that the world economy will never be transformed by the disorganized proliferation of local projects.

Strong theory has produced our powerlessness by positing unfolding logics and structures that limit politics. Weak theory could de-exoticize power and help us accept it as our pervasive, uneven milieu. We could begin to explore the many mundane forms of power. A differentiated landscape of force, constraint, energy, and freedom would open up (Allen, 2003) and we could open ourselves to the positive energies that are suddenly available.

Weak theory could be undertaken with a reparative motive that welcomes surprise, tolerates coexistence, and cares for the new, providing a welcoming environment for the objects of our thought. It could foster a 'love of the world', as Hannah Arendt suggests,[7] rather than masterful knowing or moralistic detachment. It could draw on the pleasures of friendliness, trust, and companionable connection. There could be a greater scope for invention and playfulness, enchantment and exuberance (Bennett, 2001).[8]

The diverse economies diagram in Figure 1 provides an example of weak theory. It offers little more than description, just the proliferation of categories and concepts. As a listing of heterogeneous economic practices, it contains minimal critical content; it is simply a technology that reconstitutes the ground upon which we can perform a different economy, which is how we have used it in our action research.

The choice to create weak theory about diverse economies is a political/ethical decision that influences what kind of worlds we can imagine and create, ones in which we enact and construct rather than resist (or succumb to) economic realities. Many other social scientists understand their research choices as ordained by the world itself, by the stark realities that impose themselves on consciousness and demand investigation. In economic geography, for example, the dominant topic of research over the past decade or more has been neoliberalism and neoliberal capitalist globalization. This has been represented as needing study for the apparently self-evident reason that 'it is the most important process of our age, transforming geographies worldwide'. Some leading proponents of neoliberalism studies have begun to express concern about where this line of research is headed (Larner, 2003; Castree, 2006a), but few see themselves as making an ethical choice to participate in constituting neoliberalism. Law and Urry point to the ultimately destructive 'innocence' of this position:

> to the extent social science conceals its performativity from itself it is pretending to an innocence that it cannot have. And to the extent that it enacts methods that look for or assume certain structural stabilities, it enacts those stabilities *while interfering with other realities* … (Law and Urry, 2004: 404, our emphasis)

Taking Law and Urry's point to heart, we can identify a problem with strong theories of neoliberal globalization – their performative

effect is to interfere with, to make non-credible (Santos, 2004), to deny legitimacy to the diverse economies that are already here, and to close down the open futures that are waiting to be performatively enacted.

In the face of what has become 'normal science' for economic geography – studies of neoliberal this and that – many geographers are making other choices, contributing to new performances by bringing economic diversity to light (see, for example, Leyshon *et al.*, 2003; Diverse Economies online bibliography, 2008). Through devoting academic attention to hidden and alternative economies they have constituted new objects of study and investigation, making them visible as potential objects of policy and politics. This is the most basic sense in which knowledge is performative.

We would imagine that not all of these people see themselves engaged in a performative ontological politics – such a politics is a potentiality we are attempting to call into being. But all are contributing in some way to making economic diversity more credible. They are resisting the discursive erasure threatened by neoliberal theory, drawing attention to and thereby strengthening a range of economic practices that exist outside the purview of neoliberal studies. In the rest of this paper, we outline some of the practices of thinking and research that we and they have adopted to advance the ontological project of 'diverse economies'.

IV The ethics of thinking

In our discussion of the academic subject, we have advocated an open, concerned, and connected stance and a readiness to explore rather than judge, giving what is nascent and not fully formed some room to move and grow. We have also broached the power and responsibility that devolves upon scholars once we acknowledge the performativity of our teaching and research. When ontology becomes the effect rather than the ground of knowledge, we lose the comfort and safety of a subordinate relation to 'reality' and can no longer seek to capture accurately what already exists; interdependence and creativity are thrust upon us as we become implicated in the very existence of the worlds that we research. Every question about what to study and how to study it becomes an ethical opening; every decision entails profound responsibility. The whole notion of academic ethics is simultaneously enlarged and transformed.

Ethics in our understanding involves not only continually choosing to feel, think and act in particular ways but also the embodied practices that bring principles into action. In our own diverse economies research, these practices include thinking techniques that actualize our chosen stances in particular projects of thought. Here we highlight three techniques of *doing thinking* that geographers (and others) are using to cultivate themselves as ethical subjects of economic possibility:

- ontological reframing to produce the ground of possibility;
- re-reading to uncover or excavate the possible; and
- creativity to generate actual possibilities where none formerly existed.

