What We Have Here at Hand:

An Exploration of the Really (Really) Free Market for Intersectional and Emancipatory Futures

Sarah Kristina Brown Schubert

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Abstract

This thesis follows post-development, decolonial degrowth, and diverse economies theories to examine the Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) global movement. The RRFM is a nonmonetary, nonexchange, non-barter, and nonreciprocal where goods, services, skills, and knowledge are provided by and for a community of people, usually occurring in a common space. It is an example of 'free culture,' which teaches a collaborative social relationality. The RRFM thereby offers a model of localized and post-capitalist practice of mutual aid exemplifying an anarchist economic praxis. This research is an analytical (auto)ethnographic case study of a long-running RRFM in Harrisburg (a city of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States) and a contrasting but similar secondary site – the nonprofit (i.e., nongovernmental organization) Free Store in a nearby town. Using a novel methodology (comprised of practitioner research, trauma-informed approach, and diverse economies research), the thesis employs social practice theory and diverse economies terminology to compare the autonomous RRFM and the nonprofit Free Store models of free culture. The trauma-informed approach is applied to understand mutual aid practices for collective recovery from trauma-oppressions, revealing patterns of transformative justice practice from prison abolitionist community theory. These findings describe the contradictory and generative tensions within prefigurative movements (those that enact the future world they desire in the current moment), and the pressure to conform to hegemonic expectations surrounding them. The findings also provide lessons for transformative social-economic change to benefit the human and more-than-human world.

***Keywords*:** anarchist economics, anticapitalism, autonomy, decolonial degrowth, desire framework, diverse economies, emancipatory politics, emergent strategy, free culture, horizontalism, intersectional politics, mutual aid, postcapitalist, post-development, prefigurative politics, relational multispecies justice, social practice theory, transformative justice politics, transgressive interdisciplinarity, trauma-informed

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Introduction

> Our approach to building postcapitalist futures is very different. Our starting point for imagining and enacting radically different, sustainable, non-anthropocentric postcapitalist futures is *what we have here at hand.* Focusing on what we have here at hand offers a different way of responding to the dire challenges of *now*, of 'thinking the world' and enacting change – one that has been developed out of dissatisfaction with the despairing and debilitating effects of systemic theories and revolutionary programmes of change.
>
> - J.K. Gibson-Graham and Kelly Dombroski (2020, 3)

The party is over. The excesses and indulgences produced by civilization are causing its collapse and perhaps much faster than even the most alarmist voices suggest (Hickel 2021). The environmental conditions that provided the climate stability to enable modern society are shifting. Both human and more-than-human[1] life on our planet face extinction. The accoutrements of modern industrial capitalism at its current peak have been deemed desirable the world over. However, this is a narrative of winners and losers where some suffer in extremity while others suffer differently under modernized poverty and oversaturation (Patel and Moore 2017). Meanwhile, our cycles of destruction (and trauma) continue. The comfort, convenience, and luxury of modern culture are also causing this cycle of degradation. These conveniences are the benefits of economic growth, but there is a direct correlation between economic growth and toxic emissions rates (IPCC 2022a; Parrique 2022; US Intelligence Report 2021; Hickel and Kallis 2020). Per the 2021-22 reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the emissions and ecosystem degradation continue to increase despite policy efforts, and humans are running desperately short on time to mitigate the harms of modern industrial society and prepare for coming struggles (2022a; 2022b). It is time to turn off the system and embrace a life that is simpler and can nourish the interpersonal relationships that we need to navigate the coming hardships of irreversible environmental consequences of societal choices.

Environmental degradation, mass extinction, and the climate crisis have been convincingly linked to systems of human consumption, waste, and production. "Humanity as an undifferentiated whole" is not responsible, but rather the system of social organization and industry known as

[1] This term is meant to acknowledge nonhuman entities, systems, and objects as equal agents to human actors in an entangled, multispecies history. In the era of the Anthropocene, scholars from many disciplines have concluded the damage to the earth comes from human behavior, rooted in the ontological notion of human exceptionalism. The more-than-human turn provides space for ethical and political theories of cooperation and co-existence toward a more ecologically healthy future (Tschakert 2020).

capitalism (Moore 2017, 595). The endless expansion required by globalized, corporate capitalism also creates social and economic inequities (Moore 2017; Sachs 2019; Kothari et al. 2019; Hickel 2020; Loomba 2015). This nexus of disparity is not exceptional or rare. It is woven into the fabric of modernism, a necessary part of its continuation.

Economic hardship and ecological impacts demonstrate the relevance of systems like sharing, gifting, zero waste, and circular economies. These alternative economic systems can make some difference toward transitional lifestyle and cultural change. Yet, based on their diminutive scale to date these economic add-ons can alternatively be argued as window-dressing to business-as-usual capitalism (i.e., 'greenwashing'). The drivers of global exploitation, expansion, extraction, and dispossession remain firmly in place while showcasing for zero-waste, 'green' production (Menton et al. 2020). Global sustainability policies and green culture are part of a reframing of policy that protects, enhances, and renews the legitimacy of capitalist growth (Dunlap and Arce 2022; Spash 2021) while deepening preexisting environmental and social disparities (Larsen 2022). This transitional social reconstruction simply does not meet the needs of the current moment. Global capitalism itself should be radically uprooted.

There is no easy remedy for our environmental crises. Deep and fundamental transformations are needed for us to survive and thrive. The tools, knowledge, practices, and relationships to enact a radical cultural shift are before us now. Some have always been available, from pre-capitalist era through the contemporary moment (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020; Burkart et al. 2020; Kothari et al. 2019). Resources to (re)discover life and relational changes include movements or communities that enact alternatives to the socio-economic metanarrative provided by global capitalism (Larsen 2022; Menton et al. 2020; Kothari et al. 2019). These experiential, localized movements demonstrate that alternatives to capitalism are possible by using *what we have here at hand.* We can use what we have, our own knowledges and collective resources, to make change with our own hands. Rather than look toward an external savior, a revolutionary program, or an easy-out 'technofix' that may never come, this thesis posits that the ability to survive and thrive already exists in our neighborhoods, communities, and social networks.

The movements that demonstrate the 'do-it-ourselves' ethos are a world away from globalized financialization, social stratification, and environmental degradation. They are localized and plural in their relational and anti-capitalist intentions and strategies. "This living, pre-figurative

politics is based on the principle of creating right now the foundations of the worlds we want to see come to fruition in the future; it implies a contiguity of means and ends" (Kothari et al. 2019, xxxv). A prefigurative praxis involves rethinking and resisting normal ways and doing things differently in the present. It includes an expanded social relationality, building collaborative relationships across differences, and across species (Harraway 2016; Tschakert, 2020). Transgression of our normal lives is uncomfortable, uneasy, and unfamiliar, but the communities found within autonomous movements are learning together how to address contradiction between long-held needs versus the imperative of needing systems change.

The Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) movement presents postcapitalist, relational possibilities for study. A RRFM is a recurring grassroots event where members of a local community bring material items or skills and knowledge to share and give away. Participants simply bring and take what they wish. They do not engage in barter, trade, or reciprocal exchange. These events often occur in a publicly accessible space, such as a public park (Luna 2012; Crimethinc 2007). The RRFM has no centralized coordinating apparatus or formal network. Some are one-time events, often aligned with a specific goal (i.e., 'Buy Nothing Day'). Some are recurring community events. Over the last 15 years, RRFM events have occurred in cities throughout the world, in countries such as Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Ireland, Malaysia, New Zealand, North America, Taiwan, Russia, South Africa, and the United Kingdom (Wikipedia 2021; Albinsson and Perera 2012; Annuar et al. 2016 – my translation via Google Translator).[2] It is difficult to document every type of RRFM event, which can even occur under different names (i.e., Free Store or Free Shop or Give-Away Shop), although these names can connote subtly different versions of free culture versus the RRFM, as this thesis will explain.

RRFM is more than a place to give and get things for free, it is also a personal and community building endeavor. It is a localized formation of resistance that creates new relationships. The RRFM event is a demonstration of mutual aid activities, that is "collective coordination to meet each other's needs, usually from an awareness that the systems we have in place are not going to meet them" (Spade, 2020, 7). It can also be intersectional, due to a convergence of political casts, intentions, and identities – many of which are divergent from the anarchist mutual aid politics at

[2] In a brief but spectacular group project, in 2020 graduate students at University of Oslo's Centre of Development and the Environment identified active RRFMs operating globally. It was not exhaustive, but effectively displayed the widespread nature of the movement, across countries, languages, governances, and cultures (Fowler et al. 2020).

its foundation. This enables other modes of interaction (economically and socially) and demands fluidity to deal with inherent conflicts that arise with difference. As a demonstration of mutual aid, the RRFM is an emancipatory endeavor which troubles hegemonic notions under gendered, racialized capitalism (Sokoloff and Pincus 2008; Izlar 2019; Moore 2018). It draws strength from decentralization, volunteerism, and grows resilient from conflict.

The RRFM movement remains largely understudied, possibly because it is intentionally and firmly positioned outside of institutional management or formalized organizational structures. The character of each RRFM may vary significantly based on regional politics and social norms. An examination of some of the values of the RRFM in different contexts will illuminate the theories and practices promoting a livable future. Exploring the limitations of the RRFM phenomenon will boost its continuity and spread to help create a resilient future. I have been involved with a RRFM in my hometown of Harrisburg in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, located in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States since it began in 2012. Harrisburg presents a microcosm demonstrating that RRFM practices can occur within the conditions of even the hardline capitalistic U.S. governance and culture. This thesis will examine another model of free economics which occurs in a town nearby Harrisburg under a nonprofit form[3], called Free Store.[4] Bringing these two models of the free culture practice under examination may help strengthen and evolve the activities of the Harrisburg RRFM while also providing insight into this understudied phenomenon and inspiring transformative change over transitional reforms.

Research Aims, Objectives, and Questions

This is an exploration of the RRFM as a local, decentralized protest activity and a demonstration of prefigurative and emancipatory mutual aid practices. Exemplified in RRFMs is the growing

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[3] Nonprofit organizations (or nonprofits) in the U.S. are what international audiences might refer to as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or civil society. Nonprofits operate with a social or ethical mission to provide goods or services to designated groups outside of, or in complement to, governmental or private, corporate interests. This generally occurs within the parameters of a small budget and limits to profit-accumulation. In some instances, particularly within the U.S. context, a nonprofit might operate like a corporate entity with large surplus profits, high wages for highest-ranking individuals, and general corruption. In these instances, there are or questions as to whether the nonprofit is meeting its mission to serve vulnerable groups (or even to suppress them- Dunlap and Arce 2022). Throughout this text, the term 'nonprofit' will be used instead of NGO or civil society.

[4] It is important to note a terminological distinction in this thesis. The RRFM is a grassroots anarchistic-inspired prefigurative direct demonstration. Sometimes, a RRFM event is colloquially called a 'Free Store' or 'Free Shop.' However, hereafter the terms will not be used interchangeably. The Harrisburg RRFM or RRFM will refer to the grassroots, autonomous model. 'Free Store' will refer to the nonprofit, formal, state-recognized legal entity.

interest in post-capitalist or noncapitalist economics by enhancing an understanding of non-barter, nonmonetary, nonexchange systems of economic arrangements. This thesis embraces the admittedly politicized nature of the RRFM as an object of research. It aims to contribute to post-development, degrowth, diverse economies scholarship and to autonomous social movements by better elucidating how the RRFM functions as a prefigurative act. My proximity to the RRFM and the longevity of the free culture practices at both research sites is opportune. It is my hope that this thesis plays a small part in characterizing and understanding the cultural or personal effects of long-term free culture or anarchist economic practices. I have attempted throughout to step outside my opinions and biases as a RRFM organizer-turned-researcher while also leveraging the data I have accumulated from my work. This research should have some practical applications to RRFMs or similar projects by examining how groups resolve barriers and internal tensions. Further research topics examined by this project are as follows:

- The historical development of the RRFM concept
- Alterity and heterogeneity as features of a resistance formation against capitalism.
- RRFM participants' interaction with and creation of spaces of convergence and intersectionality in various localized contexts.
- The shared and divergent attitudes and values of RRFM participants regarding consumption and waste, inclusivity, gift culture, and conflict resolution.
- Indexing the barriers against expanding free culture practices – particularly the pressure to conform to institutional or bureaucratic infrastructures and social hierarchies – and explore strategies to address these tensions.

This study contrasts the political, economic, and social values held by RRFM organizers with those of the wider social-political-economic context. The main questions include: What do the RRFM (and Free Store) practices and modes of analysis reveal about prefigurative movements? How are these revelations addressed by RRFM (and Free Store) practitioners? While meriting further stand-alone research, this thesis also explores:

- What are the limits or barriers that prevent expansion of the RRFM movement (within Harrisburg and beyond)? How have these limits or barriers been mitigated, if at all?
- How can knowledge of the barriers inform stronger RRFM and other autonomous activities?

- Which model of the free culture practice is desirable to spread and why?

Thesis Structure

This thesis diverges slightly from typical thesis construction primarily by spreading academic theories throughout Chapters 1, 2, and 3. Chapter 1 explains *why* the RRFM exists as an experiential political movement. "Toward a Pluriverse of Possibilities" will critically examine the legacy of neocolonial, global, corporate, and neoliberal capitalism – exposing it as a source of oppression across cultures and ecosystems. The universalized social order of this metanarrative is dependent on the dominance of free market capitalism, a notion of scarcity of material resources and goods, fear of alternatives, and stratification. It is reified in social and educational institutions, fortification by the state, and internalization in the thoughts and activities of individuals, such that the constructs reinforce themselves. This Chapter argues that the dominant narratives, and their corporeal realities, are a foundational problem, and a substantive cultural change is necessary. There are examples of alternative ways of being, found within autonomous communities and social movements. Recent scholarship from post-development, decolonial degrowth, and diverse economies frameworks examine these movements as examples of prefigurative, intersectional, and emancipatory politics. These studies shed light on alternative narratives and a multitude of ways of being in a livable future. The RRFM is one such example, but it has been studied in a limiting way as a collaborative consumption phenomenon rather than as a demonstration of localized alternatives to the capitalist metanarrative.

Chapter 2 describes the lineage of the movement – *what* makes the RRFM a protest and a demonstration of mutual aid. "Lineages of Really Free Culture" will explore the philosophical and historical underpinnings of the RRFM. It situates the RRFM movement within the post-development, decolonial degrowth, and diverse economies literatures as an example of anarchist economics. Although the RRFM movement is a global phenomenon, this thesis will focus on a case-study within the United States (U.S.). This chapter provides a critical perspective on the U.S. context as a background for the evolution of the RRFM. Then, a broad lineage of the free culture phenomenon to the contemporary RRFM will provide the perspective and frameworks to better understand its function toward transformative change. This chapter introduces the history specific to the RRFM movement in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Chapter 3 explores methodological theory to consider *how* to approach the particular case study at hand. "How to Study the RRFM" introduces a unique research framework. The thesis differentiates between methodology (the theories applied to research design) and the methods (how the research was conducted). The case-study at hand requires a tailored methodological approach. Following feminist and queer theory, this research approach combines three frameworks: Practitioner Research, Trauma-Informed, and Diverse Economies (PTIDER) that provides both a name and a critical approach. The practitioner framework acknowledges a critical and functional approach to participatory action research. The trauma-informed approach is borrowed from its origin in substance abuse and social work in the U.S. It is applied here to power and hierarchy within social dynamics. It allows the researcher and research participants to be affected, while also enabling a critical positionality in data analysis. Diverse economies scholarship provides language and analytical tools to examine the RRFM outside of capitalism rather than in reference to it. After explaining PTIDER theory, this section applies PTIDER to the research design and methods. This includes a discussion of positionality, bias, and ethics; description of the duration, research sites, and research participants; and tools used for fieldwork.

Findings and analysis from the case study are provided in two chapters. Chapter 4, "Free Culture or Really Free Culture?" will present findings from the Practitioner lens of PTIDER. First, the material and ideological limits, barriers, and contradictions at the Harrisburg RRFM will be presented, examining a central problem to the RRFM, the desirability of becoming a legally recognized, formalized institution. Data collected from the secondary site, the nonprofit (i.e., nongovernmental organization, NGO) 'Free Store' in a neighboring town is used for comparison. The autonomous RRFM and the nonprofit model will be assessed using social practice theory and diverse economies terminology. Chapter 5, "Being the Change and Getting Free," examines the tensions and contradictions within prefigurative, experiential free culture practices. Applying a trauma-informed analysis to research participants' own words exemplifies how this type of organizational analysis is useful in research of autonomous movements. This section studies poverty and racism as trauma-oppressions to find whether the free culture offers any active resistance to re-traumatization around these issues. It is argued that hierarchy, imbalanced power dynamics, and the desire for control continue to cause difficult situations among the community of practice. Striving for freedom and autonomy within a society that is itself not yet free of the

capitalist hegemony is a discovery process. The lessons from this case study are hoped to have resonance within other autonomous movements or in abolitionist transformative justice praxis.

In Chapter 6 “The Otherwise and the Meanwhile: A Diverse Economies Discussion,” the findings from the autonomous RRFM and the nonprofit Free Store are examined applying tools from diverse economies and anarchist scholarship to *disturb* the grounds of possibility, *read* for difference in order to *excavate* the possible, and *generate* actual possibilities for systemic change. It is argued that both models of free culture enable multiple possibilities for either transformational or transitional cultural change. This section examines critiques against diverse economies literature and other social research and discusses how the thesis design addresses them. In the conclusion, a final criticism assesses how the persistent metanarrative of capitalism is insinuated even within this thesis. It provides suggestions for future research to (re)politicize the methodologies used, follow radical research topics, and transgress boundaries for liberatory ends. This thesis concludes with a summary of the findings, answers the research questions, and reflects on re-centering the more-than-human in human economies. This is a relational multispecies justice perspective that could contribute to next steps in emancipatory praxis.

We must approach the RRFM as a multidimensional phenomenon. It is a protest demonstration; an act of mutual aid that fills the needs of people in horizontal social arrangements. It is also a mechanism of localized consumption/waste reduction that can disrupt the overarching processes of corporate production. In this, it becomes a disruption to assumed social and economic norms and is a unique method of community building. The RRFM is an embodiment of concepts, *being the change we want to see in the world*[5] where the *personal is political*[6] and the *global is local*. This experimental and experiential resistance formation is an example and exercise of potential futures which do not have privileged voice in the dominant discourse of racialized, gendered capitalism. It provides an example of a community to dismantle the hegemonic capitalist paradigm and oppression. Because the capitalist system continues to fail everyone, some in the here-and-now and others in the mid-to-longer run, it is imperative that we critique, examine, and practice alternatives to heal the scars of the hegemonic system, and it must happen now.

