

# Antipode Foundation Scholar-Activist Project Award Report

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The project *Re-drawing the economy: creating place-based images that can travel* received funding for one year to conduct workshops in Finland, South Korea and Colombia with communities who are building ethical economies. The workshops were designed to allow communities to take measure of their own economic lives and to make common cause with others by sharing what they've learned. The project was informed by relationships between the authors of *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming our Communities (TBTE)* (J.K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron and Stephen Healy) and the book's Finnish, Korean and Spanish translators. In each case the translators are connected with activist communities (in urban Seoul and Gwangju; in the agricultural hinterland of Bogotá, Colombia; and in Tampere and other regions in the south of Finland). The aim of the project was to work with these communities to develop their own representations of community economy practice.

To date visualisations of a diverse economy have been an important strategy for expanding the scope for economic action and legitimizing economic politics across a broad front. The image of the diverse economy, originally represented as an iceberg, has travelled far and wide helping people and organizations to represent and transform economic relationships in a variety of settings (see Image 1). This project sought to expand the visual vocabulary of economic representation. We enrolled three activist artist members of the Community Economies Research Network (CERN) into the project to work with communities to redraw the economy in ways that would assist their economic activism.

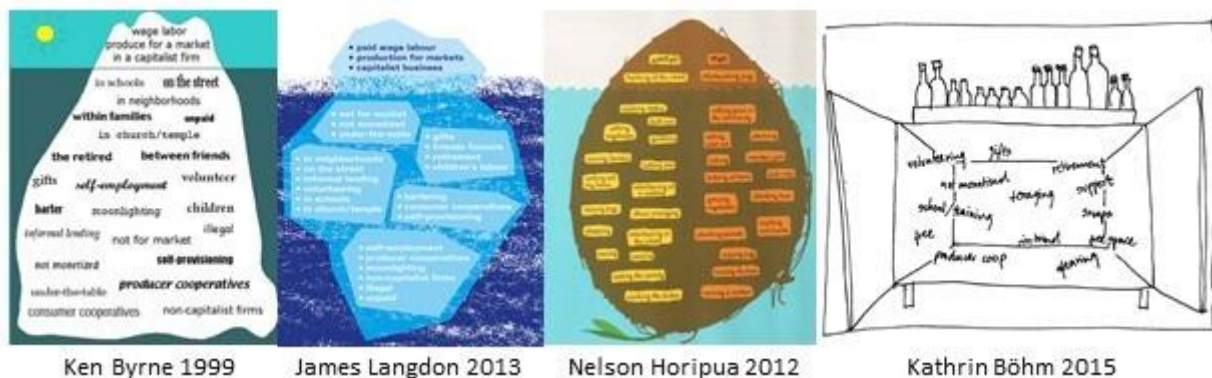


Image 1: Diverse Economy Images

In Finland, Jenny Cameron conducted a 3-day workshop in Tampere with 10 participants from eight different initiatives from across Finland. She was assisted by artist Kathrin Böhm (who was unable to attend) and three organizers (who are involved in translating *TBTE*). In Colombia, Stephen Healy and artist Aviv Kruglanski, with the assistance of a team of organizers (including *TBTE* translators), conducted a 3-day workshop in CivPaz to which 25 people from three different initiatives attended. In South Korea, Katherine Gibson and artist/curator Binna Choi conducted three separate one day workshops: 1) at Seoul City University attended by 22 representatives of 11 different Seoul based initiatives, 2) at Jeonnam University in Gwangju attended by 10 representatives of social economy organizations, and 3) in Mapo community, in Seoul community, attended by 18 people most of whom were associated with the Mapo Community House.

The results of the workshops took a number of forms. Most importantly they brought together community economy activists who had not previously gathered to discuss common concerns, challenges and strategies. Most participants had not used visual tools to express what they were

doing or how they might connect with others to strengthen their activities. The images and artefacts that were produced include a wide array of creative and instructive insights.

One set of images and artefacts focused on documenting economic diversity, building on the original iceberg image (Image 2). For example, a Finnish financial cooperative used the image of a legume (2a) to identify how the financial resources that they make available to community organisations grow from the hidden roots and “good bacteria” that proliferate as a result of previous campaigns, networks of contacts, and the relationships that are nurtured by the internal workings of the cooperative. In Seoul, a group of media-based activists depicted the mainstream media as a prickly cactus (2b) that keeps communities at bay, while below the ground activists work with communities to tap into stories of activism and spread news of activism. Another group depicted money-based financial flows as entrapping people in a gilded cage (2c), while outside the cage is a world of community currencies, time banks and reciprocal relationships that provide opportunities for people to secure what they need in novel ways.