Each of the examples we discuss could be seen as performing new worlds as well as new academic subjects.

1 Ontological reframing: producing the ground of possibility

We are interested in ontological reframings that increase our space of decision and room to move as political subjects by enlarging the field from which the unexpected can emerge. Our examples, drawn from the work of Timothy Mitchell and Doreen Massey, involve taking what is usually seen as a structural given and reframing it as an epistemological/ethical project of creation.

a Timothy Mitchell's reframing of the economy as a performative project: Geographers have been increasingly taken with Timothy Mitchell's research on the materialization of the modern idea of 'the economy' through

the repeated mobilization of mid-twentieth-century technologies of calculation and representation (Mitchell, 2008). For Mitchell the economy is not a transcendental given but is instead a project, or set of projects, that has been stabilized through measurement and accounting practices, through the 'science' of economics, through economic policy and monitoring, and through other practices and technologies (2008). Over time the economy has come to be seen and, indeed, to exist as a separate social sphere whose functionings can be known, analyzed and recorded – in other words, the economy has become a reality.

In his book *Rule of experts*, Mitchell highlights the thinking choices to be made about the economy when confronted, in his case, with historical documents pertaining to the 1950s land reform programs in Egypt:

> We should see the significance of these endless reports and announcements less as marking progress along the path of capitalist development, but more as constantly reiterating the language of market capitalism, thereby reproducing the impression that we know what capitalism is and that its unfolding determines our history. (Mitchell, 2002: 267)

He asks:

> Can one take [the] local complexity and variation [of what is happening in the Egyptian countryside] and make it challenge the narrative of the market? Can one do so without positing the existence of a precapitalist or noncapitalist sphere, or even multiple capitalisms, positions that always reinvoke the universal nature of capitalism? To begin to do so, we have to stop asking whether rural Egypt is capitalist or not. We have to avoid the assumption that capitalism has an 'is' and take more seriously the variations, disruptions, and dislocations that make each appearance of capitalism, despite the plans of the reformers, something different. (Mitchell, 2002: 248)

Rejecting a realist structural vision that assumes the underlying, determining existence of a capitalist system, Mitchell outlines a genealogical project of tracing how the economy is materialized, showing how the discipline of economics (and perhaps also economic geography?) is caught up in the process of forming the economy, participating in creating a world where particular kinds of facts can survive (Mitchell, 2008: 4, drawing on Latour). As his research in Egypt demonstrates, this means actively excluding other sites and information that could become the facts of a different performance of economy, one that includes the 'wide range of practices' and 'numerous non-capitalist elements' that made up Egyptian agricultural life (Mitchell, 2002: 270). Any economic politics must confront these repeated performances and choices, and recognize the power they marshal *as well as* their interruptibility, and the potential for alternative technologies to perform alter-economies.

If, as Mitchell argues, '[t]he success of economics, like all science, is measured in the extent to which it helps make of the wider world places where its facts can survive' (Mitchell, 2008: 4), then the diverse economies research program can take heart from the performative effects of two of its forerunners, feminist economics and social economy scholarship and activism. For the first time in 2006, the Australian Census of Population and Housing gathered information on the number of hours of unpaid domestic work and voluntary work performed by men and women 15 years and over. Also in 2006, the UK Department of Trade and Industry announced the official definition of a social enterprise, the Community Interest Company, about which data can now be collected; this is the first new legal form of company in 100 years (Todres *et al.*, 2006: 62).[9] The 'facts' produced by both these interventions are parts of 'rival metrological projects' that have the potential to bring another economy into being (Mitchell, 2008: 4). There is much to be done, showing how these facts (unpaid and voluntary hours of work set alongside hours of paid work, contributions of social versus mainstream enterprises to GDP, etc) can destabilize the dominant capitalocentric representation

of the economy. But the world now has places where new facts, generated by non-hegemonic projects, can survive.