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[5] This statement is often misattributed to Mahatma Gandhi. The phrase is better attributed to Arleen Lorrance’s 1974 book, “The Love Project,” about her work in a Brooklyn public school (O’Toole 2017; Coohill 2020).
[6] The term “the personal is political” is credited to Hanisch. http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html

Chapter 1. Toward a Pluriverse of Possibilities

The Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) movement stands to prove that humans can adapt toward resilient, care-led practices when social norms change. By removing the rules and restrictions under capitalist hegemony, the RRFM enables other ways of conducting interpersonal relations and even changes lifestyles. It consists of localized events where no money, no transfer, and no barter are used to exchange goods or services, provided by the community itself. RRFM is an experiential protest, a demonstration of alternative economics, and a flourish of collective imagination. RRFM aims to eradicate – the capitalist free market, the myth of scarcity, the dogma of private property, and the oppressive constructs that attend these notions. The RRFM illustrates a desirable and different way of being in the world. Once we understand the conditions that necessitated the RRFM and how it developed, then we can consider how to best study it and understand its social implications.

This Chapter reviews the dominant narratives of neocolonial, neoliberal, global capitalism and concludes these are foundational problems, and a substantive cultural change is necessary that the RRFM can serve to help. The section, "A Pluriverse of Alternatives" explains alternative narratives to the capitalist story by exploring scholarship that highlights social movements and localized knowledges throughout the world. These studies are critiqued, and it is argued that deeper understanding of the political nature of these social movements must be acknowledged. Next, this section explains the desires and tensions of anarchism and intersectional, prefigurative, and emancipatory politics. The next section summarizes previous research on the RRFM, arguing for an alternative framework of study to better understand the movement. The chapter concludes that we have achieved a foundational understanding of what RRFM critiques and why it functions as a prefigurative demonstration to illustrate other world(s) are possible.

The Context: A Critique of Capitalist Free Market and a Call for an Ontological Shift

The contemporary conditions of modern globalized capitalism are rooted in an often-told history of colonialist and imperialist conquest beginning with, and integrally linked to, Enlightenment rationality (Peet and Hartwick, 2015). Through the modern era, concepts of forward progression of all society were codified. In 1960, W.W. Rostow presented *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* which centralized technology as a sign of superiority, and affirmed hierarchical perspectives of traditional/ modern, backward/ advanced, undeveloped/ developed.

This posited a singular, universal, forward progression for all societies which justified the global development conviction: that modern nations should help "backward or traditional" societies on the great march forward to advancement (Peet and Hartwick 2015). Such theories have created a matter-of-fact framework that rationalizes expansion, development, and hierarchical social arrangements. Through its progression and ascendency, the world over, capitalistic narratives have become normalized. This ideology influences all levels of social and ecological life, from governance to daily interactions within the human and more-than-human world, and has corporeal, material consequences. Yet, these narratives neglect a longer story of human activities beyond or before capitalist economics, competition, and social arrangements of debt (Shannon et al. 2012; Graeber 2011). They also obfuscate how humans circumnavigated these seemingly ubiquitous constructions (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020; Graeber 2012; Graeber and Wengrow 2021). There has always been an 'otherwise' (i.e., alternative knowledges and practices) that occurs despite – and before – capitalism.

Broadly, capitalism has entailed a series of adaptations: it has evolved from a legacy of domination, othering, and competition from early agrarian society through industrialization. Through this evolution, it has enforced and epitomized the notion of ownership of private property or land enclosures (Shannon et al. 2012). The colonialist and imperialist conquest usurped lands from indigenous people while creating an underclass of devalued 'others' (Loomba 2015). Through these enclosures, peoples and the earth were deemed property, and thus rendered as disposable and exploitable (Moore 2017, 2018). Per Ania Loomba (2015), the concept of charity – or ideological missionary work – was used to rationalize dominance and exploitation over the "others" with a valorized and moral façade. This rationalization of missionary or charity work was affirmed by a moral judgement, often conflated with Christian doctrines, that justified that some were deserving of property, and morally obligated to aid or 'help' Others, who were seen as uneducated, uncivilized, and dangerous. These "pre-capitalist modes do not simply give way to capitalist ones in a simple teleological sense but persist precisely because they contribute to the growth of the latter" (*Ibid.*, 137). The hierarchies of difference, moralizing expansion and exploitation developed as capitalism continued to globalize.

In 1776, Adam Smith, an economist who is often called 'the father of capitalism,' argued that individual self-interest could become a public good. Individual activities would interact in a

capitalist system of valuing goods and services without government intervention, or a 'free market.' The competition in a capitalist free market would keep prices low and benefit all. Smith's theory of the 'invisible hand' guiding capitalism infers that free market competition inherently provides social stability (Shannon et al. 2012). According to Thomas Malthus's 1798 theory, the human population would outgrow the capacity of the environment to support it (Robbins 2020), causing a crisis of scarcity. The theory of scarcity impacts the way the free-market economy values goods with a presumption that the market effectively allocates resources relative to their availability or scarcity (Shannon et al. 2012). Both the free-market economy's invisible hand and the notion of scarcity persist as the foundation of economic theory to this day.

As is common in this story of hierarchy, the tools of colonial, imperial conquest were revamped in the global 'development imperative' initiated in U.S. President Harry Truman's 1949 speech (Peet and Hartwick 2015; Loomba 2015). This speech followed just 5 years after Gross Domestic Product (GDP) became an accepted universal standard for measuring the monetary market-value of production of nations in 1944. Following the morality and rationalized altruism that came before, the development project employed an indoctrinating program to disseminate a universalized vision of progress from the powerful, rich countries into poor nations – reiterating binary concepts – and using GDP as a standard measurement of well-being and progress. This development conquest assures that in its purest form "'Development' means making a better life for everyone" by meeting material needs basic to human survival, with a focus on cultural variation (Peet and Hartwick 2015, 1). But the development project, along with the colonial/imperial legacy before it, requires relentless growth to succeed and it has neglected both people and the earth.

As a tool to counter Cold War upheaval, this development ambition created the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, instruments of extractive, neo-colonialist logics and home to global capitalist finance (Sassen 2013, 2016). "Development promised to poor nations an entry into global markets by way of commodification and debt, agri-monoculture technologies, removal of common lands and lifestyles, and implementation of the educational and social regimes of universal narratives of progress" (Schubert 2021). But it has instead solidified debt, poverty, and inequities. Development "is a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes 'poverty' as its point of entry – launching an

intervention that may have no effect on the poverty but does in fact have other concrete effects," and these effects have political uses (Ferguson 1994, 255-256). Ivan Illich ([1971] 1997, 97) called this the "benevolent production for underdevelopment":

> There is a normal course for those who make development policies, whether they live in North or South America, in Russia or Israel. It is to define development and to set its goals in ways with which they are familiar, which they are accustomed to use in order to satisfy their own needs and which permit them to work through the institutions over which they have power or control. This formula has failed, and must fail. There is not enough money in the world for development to succeed along these lines, not even in the combined arms and space budgets of the superpowers. (100)

This underdevelopment creates dependency on free market economy, debt, wage labor, and the planned obsolescence of commodities throughout the world and it enables powerful elites to enhance their holdings via opportunistic extraction and exploitation. It also solidifies a manner of linear thinking that all societies 'advance' on a universalized trajectory in economics, science, industry, technology, and governance (Schubert 2021). Underdevelopment and the logic that supports it are apparent not only in poor countries, but within the richest, too (Chapter 2).

Along with the evolution of conquest as a benevolent development of poor countries, the capitalism narrative advanced and perpetuated itself by instilling fear into the masses of the implied consequences of attempting alternatives with the prosperity of industrialized nations held up as proof. It morphed into a universalized neoliberal bureaucratic construct and a neo-Malthusian retelling of the scarcity theory in the 1970s: Per David Harvey (2005), the neoliberal state is structured on two systemic biases. First, the need to create a business and investment climate amenable to capitalist interests – which presumes social-political stability follows. Second, it must ensure "integrity of the financial system and the solvency of financial institutions over the well-being of the population or environmental quality" (72). These biases have created a condition of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2004) - the concentration of wealth and power with the elites by dispossessing resources from the public. The neoliberal turn presented new social quandaries (Kinna 2012): the corporate character (i.e., production zones causing havoc in poor countries, deregulated banking systems, consistently high consumption patterns); the ecological costs of industrialization and modernization; unfair market regulation which increases inequality (i.e., one-size-fits-all policies, trade sanctions, virtual recolonization of poor states); and interstate rivalry over control of natural resources.

The 1970s also brought political threats to Western standards of living and capitalist economy, from social revolutions to the ideological threat of communism (Patel and Moore, 2017). This context, coupled with starvation and malnutrition in developing countries, revived the Malthusian warning of a pending system collapse.[7] Such doom narratives of resource scarcity begat the concept of the 'carrying capacity' of the earth (Sayre, 2008). This theory draws a direct causation between the number of humans, resource exploitation, and degradation of the environment. It naturalizes fear, scarcity, inequality, and conflict along lines of class, race, gender and geography (Hendrixson et al. 2020; Ojeda et al. 2020). Although seemingly objective and rational, the explicitly political impetus of neo-Malthusian theorists is evident in unwavering attention upon the poorer, or so-called developing countries, "most often targeting poor women of color, particularly in the global South" (Hendrixson et al. 2020, 309). Thus, the pre-capitalist modes to create Others to enhance power of elites evolves, and it has corporeal consequences. This ecoscarcity narrative asserts that government authorities should intervene. It insists that: "Population control, rather than reconfiguration of global distributions of power and goods, is the solution to ecological crisis. The continued advocacy of an apolitical natural-limit argument, therefore, is implicitly *political*, since it holds implications for the distribution and control of resources" (Robbins, 2020, 14). The ecoscarcity narrative, by posing as an objective universal truth, frames the culprit of environmental degradation as "humanity as an undifferentiated whole" (Moore 2017, 595), which obfuscates a critical view of global, corporate, capitalist industry as the real driver. It leaves little room to consider earth exploitation over consumption patterns.

The ecoscarcity theory prediction that overpopulation would cause societal collapse by the 2000s did not occur in part because of the agricultural industry boom (which has in turn, radically affected arable lands, water resources, and animal habitat – See: Robbins 2020). The notion that of earth as a finite source which sets limits to human action has been challenged (Robbins 2020): It is industrial, global capitalism that has exploited the earth and radically changed ecosystem processes (Moore 2017, 2018). Further, 'carrying capacity' is not finite, but fluctuating and variable (Sayre 2008). While the state does not seek to intervene on the financial free market (except to ensure its unfettered continuation), it may intervene into poor societies to subjugate

[7] The warning was echoed in literature predicting an apocalyptic future of a deteriorating earth and mass starvation caused by human breeding patterns (i.e., Paul and Anne Ehrlich's 1968 *The Population Bomb,* the Club of Rome's 1972 *Limits to Growth* (Robbins, 2020); and Garrett Hardin's 1968 essay "Tragedy of the Commons").

people and earth for capitalist expansion and growth. Although the ecoscarcity narrative has failed, it is offered as further moral justification for development projects, propped up by international governance, to intervene in poor, racialized countries. This enables back-door access to resources and labor for capitalist expansion and enterprise (Sassen 2013, 2016). Thus, the metanarrative of development and free market predominance evolves.

Current governmental policies continue to protect capitalist interests and perpetuate underdevelopment by manipulating the fear of climate change. This is evident in criticism of a rash of intergovernmental policies in the 2000s. The United Nation's (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were invested in a reproduction of poverty that comes at the price of increased inequality and environmental degradation (Sachs, 2017). The development project creates the conditions it says it will resolve, creating (arguably) unintended but generally useful outcomes for the neoliberal, capitalist class to manipulate (Ferguson 1994). Despite the failures and mixed results of the MDGs, development project strategy continues in so-called green growth projects, redux as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs have been criticized as doomed to fail as utterly as their predecessors (Sachs 2017) as they are yet another method of the same insidious justifications for exploitation, extraction, and dispossession (Spash 2021). SDGs have produced critiques echoing Ivan Illich's ([1971] 1997) predictions:

> The problem lies not in lack of implementation, but in the conception of development as linear, unidirectional, material, and financial growth, driven by commodification and capitalist markets. Despite numerous attempts to re-signify development, it continues to be something that 'experts' manage in pursuit of economic growth, and measure by Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a poor and misleading indicator of progress in the sense of well-being. In truth, the world at large experiences 'maldevelopment', even in the very industrialized countries whose lifestyle was meant to serve as a beacon for 'backward' ones. (Kothari et al. 2019, xxi – xxii)

The SDGs continue with the persistent belief that economic growth is possible alongside sustainability projects. Although ecoscarcity has not disappeared from the narrative, today, the mission is 'sustainability' whereby commodities and economic growth are rendered 'green' by 'decoupling' polluting industrial emissions from GDP (Schubert 2021). The fear of ecological crisis is mobilized to perpetuate the continual rebirth of economic growth (Spash 2021; Swyngedouw 2010). Fear is an essential tool in the evolution of capitalism's dominance.

Capitalism as Common Sense

The capitalist narrative is propagated and perpetuated in media, news, and particularly in educational institutions. Beyond the de facto indoctrination in compulsory education (Illich 1973), social research is traditionally just as culpable of perpetuating the metanarrative. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014) explain that "many social science disciplines emerged from the need to provide justifications for social hierarchies undergirded by White supremacy and manifest destiny" (228). "Academic capitalism" has developed alongside the 'neoliberal academy' beholden to the state's interests (Paasi 2005, 2013). Higher education replicates some features of the neocolonial – racial, linguistic, educational – binaries of difference (Paasi 2005), even in many countries where education is socialized rather than a personal financial burden for students. Per Tuck and Yang (2014), even in the moments of inclusion, the academy tends to focus on narratives that display the pain of the Other over any investment in reparative solutions. "We see the collecting of narratives of pain by social scientists to already be a double erasure, whereby pain is documented in order to be erased, often by eradicating the communities that are supposedly injured and supplanting them with hopeful stories of progress into a better, Whiter, world" (231). Tuck and Yang relate the operation of academic capitalism to the perpetuation of a deceptive 'common-sense' popular understanding:

> The relentlessness of the master narrative is what hurts people who find themselves on the outside or the underside of that narrative. History as master narrative appropriates the voices, stories, and histories of all Others, thus limiting their representational possibilities, their expression as epistemological paradigms in themselves. Academic knowledge is particular and privileged, yet disguises itself as universal and common; it is settler colonial; it already refuses desire; it sets limits to potentially dangerous Other knowledges; it does so through *erasure*, but importantly *also through inclusion*, and its own *imperceptibility* (235, emphasis added).

The insistence on archiving and collecting stories of Others maintains control over them, which is characteristic of a particularly western, Eurocentric, or settler-colonialist relationship to subaltern subjectivity (*Ibid.*). Academic research affirms binary separation between subject/researcher, academy/life.[8] It objectifies alterity to own or control it. Scholars produce work that centers on white/western-centric perspectives at the expense of 'others' or fail to assess relational and structural power, politics, and conflicts. And our familiar cultural biases may prevent us from

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[8] This might be seen as relevant not only for social research, but also of the hard sciences which analyze the more-than-human worlds with a similar distance and hierarchical power imbalance.

realizing this. Academic Northern or Western experts may be better understood as 'Thought Leaders' who (sometimes unknowingly) assist the elite classes to conquer the world of ideas. The Thought Leaders essentially remove political critique of a degrading economic system and instead promote entrepreneurial notions that remain congenial to the free market economy (Giridharadas, 2020). State and international policy is created from this ideological foundation which hinges on the notion that "only a few thousand Western experts steeped in neoclassical/neoliberal economics know truly what policy regime works best for everyone else" (Peet and Hartwick 2015, 111). It appears that inequality continues unbated while corporate returns remain high, and the elite widen their profit margins.

Because this metanarrative is so ubiquitous and even codified by the entertainment owned by wealthy corporations and educational institutions (run by the state), it is internalized and reinforced by everyday people as 'common sense,' 'human nature,' and 'pragmatic' (Shannon et al. 2012, 22). These ideological assumptions hamper critical thought in this widespread subliminal normality. Any notion that there might be other ways of being are forgotten.

> For 'capitalism' to make sense as the globally prevalent system of our times, a long history and geography of archival work (re-membering and forgetting) will need to have taken place and to have organized reference points (implicit or explicit) that constitute the 'origins of capitalism' and enable us to 'intuitively' locate ourselves within this 'system,' or as 'economic subjects' in the first place (Alhojärvi 2020, 302).

It may be correctly argued that this amounts to indoctrination. This ideology holds a hegemonic power, as in Antonio Gramsci's ([1929-1935] 1971) analysis, such that it "mystifies power relations, camouflages the causes of public issues and events, encourages fatalism and political passivity, and justifies the deprivation of the many so that a few can live well" (Peet and Hartwick 2015, 199-200). Part and parcel with the capitalist hegemony is a reinforcement by fear. Fear of the unknown or the otherwise, and a focus on maintaining the stability of this social arrangement, bolsters the potential for paternalism of the state and reinforces the *invisible hand* notion. Advancing and inculcating apocalyptic fears is essential to the continuation of capitalism (Swyngedouw 2010), from ecoscarcity to the global warming crisis.

But for many, there has been disenchantment with this status quo, because the material realities are at odds with hegemonic notions of social, economic, and ecological order. Now facing ecosystem failures and mass extinction, the capitalist construct and compliant state may finally be

losing some credibility: "We are seeing a dangerous slide towards a lawless capitalism, where free market ideology (neoliberalism) has privatized and atomized every aspect of our lives and nature, nearly drowning democracy in a bucket so that global corporations and nation-states can misbehave with virtually no public oversight or accountability for their unethical practices and unfettered profiteering" (Dayaneni et al. 2021). As the disparities deepen, and climate concerns and environmental degradation are more apparent, dissent in this system is more palpable.