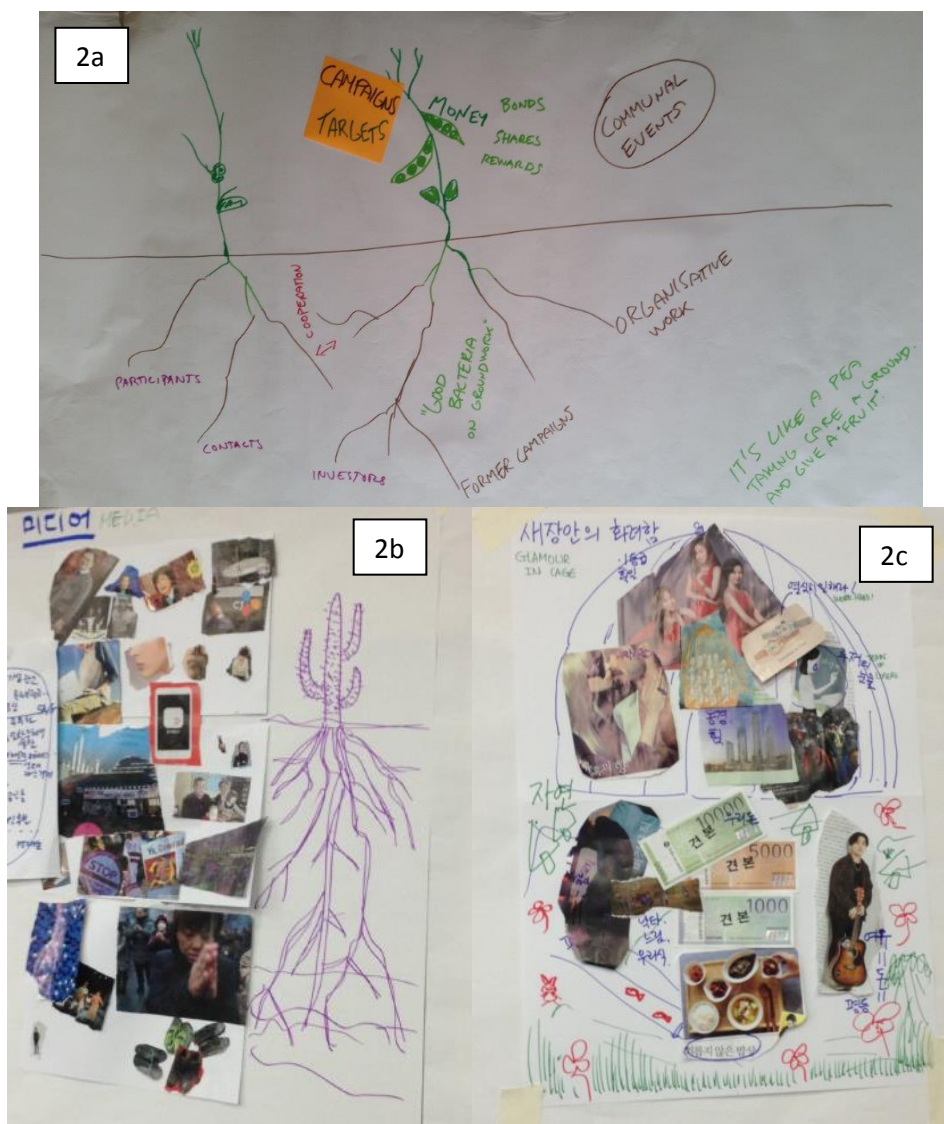


Image 2: Diverse Economy Images from the Workshops

A second set of images and artefacts explored the ethical dilemmas that groups encounter as they establish and work on their initiatives (Image 3). In Colombia, the members of the Civipaz community struggled with imagining what future might come with the end of three generations of

conflict. They mapped out the contrasting possibilities of a vibrant campesino economy with a mix of subsistence farming and collective-production for markets (in the top of their collage, 3a) or “development” in the form of petroleum exploration and mining activities (at the bottom of their collage, 3a). In the neighbouring community of Sumapaz women-activists wondered how their care needs will be met as they age and lose capacities for self-care. In Finland, groups explored various ways of managing difficult relationships that can arise when working on initiatives: one group (3b) exploring how a joint initiative withstood the departure of one organisation because of the “infrastructure”, i.e. the relationships that had been built over time that helped hold the initiative together; another group (3c) explored how an initiative in which participants had conflicting commitments made the difficult decision to split into two separate initiatives but as a result each initiative went on to flourish.



Image 3: Negotiating Ethical Dilemmas

With the completion of this first stage of the project (the stage supported by the Antipode Foundation Scholar-Activist Project Award Grant), the project now moves into the second and third stages of drawing on the workshop materials for a digital exhibition and generating teaching tools that can be used in a range of settings to help promote a postcapitalist logic of economy, where mutual aid, care, cooperation and common concern are practiced.

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