b Doreen Massey's reframing of the world city as an ethical project of globalization: Perhaps the most politically empowering ontological reframing is the move from a structural to an ethical vision of determination, powerfully exemplified in Doreen Massey's work on 'geographies of responsibility' and an 'ethics of place beyond place' (Massey, 2004; 2005; 2007). Massey's work reminds us that a representation of structural impossibility can always give way to an ethical project of possibility, if we can recognize the political and ethical choices to be made. In her latest book, *World city* (2007), she starts with the familiar vision of London as a site through which the current form of neoliberal globalization is imagined and constituted. Her purpose is not to reaffirm London's role 'as inventor and protagonist of deregulation and privatization' (Massey, 2007: 178) but to highlight the crucial importance of urban political and economic struggles 'in defining the kind of world that is currently under construction' (p. 185). Conscious of the political decisions one makes as a theorist, Massey argues for a reimagining of London, moving away from a structural vision of a global city with assumed dominance in an urban hierarchy to a more politically enabling understanding. She wants to accept the responsibility of 'this place's implications in the production of the global itself' (pp. 170–71) but also to imagine a city that is engaged in recreating itself through ethical practices of globalization, reaching out to establish 'relations with elsewhere' (p. 174). This shift relies on a reframed ontology of space and place:

> Urban space is *relational*, not a mosaic of simply juxtaposed differences. This place, as many places, has to be conceptualized, not as a simple diversity, but as a meeting-place, of jostling, potentially conflicting, trajectories. It is set within, and internally constituted through, complex geometries of differential power. This implies an identity that is, internally, fractured and multiple. Such an understanding of place requires that conflicts are recognized, that positions are taken and that (political) choices are made. (Massey, 2007: 89)

Massey's London and, indeed, all places are 'open to the wider world, as articulations of a multitude of trajectories' (p. 172). With this vision, rather than treating the local as naturally inward-looking and parochial, we might engage in ethical projects of extending the local imagination to what is outside, enrolling an understanding of place 'as generous and hospitable' (p. 172). The academic task becomes not to *explain* why localities are incapable of looking beyond their boundaries but to *explore* how they might do so.

Massey's *World city* offers exciting examples of city-based politics potentially emerging from an ethical intervention to create geographies of collective responsibility. One involves deepening the relationship, thus far based on cultural festivals, established between London and Caracas. The proposal is for barter of cheap oil from Venezuela in return for London's 'advice and experience in the areas of transport planning, housing, crime, waste-disposal, air quality and adult education' (Massey, 2007: 199). The cheap oil would be used to reduce the cost of bus transport for London's poor. This move builds in a progressive and redistributive way on the interdependence, rather than competition, that can be fostered between places (p. 199). Another proposal calls for restitution of the perverse subsidies enjoyed by London's health system through employing foreign health professionals, often drawn from poor countries that suffer inadequate health care as a result. In the case of Ghana, the proposal is radically to revision the British and Ghanaian health systems as one interdependent system and to redress inequalities within that system through compensatory transfer payments to the Ghanaians from the UK health authorities. This agenda addresses a national issue but could be made credible through acts of 'inter-place solidarity' by ordinary Londoners and Ghanaians in their capacities as members of

health-related trades unions and professional organizations (pp. 192–93).

Both Mitchell and Massey give insights into research agendas that open up when we abandon the ontological privileging of systemic or structural determination. Their work does not suggest that we can remake the world easily or without significant resistance. We cannot ignore the power of past discourses and their materialization in durable technologies, infrastructures and behaviors. Nor can we sidestep our responsibility to those both within and beyond our place who have suffered for our relative well-being. But we can choose to create new discourses and counter-technologies of economy and construct strategic forms of interplace solidarity, bringing to the fore ways to make other worlds possible.

2 Reading for difference: excavating the possible

The second technique of thinking is that of reading for difference rather than dominance, a specific research practice that can be brought to bear on all kinds of subjects to uncover or excavate the possible. The theoretical importance of this deconstructive technique is highlighted for us by the queer reading of sexuality and gender that appreciates the wide diversity of biological, emotional, social and cultural manifestations of sexuality and gender without subordinating them to the binary hierarchies of heterosexual and homosexual, male and female (Sedgwick, 1993; Butler, 1993). In our own work, we have queered the economic landscape by reading it as differentiated along class lines (see especially Gibson-Graham *et al.*, 2000; 2001). Our agenda is to destabilize the discourse of capitalocentrism that situates a wide range of economic practices and identities as the same as, opposite to, a complement of, or contained within capitalism. In *Capital* Marx foregrounded capitalist class relations against a background of non-capitalist class processes. Re-reading for difference, we bring that background to the foreground, representing class processes as co-existing rather than marching in sequence through time. By collapsing the temporality inherent in Marx's historical analysis, we are able to highlight the different ways in which surplus in its various forms is currently produced, appropriated, and distributed.