Yet, the capitalist social order used climate crisis to evolve again and has mainstreamed solutions revolving around *sustainable growth* or *green economy*, which assume that economic growth can be decoupled from ecologically mindful efforts. The green growth narrative is squarely focused on carbon dioxide (CO2) and greenhouse gas emissions while neglecting problems of earth, animal, and water abuses. This is a tunneled narrative that forecloses discussions on a range of other concerns. However, Jason Hickel and Giorgios Kallis's review (2020) of the UN Environment Program and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports concluded, "there is no empirical evidence that absolute decoupling from resource use can be achieved on a global scale against a background of continued economic growth, and absolute decoupling from carbon emissions is highly unlikely to be achieved at a rate rapid enough to prevent global warming over 1.5°C or 2°C, even under optimistic policy conditions" (469). Since this review was published, the IPCC has confirmed with *very high confidence* that global warming reaching *1.5°C by 2040* would cause unavoidable, pervasive (and in some cases irreversible) increases in climate hazards and multiple risks to ecosystems and humans: including extreme weather events; coastal flooding; biodiversity loss; limited access to energy, water and other services; increased violent conflict and migration (IPCC 2022a). This is dire enough, but risks become extreme at 2°C warming, and it is questionable what kind of life might exist under such circumstances. Reinforcing the conclusion that decoupling is impossible, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) data (2021) data states that the global temperature reached a peak of 1.2°C in 2020. Recently, WMO confirmed the past 7 years have been the hottest on record, and 2021 set records for greenhouse gas concentrations, sea-level rise, ocean heat and acidification (2022). But those in positions of authority already generally know and predominantly accept all this as fact. Even the 2021 US Intelligence Report acknowledges the high correlation between economic growth and carbon emissions, as evident by the 2020 pandemic economic and emissions rebound (18-19). The most recent US Intelligence Report

acknowledges that the current trajectory based on world governments' present policies and pledges would cause temperature to rise to *1.5°C by 2030* and surpass 2°C by mid-century (2022, 21). The assumption that economic growth might continue while environmental or social inequity decreases has been invalidated (Sachs 2019; Kothari, et al. 2019; Hickel 2020). Nonetheless, the emissions goals remain the focus, and green growth theory is treated as a de facto national and international policy standard in response to ecological breakdown. It is advocated by the UN, European Union, World Bank, etc. (Hickel and Kallis 2020; Gómez-Baggethun 2020; Schubert 2021). *If those heads of state, governments, and their administrative bureaucracies already predominantly know and tacitly accept that the decoupling theory is invalid, why does the free-market green-growth hegemony persist?*

Hickel and Kallis (2020) further stated that it is possible to continue the capitalist order and stay within the agreed emissions limit of 2°C but only if growth (i.e., GDP) is close to zero with every mitigation tool in place. This possibility does not place its hope in nonexistent mitigation technologies. Rather, this possibility necessitates a low energy and low consumption society - an entirely different social, economic, and cultural structure. This proposal is known as degrowth in certain academic and activist circles. "An ecologically sustainable world economy would have to be delinked from the drive for profits and ordered instead around the principle of deploying human capabilities to meet human needs, within the limits of Earth's biocapacity" (Burton and Somerville 2019, 103). Degrowth narratives broadly remain focused on the state as a source of change, moving away from the capitalist growth imperative and toward equitable redistribution (Krueger et al. 2018). A range of degrowth reformist or ecosocialist proposals have proliferated.

Degrowth reformist policy tends to be progressive versions of 'green new deals' and approaches a kind of 'ecosocialist' agenda. This agenda includes cuts to industrial production, construction, and distribution in the richer countries; cuts to consumption in the developed world and global elites; a shortened working week; electric heating from renewables; stronger public transport (electric, hydrogen fuel); and expanding agroecology practices, etc. (Burton and Somerville 2019). These reforms are presented with a political message: "by favoring redistribution over expansion, the degrowth utopia represents a frontal attack on the core ideology of modern industrial capitalism" (Gómez-Baggethun 2020, 5). However, "there is no obvious reason to expect that the capitalist and socialist variants of the modernist project should bring essentially

different environmental outcomes" (*Ibid.*). Furthermore, this does not do enough to challenge social inequities that undergird capitalism. These policies and reform efforts reflect the top-down approach of integrating dissident factions of society while keeping them powerless, and diverting attention from the need for systems change, what Antonio Gramsci ([1929-1935] 1971) referred to as a 'passive revolution' (Spash 2021). On the other hand, decolonial scholars wonder: "Will ecosocialists develop one master plan, modeled on the [Ecomodernist] Manifesto's blueprint for reorganizing and intensifying global farming, forestry, and settlement? Or will they resist projecting Euro-American visions and values onto others, and join degrowth efforts to learn from diverse communities and socio-environmental justice movements?" (Paulson 2021, 2). It seems more likely that "the mitigated capitalism of a 'green new deal' will be little help, because it leaves the overall system of commodification, and the motors of expansion, firmly in place" (Burton and Somerville 2019, 104). In this light, the passive revolution of ecosocialist degrowth reforms are insufficient to challenge neither the hegemony of modern lifestyles nor political will.

However, the degrowth argument is receiving recognition from international elite, but the prospects are bleak that international policy will adjust to a zero-growth reality. For starters, degrowth is in direct conflict with the core objective of every publicly traded company on the planet, and most privately owned ones, too. But scientists are drawing light on its credibility. The 2022 IPCC Working Group II report notes the link between social equity and environmental wholeness to ending the capitalist growth imperative (IPCC 2022a; Parrique 2022). The IPCC still hopes the state will create policies to enact the change. But, as argued earlier, there is no reason to expect that governmental reforms or mitigations will arrive in the much-needed time frame. We predict that the state will continue protecting its interests in power, free market-centered stability, and capitalist elitism. It will subsume or obfuscate political will to the contrary.

Indeed, as Eric Swyngedouw (2010) states "the current hegemonic climate change polities ultimately reinforce processes of de-politicization and the socio-political status quo rather than, as some suggest and hope, offering a wedge that might contribute to achieving socio-ecologically more egalitarian transformations" (214). There is no reason to consider that the invested status quo will be challenged. But this is a time when it is crucial that other ideas, those that may have been repressed or suppressed, resurge:

> To the extent that the current post-political condition that combines apocalyptic environmental visions with a hegemonic neoliberal view of social ordering constitutes one particular fiction (one that in fact forecloses dissent, conflict and the possibility of a different future), there is an urgent need for different stories and fictions that can be mobilized for realization (Brand et al. 2009). This requires foregrounding and naming different socio-environmental futures and recognizing conflict, difference and struggle over the naming and trajectories of these futures (Ibid, 228).

Accepting the reality that power protects itself by reinforcing business-as-usual hegemony, enables us to move beyond its power and to examine alternate modes of cultural, economic, social, and ecological change. It opens the possibility of transformational activities, rather than transitional or reactionary stances. A transformational change in economic systems entails challenging the oppressive social and political systems in which they are embedded (Anantharaman 2018). A transformation must achieve an ontological and epistemological shift wherein we recognize that "capitalism is not some naturally occurring system. It is a system that is constructed and one that can be dispensed with" (Shannon et al. 2012, 23). This means leaving aside the machinations of the state and free market and (re)discovering other knowledges and (re)enacting other ways.

A Pluriverse of Alternatives

As Wolfgang Sachs (2019, xvi) states, there are "many paths to a social transformation that places empathy with humans and non-human beings first. These visions stand firmly in opposition to both xenophobic nationalism and technocratic globalism." Post-development and degrowth scholarship herald a new era of exploring *localized practices* that reduce energy, resource use, and waste in a way that restores a balanced interaction with all actors in the world – human and the more-than-human alike (Hickel 2020). Post-development scholarship critiques the dominance of Western or Northern hegemony, which is linked to the accumulation by dispossession inherent to globalized, neocolonial, neoliberal global capitalism. Rather than consider economic growth as a standard of well-being and progress, degrowth posits that economic growth should cease and different indicators of well-being be prioritized.

Toward explaining economic alternatives, diverse economies scholarship contributes the term 'capitalocentrism' (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). This term is a discursive move that insists that capitalism (and the cultural tendencies to make essentialist references to it) is an unhelpful and hindering sign of hegemonic control. This term allows analysis to move away from

capitalism as the de facto form of social organization and asserts that capitalism is just one of many economic structures used in any given society. The recognition, inclusion, and examination of all economic structures existing within a society becomes the focus (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). Diverse economies scholarship theorizes the economy as a site of ethical intervention into the capitalist hegemony by centering the interdependency between human and more-than-human life (Healey et al. 2020, 68). This leads to the possibility of a quite different future and a socially liberatory narrative within a relational multispecies justice framework (Tschakert 2020). This perspective deconstructs the human-nature dichotomy "to address corporeal and reciprocal vulnerability within and between humans and the natural world, across proximity and distance" (2) as well as time. Rather than an afterthought, this framework illustrates how more-than-human needs and vulnerabilities might be a determining influence on human socio-economic structures. This multispecies justice framework is evident in a variety of the post-development, degrowth, and diverse economies studies of social movements.

Acknowledging the agency of the more-than-human world in these post-capitalist activities infers a shift away from the metanarrative. Collectively, these constitute a "positive assertion of another way of being and aligns with ontological *difference*. It means, 'phasing out the imperial way of life that industrial civilization demands, and redefining forms of frugal prosperity,' (Sachs 2019, xv) by thinking globally and acting locally" (Schubert 2021). The "pluriverse" is a post-development notion that references post-capitalist, communal, groups that are rooted in community relations, practical resolution to material needs, and critical and literal resistance to capitalist hegemony (Kothari et al. 2019). Examples are often drawn from Latin American communities in struggle against industrial extractivist projects of capital and the state (i.e., Zapatista, Oaxacan, and Chiapas territories). These groups show that many localized possibilities exist for diverse and just futures. They are often autonomous groups, meaning they hold the ability to govern themselves or act independently.

Autonomy is a framework of freedom from normative constructs, limitations, or rules. Autonomous groups aim toward self-governance and collective regulation rather than external regulation from governmental bodies or even social mores. This self- or communal- governance is often described as a horizontal social arrangement. As explained by Marina Sitrin (2012), 'horizontalism' comes from the Spanish *horizontalidad* first used during the popular uprising in

Argentina in 2001. During this period, the resistance movement created neighborhood assemblies and rejected representative democracy, seeing charismatic leaders as part of the cause of crisis in the first place. Horizontalidad, or horizontalism, is social relationality that seeks to maintain equitable power across all actors. It seeks self-management, autonomy, and direct democracy. "Communal worlds are relational worlds, defined as those worlds in which nothing pre-exists the relations that constitute it (reality is relational through and through), as opposed to the dualist ontologies that predominate in modern worlds, where entities are seen as existing on their own (the 'individual', 'nature', 'the world'), prior to their inter-relations" (Escobar 2015, 460). The pluriverse project is informed by autonomous and horizontal groups. These groups have characteristics of cooperative (or communal) and insurrectionist anarchism, antiracism, and feminist scholars and movements. They are living examples of direct resistance to capitalist extraction, expansion, pollution, and displacement (Schubert 2021), and they hold lessons for alternative pathways to healthier futures.

The last decade has allowed for a more nuanced academic exploration of initiatives in various countries and cultures with a focus on autonomy. As presented elsewhere (Schubert 2021), this focus provides a "matrix of alternatives" that challenges the capitalist hegemony (Demaria and Latouche 2019, 149) with a heterogeneity that "hypothesizes possible futures and involves multiple strategies at different scales: oppositional activism, building alternatives, institutional politics, research, dissemination, education and art (Demaria *et al.* 2013). 'Sharing', 'simplicity', conviviality', 'care' and the 'commons' are terms used to describe what these alternative futures might look like" (Demaria, Kallis, and Bakker 2020, 432). These movements are global phenomenon with *localized character*. These various movements represent "a new wave of prefigurative social movements. . .movements that 'embody their ultimate goals and their vision of a future society through their ongoing social practices, social relations, decision-making philosophy and culture.' And it can be seen in the emergence of what have been called 'transformative economies' [. . .] new economic models and practices around commons, agroecology and cooperativism aiming at transforming the existing economic system" (Burkart et al. 2020, 9). Post-development and degrowth scholars examine regional activities ranging from gift exchange, local currencies, time banks, swaps, Rights of Nature movements, and Buen Vivir – activities that have always existed but are (re)surging or receiving further interest in the face of global governmental impotence and the increasing undeniability of massive planetary

environmental impact. By seeking to move beyond the capitalocentric tendencies of scholarship, diverse economies have inspired examination of relationality, vulnerability, and care within economic practices such as time banking, commoning, fisheries, small community agriculture, solidarity economies across geographical ranges, worker co-operatives, rural hunting and gathering, among other practices (Roelvink et al. 2015). Examples of transformative economies are found within resistance movements and local everyday spaces alike, throughout the world.

Critiquing Social Research of the Pluriverse

But Tuomo Alhojärvi (2020) explores capitolocentrism as a discursive move. It is a helpful term that signifies more than capitalism, it also operates to negate the dominant hegemony that perpetuates the system, so that inquiry can move toward affirmation of alternatives. It allows an exploration of "how our always already heterogeneous and ambiguous coexistence (the diverse economy) is organized in such restrictive, alienating, and destructive ways that recognizing more-than-capitalist alterity becomes a celebrated achievement rather than the starting point of our collective negotiation" (291). However, it falls into a new bind by creating a binary of negation-affirmation. 'Capitalocentrism' becomes a "shorthand for characterizing unhelpful kinds of economic discourse" (295) and creates a false sense that the capitalist hegemony is a settled critique (which restricts further exploration). "Instead of a continuous, ambiguous, and polymorphic problematic that haunts us, we are left with a seemingly well-behaving, singular problem" (*Ibid.*) which is outside or behind us. But capitalocentrism remains as a troubling, looming presence *within us* that we have inherited from 260 years (or more) of ever more problematic past generations. It is an active *process* to challenge this narrative within and around us because it is an integral part of the ontological constructs that we seek to resist. This remains a problem in a practical sense for autonomous social movements, but also is the case in this academic work (Chapter 6).

The diverse economies scholarship, like other social research paradigms, has further critics stating that it neglects to acknowledge that both capitalism and the alternative economies that develop around it are based on racial (and gendered, abled) oppressions (Bledsoe et al. 2019).

> The continuation of capitalocentric violence is seen in the continuing marginalization, silencing, exploitation, and oppression of bodies devalued in capitalocentering hierarchies: bodies contributing to, getting sustenance from, and reproducing interdependencies through and as more-than-capitalist relations of the diverse economy.

> This also means that the epistemic privileging of capitalist economies should be theorized alongside and intersecting with the all-too-real violence of gendered, racialized, ethnicized, speciesist, ableist, and classist hierarchies, among others (Alhojärvi 2020, 297).

Diverse economies scholarship must take care to avoid erasure of the difficult corporeal and emotional impacts of all kinds of socio-economic realities. As argued elsewhere (Schubert 2021), degrowth scholarship is similarly situated within modernist institutions and has been criticized for failing to engage "with ontological, epistemological, and cultural difference as well as gender, class, ethnic, racial, religious, and colonial difference" (Nirmal and Rocheleau 2019, 466). Scholars should *revalue and restore* other knowledge(s) and practices by drawing attention to them, so that *possibility* can emerge. This entails "re-centering resistance within the discourse, while recognizing that most autonomists are committed to other worlds, not to armed violence and violent resistance. A decolonized degrowth must be what the growth paradigm is not, and imagine what does not yet exist: our separate, networked, and collective socio-ecological futures of sufficiency and celebration in the multiple worlds of the pluriverse" (*Ibid.*, 482). The aim is to highlight alternatives rather than marginalize or condemn resistance movements and people.

Others (Krueger et al. 2018) have proposed that the diverse economies literature provides opportunity for degrowth scholars to return to theorizing how alternative economies operate *within* governance structures, affording opportunities to change institutional activities. They seek to examine what they feel degrowth scholarship misses - how community economies operate within a larger system of capitalistic dynamics and how degrowth ideas become transformed by local constructs and politics. This critique illuminates a divide in degrowth scholarship between ecosocialist reformism, or 'green growth' (the state can be 'decoupled' from capitalist growth paradigm for social and ecological equity) and decolonial autonomism (grassroots, localized, direct-action activities without dependency on state or capitalism).

Acknowledging these critiques, the autonomous pluriverse of social movements and communal alternatives to capitalist hegemony must be examined with a lens that can read for difference and identify the socio-historical context in which each resistance practice arises. It should examine power and oppression inherent in the practices before it. This research paradigm must reflect upon how studying these practices is itself a capitalocentric process. The practices and the alterity of the agents involved should be analyzed with care to present the localized embedded,

embodied, and place-based knowledge-practices that are being "generated, modified, and mobilized" (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008) within the movement spaces. In alliance with the movements themselves, this research paradigm could support them by aiding in redefining the realms of the possible (Roelvink 2020). It should recenter Black, Indigenous, and gender as sites where economic relations are most steeped in transformative liberation (Bledsoe et al. 2019) rather than as a fringe or secondary inclusion. By recentering these groups, a more sustainable and actually equitable consumption practice can become clearer. *If the most oppressed are kept well, then the least oppressed will also be well.* Thus, following the diversity that post-development, degrowth, and diverse economies posits, this research agenda should advance that there are resistance practices that are more closely aligned with transitional (or reformist) change even among those that claim transformative or liberatory posture, sometimes within the same practice. But most critically, this research agenda should seek to understand the political foundations at the root of these socio-economic movements.

Even with these nuances, these social movements are local, place-based, situated, and most often decentralized endeavors and to seek scalability might obfuscate their uniqueness (however, some of their elements may be transferable). While it is not always apparent nor claimed by the autonomous groups, they draw parallels to the anarchist ideologies. Anarchism is simply a politicized posture that critiques domination, and from this position, acts instead toward freedom. The anarchist praxis is overwhelmingly non-dogmatic and situational. It integrates critique with action while building an expanded sense of community to meet its desired ends. This is similar to diverse economies scholarship's use of capitalocentrism to usher in possibility of different ways of being (Alhojärvi 2020) or Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's (2014) framework of desire which is both a 'no' (i.e., a refusal to comply with a legacy of colonial oppression) and a 'yes' (i.e., an affirmation of expanded possible futures). Anarchism is both a 'no' (to domination and oppression) and a 'yes' (to autonomy and freedom). Between this critical negation and embodied affirmation is action, often of a transgressive, insurrectionary, and communal nature. Put simply:

> [A]narchism is the general critique of centralized, hierarchical, and thus oppressively coercive systems of power and authority. State power and capitalism are the culprits responsible for the horrors that surround us, being deemed by anarchists as monopolistic and coercive, and hence illegitimate. [. . .] In theory, anarchism is touted to oppose all kinds of oppression, be it racism, sexism, transantagonism, classism, colonialism, ageism, etc. [. . .] the overarching claim of anarchist ideology is that any kind of coercive,

> dominative oppression is to be quashed. To be established instead is a society based on direct democratic collaboration, mutual aid, diversity, and equity. [. . .] Far from meaning that everyone is left alone and unorganized, anarchism in the classical sense privileges democratic and communal relationality, obviating external rule and control (Bey, 12-13).

The critical nature(s) of diverse autonomous, anarchist, communal social movements is also inflected internally. Creating cultures of mutual care and resistance involves constant readjustment and recalibration to remain culturally affirming and intersectional rather than stagnant and complacent within its own internally created hierarchies. Herein is the tension of creating new existences within a surrounding hegemony of oppression. There is a difference between inclusion - creating a space and inviting diversity into it - and cultural affirmation, which aims to adjust and evolve when difference presents itself. To understand this latter point, the metaphor of 'being invited to the table' may be used. Inclusion might invite diverse people to a preexisting table, with its norms and rules already determined before the guests arrive. But cultural affirmation constitutes a different type of gathering, perhaps at a different table, one that is built on the constructs of a counter-narrative of the people. Or perhaps cultural affirmation removes the table altogether. The tensions of stagnation and inclusion is explored within the academic studies of emancipatory, intersectional, and prefigurative politics.

Movements and groups that lean on a collective self-reliance, and transformative counter-narratives can be described as emancipatory endeavors. They move away from the state's paternalism or autocratic authoritarianism (Blühdorn et al. 2022) toward intersectional social arrangements oriented to the wellbeing of the human and more-than-human life. Emancipatory, intersectional, and prefigurative politics require an active resistance to the current metanarrative. Active resistance is often perceived as a transgression (acts that go against laws or rules, which are often perceived as an offense), but it is at the foundation of transformation. Transgression in action entails risk but can also dispose of some cultural restraints toward enacting different ways of being. These processes are laden with contradictions and paradoxes which then inform the transgressive actions. This might be considered as a *dialectic of emancipation* (Blühdorn et al. 2022). By challenging certain boundaries of society, the emancipatory movement may create new ones to potentially exclude other groups from their ways of enacting freedom. But this is not a binary opposition. It is a conversational, liminal tension. Once the movement understands that it has created new exclusions, it must transgress its own limitations and evolve if it is to continue its emancipatory trajectories. This is an uneasy and iterative, not a linear, process.

Like the complications and ambivalences within emancipatory politics, prefigurative politics are also engaged in the difficult labor of the liminal zone of the ontological shift. A prefigurative project simply represents the change in the world that its organizers desire, in the way it is organized, how it is performed, and why it exists. "Prefiguration is the notion that our organizing reflects the society we wish to live in – that the methods we practice, institutions we create, and relationships we facilitate within our movements and communities align with our ideals" (Walia 2013, Introduction). It "makes space or what we have not yet been able to imagine, but at the same time [amplifies] that the practice is grounded, everyday, and already unfolding – now" (Davis et al. 2022, 15). Prefiguration exists in that in-between of what is and what could be.

It is difficult to romanticize these efforts to create the new while living within the old. Per Lucien Demaris and Cedar Lansdman (2021), prefigurative movements are often deeply challenged in sustaining their own radical commitments. They must strategize to uproot dominant cultural values and behaviors and replace them with a "relational culture," one that protects trusted relationships. They posit that humans have been "evolved for co-regulation which, when we have access to quality, dependable relationships, brings us into wellbeing, creativity, and ultimately a capacity to hold complexity and collaborate well" (2). But as they explain, "this is not easy to come by when the ontological assumptions of those attempting to practice it go unexamined" because "modern societies are socialized by capitalist, patriarchal and White supremacy culture, relational process ontology (Stout & Love, 2019) is not easily understood, embraced or enacted without significant support" (*Ibid.*). In these prefigurative sites, conflict is inevitable. A tenacity for embracing conflict with a desire to work through and with it rather than sublimate or deny it is key. "Rather than being limitations, prescriptive horizons, or opportunities for empty quick fixes that resolve little, these contradictions are generative and necessary sites for collective analysis and labor" (Davis et al. 2022, 5). To enact a prefigurative movement, collectivism is required with group analyses, deconstruction, and labor to create a different culture.

This relational culture and tensions in unlearning hegemonic ontology is challenging, but more so when the movement or group considers the goal of intersectionality, a form of cultural affirmation which is quite different from inclusion. Intersectionality is defined by Oxford English Dictionary as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent

systems of discrimination or disadvantage" (2015). The term was first coined by black feminist attorney and critical theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, pointing to the overlapping oppressions that a person who is black and a woman might face, and arguing for a politics that addresses overlapping oppressions rather than detaching them. An intersectional aspiration within the emancipatory, prefigurative process understands that oppressions overlap and sees them as emanating from the same source of domination (i.e., "all our grievances are connected" – Schragis 2011, Myerson 2011). Intersectionality draws forth the tensions of (un)learning hegemony and creating a stronger relational culture toward enacting visions for the future. It is integral to the communal-autonomist projects that are explicitly anti-authoritarian.[9]

As the conjuncture of intersectional, emancipatory, and prefigurative politics elucidates, movements and social arrangements examined in post-development, degrowth, and diverse economies literatures are not merely naive utopic (in the pejorative sense) visions. They are a communal, emotional labor that is never finished. "People do the labor and therefore it, like all of us, is always flawed. And a turn to 'the community' is fraught, sometimes mythic: community is at once a radical vision, a fugitive possibility, and a struggle" (Davis et al. 2022, 14). In theory, the community is always a sight of negotiation and revision in autonomous, horizontal, social-political movements. It is open to change. *And the process of a reflexively shifting community that deconstructs capitalist hegemony can teach an empathy for the unknown or unseen Other (Tschakert 2020) which can extend to the more-than-human world.* By learning to be affected across differences and hierarchies that were imposed by dominant hegemony, humans can uncover an interdependency across vulnerabilities even with those beings that do not share our geography or present moment. Accomplishing a horizontal socio-economic practice that extends beyond the human world is to apply an emancipatory politics aligned with a relational multispecies justice (Tschakert 2020) framework. Studying and talking about the collection of prefigurative collectivist-autonomist movements in the post-development, degrowth, and diverse economies frameworks provides lessons in how to begin this transformative process. RRFM is one example of a site for this kind of research.

[9] However, even movements who are edging toward a "green" authoritarianism can employ an intersectionality of sorts – this might entail some inclusion across identity, such as race, gender, or religion. However, these are antithetical to the anarchist movements that seek liberation from all forms of oppression. (See Ross and Bevensee 2020; Blühdorn et al. 2022; Schubert 2021)

Previous RRFM Research

Yet, researchers in the fields of business, marketing, and consumer culture have glanced at RRFM as a form of collaborative consumption or 'sharing economy' (McArthur 2015; Albinsson et al. 2019) or as nonmonetary, nonreciprocal 'alternative giving' (Liu et al 2019). Anthropological and social theory fields have mentioned RRFM as a social movement and site of diverse knowledge-practices (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008), or an example of prefigurative feminist organizing (Izlar 2019). However, the sole published research of the RRFM to date approaches it as a *novel topic* in sustainable consumption studies. An article from Pia A. Albinsson and B. Yasanthi Perera (2012) addresses a knowledge gap in consumption studies regarding the sharing phenomenon. It contributes to collaborative consumption research by studying a context that involved no monetary exchange: the RRFM.

Using community theory, they conclude that RRFM events "foster sustainability practices and confer community benefits on different fronts from reduced environmental impact to consumers' enhanced sense of psychological well-being" (*Ibid.,* 304). Albinsson and Perera observed participants engaged for a variety of reasons, amounting to "a consumer-driven desire to enact social change while fostering personal and community well-being through participation in alternative marketplaces" (307). Collaboration, community building, and expressions of genuine care were recognized within the RRFM space. They noted "On another more subtle level, educating newcomers about the logistics and expectations of the swap meant that the organizers were implicitly 'teaching' these individuals about generosity, responsibility to one another, and thankfulness in some respect" (310). Furthermore, Albinsson and Perera realized that the RRFM challenged "entrenched notions of exchange and reciprocity" (303) as direct utilitarian value was absent (311). "The nexus of value has expanded to include not only the goods and services but also the interactions between the individuals who participate in the giving and receiving" (308). The researchers noted "some participants struggled to accept free goods, whereas others were comfortable with doing so. The reluctance could be attributed to societal messages on what it means to take more than to give, based for instance, on cultural norms (Albinsson and Perera, 2009) or social class, or perhaps consumers find it difficult to accept free items because the only goods acquisition systems they know of is the traditional market system where one pays for goods and services acquired" (311). *This observation alludes to the integrated (un)learning of hegemonic social behaviors found with the RRFM as a resistance demonstration.* Their study

offered multiple openings for further research pertaining mostly to consumer behaviors and mindsets. These topics include exploring the *freeganism* phenomenon; retailer responsibility to society when destroying unsold merchandise; and the need for stable infrastructure to grow the RRFM practice. They noted future study might examine the consumer values of RRFM attendees (prosocial vs. individualistic) and potential conflict arising when goods are taken for self-oriented purposes, such as resale. The addition of community theory was pivotal and led to findings relevant to community building, sharing, and collaboration. The acknowledgement that the RRFM inherently challenges the market-based norms of value, exchange, and reciprocity – *which is recognition of the politicized nature of the event*.

Unfortunately, the framework of consumer behavior studies limits the ability to analyze the embedded, embodied, and place-based knowledge-practices that are being "generated, modified, and mobilized" (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008) at the RRFM. While the turn toward studying transformative economies is pivotal, there remains tension in whether research should focus on analyzing consumer behavior, mainstream policy, and scalability (Seyfang 2009). Critics of mainstream consumer research assert that rendering alternative community economics palatable to the mainstream does nothing to uncover the reasons that alternatives are desirable (Sachs 2019; Kothari et al. 2019; Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020). In fact, it works to undermine the viability of alternative community economic theory and practice. Movement knowledge-practices "offer a counterpoint to conventional academic and scientific modes of knowledge productions" and should be accepted in their own right (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008, 43). But "a great deal of even the most critical academic work on social movements has theoretical assumptions and methodological inclinations that prevent scholars from seeing or making sense of various knowledge-practices and their implications. [. . .] the inability to recognize knowledge-practices as some of the central work that movements do, has made it difficult for social movement theorists to grasp the actual political effects of many movements" (*Ibid.*, 20). There are details of the RRFM that this study may have overlooked by the nature of their research paradigm.

As in the diverse economies and degrowth scholarship critiques mentioned above, the consumption framework can also run the risk of failing to critically engage "with ontological, epistemological, and cultural difference as well as gender, class, ethnic, racial, religious, and colonial difference" (Nirmal and Rocheleau 2019, 466). Sustainable consumption scholarship has

been criticized specifically for avoiding the question of oppression and liberation. Manisha Anantharaman (2018) argues that the hierarchical relationships within a given sustainable consumption practice (and surrounding it) can recenter white/western-centric narratives of a celebrated 'sustainability' at the expense, exploitation, and exclusion of vulnerable populations (and, I would add: the more-than-human world). But "questioning our patterns of consumption is fundamentally equivalent to questioning the dominant economic paradigms of our time" and this should include questioning social and political systems they are embedded in (558). This argument states that issues of oppression (i.e., racism, classism, patriarchy, etc.) should be addressed as a means of identifying socially responsible consumption. Toward (re)politicizing consumption studies, Anantharaman argues for an examination of power, politics, and conflict. This critique specifically calls for an examination of "relational and structural power within sustainable consumption efforts to see how these efforts challenge or reinforce existing patterns of oppression and marginalization" (553). Anantharaman refers to diverse economies scholarship as a potential framework for achieving this critical social analysis, although a similar critique has been offered of diverse economies (See: Beldsoe 2019). An examination of dynamics of hierarchy, power, oppression, and conflict is offered throughout this thesis (Chapters 4, 5, 6).

A focus on consumer behavior depoliticizes and domesticates the RRFM activities and subsumes them into the neoliberal capitalist construct (Gelderloos 2013; Swyngedouw 2010; Spade 2020; Dunlap and Arce 2022). For example, Albinsson and Perera labeled the RRFM event as a "sharing" practice, which can be contentious or understate its nuance. As a participant in the RRFM, I offer an observation that the RRFM constitutes a nonobligatory, nonreciprocal activity. Things can be taken and never returned. It is not quite the same as a sharing economy, where goods or services are generally purchased and used collectively (which could be better understood as a 'shared infrastructure' as per Morgan and Kuch 2015). Nor is RRFM particularly the same as common or collective ownership. But neither should free culture be conflated with *gift culture* or *gift economy* – where some level of reciprocity might be expected. Even free market-based value systems may persist in gift culture. Yet, the nuance is that the plurality of RRFM prefigurative practices cannot exclude these gifting and sharing activities either. Furthermore, Albinsson and Perera acknowledged the anarchist roots of the RRFM - but in fieldwork, seeing few participants who identified as either anarchist or radical, this point was lost. It precluded any inference that intersectional inclusion and community building are fundamental

characteristics of anarchist economics. This research foreclosed examination of anarchist critiques of property enclosures or the notion of scarcity. It sidestepped discussion of mutual aid practices as a tried, tested, and viable alternative to state intervention or free market-based economy. There remained little possibility to examine notions of vulnerability or care across the more-than-human world. By attempting to place the RRFM within a paradigm that seeks scalability, policy reform, or to change consumer behavior, scholarship risks misplacing the socio-political implications and relational possibilities of the RRFM.

Thus, a view of RRFM as primarily a nonmonetary collaborative consumption site neglects the plurality and intersections of knowledges generated at the movement as well as the significance of its political and social effects. While Albinsson and Perera's research is a useful resource, this thesis explores the effects of the RRFM as a demonstration of resistance and possibility. As the assumed rules of economic relationships are displaced/disrupted, individual and interpersonal interactions move toward emancipatory trajectories.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a critical examination of the evolution of neoliberal capitalism and the notion of scarcity, its hegemonic constructs, and oppressive effects. The post-development, decolonial degrowth, and diverse economies scholarships have drawn attention to a pluriverse of transformative ways of being. A resurgence of these possibilities is found in social movements steeped within emancipatory, intersectional, and prefigurative politics. Throughout these settings, ontological and heterogeneous difference is embraced, generated, and enacted – although it may feel uneasy and transgressive. Transformative (rather than transitional or reformist) system change is desirable, and these social movements hold lessons in cultural change. Essentially only one study of the RRFM movement exists, the collective consumption study of Albinsson and Perera (2012). While some of their findings are useful, limiting the scope of the analysis to consumer behavior foreclosed meaningful analysis of the RRFM phenomenon as a politicized demonstration of anarchist economics. The next chapter takes a deeper look at the RRFM's historical lineage(s) and provides a research context that appears missing in both academia and popular culture. My own affiliation with the Harrisburg RRFM both as a participant and as a researcher is introduced.

Chapter 2. Lineages of Free Culture

Free culture is a term that describes an economy where material goods or services are provided without monetary or reciprocal exchange. Chapter 1 explained how free culture should not be conflated with sharing economy, or gift culture, but neither of these are precluded in free culture. However, there are differences in free culture practices that deserve recognition. When people hear of the Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM), they usually think of online collaborative consumption practices – as with online sharing groups. While providing items for free on online platforms may be a type of free culture phenomenon, the RRFM is an in-person event that entails live interactions between people and building relationships between them. In its most basic form, *really* free culture requires nothing of its participants, and thus disrupts normal ideas of what it is to fulfill material needs and wants. It enables horizontal relationships through the act of mutual aid – whereby community needs are met by neighbors rather than through state intervention or the free market economy. Thus, a *really* free culture induces acts of freedom. It is a demonstration of 'free' in the double sense of the word, materially and personally.

RRFM challenges the notion of value relative to scarcity, property enclosures, and exchange-based reciprocity. It enhances the practitioners' psychological wellbeing through increased collaboration, mutual responsibility, community building, and expressions of genuine care and gratitude (Albinsson and Perera 2012). RRFM groups generate their own unique knowledge-practices (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008). Each RRFM is an example of embodied, prefigurative feminist organizing (Izlar 2019; Shannon et al. 2012). These characteristics of RRFM adapt to its context and collaborators, becoming tailored to the socio-political and economic context, cultural norms, and ideological environments where RRFM appears. The decentralization of RRFMs results in origin stories and on-the-ground practices as varied as the places where they occur, in multiple continents. This wide-ranging variability negates the suitability of constructing a universal vision of what the RRFM should be. A perfect version of the RRFM cannot exist.

The RRFM has been understudied in academia and underrepresented in popular culture (at the time of this writing, even Wikipedia is deficient in RRFM history). This Chapter provides some theoretical framework and attempts a history of the global RRFM movement. There are certainly broader, deeper, and more heterogeneous histories of the *free culture* movement, which might include stories of creating or claiming common space with nonreciprocal, nonmonetary, non-

barter exchange of goods and services. This chapter admittedly has limited scope and merely begins to document the ideological origins of free culture. The RRFM as practiced in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, located in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States, is the focus of this thesis. Based on observations from nine years of practice, I posit that RRFM is a prefigurative site with potential lessons toward the abolitionist transformative justice praxis (community practices to address social conditions and interpersonal harms before they become greater harms).

This chapter begins with a review of anarchist economics, mutual aid, and the intersectional, prefigurative, and emancipatory politics within the RRFM, followed by a critical perspective on the United States (U.S.) context, providing an overview of the socio-political environment in which RRFMs evolved. Then, "*RRFM Historical Lineages,"* reviews the broad history of the RRFM or 'free' movement. Then, the specific history of the Harrisburg RRFM from its start in 2012 through 2021, along with my personal observations on the resulting possibilities for transformative justice praxis is discussed. The chapter ends with an empirical conclusion that this particular case-study requires a tailored methodological approach.

RRFM in the Pluriverse

The Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) movement is an example of a transformative economy steeped in autonomy and liberatory relationality. It is a pluriverse of possibility for reducing waste, changing normative consumption patterns, and expanding relationships among humans, more-than-human, and the material world. It draws attention to a critique of the capitalist hegemony and scarcity constructs (Chapter 1) by being free and thriving from mutual aid. As such, it is also an explicit example of anarchist economics, particularly that of communist anarchism, which rejects a market-based valuation and renumeration principles (Shannon et al. 2012).[10] As with many of the examples in the post-development pluriverse, anarchist economics are treated with a leveled skepticism, likewise for diverse economic practices: "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

[10] There exist non-capitalist ideations of a market-based economic system, as in concepts of socialist economics. Some anarchist economic proposals including market-valuations are Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's ([1840] 1994) mutualism, where banks are owned by workers, or its potential evolution in Mikhail Bakunin's ([1926), n.d.) collectivism, wherein there exists a communal market (Shannon et al. 2012).

response to new information, it affirms an ultimately essentialist, usually structural, vision of what is and reinforces what is perceived as dominant" (Gibson-Graham, 2008, 618). Transformative economic practices are often ignored, which can be attributed to the pervasiveness of *capitalocentrism*. It amounts to a discursive erasure. Put differently:

> [E]conomists often object to anarchist alternatives to capitalism as utopian (in the pejorative sense of the term) or not being pragmatic. They argue instead that alternatives to capitalism would never 'work' [. . .] First, this ignores the vast majority of human social organization, which presumably 'worked' (that is, we are still here and people sometimes struggled in the past, but other times we have surely thrived without capitalism). This also ignores human experiences and experiments outside of capitalist relations that exist within capitalist society or in revolutionary situations. But more egregiously, it assumes that capitalism, even by its own ideological standards, is a system that 'works.' Given massive poverty, privation, and hunger; the routine destruction of landbases and the despoiling of the natural environment; massive worldwide wars; periodic crises [. . .]— indeed, given that a tiny elite owns massive amounts of resources (multiple homes, dozens of luxury cars, servants and coteries, and the like) while most of us struggle to survive—can we really say this is a system that 'works'? (Shannon et al. 2012, 23).

Anarchist economic practices maintain certain characteristics – a widespread rejection of state control; decentralized planning; localized decision-making; individual autonomy; egalitarian rights; and synergy between economic means and socially useful ends (Kinna 2012). Like the pluriverse examples, anarchist economics are uniquely prefigurative and embodied efforts. The organization of movement communities should reflect the world they wish to create, based on the affected experiences of people within and around them (*Ibid.,* 32-33). Anarchist economics are rarely prescriptive, but rather fluid and adaptable to the situation at hand.