The strategy of making difference visible does not automatically produce new ways forward, but it can generate new possibilities and different strategies. Boaventura de Sousa Santos stresses the importance of recovering what has been rendered 'non-credible' and 'non-existent' by dominant modes of thought. The 'sociology of absences', as Santos calls it, offers alternatives to hegemonic experience; it creates the 'conditions to enlarge the field of credible experiences', thus widening 'the possibilities for social experimentation' (Santos, 2004: 238–39). Our technique of reading for economic difference takes up Santos' challenge to the monoculture of capitalist productivity that has produced the 'non-productiveness' of non-capitalist economic activity (see Gibson-Graham, 2005). Our interest in building new worlds involves making credible those diverse practices that satisfy needs, regulate consumption, generate surplus, and maintain and expand the commons, so that community economies in which interdependence between people and environments is ethically negotiated can be recognized now and constructed in the future.

Other geographers are also exploring the political productivity of reading for difference. Stephen Healy, for example, finds ways of intersecting the stalemate in the US health care debate that pits free market reform against a publically administered single payer alternative (Healy, 2008b). He foregrounds the household caregiving and non-capitalist sectors of alternative medicine that play a major part in attending to the health of the nation and yet are rarely factored into possible solutions to the 'crisis' of the privatized capitalist health industry. Resisting the dominant and singular casting of informal

care as only ever a 'duty' exploitatively extracted from household members,[10] he brings to light the joy, satisfaction and ethical transformation experienced by caregivers alongside their exhaustion, and lack of recognition and support. Given that informal care will persist because people want to offer it (whether or not formal health care is nationalized or privatized), caregivers could be supported to 'perform their labors in fidelity with their ethical commitments' through strengthening of cooperative networks and community initiatives like LETS (Healy, 2008: p. 26 of ms). Healy's reading of the diverse health care landscape opens up ways of improving on what exists through multipronged initiatives and helps break the stranglehold that the scarcity model dominating current thinking has on creative health care strategies.

Kevin St Martin has used the technique of reading for difference in the US fishing industry as a way to think about intervening in fisheries resource management. His study of fishers in the Gulf of Maine reveals a range of non-capitalist activities, local knowledges, and communal territories-at-sea within an industry usually represented as populated by private entrepreneurs driven by a highly competitive ethos (St Martin, 2005: 971). Forms of cooperation around shared fishing grounds, territorial relationships to certain sea-bed areas and concern across different gear categories about access to fisherdays are all brought to light (pp. 971–74). Interestingly, many of these practices are the same as those used to characterize (somewhat dismissively) fisheries in the majority world (often referred to as the 'third world'), but not expected to be present any more in the developed context of the minority 'first world'. St Martin's reading deconstructs the first world/third world binary by re-reading the discursively homogenized landscape of first-world fisheries science for difference. Concerned not to leave it at that, he has engaged in participatory action research that uses this remapped landscape to initiate discussions with fishers, policy-makers, fishing community members and academics about alternative fisheries management policies that build on and sustain the community and communality of contemporary US fishers.

In a similar vein, Marla Emery and Alan Pierce (2005) bring to light non-capitalist property and production relations among gatherers of non-timber forest products in the USA. Subsistence activities in contemporary US forests are important sources of food and material well-being not only for indigenous people in Alaska, Hawaii, and on mainland Native American reserves, but for Americans of all ethnic origins all over the country. The extent of self-provisioning through hunting, fishing, gathering, and gardening belies the dominant reading of a consumer- and market-driven society and challenges representations of the unilinear trajectory of capitalist development.[11] The re-reading projects of St Martin, Emery and Pierce yield options for natural resource management that have not been on the table in wealthy countries. Extending the perspective of political ecology, they prise open ossified views of economic subjects and sectors and allow for new actors to enter conversations about sustainable resource use, resource rights and community economic development.

The technique of reading for difference has a number of effects. It produces recognition of the always already diverse economic landscape in all geographical regions. It clarifies the choices we have in the policy realm to support and proliferate diversity, to destroy or allow it to deteriorate, or indeed to promote uniformity.[12] It also opens up the performance of dominance to research and questioning. Diversity exists not only in the domain of non-capitalist economic activity. As much of mainstream economic geography illustrates, capitalist enterprise is itself a site of difference that can be performatively enhanced or suppressed through research. Reading for difference in the realm of capitalist business can even produce insight into the

potential contributions of private corporations to building other possible worlds.[13]

3 Creativity: generating possibilities

The final technique is that of thinking creatively in order to generate actual possibilities where none formerly existed. Creative thinking often involves bringing things together from different domains to spawn something new – a practice that has been called 'cross-structuring' (Smith, 1973) or 'cross-appropriation' (Spinosa *et al*., 1997) or 'extension' (Varela, 1992). Such techniques are a powerful means of proliferating possibilities, yet they are seldom deliberately addressed to the task of creating different economies.