RRFM is also an act of mutual aid, an example of anarchist communal economics. Mutual aid defies reliance on governmental or institutional structures to meet group or personal needs, often because of these structures' inadequacies (Spade 2020; Springer 2020). Mutual aid is best understood as cooperation as Peter Kropotkin ([1902] 2011) posited (Springer 2020): The theory of survival-by-cooperation, evident across species, troubles the prevailing evolutionary notion of competition, or 'survival of the fittest.' Cooperation is visible in the daily reciprocal practices of people everywhere – friendships, neighborly mutuality, giving directions to a stranger. "Life itself is an intricate and beautiful complex web of mutual aid relations" (113). Yet, capitalocentrism is a tenacious problem that overwhelms our efforts to move beyond it (Alhojärvi

2020). However, the impulse toward cooperation innate across species is similarly determined, and systems of cooperation are older than capitalism. "This rooted knowledge has persisted under threat from dominant hegemonic powers as the state and capitalism worked in concert to destroy the cooperative impulse (enacted as mutual aid) by imposition of private property; replacing community bonds with a national allegiance (rooted in obedience and Othering rather than compassion and care); and transforming reciprocal exchange into transaction of assumed value relative to scarcity (Springer 2020)" (Schubert 2021). When rooted capitalist hegemony is disrupted, like a weed, the deeper-rooted seeds of cooperation can experience new growth.

Mutual aid practices can uncover paths of recovery that promote collective healing by removing restrictions of capitalist expectations of exchange and competition to allow deeper connections. Mutual aid practices fall within the description of the prison abolitionist transformative justice practice. Transformative justice "is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm, and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence" (Mingus n.d., para 3). This framework endeavors "to create experimental and collective practices of safety, accountability, and healing [. . .] these tools and practices (with accompanying analysis) provide and proliferate responses without engaging in the carceral or punitive state" (Davis et al. 2022, 5). These latter methods cause or perpetuate the very harms they claim to address. But transformative justice is a community-led, horizontal form of proactively disrupting interpersonal violence(s) and creating accountability. This practice aims to "transform the conditions which help to create acts of violence or make them possible. Often this includes transforming harmful oppressive dynamics, our relationships to each other, and our communities at large" (*Ibid.*). Transformative justice practices teach empathy across difference and vulnerability.

RRFM offers the possibility of transformation in social relationships. It is a convergence of many political castes, intentions, and identities - many participants do not engage because of explicit political beliefs as much as they attend to fulfill material needs and wants, or to socialize. This intersectionality creates tension, but also allows a robust plurality of thought and diversity of community. The participants (re)develop alternative approaches and reactions to interpersonal conflicts. RRFM draws strength from decentralization, volunteerism, and intersectionality. Thus, it is an emancipatory endeavor. This speaks to a long-standing abolitionist praxis in the U.S.

focused on the centrality of women, relearning histories, rethinking the politics of the possible, solidarity across racial lines, relations of repair, *being engaged in* liberation struggles, and creating freedom by placemaking (Heynan and Ybarra 2021). The RRFM movement aligns with Paul Robbins's (2020) framing of political ecology, which rejects the notion of earth limits, in the neo-Malthusian sense, and embraces the concept of convivial use (Illich 1973): "scarcity is a construct that is allied with elite power, not emancipatory process" (240). These mutual aid efforts are inherently politicized, being counterhegemonic and outside of authoritative measures.

US Context – A critical perspective

The history of free culture movements focuses on the United States (U.S.) due to the location of the case study. Thus, understanding the present socio-economic role of this country is required. The U.S. plays a role that affects operations in nations abroad, the more-than-human reality, and its domestic population in various ways.

The U.S. has played a significant part in the expansion of global capitalism, particularly during the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Peet and Hartwick 2015). It is one of the richest countries in the world and many nations are indebted to it. It is a massive champion of democratic nationalism, globalized free trade market arrangements, and industrialization. U.S. technologies and policy greatly influence other countries. But with the world's largest military budget, it also has a very active prescriptive 'outreach' program promoting its interests, ideological and cultural values, and political beliefs. The U.S. is characteristically neo-imperialist in that it leverages physical might "to control spaces, resources, and specified people indirectly through multinational corporations, international financial institutions, and other global governance mechanisms, and even foreign investment, policy imposition, and charity" (*Ibid.*, 187; See also: Loomba 2015). This conforms to the global development and capitalist hegemony.

The U.S. has a strong self-image as promoting freedom and democracy, but also suffers from a history of colonial and imperialist ambitions and resource exploitation (Peet and Hartwick 2015). This history includes extremes of population displacement, genocide, and enslavement. However, the character of modern U.S. expansionism is based on an inclusionary system – it incorporates minorities and local governments into the mainstream (Loomba 2015) through integration and repression. As discussed in Chapter 1, inclusion often subsumes differences, obfuscating criticism and resistance. The result reaffirms the unifying logic of capitalist expansion,

exploitation, and extraction while championing social heterogeneity (Loomba 2015). This accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2004) affects not only global countries but also ecosystems and the U.S.'s own people. The U.S. is historically the world's #1 polluter although it has displaced its direct emissions by outsourcing industry (Evans 2021). Current U.S. existential conditions can be summed up as individualistic, competitive, divisive, and increasingly economically disparate. The wealth gap widens, and 60-70% of Americans report living paycheck-to-paycheck (Dickler 2022; Friedman 2022). Even 42% of those Americans with annual incomes above $100,000 state to be in this predicament. These numbers reflect 2022 polls in a pandemic inflation period, but Prosperity Now reported in 2019 that 40% of Americans were a single paycheck away from poverty and even potential houselessness – this number leaped to 57% for Black American households (Picchi 2019; Bach 2019; Prosperity Now 2019). But most Americans did not perceive themselves to be so close to poverty, and roughly 60% were optimistic they would someday be wealthy (Charles Schwab 2019). These statistics illustrate that core of American reputational primacy is based on disturbing inequity and exploitation.

The U.S.'s troubled history greatly affects social, political, and individual life to this day. American poverty experiences are markedly different than in other poorer countries. Part of U.S. consumerism are cycles of heavily credit-based (over)consumption, wastefulness, cheapened things of limited quality and durability, and pollution (Patel and Moore 2017). This lifestyle has been somewhat proliferated as part of globalization. The combination of debt, oversaturation in poor quality, and modernized American poverty joined with precarious economic and personal stability conflicts with the perceived attractiveness of this lifestyle. It raises questions of whether people in free-market culture are truly free. "Whose interest does the economic decision serve? Who are these free individuals, and what does "freedom" mean in this ideological system? Clearly the neoliberals are not talking about workers in factories, nor women in families, nor peasants on plantations. They mean, by the free individual, the entrepreneur, the capitalist, the boss. And they mean, by freedom, the opportunity to make money, which buys everything (except happiness)" (Peet and Hartwick 2015, 114; See also: Appendix A "U.S. Condition - A Critical Perspective"). The U.S. is at the heart of the consumption/waste nexus, with a culture shaped around it. It is an ideal place to examine RRFM as both protest and cultural innovation.

RRFM Historical Lineages

Mutual aid activities are prevalent throughout human history (Springer, 2020). Some are closely related to the emergence of free culture marketplaces, like RRFM. An early example of free culture was the short-lived Digger movement in post-Civil War England, 1649-1650. Amid political disruption and rising food prices, these social and religious dissidents claimed land enclosures (privately owned by lords or the king) and planted crops to freely share with the poor (Coyote 1999; Royal Holloway University of London 2018). They considered private property ownership sinful and the earth a common treasury. Landlords were regarded as thieves (Royal Holloway University of London 2021). The Diggers advocated for the abolition of the nobility system and this, coupled with reclaiming land enclosures for the common good, disturbed social mores of the time. Their homes and crops were destroyed by a royal-sanctioned mob, and they were denounced by church, state, and even other radical dissidents (Royal Holloway University of London 2018). Yet their revolutionary ideas and example of primitive communism lived on: The Diggers have been called "the forerunners of anarchism, socialism, environmentalism, and more radical -isms - even into the 20th century" (Simkin 1997; See also: Wills 2020).

Indeed, the Digger philosophy inspired a 1960s direct-action theater group in San Francisco who took the Diggers as their namesake (Wills 2020). These counter-cultural artist-anarchists sought to "engage in life theater, a form of enacting the world they wanted to live in, rather than performing for audiences or waiting for social change to be granted by authorities" (Noble n.d.). They held protests that were closer to street art or prefigurative demonstrations, including burning money in a public park and a funeral procession declaring the death of the hippie (the latter event occurred when the media-obsessed 'summer of love' was declared in 1969). They acquired food (from farmers markets or by 'liberating' it from grocery stores) and offered it for free in public parks. They established a free store. Many of them are credited with starting the 'back to the land' ecological movement (*Ibid*.).

Peter Coyote, a participant in the San Francisco Diggers movement, explains in his memoirs (1999) how the Diggers Free Food and Free Store demonstrations might teach a culture of freedom (See Appendix B: "The Diggers"). Coyote links the Diggers Free Store to the black American civil rights movement. He references a 'Black Man's Free Store' in the adjacent neighborhood started by Roy Ballard (*Ibid.*, 95). Ballard "had worked as a Student Nonviolent

Coordinating Committee organizer in the Deep South, and had become an ardent follower of Malcolm X" (GLIDE [1967] 2022, para. 1; See also: Diggers.org 2020). He "saw the possibility of applying Digger concepts and philosophy to the poverty and depravity of the black ghetto" (GLIDE [1967] 2022, para. 1). In May 1967, Ballard opened what other sources call the Black People's Free Store. Other contemporaries (and neighbors) of the San Francisco Diggers were founders of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP) (Coyote 1999, 88), which started as a formal organization in October of 1966.

The BPP mobilized their communities to defend against racialized police and state oppression by arming themselves and creating their own self-reliant resource networks. Chapters of their party spread across the U.S. While much attention has been placed on the BPP's militancy and its masculine, charismatic leadership, membership of the Black Panther Party was 70% women, and the average age was 19 years old (Feliciano et al. 2022; West Oakland Mural Project 2022). The organization had a widespread, although underacknowledged, legacy of free neighborhood social services. These 'survival programs' served people in need but also advanced the BPP's political agenda. BPP formalized self-reliant social programs such as the Free Food Program, Free Ambulance Program, Free Dental Program, Free Film Series, Free Plumbing and Maintenance Program, GED Classes, Legal Clinics, The Free Sickle Cell Anemia Research Foundation, and The Free Clothing Program (among others – one source lists 65 programs: Dinh et al. 2013; Black Panther Party Alumni Legacy Network 2021). The most successful and visible of these survival programs was the Free Breakfast for School Children program. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover cited the breakfast program as "potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for" and launched a 'war' against the program (Blakemore 2018). Per Joel Izlar (2019), this impactful bit of organizing is often overlooked:

> [. . .] it was not the masculinist tactics such as public weapons display, patrolling of neighborhoods, protests, and media control by men of the BPP that were seen as a threat to national security by white, cishetpatriarchal FBI, but, rather, the functional social programs organized via feminist methods by women members. This is not to say that these masculinist tactics did not have their place or weren't effective. In many respects, they were effective within the public sphere. However, this reaction by J. Edgar Hoover (1969) is a testament to the psychological potency that feminist methods espouse by linking larger systems to localized problems, and being seen as a threat compared to armed insurgency, is a sobering fact to its power and legitimacy (*Ibid*., 5-6)

Izlar identifies the activities of the Young Lords in Chicago (and New York) as further instances of feminist organizing methods. Founded in 1960s as a gang of Puerto Ricans and Latinos, the Young Lords were reimagined in 1968 as a civil rights and social organizing tool emulating student movements in Puerto Rico and Black Panther projects (Wikipedia 2022). They created community clinics, occupied hospitals, and drew attention to sanitation issues within their neighborhoods. Izlar further asserts that current iterations of Food Not Bombs (FNB)[11] and RRFM are examples of feminist organizing systems (Izlar 2019; Spade, 2020). Despite a history of repression, the activities of the 17th Century Diggers, the 1960s Diggers, Black Panthers, and Young Lords created a lasting impact on modern protest movements.

Parallel to these socio-political movements is the 'squatters' phenomenon. Squatters reclaim a building or space for common use regardless of legal ownership status. Like the free culture movements noted above, squatters disavow the primacy or innate truth of private property. This tactic is not limited to one continent or one historical era. In contemporary practice, there are several squatting types: 1) Deprivation based squatting (opening squats for poor people to move into); 2) squatting as an alternative housing strategy (people squat to meet their own housing needs); 3) Entrepreneurial squatting (creating social centers free of bureaucracy); 4) Conservational squatting (a tactic to preserve a cityscape or landscape from "efficiency-driven planned transformation"); and 5) Political squatting (all squatting has political elements, but this type engages in anti-systemic politics) (Martinez et al. 2013, 12). Like RRFM, the squatting movement remains understudied and underrecognized, but it engages a fundamentally different access to resources than mainstream socio-economic norms allow.

Per Miguel Martinez, Gianni Piazza, and Hans Pruijt (2013) squatting is a politicized activity that has connections with broader social movements. Squats can offer spaces to engage with political meetings, practice non-hierarchical and participatory organizational models and hold countercultural events. Squatters are often engaged in other campaigns "fighting against precariousness, urban speculation, racism, neo-fascism, state repression, militarization, war, locally unwanted land use, privatization of education/university reforms. By drawing attention to the existence of vacant buildings, sometimes on prestigious locations in metropolitan areas,

[11] Food Not Bombs is a decentralized, autonomous movement where local groups share vegan or vegetarian food for free, usually in a public space and without a government-issued permit. They point out the systemic issues of food waste and the corruption of governments that invest in military might over food security.

squatters question neo-liberal ideology" (11-12). Like free culture, squatting combines its own social relationality with claiming common space and declaring a political statement. Political and entrepreneurial squatting tactics are inherent in RRFM and prefigurative protest groups, particularly the anti-globalization and the Occupy Wall Street movements of the 2000s (Mayer, 2013). Some squats provide resource sharing in common areas like 'Free Stores' or 'Free Shops.'

The contemporary RRFM combines squatting elements with experiential spectacle and community-sourced resources. They are often met with suppression (or repression) and their stories obfuscated in the historical metanarrative. Communal activities and spaces collide with 'counterinsurgency' tactics from the dominant powers. Counterinsurgency tactics can take the form of direct force or manipulation – using sabotage, threats or acts of physical violence, psychological influences, reputational damage, resource deprivation, or criminalization (Schubert 2021). Or counterinsurgency can be more subtle. Peter Gelderloos (2013) describes recuperation as the process whereby those who resist "current power structures are induced to rejuvenate those power structures or create more effective ones" (20). It is coercive in that it appears like a benign reformism, making 'change within the system' by negotiating with powerful actors, or creating 'better' capitalist enterprises. The appearance of systemic change can subdue resistance groups. Commonly, recuperation can involve the creation of nonprofit (i.e., Nongovernmental organization or NGO), charity, or mission-based entities that "mostly replicate, legitimize, and stabilize the system" (Spade 2020, 26). As argued elsewhere (Schubert 2021), some of these entities can be useful in a larger strategy toward emancipation (i.e., a nonprofit bail fund to undermine the prison industrial complex). But these efforts represent compromise within the hegemonic capitalist structure rather a break from it.

The coercion of free cultures is precisely what the San Francisco Diggers were reacting against with their 'death of the hippie' march. Squats have been used as cultural marketing tools to raise real estate prices (particularly in the case of squats that acting as venues for art or music). Sometimes contracts or formal arrangements are offered to squatters to stay in place at a low or livable price. Projects that mimic the squat or free culture are sometimes instituted by the government or other powerful parties for commercial purposes (For one such example, see this story from the New York City in Starecheski 2017). The BPP's Free Breakfast Program became a federal project. It might be more aptly termed co-optation, as these practices are absorbed into or

appropriated by the dominant structures. Claiming spaces or creating self-reliant systems without permission from authorities can require free communities to protect themselves. Recognition can lead to further oppression, appropriation, or temptation to assimilate. Many free cultures have compromised in their need to maintain their vision while remaining under-the-radar (i.e., some squatters take space without publicizing it; the San Francisco Diggers paid rent for their Free Store (See Appendix B: "The Diggers"). This may mean that the free culture self-polices to become less subversive or provocative. However, these communities of practice do not exist in a 'free' world, consequently conflict and compromise like these are inevitable.

The Really (Really) Free Market movement began in the early 2000s. The origin story is somewhat dubious. Perhaps this is an intentional effort to avoid recognition in a system of oppression. The Wikipedia version reads: "The first known Really, Really Free Market took place at a Food Not Bombs meal in Christchurch, New Zealand, as a protest to a meeting on free trade. The Really Really Free Markets started to spread around Asia. Jakarta Food Not Bombs organized a Really Really Free Market on Buy Nothing Day" (Wikipedia 2021; Roust n.d.). Most references acknowledge that in 2003, the RRFM started simultaneously in two US cities – Miami and Raleigh, in protest of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) meetings in downtown Miami (corroborated by Crimethinc, 2007). The Miami RRFM apparently arose from a Texas pagan group meeting in preparation for the FTAA protests.[12] The idea was enacted by anarchist groups. An alternative origin story of the U.S. RRFM movement is found in the often-repeated statement, "Participants from the SouthEast Anarchist Network (SeaNET) held demonstrations using the Really, Really Free Market to protest the G8 summit in 2004" (Wikipedia 2021; Roust n/d.; Buddhagem, 2009; Crimethinc, 2007).[13] In this version, leftists accused the anarchists of oppositional positioning – the anarchists were against more than they claimed to be for. The RRFM was an opportunity to display what the anarchists were actually supporting. (Wikipedia 2021; Buddhagem 2009; Albinsson and Perera 2012). To ensure the continuance of RRFM principles, multiple websites assert basic tenets of the RRFM concepts, best practices, and potential pitfalls (i.e., Crimethinc 2007; Ray, 2011; Luna 2010). The sites stress the localization of consumption, community building, claiming (and caring for) common space, and ensuring

[12] There was brutal police force against protestors at this event (American Civil Liberties Union 2005)
[13] G8 refers to Group of 8, a forum of the leaders of the richest countries. At the time of the 2004 summit held in the US state of Georgia, the G8 included Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States. Russia ceased participating after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the G8 became the G7.

inclusivity. Notably, while the contemporary RRFM was initiated by grassroots anarchist ethos, now people from a wide variety of ideological backgrounds participate. Most are not anarchist, nor would they consider themselves to be radicals (Albinsson and Perera 2012). This is an instrumental and intentional effect, as the RRFM would not be successful if attendees felt like outsiders, or if the RRFM was produced by an outside entity (Crimethinc 2007).

While the history of the RRFM over the last 20 years appears ambiguous, it cannot undermine the strength of the free culture concept or its international spread. RRFM reveals the possibilities of a society where exchange of goods has no monetary valuation (Izlar 2019). Even the RRFM is named as a substantive pun on the capitalist notion of so-called free market neoliberalism. "*This* Free Market turns *that* Free Market on its head" (Buddhagem 2009, emphasis added). Recently, several nonprofits (i.e., NGOs) have promoted a secularized charity model similar to the RRFM, or the Free Store concept.[14] These stores provide free goods, particularly food, directly to communities living in poverty. Often (but not always) there is no requirement to demonstrate need to obtain the free goods (i.e., Portland Free Store in the US State of Oregon or the Baltimore Free Store in the U.S. state of Maryland). Several celebrities have opened such stores. Recent 2021 U.S. examples: A rap artist (Gunna) started a free grocery store within his former elementary school in Georgia (Wyman 2021); Brad Paisley, country music artist, and his wife opened a similar store in Tennessee (Finan 2021). These legally recognized, institutionalized Free Stores both draw parallel to some versions of free culture described above but hold fundamental difference to the RRFM movement, as this thesis will explore (Chapter 4).

Case Study: History of the Harrisburg RRFM 2012-2021

The City of Harrisburg is a microcosm where RRFM practices exist within the establishment of U.S. governance and culture. The Harrisburg RRFM case-study is unique because holds reoccurring events during warmer months – for over nine years and counting. Few RRFMs anywhere appear to have held regular events for this length of time. Its longevity provides an opportunity to study a long-term, active RRFM practice rather than a singular event. This section provides the demographic context of this city and a local history of the Harrisburg RRFM as corroborated via oral histories from research participants.

[14] The free culture within religious communities is excluded in this thesis because its link to a legacy of charity, and oppressive cultural manipulation via missionaries, but it merits a different research study.

Harrisburg is the capital city of Pennsylvania, sitting along the Susquehanna River about 2 hours north of Washington D.C. The city has a high presence of state and federal offices attracting many work commuters and businesses that cater to them. Leaving aside the commuter demographics, per the US Census Bureau (2020), the population within city limits is about 49,000 residents: 51.5% are black or African American; 24.1% White, alone (not Hispanic or Latino); 21.8% Hispanic or Latino; 4.6% Asian; and 4.1% identify as being two or more races. The median household income 2015-2019 was $39,685 USD. 26.2% of the population lives in conditions defined as below the poverty line. Near 80% are high school graduates or higher, and 22.1% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. 21% of households speak languages other than English. Although some of these statistics constitute estimates and may include polling errors, they provide the directional context for the Harrisburg RRFM and related social movements.

In the 2020 Presidential elections, Dauphin County (the municipality where Harrisburg is situated) voted decidedly Democratic in a 'sea' of Republican counties. As the capital city, protests of all manner occur frequently, often attended by busloads of participants from other regions of the state. Beyond church, labor union, or nonprofit organizations, grassroots movements operate within the city that overlap with the RRFM purpose, among them Food not Bombs, Black Lives Matter groups, LGBTQQIP2SAA+, prison abolition collectives, the Dauphin County Bail Fund, Democratic Socialists, tenant rights groups, immigration rights groups, houseless communities, and others. The Occupy Harrisburg (OHBG) movement, which maintained a 24-hour protest tent on the Capitol steps from 2011 to 2012, has various levels of connection to these groups. Notably, participation in all these groups, including the RRFM, is not limited to the city residents, but includes residents of greater Dauphin County and beyond.

There is a direct lineage between the OHBG movement and the Harrisburg RRFM. The OHBG oral history was gathered during this research and is summarized in Appendix C, "OHBG to RRFM." The OHBG history was previously undocumented at this level of detail. In summary, the Harrisburg RRFM was organized by OHBG protesters in May 2012 as a protest and to promote mutual aid and community building in the pattern laid out by websites cited earlier (i.e., Luna 2012; Crimethinc 2007). As with similar free movements, the Harrisburg RRFM laid claim to a public park, without a city-issued permit, to create a common area where material goods, skills, and education were provided by and for the community. These events created a positive

OHBG community spirit, and it was decided to make the RRFM a monthly event. In these early days, it was quickly learned there were always leftover material items, which were not worth storing. Instead, they were conscientiously cycled to other local donation, recycling, or trash spaces.[15] Faced with the City Parks and Recreational Department, sometimes accompanied by local police, advising the protestors to obtain a permit, there was little interest in holding ground. By 2014, the RRFM found its home on a private site, instead. This site was obtained with permission of the City Plaza Board of Directors and is still in use for the RRFM to this date.

After this relocation, there were substantive changes to the RRFM. Skill shares were no longer formally organized, but musical events happened sporadically. It transitioned to mostly focused on physical goods, but the message of the protest was not lost. The RRFM continued to encourage people to rethink their relationships in a context where capitalist competition and scarcity did not exist. Furthermore, the number of attendees grew beyond OHBG participants. The years between 2014 through 2019 represented a period of relative stability and during this period the culture of the Harrisburg RRFM developed certain characteristics that continue today. The open-access structure of the plaza nurtures a sense of fluidity that complements the group's social media message that there are *no strings attached*. On site, the core group of organizers avoid regulating the event. There are no signs posted, no attempt to organize or screen material items, and no explicit rules or expectations. It is difficult to even tell who the core organizers are during the event. There is a sense of disorganization by design, but the uncounted number of regular long-time participants spontaneously self-organize.[16] The rare interpersonal conflicts are usually resolved and mediated among the community without interventions by the core group. This (dis)organization enables a sense of the Harrisburg RRFM as a free-for-all style flea market.

In 2020, in the wake of the global pandemic and the uprising after George Floyd's murder, the core RRFM practitioners began communicating more via group chats. The social media event descriptions were also updated. Participants newer to the RRFM practice began reintroducing certain elements – like an information table or inviting affinity groups to set up their own table or

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[15] Organizers endeavor to avoid corporate charity centers like Salvation Army. They make profits, leftovers are sold to poor countries, and rarely benefit local communities. At Salvation Army, there is a long history of alleged discrimination against the LGBTQ community (Del Valle 2019) and other corruption.

[16] This is distinct from depictions of other RRFMs. Some of these other events encourage individuals to lay a tarp or find a table to display their materials – like a vendor. While there are occasions where a person might try this at Harrisburg RRFM, it is rare. The (dis)organization of the Harrisburg RRFM does not encourage 'vending.'

services. The RRFM continues as this thesis is written. It is significant to note the demographic and ideological diversity exhibited at the Harrisburg RRFM events, (as did Albinsson and Perera 2012 in their study of an RRFM). This is seen as a sign of success for the RRFM organizers (Crimethinc 2007). There are regularly participants at the Harrisburg RRFM from across racial, ethnic, national, gender, and age spectrums. Attendees attend from multiple neighborhoods, some 45 minutes away, and appear to range from upper middle-class to impoverished or even houseless – all bringing items, taking items, or doing both. The RRFM creates an intersection for people from all socio-economic circumstances and identities.

People new to the RRFM express a common assumption that the RRFM or Free Stores are meant for vulnerable people in need, but it is actually meant for anybody at all. Yes, material needs are met, but people also participate for the social experience: serendipity, the energy of the space, connect with others, or to engage in a situation where social norms are relieved. While it is generally a good impulse to help others, it can also lead to a hierarchical relationality wherein a system or authoritative body is created to determine who is deserving of free things. This hierarchy is a common complaint of charities, which are differently intentioned than the horizontally organized mutual aid practice. While horizontalism within systems of care defies it, hierarchy conforms well to capitalist hegemony. The RRFM aims to disrupt this thinking. However, refusing hierarchy in favor of an egalitarian sameness called 'unity' can become dangerous, simply boring, or even counterproductive. As adrienne maree brown (2017) points out, we all have varying power, authority, or knowledge in different arenas or different junctures:

> I am not against hierarchy. I notice hierarchies in my life and attention all the time, inside my own preferences for whom I spend my waking hours with and how I like to spend my time. I also deeply value experience and natural affinity for things – I am oriented towards healing and not math, so I don't offer myself up for leadership around math, I offer leadership around healing, which comes more naturally to me. That give and take creates room for micro-hierarchies in a collaborative environment. One of my favorite questions today is: How do we turn out collective full-bodied intelligence towards collaboration, if that is the way we will survive? (7).

A horizontal, collaborative culture can teach respect of the power and authority that any individual holds at varying junctures. A feeling is expressed (even among the long-term participants) that they should not take something until the end of the event because someone else might need or want it more. But as RRFM teaches us, "that's not the point" (Coyote 1999, 88): If

you want to live in a post-capitalist world where needs and desires are met, you must create it *and then participate in it* (See Appendix B: "The Diggers" for full quote).

Like the Diggers movements, the BPP survival programs, the OWS, and anti-globalization movements, the RRFM finds itself in the crosshairs of protest demonstration and performance art. For the apolitical attendee, the lessons evoked by the RRFM free culture can be nuanced and be perceived and absorbed slowly, over some period of time. Most do not realize RRFM participation has changed their thinking about society until asked, as this research elucidates in the case of RRFM organizers (Chapters 4 and 5).

Conclusion

This Chapter provided a brief history of the free culture antecedents to the RRFM: the 17th c. Diggers, the 1960s San Francisco Diggers, BPP survival programs, squatters, and the anti-globalization and Occupy Wall Street movements of the 2000s. The Harrisburg RRFM history describes a protest movement that creates common spaces for education, mutual aid, horizontal decision-making, and social experimentation. It is an intentional (dis)organized free-for-all. A free culture environment can be fraught with conflict, but closer observation shows this is a generative space where conflict and the underlying traumas (the result of hegemonic, systemic oppressions) can be addressed. This research is intended to benefit the Harrisburg RRFM practice and create a record in scholarly fields of the RRFM movement. Hopefully, it will encourage the spread of RRFM practices into new locations. When provided a space free of constraints, people are adept at transformation toward practices of harm reduction and resilience. This is 'second-nature' and rooted knowledge, as Peter Kropotkin ([1902] 2011) proposed. The liminal space of the RRFM is temporary, but it elucidates this possibility, and provides lessons of the fruitful although uneasy contradictions within emancipatory processes.

I have observed the RRFM's potential for advancing anarchist economics and practices of transformative justice. The knowledges produced at Harrisburg RRFM illustrates the potential outcomes from consistent and established free culture practices. This unique phenomenon, and my experience and affinity with this research site have inspired me to create a unique methodology to meet the needs of this research scenario. This methodology is defined in the following Chapter on methodology and methods.

Chapter 3. How to Study the RRFM

For the researcher who is deeply connected to the research subject, questions of ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods, and ethics can become entangled. Ontology is the study of existence, or being, while epistemology is the study of knowledge, or knowing. Methodology is the theory or rationale of research; methods refer to the design or tools used to conduct research. Ethics are behavioral principles to minimize harm while conducting research. According to Nina Lykke (2010), this entanglement is what Donna Haraway (1988; 2008) and Karen Barad (2007) termed 'onto-epistem-ology' or 'ethico-onto-epistem-ology," (140; 159). These ethico-onto-epistem-ological understandings can be uniquely local to a single place and situation. It is a useful concept for this research project in which there is little separation between the researcher and the subject. The dilemma arises when the researcher attempts to create an artificial division between participation and research, or when considering how the subject has impacted the participant.[17] As a participant and organizer of the Harrisburg RRFM, I have been a part of this movement in my hometown, and I am therefore already integrated with this case-study, and it has changed me as much as I have shaped it. What are the ethical considerations when the researcher is not definitively separate from the subject? This entanglement is resolved by integrating the positions rather than enforcing a rigid binary approach. Integration allows the researcher to leverage years of experience and observation and creates a lens of research that allows the RRFM to tell a story.

For this reason, I have tailored a methodology which combines three frameworks: Practitioner Research, Trauma-Informed Research, and Diverse Economies Research. I refer to the methodology as "Practitioner Trauma-Informed Diverse Economies Research." (PTIDER). For a discussion of the queer and feminist antecedents which inspired the name, see Appendix D: "What's in a Name?". PTIDER accommodates the researcher's positionality (and intentionality) and invites co-production of knowledge with research participants with a mindfulness toward care in an era of crises and pandemics. This will further allow greater flexibility in methods and nimbleness during research *fieldwork*. The insights produced via the PTIDER lens should benefit my community of practice *on the ground*. Analysis of the knowledge-practices (Casas-Cortés et

[17] The dilemma of a participant-turned-researcher could be alternatively characterized as the tension between being an actor creating change 'on the ground' versus the ethnographer who does 'fieldwork'.

al. 2008) witnessed during fieldwork can help to usher particular futures into being (Roelvink 2020, 458). More directly, this study intends to troubleshoot barriers and limitations within my own community of practice and to challenge other perspectives within it, including my own.

This Chapter proceeds with examination of theories and criticisms of qualitative approaches to ethnographic research. Then, a definition of the PTIDER methodology is provided to show how each of these frameworks complements the others, and addresses critique of the component parts of the methodology. The methods, research tools, and logistics are then described to include the PTIDER research design, ethical resolutions, data collection and analysis, and mitigation efforts. This Chapter concludes that despite the limitations, the research questions were answered.

Methodology

A qualitative approach is needed considering the complexity of the subject and the perspectives of those involved – research and research participants. Qualitative methodologies are useful for subjectivism, interpretivism, constructivism, and thematic exploration (O'Leary 2017 Ch8). This research paradigm provides insight into a society that may not be possible in a positivist or generalizable research model (Beuving and De Vries 2015). One resolution to the dilemma of the impossibility of separating the researcher from the subject is the participant observation approach, a tactic of total immersion. "Participant Observation is a method in which researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (Dewalt and DeWalt 2011, 1). But Participant Observation fails in several regards. First, it is unlikely that observation of a cultural setting by an embedded researcher can occur without affecting the behaviors of the community. Secondly, the researcher has their own subjective biases and may misinterpret meanings, leading to distorted conclusions or representations (Holy 1984, 19). Essentially, the data collected through participant observation will always be faulty because of the researcher's impact and subjectivity. But in this thesis, the researcher is not an outsider entering into a community but is already enmeshed with the research subject. The observational technique is closer to that of an 'observing participant'. This is not a simple inversion of participant observation. It is rather a research framework wherein:

> the researcher does not participate in the lives of subjects in order to observe them, but rather observes while participating fully in their lives [. . .] it consciously eliminates the

> distinction between the observer and the observed phenomena and thus radically departs from the scientific attitude of the positivistic paradigm [. . .] active participation in the social life studied is virtually the *only* data gathering method. If this research attitude is vigorously adopted, the researcher should refrain from asking even simple questions if they are ones which a subject would not ordinarily ask. Asking questions prompted by the researcher's current theory means forcing the subjects to adopt an attitude which is not ordinarily part of the praxis (Bourdieu 1977) and thus shapes the social reality being studied (Holy 1984, 29).

While this is certainly closer to the research approach used here, it does not precisely enough encompass the aim of this research, which is to "shape the social reality being studied." I am *already* a participant in it and have *already* had influence in creating it and intend to use research to improve this community of practice.

Nina Lykke (2010) offers the 'post constructivist' approach to feminist methodologies, which acknowledges and accepts the diminishing difference between researcher/subject, knower/known. Unadulterated or positivist ethnographic data cannot be achieved. Rather, the researcher and subject (knower and known) are bound and embedded in the research site. Objective results are achieved on a situational and limited basis. A researcher discovers a "partial and localized objectivity, that is, an objectivity that is valid within the specified and local frame and context of the particular research design, but not outside of this" (141-142). Following Karen Barad's (2003) theories, Lykke concludes that the relationship between researcher subject and object should be defined and contextualized, but that the boundary between subject and object is not static, instead it is a momentary phenomenon for the research project. The researcher is reflexively and explicitly accountable for their interests (151) and ethical conduct in the project. This fluid, transitory boundary between researcher and researched best fits this thesis.

Each turn of the PTIDER approach will analyze different areas of the RRFM movement. Chapter 4 explores Practitioner lens, Chapter 5 uses the trauma-informed angle, and Chapter 6 frames the discussion through diverse economies analytical tools. Each of these explications can be called an analytical diffraction of the RRFM movement. Nina Lykke (2010) explains how both Donna Haraway (1997) and Karen Barad (2014) use diffraction as an alternative methodology to reflexivity (reflection). Diffraction is an optical metaphor, like reflection. Diffraction breaks a ray of light into parts, creating gradations of light and dark as light waves split.

> If we take the optical metaphors seriously, a reflexive methodology means using the mirror as a critical tool. Haraway notes that while this can be useful, it also has limitations

> if you seek alternatives and want to make a difference. For using the mirror as critical tool does not bring us beyond the static logic of the Same. We can look critically at the reflection in the mirror, but no new patterns emerge. A mirror image appears as a static entity; both the foreground and the background remain the same. In contrast to critical reflection, diffraction is a much more dynamic and complex process (*Ibid.* 155).

Diffraction is understood to continuously make new patterns emerge from the object being examined. It is "useful to analyze change or dynamism related to processes of sociocultural transformation, liberation, emancipation and so on" (*Ibid.*). By using a diffraction rather than simply a reflection approach, this case study of contemporary free culture will explore not just personal observations in the dual roles of researcher and practitioner but show the fluidity of shifting meanings among various perspectives and practices of the research participants.

This thesis evokes an "analytic autoethnography [. . .] in which the researcher is a full member in the research group or setting, visible as such a member in published texts, and committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena" (Anderson 2006, 375). It integrates data from others in the research group while employing an analytic reflexivity (*Ibid.*) and "transcends mere narration of personal history," (Chang et al. 2013).[18] It actualizes a feminist methodological philosophy (Lykke 2010) and embraces emergent strategies (maree brown, 2017) by adjusting methods as needs develop. It coalesces a research praxis, an onto-epistemological approach, and an analytical framework, just as the PTIDER is meant to do. As a part of the research subject, I aim to contribute theory and fresh understanding of free culture practices.

Practitioner Research Defined

I am not just an organizer or participant at the RRFM, I am a *practitioner* of free culture, which encompasses a social relationality and more than just 'free stuff'. Commonly employed in education research fields, Practitioner Research is generally conducted by a researcher within their own community of practice. This is a reflexive qualitative research methodology that offers an opportunity to investigate and innovate group activities to enrich the understanding of all

[18] I originally envisioned this research as a sort of "collective autoethnography" where typically two or more researchers study a phenomenon that they are members of themselves. The benefit of the collaborative approach is to avoid pitfalls of autoethnography (i.e., perpetuating the researchers' own presumptions and inability to demonstrate researcher accountability because the researcher is also the participant) by introducing multiple subjective perspectives (Chang et al. 2013). This "didactic and emancipatory method" (Wężniejewska et al. 2020) would enable collective knowledge generation and evolution within my own community of practice. However, the was that RRFM research participants were not participating with the intention of being themselves researchers. To expect this is an exploitation of their labor and knowledge. However, knowledge was co-constituted with the other participants - I invited their participation, disagreement, and correction at several junctures of the research and analysis period.

subjects involved and to enhance group actions moving forward (EdFutures 2013). Practitioner Research is often used by educators within a school setting to search out better ways of engaging students by relying on their own experiences and knowledges. Educators collaborate to improve practices via group meetings, interviews, workshops, and modeling. The researcher's community of practice is invited to work join in the investigative and improvement process. Practitioner Research distinguishes itself as collaborative, practitioner-initiated, democratic, and open to public scrutiny. It makes the practitioners' voices heard and their activities substantiated (EdFutures 2013). It is an empowering framework, which makes it a complement to RRFM.