One exception to this generalization involves conceptualizing non-deterministic and non-linear economic dynamics. These dynamics are designed to supplant the mechanistic logics of capital accumulation and the behavioral logics of rational individualism, two of the most obdurate representations standing in the way of building other worlds. Both are held up as 'real' in the last instance (the much referred to bottom line). And both act to inhibit other imaginaries of causality and motion.

Often it is concern for the future that prompts creative thinking on dynamics – as in the case of the late Jane Jacobs' extension of complex ecological thinking to the economic domain. Jacobs has made path-breaking attempts to 're-naturalize' the economy, helping us to think about economic 'development, expansion, sustainability, and correction' in radically different ways (Jacobs, 2000: 12). She asks us to abandon the economists' view of the 'supernatural' economy and to recognize economies as just one of nature's systems that 'require diversity to expand, self-refuelling to maintain themselves, and co-developments to develop' (pp. 143–44). Along with others, she calls for social analysts to take seriously the dynamics of complexity – emergence, self-organization, bifurcation, non-linearity, dissipation, instability (Capra, 1996; Law and Urry, 2004; Escobar, 2008). These descriptors with their complicated mathematical analogues expand our imaginaries of change and determination and allow us to conceive of the smallest ethical interventions as having potentially wide-ranging effects.

Jacobs' work exemplifies one of the creative tools of history-making – to bring concepts and practices into 'contexts that couldn't generate them, but in which they are useful' (Spinosa *et al*., 1997: 4). For Scott Sharpe, this sort of fruitful combining can potentially take place in the context of action research and other geographic fieldwork. Offering a non-humanist vision of matter (what is outside the symbolic order) as a creative agency, Sharpe understands the field as any site where matter and thought fold together in new ways, producing the 'event in thought' (Sharpe, 2003).[14] The field is not a site where we recognize or particularize what we already know, but a place where we create the new.

Out of our own action research around local economic development the notion of 'ethical dynamics' has emerged as a way of pinpointing the individual and group decisions that influence the unpredictable trajectories of diverse economies (whether, for example, diversity is maintained, enhanced or destroyed). Through action research in the Philippines, greater community awareness of the implications of such ethical decisions has prompted active interventions not only to maintain valued elements of the local economic habitat, but to expand its diversity through the development of community enterprises that strengthen resilience and generate surplus to be reinvested in the community (Gibson *et al*., 2007). Here another 'extension' is taking place as local NGOs and municipal governments look to social enterprise development elsewhere for models that can be adapted to the Philippine context.

When we look back on our previous lives as radical geographers, we recognize our role as critical academics in inventing and

consolidating a certain sort of capitalism by endowing it with encompassing power, generalizing its dynamics and organizations, and enlarging the spaces of its agency. The three techniques of thinking outlined above are interventions that unravel and dissolve this structural power, imagine specific and yet context-shaping dynamics, and enlarge the space of agency of all sorts of actors – non-capitalist as well as capitalist, disorganized as well as organized, non-human as well as human. A plethora of challenging research agendas emerge from this kind of thinking (see Diverse Economies online bibliography, 2008). All of them involve creativity in that they push us to make something new from what is at hand. They are predicated on a reframed ontology of becoming and an orientation to seeing difference and possibility rather than dominance and predictability. Seeing knowledge as performative (as always implicated in being and becoming), all these research agendas are forms of action research.

V New academic practices and performances

At the outset of this paper, we hinted that a new academic subject might be on the horizon, one that is differently related to the politics of 'other worlds'. In this section, we come back to this tantalizing claim and attempt to make it concrete. We ask how is it that as academics we might be directly enrolled in performing alternative economies? We have already outlined the hopeful, reparative, non-judgmental affective stance that might enable us as thinking subjects to inhabit a diverse economic landscape of possibility. But is there more to enactment than vague generalities about the performativity of research? We think there is. In this last section of the paper, we depict the academy as an advantageous place from which to perform other worlds and illustrate the ways in which performative social experiments can be engaged in by hybrid research collectivities, including but not limited to academics.