Practitioner research can be likened to emancipatory research or participatory action research (PAR) (O'Leary, 2017). PAR also collaborates with the subject community to enhance knowledge and improve outcomes or practices within that community. According to María Isabel Casas-Cortés, Michal Osterweil, and Dana E. Powell (2008), PAR is a contribution from the 1960s decolonization movement inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1970] 2005). It studies "how marginal and exploited communities produce emancipatory knowledge through their processes of collective struggle" (48). PAR suggests that oppressed or marginalized groups are best situated to analyze and respond to exploitation and exclusion because they have lived through it. As Casas-Cortés et al. (2008) argue, PAR does have "some clear shortcomings: the ontological separation between scientific knowledge and people's knowledge without interrogating the validity or social-situatedness of science itself; and second, the tendency toward essentializing or romanticizing the knowledge of certain groups as necessarily and naturally 'better' than all others" (48). Rationalized science is not entirely objective, separate from the rest of humanity, or even an accurate form of knowledge in every context, and other knowledges should not be fetishized. Some narratives voyeuristically relate the pain of marginalized groups, and characterize the groups as broken without providing concrete possibility of structural change (Tuck and Yang 2014). Such narratives are a reiteration of imbalanced power complicit with capitalist hegemony, and these stories often work to subsume marginal voices into dominant knowledge paradigms.

To avoid this pitfall, this thesis employs an analytical framework from social practice theory. Social practice theory (SPT) views routine activities as produced through relationships between the social world (values, institutions, norms), the material world (infrastructures, technologies,

nonhuman) and the body (individual human competencies, cognitive processes, physical abilities, attitudes) (Sahakian and Wilhite 2014). Each of these pillars interacts with the others and has agency to create the final form of the practice. Examining one pillar in isolation is insufficient to understand the whole of the activity (*Ibid*.). SPT is used in Chapter 4 to examine the RRFM and Free Store[19] practices on their own terms and on a horizontal plane, although comparison is inevitable. But SPT has been criticized for neglecting the dynamics of hierarchical relationships (Anantharaman 2018). To address this concern, I use the diverse economies framework to examine each model for its transactions, labor, and enterprise types as capitalist, alternative capitalist, or noncapitalist. This approach primes the researcher to examine the function of power in socio-economic practices with a trauma-informed approach. Throughout this thesis, questions of oppression and liberation between hegemony and the emancipatory nature of the free culture practice are addressed.

Trauma-Informed Research Defined

The Trauma-Informed methodology draws on the tension created by hierarchical relations in an oppressive culture. "**Trauma is a pervasive problem.** It results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being. Experiences that may be traumatic include: Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; Childhood neglect; Living with a family member with mental health or substance use disorders; Sudden, unexplained separation from a loved one; Poverty; Racism, discrimination, and oppression; Violence in the community, war, or terrorism" (TIC IRC 2021, emphasis in original).[20]

Per the Trauma Informed Care Implementation Resource Center (2021) trauma causes emotional disturbances, specifically stress, which can have debilitating long-term effects on a developing brain, causing higher risks for chronic health conditions and health-risk behaviors. But traumatic stress can have detrimental effects on health at any age. In the U.S., 62% of adults (across all sectors of society) faced at least one of these adverse experiences as a child. The likelihood of experiencing these stressful events increases "within certain populations such as people who

[19] A reminder of the terminological distinction used within this thesis: The RRFM is the grassroots anarchist-inspired prefigurative movement. Sometimes, a RRFM event is colloquially called a 'Free Store' or 'Free Shop.' But the terms are not used interchangeably in this thesis. The Harrisburg RRFM or RRFM will refer to the grassroots model as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. 'Free Store' will refer to the nonprofit, formal, state-recognized legal entity.
[20] This list is not exhaustive. For example, natural disasters are traumatic events.

identified as black, Hispanic, or multiracial; people with less than a high-school education; people with low-income or who were unemployed or unable to work; and people who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual" (*Ibid.*, para 3). The effects of trauma-induced stress can appear in behaviors beyond the physical realm - as mental, social, emotional, and spiritual manifestations. These effects can reoccur throughout a person's life via re-traumatization – when people, places or events causes a person to re-experience past traumas, they relive the stress reactions related to the original trauma in a new context (SAMHSA 2017). In this research, I found that stress from previous traumatic experiences influenced behaviors more than is commonly acknowledged.

'Trauma-informed care (TIC),' has developed within educational or care settings throughout the last decade. "A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed *realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery, *recognizes the signs* and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system, and *responds by fully integrating knowledges about trauma into* policies, procedures and practices, and seeks to *actively resist re-traumatization*" (SAMHSA, 2014, 9, emphasis added). The US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration identifies six guiding principles of TIC: 1) Safety – in environment and language; 2) Trustworthiness and Transparency; 3) Peer Support; 4) Collaboration and Mutuality; 5) Empowerment, Voice, and Choice; and 6) Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues (2014, 10). TIC considers all agents as subjects: client, patient, staff, and others such as bystanders or board members (ITTIC, 2015). TIC signifies a cultural shift in care settings, where trauma is accepted as widespread, even acknowledging that care providers are affected by it. This encourages care providers to change their approach to clients from *What's wrong with this person?* to *What happened to this person?* (traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma-informed-care/), employing a nonviolent communication approach (Rosenberg 2015). The TIC approach is intended to teach empathy at all levels.

However, the TIC framework has become a depoliticized and malleable concept in many of its iterations. In the United States, it is now commonly used in ethical training workshops in institutional settings that might be the very institutions perpetuating trauma, such as government bodies, civil society organizations, or police forces. "Trauma-informed" is a buzzword in institutional settings, like the term 'inclusion' or 'decolonize' (Tuck and Yang 2012). Even U.S. police forces discuss being more trauma-informed, while failing to acknowledge that the police

themselves are often a part of the oppressive structure that induces trauma(s). Thus, this empathic approach can paradoxically be used to extend or minimize trauma when manipulated to reaffirm power imbalances and justify the oppressive apparatus and relationships therein (and this is an apt example of recuperation – See Gelderloos 2013 and Chapter 2). This is due to a failure to acknowledge trauma-oppressions when manifested in their various forms. The abuse of TIC framework confirms the notion that inclusion is not the same as cultural affirmation (Chapter 1) and that "decolonization is not a metaphor" (Tuck and Yang 2012).

TIC has the potential to (re)politicize social research and become an emancipatory exercise. Rae Johnson (2009) explains how the fields of somatic psychology and traumatology have traced an explicit link between trauma and oppression: "(T)here are important relationships between our personal experiences and the political context in which they occur, and the legacy of various forms of trauma touches every facet of our society" (23). This is a relatively new field of research, but some traumatology researchers have suggested "that much of the violence and abuse resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder exists on a continuum (and within the larger context) of social oppression" (*Ibid.*). Rae Johnson relies on Allan Johnson's critical social theory within *Privilege, Power and Difference* (2001) to describe the trauma-oppression connection in structural *and* relational iterations.

> If the unequal social categories upon which oppression is predicated are culturally constructed [. . .] it is the repetition of acts shaped by these discourses that maintains the appearance of a coherent identity. In short, if oppression depends upon naturalized social categories of unequal power and status, the idea that identity is performative (that is, it depends not on naturalized differences but on reiterative acts), then changing those acts disrupts the categories upon which social inequality deepens (29).

By enacting different non-oppressive relations and behaviors, the oppressive social constructs themselves are unsettled. However, 'trauma-oppression' is perpetuated because power hierarchies underpinning the capitalist hegemony can become internalized and enacted within interpersonal settings. For example, hoarding disorder, the persistent difficulty in getting rid of things due to a perceived need for them, has several causes but one is the experience of stressful events, such as eviction or loss of possessions (Mayo Clinic Staff 2018). There is a high correlation between trauma history and adult onset of hoarding disorder (Pike 2020). Individuals who experienced the losses connected with a childhood of poverty (a systemic problem) might tend to keep excessive material goods regardless of their quality and even when they have no need to worry about

scarcity, which can impact household and family health, in severe cases causing hazards (NHS UK 2018). These examples could go further, but to the point, while the difference between interpersonal and structural trauma-oppressions is important to understand, they are inextricably intertwined, resulting in corporeal effects in the social and individual sense. Recognizing the association between trauma and oppression endorses a critical analysis and validates harm-reduction practices, as demonstrated within transformative justice praxis (Chapter 2).

TIC is an underutilized framework in social research. Its use increases in importance and benefit in the context of our current crises, such as the pandemic and ecological devastation. It is also well-adapted to prepare researchers for ethical positionality. Other researchers have argued for trauma-informed training of social researchers or incorporated similar elements into their work (See Appendix E: "Trauma-Informed Approach in Research"). Although it does not yet exist as a regular framework in social research, its development in other disciplines is transferable.

This thesis uses the resources and insights provided from applicable studies in behavioral health, social work, and education research fields knowledges combined with a critical analysis of power, hierarchy, and hegemonic constructs. This approach suits the RRFM because awareness of trauma in oneself and others is an integral part of the 'why' and the 'how' a RRFM is enacted. This critical starting point presupposes that trauma arises from experiences of oppression and that "all our grievances are connected" (Schragis 2011; Myerson 2011). While there are a range of traumatic experiences and behaviors, the ones RRFM immediately addresses are: 1) poverty; 2) racism, discrimination, oppression; and 3) violence in the community (TIC IRC, 2021). Long-term empirical observation and experience indicates that some RRFM participants hold trauma which might not be commonly perceived as trauma. This project avoids the practice of applying TIC to extract marginalized experiences of pain as social research, typical of academic capitalism (Chapter 1), and instead uses a framework of desire:

> Desire-centered research does not deny the experience of tragedy, trauma, and pain, but positions the knowing derived from such experiences as wise. This is not about seeing the bright side of hard times, or even believing that everything happens for a reason. Utilizing a desire-based framework is about working inside a more complex dynamic understanding of what one, or a community, comes to know in (a) lived life (Tuck and Yang 2014, 231).

Trauma is a site of learning and of embodied wisdom. As Rae Johnson's study (2009) found, wounds of trauma from unjust and inequitable power relations are embodied and emerge as an important source of knowledge and power, and as a site for resisting oppression (24). Rather than studying pain, or the suppression of it, this thesis examines how trauma-induced behaviors can be revealed, and how (re)traumatization can be actively resisted. The trauma-informed framework encourages care for participants, and reflexive examination of the researcher's own traumas and behaviors. We are all "in a moment of collective trauma – both our own trauma and vicarious trauma – we must attune ourselves to both its inner and outer reverberations, for ourselves and our participants" (Ravitch, para. 13). Furthermore, as a complement to diverse economies scholarship where the researcher is subject to the same approach as the research informants, the trauma-informed approach in social research embraces that researcher and researched are both affected within a study. This methodological framework accepts this expanded sense of trauma as widespread and linked to structural and relational oppressions. In the trauma-informed holistic perspective, all agents are subject to the same potentiality for traumatic expression.

A trauma-informed research approach is applicable beyond the context of this RRFM. The participatory and emergent strategies necessary for research during the pandemic necessitate a deeper awareness of personal and social trauma. As an analytical lens, the trauma-informed perspective can be used reflexively throughout field research to inform or adapt methods to the emergent needs of the participant, researcher, or environment. Through this lens, deep insights about the participants, phenomena, and mitigation strategies are revealed.

Diverse Economies Research Defined

Diverse economies scholarship posits that research is a performative act which actively shapes its participants' subjective experiences of the research. (Gibson-Graham 2020). It requires the researcher to deconstruct their own separation from the subject of study:

> Diverse economies scholarship focuses attention on a different conjugation, or shall we say *another imaginary*, of the subject. This imaginary is defined by a set of qualities: an openness to affect, a capacity to act ethically in a world of shared and constitutively antagonistic interdependence between both humans and a more-than-human world, and an inclination to experiment with forms of social, economic and ecological organization that further enable these capacities (Healy et al. 2020, 390-91).

Putting human and more-than-human relations at the center of social organization incorporates emancipatory politics with a relational multispecies justice framework (Tschakert 2020).

"Diverse economies research advances that we must first change how we know the world and ourselves as researchers, and with this both our knowledge of the world and the world itself will change" (Roelvink 2020, 460). This approach encompasses the embodied (Brockington and Sullivan 2003) and reflexive aspects necessary to my positionality as activist and researcher.

J.K. Gibson-Graham (2020) theorized a research framework that examines a multitude of economic practices, a distinct break from the binary juxtaposition of socio-economic dynamics versus capitalism and the overdetermining logic that attends this thinking (i.e., capitalocentrism, see Gibson-Graham, 1996):

> (W)hat distinguishes diverse economies scholarship is its commitment to theorizing the economy as a site of ethical action. To this end it has generated a discourse of economy that is open to multiplicity and possibility, in which capitalism is not seen as an 'economic system' defined by an essential identity with universalizing dynamics, nor as the most efficient and advanced model of economy. Diverse economies scholarship involves detaching from such powerful structures of thought – ones that continue to inform both those who support and see themselves as benefiting from a capitalist world and those who struggle to replace it with something more equitable and environmentally sustainable (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020, 2).

The diverse economies framework is like the desire framework (Tuck and Yang 2014) in that it is "rooted in possibilities gone but not foreclosed [. . .] desire refuses the master narrative that colonization was inevitable and has a monopoly on the future. By refusing the teleos of colonial future, desire expands possible futures" (243). This research is intended to hold complexity in socio-economic activities to shed light on possible future(s) rooted in other kinds of knowledge.

Along with developing notions like *capitalocentrism*, Gibson-Graham (2006) provides a matrix to illuminate the heterogeneity of alternative economic practices. Gibson-Graham views this radical diversity in terms of three areas of economic practice: 1) *transaction* and ways of negotiating commensurability (proportionate exchange value); 2) *labor* and ways of compensating it; and 3) *enterprise* and ways of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus (60). This provides the basis for discussion of "alternative" capitalist or "noncapitalist" transactions, labor, and wage relationships (See Appendix F: "Diverse economies Matrix"). "By marshaling the many ways that social wealth is produced, transacted, and distributed *other* that those traditionally associated with capitalism, noncapitalism is rendered a positive multiplicity rather than an empty negativity, and capitalism becomes just one particular set of economic

relations situated in a vast sea of economic activity" (70). Highlighting economic alternatives prevents them from disappearing into a footnote or niche practice.

Diverse economies scholarship utilizes detailed, thick, nitty gritty descriptions (Roelvink 2020) to depict social practices as they are, rather than by comparison to capitalism. Diverse Economies Research seeks to 1) transform economic knowledge; 2) transform researchers; and 3) transform possibilities (Roelvink 2020). Any research method or tool can be used to usher particular futures into being (*Ibid.*). Gibson-Graham (2008) offered several: ontological reframing to produce the ground of possibility; re-reading to uncover or excavate the possible (reading for difference rather than dominance); and creativity to generate actual possibilities where none formerly existed. This aligns with the RRFM as a research subject – it disrupts hegemonic constructs and is a prefigurative endeavor which invites possibilities. Diverse economies research affirms the transgressive nature of the RRFM as a protest and alternative to capitalist society. As an anarchist project, the RRFM "disturbs the grounds" (Bey 2020) rather than 'produces the ground.' It invites unsettling conclusions to "stay with the trouble (Haraway 2016) and generate new outcomes. Even a prescriptive notion of an idealized future is seen as an act of oppression over beings that have not yet come to exist (Bey 2020; Shannon et al. 2012). In this sense, opening possibilities enjoys greater acceptance than theorizing a "correct" free culture practice or future. Like the prefigurative practice, the RRFM is unfinished, active, liminal, and indeterminate.

To summarize, the "Practitioner, Trauma-Informed, Diverse Economies Research" (PTIDER) is a unique methodology developed for the study of the RRFM. PTIDER is a type of analytical (auto)ethnography tailored toward uncovering the knowledge and practices of the Harrisburg RRFM and acknowledging distinct access and familiarity with the informants. These three perspectives are woven together throughout the research design and data analysis.

Methods

The RRFM is a multifaceted phenomenon, and the methodology reflects this plurality. The research design was built around my own access and experience with the RRFM community. Once the RRFM topic was chosen, research design elements were clear: Utilizing the familiar Harrisburg RRFM as the primary site, being both a participant and a researcher. The researcher role in the analytical (auto)ethnographic and Practitioner research paradigms entails deep inquiry and reflection, while inviting other RRFM participants to engage in analysis. Being in this dual

role stimulates conversations that may not otherwise occur but remaining transparent regarding the dual role is essential. The research design follows the interests and knowledge shared by research participants, including my own. Personally, I was troubled by the ideological conflict: whether to institutionalize the RRFM by creating a legally recognized organizational structure or to retain its autonomous character. This conundrum required the introduction of a secondary research site, a nonprofit (i.e., NGO) Free Store in a nearby town. Information about the Free Store's operations informed discussions at RRFM.

Research took place over a nine-month period from June 2021 through April 2022 at two research sites. There were 15 participants whose anonymity was maintained to the greatest extent possible, by changing names, using gender-neutral pronouns, and obscuring most locations. The City of Harrisburg remains listed because it was necessary to establish my connection to the study. Flexibility was integrated into the design and numerous methods were employed to collect data, to include one-on-one, semi-structured interviews where participants were asked about their experiences with the RRFM and the nature(s) of their involvement with it. Other data collection involved informal conversation, oral history, observation, field notes, and group meetings. Themes were presented to the RRFM group to stimulate conversation and invite critique. There were limitations to several of these tools, such as participant drop-off or disruptions in the research timeline, and mitigating techniques inherent to the flexible and fluid design of PTIDER were used (i.e., changing methods to meet emerging needs, additional round of interviews, changed timeline, etc.).

Positionality, Bias, and Ethics

I am a lightly complected person of color who grew up on the edge of American poverty. I had – and have – a vested interest in overcoming social hierarchies related to class and identity. My physical appearance may have enabled certain responses from participants, particularly about structural racism. Several RRFM participants know me through local anti-racism work or our shared time at Occupy Harrisburg protesting a myriad of connected oppressions under global capitalism. But other participants did not know me in this context, so some conversation may have resulted from the consciousness-raising nature of free culture practice(s). But also, interviews occurred in the year following George Floyd's murder and a national (and international) reckoning around anti-Black racism.

But my experience has been both a benefit and hindrance in the fieldwork. It has afforded me the ability to tailor methodology and unique access to research participants and sites. I was able to communicate with research participants as peers. Yet my set of assumptions clashed with those of other participants. Certain differences, such as the proposition that RRFM might become a nonprofit organization, influenced my decision to establish a secondary site of research. But at the secondary site, where I expected a greater cultural divide, I found surprising similarities with some participants, particularly toward eliminating socio-economic barriers. I utilized discourse analysis to identify differences and similarities at multiple junctures during fieldwork.