1 Scaling up from an academic location

When we look at examples of world-shaping discourses that have spread like wildfire, we see complex networks that are mobilized via the global transportation infrastructure of academic institutions and their teaching and professional training programs. The discourses of flexible specialization and sustainable livelihoods serve as two instructive examples.

After a decade of crisis and capital flight in the developed world, Michael Piore and Charles Sabel published *The second industrial divide* (1984) in which they described a successful but distinctively different model of industrialization in a region of Italy. In contrast to Fordist mass production and intercompany rivalry, this model was built on flexible work teams with a high degree of autonomy and forms of cooperation between geographically clustered and strategically aligned companies. Soon after its publication, 'flexible specialization' and 'industrial districts' were being researched and taught in almost every planning and geography program in England and the USA – an alternative, yet still mainstream, discourse of industrialization was born. Michael Porter of Harvard Business School then formalized the key concepts as 'industrial cluster' development (Porter, 1998: Chapter 7) and planners trained in this model were dispersed around the globe. Within a few years a local industrial practice was projected to a global scale, transforming industrial planning and creating industrial clusters worldwide.

To take another example, in 1992 Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway defined a 'sustainable livelihood' based on years of experience working with poor people in the global south. By marrying the concept of a livelihood with the dynamics of social vulnerability and sustainability, they radically refocused development attention on poor people's capacities and assets. Their idea was soon elaborated as the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) to rural development and picked up in turn by Oxfam, CARE,

the United Nations Development Program, and the UK Department for International Development as their flagship 'bottom-up' intervention to refocus international aid projects (Solesbury, 2003). The SLA prioritizes 'people's assets (tangible and intangible); their ability to withstand shocks (the vulnerability context); and policies and institutions that reflect poor people's priorities, rather than those of the elite' (Livelihoods Connect, 2006). It has given rise to research projects measuring the assets of poor households, or the 'five capitals' as they were soon named, as well as aid projects focused on reducing vulnerability by boosting natural 'capital' via community environmental management projects, physical 'capital' via micro-enterprise development and infrastructure assistance, financial 'capital' via micro-credit programs, social 'capital' via governance training, and human 'capital' via technical training. The SLA offered new options for disbursing aid budgets and new activities for experts, all under the rubric of participatory development and assisting the poorest of the poor. Again, this approach, or some version of it, is taught in every international development program and has been 'rolled out' in countless aid projects around the world.

The world-scale performance of industrial clusters and sustainable livelihoods resulted from the mobilization of certain transportation strategies, networks, and technologies. Each is represented by a catchy phrase; each was produced in an institutional context with a global infrastructure that spread the word and enrolled experts who picked up the new language and started to speak it. Mitchell, who has traced the similarly rapid uptake throughout the global south of Hernando De Soto's neoliberal discourse of property titling for the poor, argues that complicated networks of universities, development institutions, think tanks, and influential and charismatic people constitute the routes along which new 'facts can travel and be confirmed' as well as shaping 'what kinds of facts can survive' (Mitchell, 2005: 304). In the case of cluster development and SLA, the new discourses produced their own 'metrology' (Latour, 1987: 251) which was adopted worldwide including newly formatted facts such as vulnerability indices and measures of social capital assets for the SL approach, and indices such as the Local Indicator of Spatial Association for industrial clusters.[15]

From our point of view, what is most interesting about these stories is the remaking of economies that resulted from the interaction of knowledges codified in the academy and actions undertaken on the ground by industrial and international development practitioners. The lessons for the diverse economies project seem to be that (1) the academy is a powerful place to be if we can mobilize our networks there and that (2) the development industry is not only what we are up against, but what we have to work with in creative ways. Certainly, a recognition of the established institutional context makes performing a global project from an academic location seem less far-fetched, more like something we can undertake realistically (though of course with no guarantees).

2 Collective experimentation with building community economies

The global project we are most interested in involves the enactment and support of community economies, which we theorize and explore empirically and experientially in *A postcapitalist politics* (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Community economies are simply economic spaces or networks in which relations of interdependence are democratically negotiated by participating individuals and organizations; they can be constituted at any scale, as we can see from the examples above in which Healy envisions a community health care economy on a national level and St Martin is engaged in building regional networks of fishers.

Our interest in building community economies means that, for us, the diverse economies project is not an end in itself but is rather a precursor and prerequisite for a

collective project of construction. We use the tools and techniques of diverse economies research to make visible the resources available for building community economies (see Gibson-Graham, 2005) as well as to lend credibility to the existence and continual emergence of 'other economies' worldwide.

Perhaps the 'closest to home' action we have taken to foster the global performance of community economies is to cultivate ourselves as new kinds of academic subjects, open to techniques of ethical thinking that can elaborate a new economic ontology. But there are other subjective factors required to create the environment where the facts of diverse/community economies can emerge and thrive. The first is an experimental attitude toward the objects of our research, and the second is an orientation toward a collective research practice involving non-academic as well as academic subjects.

The experimental approach to research is characterized by an interest in learning rather than judging. To treat something as a social experiment is to open to what it has to teach us, very different from the critical task of assessing the ways in which it is good or bad, strong or weak, mainstream or alternative. It recognizes that what we are looking at is on its way to being something else and strategizes about how to participate in that process of becoming. This does not mean that our well-honed critical faculties have no role in our research, but that their expression takes second place to the experimental orientation. To offer just one example: without condoning the state's departure from its role in social welfare provision, we can explore the social economy that has become visible in the wake of that departure, including the full range of social enterprises and perhaps even socially responsible corporations. Taken together, these arguably constitute an 'immense uncontrolled *experiment* … a vast collection of different, potentially informative ways of working' (Berwick, 2004: 286).[16] Recognizing that 'every process produces information on the basis of which it can be improved' (Box, quoted in Berwick, 2004: 286), we could make marshalling such information a goal of our research. In our own work, the experimental approach means that, rather than judging community economic experiments as unviable because they depend on grants, gifts, state subsidies, long staff hours, volunteer labor, unstable markets, and so on, we study their strategies of survival, support their efforts to learn from their experience (much greater than ours), and help them find ways of changing what they wish to change.

Our experiments in the academy have included enrolling the thinking practices and affective stances outlined above to theorize the community economy. This work has been nourished by action research experiments in building and strengthening community economies, bringing together concerned individuals and groups including:

- community members who are excluded from the operations of the mainstream capitalist economy – retrenched workers, unemployed youth, single parents, women carers, rural people in poor municipalities of the 'third world';
- local government officials – mayors and council members, development planners – and national government institutions;
- NGOs involved in new forms of community economic development;
- alternative and non-capitalist enterprises;
- umbrella organizations that are advocates of the community economic sector (Community Economies Collective, 2001; Cameron and Gibson, 2005a; 2005b; Gibson-Graham, 2006).

Participating in social experiments and performing community economies necessarily involves joining together with others, both within the academy and 'in the wild', in what Michel Callon has called a 'hybrid research collective' (Callon *et al*., 2002; Callon and Caliskan, 2005). It means working with people who are already making new worlds,

but it does not mean abandoning the academy to do so. Rather than attempting to bridge an imagined divide between academy and community (by becoming activists in a traditional sense), we can exercise our academic capacities in a performative division of labor that involves many social locations and callings. As university-based scholars, we are well positioned to mobilize the resources to support the co-creation of knowledges, create the networks necessary to spread these knowledges, work with activists and academics of the future, and foster an environment where new facts can survive.[17] These are just a few of the ways that we can use an academic platform to participate in the collective performance of 'other economies'. And if we treat the academy itself as a 'vast uncontrolled experiment', continually producing information about how it could be improved as an agent of change, we may find many ways to perform new worlds from an academic location.

VI Conclusion

In this paper we have identified aspects of our existing academic selves that stand in the way of performing new worlds and discussed three orientations or stances towards thinking, research, and politics that might better equip us for the task:

- a performative epistemology rather than a realist or reflective one;
- an ethical rather than a structural understanding of social determination;
- an experimental rather than critical orientation to research.

Each of these stances reconfigures our role as academics and changes the nature of our relationships to the academy and wider community.

The diverse economies research program takes as its explicit motivation the performing of other economies both within the academy and without. This paper is an invitation to others situated in the academy to join this project and its hybrid collectivities. Our invitation is offered in full recognition that many of us working in academia today are daunted by the rise of corporate management practices and auditing technologies that are changing the shape, feel and dare we say 'mission' of universities (Castree, 2006b). Yet if it is true, as we believe, that other worlds are possible, then 'other academies' are possible as well.

As always, we are happy to 'start where we are' in our places of work where practices of collegiality and an understanding of an intellectual commons still prevail, despite the encroaching commercialization and casualization of university life. Academia remains a setting for what Harvie calls 'commons-based peer production' that values collaborative engagement and respects and requires the sharing/gifting of output (Harvie, 2004: 2). In such an environment, we can support each other to publish papers and books that elaborate examples of divergent pathways and possibilities. And with greater value now attached to community outreach by our institutions we can perhaps more easily venture into research collaborations with researchers in the wild – civil society groups, localities, governments, movements, and businesses. In this research community our knowledge and other products could become part of a new commons, which other academics and non-academics could draw upon and enlarge. By constituting an academic community economy based on a knowledge commons, we could contribute to performing community economies worldwide.

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Notes

1. For the UK, it has been estimated that the value of domestic work is at least 40% of GDP and may amount to as much as 120%. See Murgatroyd and Neuburger (1997).
2. For a full exposition of this diagram and how it has been and can be composed, including an explanation of all the terms included, see Gibson-Graham (2006: Chapter 3). Importantly, Figures 13–15 in that chapter represent differences *within* the categories of wage labor, market transactions and capitalist enterprise that are not deconstructed here (see pp. 61–65).
3. This is calculated in terms of hours worked; it can be greater when estimated in value terms, depending on the method of estimation (Ironmonger, 1996).
4. It is important to distinguish the performative ontological project of diverse economies from the project of performing new worlds. We are not interested in performing difference *per se*, nor are we necessarily interested only in the growth of 'alternative' economic activities. Our political and strategic concern is to build community economies (more on that later) and to do this we must reframe the ontological ground on which we build.
5. Torfing (1999: 304), paraphrasing Laclau and Mouffe.
6. Silvan Tomkins coined the term, arguing that a weak theory is 'little better than a description of the phenomena which it purports to explain' (quoted in Sedgwick, 2003: 134). 'Description' here should not be seen as a disparaging term, nor as the opposite of theory. Clearly, description involves theoretical moves such as the use of language to name and frame and the choice to focus on some aspect or other. Nor should the term 'weak theory' be taken to mean that this sort of theorizing is not powerful; it is just as powerful as any other kind of theory in its ability to perform worlds.
7. See Young-Bruehl (2004).
8. This discussion of Sedgwick and strong and weak theory has been paraphrased and shortened from Gibson-Graham (2006: 4–8).
9. See 'Key third sector statistics' (http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/Research_and_statistics/Key_statistics.aspx, last accessed 19 February 2008).
10. And increasingly relied upon because of the neoliberal rollback of state services.
11. Colin Williams's research into the extent of unpaid labor and non-commodified exchange in the contemporary UK provides another example of reading for and researching difference (Williams, 2004; 2005).
12. Clearly, diversity is not necessarily 'better' than uniformity. For example, in the case of the US commercial construction labor market, diverse forms of labor coexist – regulated wage/unregulated wage/indentured/paid-in-kind. Unions and community organizations supporting a uniform living wage find their efforts to reduce diversity thwarted by policies that actively promote or turn a blind eye to this situation.
13. See, for example, Trina Hamilton's research into the extent of corporate policy change with respect to environmental and social responsibility in response to various pressures from shareholders and consultants (Hamilton, 2006; 2007).
14. As an example, we offer the work of Jenny Pickerill and Paul Chatterton who have forged the concept of 'autonomous geographies' out of their fieldwork and activism (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006). This concept creatively inaugurates a new research program in geography as well as performing a new political project in the world at large.
15. In the uptake of flexible specialization by the mainstream planning world, the fact that many of the Third Italy's successful firms had evolved out of local communist party policy and communal organizations did not survive as part of the model. This is probably because this information did not sit well with the new 'performation' of economy that was under way.
16. Berwick is a well-known health care reformer who is talking about the US health care sector here, advocating the experimental perspective as a more creative way forward than the usual crisis depiction.

17. For us, the performative ontological project of diverse economies has involved building community economies not only by working in hybrid research collectives, but also by building an academic community. With Andrew Leyshon and others, we have experimented in forming a loose email network of geographers interested in researching diverse economies, and have organized conference sessions together over the past five years (for a bibliography of selected works of these and other interested scholars, see the Diverse Economies online bibliography, 2008). We have also become connected to large action-oriented research groups concerned with social and environmental wealth in the USA, social innovation in Europe, and economic innovation at the 'base of the pyramid' in poor countries.

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