Additionally, there may have been some uneven power dynamics. At the Harrisburg RRFM, I have long relationships with most participants at varying levels of social and task-oriented interaction, or we may have worked together in other social movements (i.e.., Occupy Harrisburg, Black Lives Matter, or others). This longevity breeds a level of trust which can give undue weight to my opinions. I have always interacted with RRFM organizers as ideological peers and continued to do so. The informal nature of our relationships, my willingness to speak my mind, and power imbalances may have influenced the opinions they shared or how they reflect upon the RRFM. As stated earlier, my role as a participant at the RRFM predates my role as a researcher, and these social dynamics existed before research began. While the existing dynamics in the RRFM community influenced the data collection and outcomes, these effects are expected to some degree within the Practitioner methodology as the researcher is entangled with the research subject(s). It was also apparent at the secondary research site of Free Store. While the researcher role might have resulted in an assumption of authority over participants there, it presumably was mitigated by my role as a practitioner seeking knowledge about another way of doing things.

At both sites, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data's (NSD) guidelines to ensure anonymity of all participants were adhered to. Participants were provided with an information letter and signed a consent form (See Appendix G: "NSD Documents"). They were invited to create their own pseudonyms, but those who chose not to were assigned pseudonyms to better guarantee their privacy. The participants' name keys were never written out. Only they/them/their pronouns are utilized in reference to the participants. While the town name remains, I have removed details that might directly identify other RRFM organizers. For the secondary research site, the names of the Free Store and its connected nonprofit organizations were changed. The name of the town

where the Free Store operates was omitted. Interviews and group meetings were recorded on a digital device that was not synced or uploaded to any computer. Transcripts were created from these recordings using only pseudonyms, neutrally gendered pronouns, and anonymous place names. The original audio was deleted from the digital recorder and transcripts were kept in an encrypted, password protected storage device.

Research Sites and Participants

The length of the study (over ten months) was due to two factors. First, the Harrisburg RRFM events occur only once a month from March to November. This provided six instances to observe the events. Secondly, the global pandemic caused disruptions for participants. These conditions required flexibility in research design and adaptability in methods. Personal health-related events added more time to the research duration.[21] Below are the data collection methods, the timeframe in which they occurred, and some discussion of limitations or barriers to the data collection.

The primary research site was the Harrisburg RRFM. The research participants are limited to the organizers of the event (See Appendix H: "Research Participant Tables" *Table 2*). 'Organizers' is a terminology used loosely to describe the nine research participants. This 'core group' does not have consistent roles: logistical duties are shared fluidly and vary over time. For example, there are at least four administrators of social media, but not everyone actively or consistently maintains those sites. For the remainder of this thesis, the research participants from RRFM are referred to as organizers, core group, or (research) participants. All organizers received interview questions and were informed of the research prior to our recorded discussions. From the outset, I was conscious that my own perspective and assumptions would not always overlap with the other organizers at RRFM. I sought to be challenged as a practitioner. In recent years, a fellow RRFM organizer shared press clippings about another Free Store in northeast U.S. (in proximity to Harrisburg). This was a non-profit legal entity. This organizer shared ambitions for the RRFM to evolve and follow this model. This caused some controversy. Some of the organizers, including myself, were not captivated with this nonprofit model of Free Store practice. My personal bias

[21] Indeed, there were unexpected and tragic events that occurred during this field research. Those that effected the research and analysis timeline were personal and following PTIDER are shared here. The first was in July 2021 when a family member had a severe decline in health (after contracting the COVID-19 virus several months earlier), and subsequently passed away in August. In October, our family dog died suddenly. In January 2022, two close family members had (unrelated) surgeries that required my direct support. Finally, in February 2022, my cat fell ill, followed by her death in March. Some details of these events were shared openly with RRFM participants, who I consider friends, either via group chat or before one-on-one interviews when we chatted about personal things.

was that the nonprofit organizational structure was a cooptation of the RRFM movement (Chapter 2). The research design begins with indexing this and other issues at the Harrisburg RRFM. Then, data was collected at the secondary site, the Free Store in a neighboring town.

Conversations with RRFM organizers began in June of 2021. Locations varied based on the availability and preference of the participants. Due to the nature of the semi-structured format, the interviews were largely conversational and fluid. This facilitated the information exchange and led to some surprising findings and resulted in some variation in the questions asked and data collected. All interviews were transcribed and shared with the participants to invite correction or critique. Videos of other RRFMs (Buddhagem 2009; Grassroots Activist Guild 2009.) were shared with RRFM participants to inform their decision in retaining an autonomous model of free culture. As with the interview transcripts, there was little consequential feedback. The bulk of my insight came when I conducted discourse analysis of the transcripts, coding for common themes. Following practitioner research methodology, these themes or items that needed troubleshooting were indexed. At this juncture, I recognized that this information would be useless if I were the only one to examine it. The need for additional input emerged and the solution adopted was a group meeting – the first formal RRFM meeting since 2012. The themes and troubleshooting items discovered in the data analysis were compiled in a SWOT table, indexing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for the RRFM (Chapter 4 and Appendix I: "SWOT Table"). The SWOT was provided to RRFM participants prior to discussion at our first group meeting in September 2021. Two participants were not able to attend.

After this meeting, I visited the Free Store. Prior to the visit, I conducted preliminary research of secondary data found on news media websites and the Free Store's own website. Free Store research participants have defined roles within their organization (i.e., Donor, Volunteer, Shopper, Founder), although sometimes these roles or duties change, as indicated in some of the descriptions in the table (See Appendix H: "Research Participant Tables" *Table 3*). The research participants from Free Store are referred to as "volunteers" or "shoppers" depending on their roles. The participant selection at Free Store was conducted via snowballing techniques (where one interviewee refers the researcher to the next interviewee). While some Free Store participants may have mentioned additional individuals whom I should talk to, I was unable to meet them all. Only the interviewee known as Quinn, the Executive Director, received the semi-structured

interview questions (via email) prior to our conversation and only they were prepared for our discussion. The other participants received the printed copies of questions during our interview. Since Quinn was the only individual making successful referrals, the participant selection process was significantly limited to only core volunteers, and the range of perspectives may have been similarly limited. I did not seek to interview participants who were attendees, 'donors' or 'shoppers.' I did have informal conversations with one shopper (Kai) and another volunteer (Aria). The insights that might be afforded by these other practitioners would be worth examination in a future study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted over the three-day span of my visit, with the indicated volunteers in these locations. Some informal conversations occurred with other Free Store volunteers and were documented as field notes the same day. Each evening, I shared impressions, photos, or field notes with the RRFM organizers via group chat.

Beyond the limits of snowballing techniques, there were three significant limitations to data collection at the Free Store. I spent three days on site and the store was open during two of those days. This possibly limited the extent of insight possible. My biases and experience with RRFM uncovered cultural differences. Interviews at Free Store exposed miscommunications. Certain language was malleable, or too broad: questions about concepts of charity or capitalism solicited responses I had not anticipated, which was both an opportunity for insight and a barrier to discovery. My experience with RRFM led to my skepticism about the nature of the Free Store project that I anticipated would affect my ability to collect objective data. Toward mitigation, from the outset, I prepared myself to be curious about the material methods of the Free Store. By recording and analyzing conversations later I was able to better separate new information from my biases. I invited others from the RRFM to come to Free Store with me to balance my perspective and increase accountability to the RRFM group. One other individual did attend, but they did not completely share observations with the wider RRFM group as they did not attend a group meeting scheduled for that purpose. This attempted mitigation had limited effects.

By October 2021, I compiled a document of the oral history of the RRFM as well as a summary document of the visit to Free Store. These were provided to the RRFM group with an invitation to critique them. A second group meeting was scheduled to discuss the outcomes and opinions regarding the Free Store trip. Most participants did not review the oral history or Free Store field note summary documents. This may have affected the course of the group conversation. In this

meeting, a few participants discussed the Free Store visit, but cross-conversation about other topics (i.e., events at recent RRFMs, and the upcoming local political election) interfered some. Most of the RRFM organizers did attend, but several in attendance did not contribute to group conversation. The interviews at Free Store and second group meeting were transcribed and coded for themes following discourse analysis in November 2021. I discovered some difficult themes, and I also felt the second group meeting did not provide adequate data. To mitigate the drop-off in group participation, I conducted a final round of informal one-on-one conversations in December to learn organizers' thoughts on the Free Store observations. From January through March 2022, final interviews with RRFM organizers were transcribed and coded for themes following discourse analysis. Drafting thesis chapters commenced to include findings and overall analysis of themes. In April 2022, drafts of Chapters 2, 4 and 5 were shared with the RRFM group requesting critical feedback but little input was received.

Conclusion

There is a lack of scholarly study of the RRFM movement, and I have first-hand experience with this subject. This provided the latitude to create a methodology unique to the subject: Practitioner Trauma-Informed Diverse Economies Research. The first component, Practitioner Research integrates the researcher's active engagement with the RRFM movement as a participant and movement organizer. Practitioner methodology adds to what is already known within a community of practice and shares research findings within that community. The second component, Trauma Informed research, allows the researcher to engage with generative conflict (internal and external) to gather knowledge with flexibility toward uncovering sometimes difficult truths. As a mechanism of analysis, a trauma-informed lens will allow deep insight into the creative approaches RRFM practitioners employ to address tensions and conflict. Trauma-Informed methods can, and should be, used in other studies in research design, application, and analysis. It addresses critiques of social research by re-politicizing social research, examining oppression and liberation (hierarchies), affirming the affective researcher, honoring the knowledge-practices of the research site, and creating opportunities for possibility and plurality. The third view is diverse economies research. It uncovers a web of interconnected, intersectional oppressions that permeate the capitalist system. It is not neutral. Like the RRFM, it seeks to proliferate practices of "transformation, pluralism and place-based experimentation with the economic world" (Roelvink 2020, 455). This triptych methodology is woven into a plurality of

methods and considerations used in the research design. Following the call to embrace any method or tool available for the possibilities they may produce, this thesis uses social practice theory and trauma-informed analyses to explore diversity within the free culture models.

The methods used varied by site based on familiarity and needs. The research design was modified as new needs emerged. The primary methods used throughout were observation, interviews, analysis, and invitation to correct and critique. Positionality, bias, ethical concerns, and limitations were examined and addressed. I documented safeguards, counterbalances, and issue mitigation efforts. There were multiple limitations and barriers. These involved personal crises interrupting the research timeline, an isolated participant pool, limited time spent on location, misunderstandings due to cultural context, variation in interview questions, and waning levels of participation. Where possible, these limitations were anticipated, and flexibility was built into the research design. As barriers were presented, mitigation was implemented.

Despite research limitations and barriers, the thesis research questions were answered. These are addressed using parts of the PTIDER framework following a diffraction methodology. The Practitioner Chapter 4 presents findings and analysis pertaining to the following questions: 1) *What are the limits/barriers that prevent expansion of the RRFM movement (within Harrisburg and beyond)?*; 2) How have these limits/barriers been mitigated within the Harrisburg RRFM?; 3) *How can knowledge of the barriers inform stronger practices at the RRFM or other autonomous activities?*; and 4) Which model of the 'free' practice is desirable to spread and why? Chapter 5 presents findings and analysis through the trauma-informed lens to answer: 1) *What does RRFM (and Free Store) practices and modes of analysis reveal about prefigurative movements?*; 2) *How are these revelations addressed by RRFM (and Free Store) practitioners?*; and 3) *How can this knowledge inform stronger practices at the RRFM or other autonomous activities?* Chapter 6 will discuss the findings of previous chapters through the lens of Diverse Economies research to both affirm the responses to the research questions and contextualize their meanings. In total, these chapters conclude that while a research-subject division is blurred in this study, a partial and localized objectivity does exist and provides lessons that can generate stronger practices elsewhere.

Chapter 4. Free Culture or Really Free Culture?

Free cultural practices challenge capitalist hegemony. They disrupt the 'common sense' notions of the invisible hand of the 'free' market system, the myth of scarcity, the primacy of property enclosure, the paternalistic posturing of the state, and the logics of social hierarchies that enable exploitation and extraction (Shannon et al. 2012; Robbins 2020; Loomba 2015; Moore 2017, 2018). Free culture practices are under continuous pressure to conform to hegemonic, capitalocentric (Gibson-Graham 2006) norms to adopt bureaucratic structures, institute social regulations and rules, and utilize a wage and "free" market-based enterprise model. This pressure appears as an external 'soft' coercion or co-optation (i.e., recuperation) (Gelderloos 2013; Spade 2020; Dunlap and Arce 2022),[22] or an internal interest in "potential for growth." The pressure to conform to hegemonic structures undermines the emancipatory nature(s) of autonomous, horizontal free culture organizing. But only a proactive, transformative, and *emancipatory* approach is likely to avoid the failures that led to crisis in the first place. Internal pressures to conform do arise in autonomous movements. The pressure appears as a 'common sense' urge to improve or enhance existing activities. However, after conforming to normative processes, is the radical movement still disrupting hegemonic practices, or just improving upon them? Is the group trading one set of problems for another? This tension was detected within the Harrisburg Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) movement in recent years. Some of the core organizers were interested in moving the RRFM events from its open-air plaza to a proprietary indoor space. They speculated that this would better meet the material needs of the community and provide space for other related activities. This vision was offered with some hesitancy because it would require the RRFM to establish itself as a legal entity, such as a co-operative business or a nonprofit organization (i.e., nongovernmental organization, or NGO). Most of the RRFM core group were apprehensive of this aspect for the reasons explained below. As an organizer, I was among those in the group questioning whether a nonprofit model was an opportunity worthy of the risk.

Applying Practitioner Research methodology, this study investigated a nonprofit free culture practice and provided the findings to the RRFM core group for their assessment. A nonprofit Free Store that had been operating for the same length of time as the RRFM (nine years) in a town

[22] The 'hard' approach would be repression, (i.e.., sabotage, direct threats or acts of physical violence, psychological influences, reputational damage, resource deprivation, or criminalization) (Schubert 2021).

near to Harrisburg was observed.[23] It was found that these two models, both categorized as 'free culture,' constitute very different sets of practices. This data was analyzed using social practice theory (SPT) to illustrate how each practice is comprised by the agency of its parts: the social world (values, institutions, norms), the material world (infrastructure, technologies, nonhuman), and the body (individual human competencies, cognitive processes, physical abilities and attitudes) (Sahakian and Wilhite 2014). Diverse economies methodology provides terminology to better describe these free culture models as unique practices.

This chapter presents findings using the Practitioner Research lens of Practitioner Trauma-Informed Diverse Economies research methodology (PTIDER), previously defined. One-on-one conversations with the organizers of the RRFM were categorized into themes. This process revealed issues and insights among different vision(s) of the free practice, both practical and ideological. Some were solved, but the most important issue endured: tension between the anarchist-leaning practitioners of RRFM and others urging transitioning into a legally recognized organization. The issue highlights a fundamental distinction between the two research sites. This chapter proceeds by reviewing the generative conflict among the autonomous RRFM organizers – a diversity of perspectives that is the background to the tension to conform or remain autonomous. The second section describes the contrasting practices of the nonprofit Free Store and describes the RRFM group response to the Free Store observations. This is followed by a section that compares and contrasts the models using the three pillars from social practice theory: social, material, and body. Each research site is examined for its own heterogeneity using a diverse economies analytical lens. The chapter concludes that there is no current resolution to the ideological rift within the Harrisburg RRFM, and it may remain unresolved.

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats: The RRFM Organizational Analysis

After analyzing the first round of interviews, it was found that common problems could benefit from group discussion and troubleshooting. Other themes were beyond troubleshooting, such as

[23] A note of several terminological distinctions: Sometimes, a RRFM event is colloquially called a 'Free Store' or 'Free Shop.' But in this thesis the terms are not used interchangeably. The Harrisburg RRFM or RRFM refers to the grassroots, autonomous model as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 while Free Store refers to the nonprofit organization, a formal, state-recognized, legal entity. Any conclusions about either the nonprofit Free Store and the autonomous RRFM examined here remain unique to their own localized iteration of free culture practices and may not be transferable to these practices elsewhere. Additionally, the Free Store research participants are referred to as 'volunteers' and the RRFM research participants are referred to as 'organizers.

desires and insights for the group. These were shared in the form of a "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats" (SWOT) table (See Appendix I: "SWOT Table" and *Table 4: SWOT*, found therein). The SWOT was provided to the group prior to the first group discussion, but it was not explicitly examined. This research focuses on the tension within the group as to whether to institutionalize to grow the Harrisburg RRFM, although some shared little interest in the idea.[24] Some rejected it outright and speculated about organizing multiple RRFMs in various Harrisburg neighborhoods instead.

The idea to formalize the RRFM started with a perceived need for a physical structure – a building, with roof cover and storage facilities. Such a structure would protect RRFM from weather and provide events year-round. Material items could be screened, inventoried, stored, or displayed. It was imagined this space might be used for other purposes: for a Food Not Bombs kitchen or residential quarters and offices.[i] Formalized legal status could lead to additional resources, like direct donations from retailers or grocers, or grants to pay for the space and employees.[ii] It might enhance the group's credibility in wider society and increase the reach of the free culture to other sectors and people.[iii] Yet even those organizers with the vision of an indoor space were weary of the legal process to get there. They all held similar reservations about the potential for corruption in nonprofits as is the case especially with large U.S. nonprofits. Other RRFM organizers were skeptical of the idea,[iv] but some were interested in learning more anyway.[v]

The opposition to formalization was clearly communicated. Firstly, the RRFM was meant as a protest and prefigurative movement; becoming a legal entity would be aligned with hegemonic values. In doing so, the RRFM would become exactly that which it meant to rebel against. The introduction of requirements to obtain and transact with money - to maintain property and pay employees - was a clear example of this contradiction. Secondly, the work or commitment involved in becoming a legal entity was itself a burdensome obligation. As discussed earlier, many were weary of the charity or nonprofit industrial complex and all that it evoked. Finally, maintaining a 'brick-and-mortar' store would involve other obligations and the restoration of social norms, whether from volunteers or employees, which would undermine the freedom (in the

[24] To be clear, there were no debates or arguments on the idea to grow RRFM, it was a casual topic of conversation. None of the organizers were passionate about it. Through this research this tension was rendered visible.

social, cultural, and personal sense) that was enjoyed at RRFM. There were alternative discussions about the RRFM expanding to other neighborhoods, either via the existing group's initiative or by encouraging others to start additional one(s).[vi] Some highlighted the benefits of the RRFM as a transient, open-air, low commitment, and nimble event.[vii] It involved little fossil fuel resources or costs for individuals to travel to and from the space; people could arrive on foot.[viii] There were no fees for maintenance or rent.[ix] If RRFM was displaced or if a critical need in another area arose, the RRFM could relocate with ease.

As an organizer, I characterized the opposing views as a tension between the *growth* and *spread*. Growth evokes the hegemonic capitalist principle that collective activities should follow a certain trajectory to reach success, stability, scalability, recognition, and acceptance. Growth aims for universality. Alternatively, spread connotes a replication of the practice that is localized and flexible, a sort of virality. It is not owned, patented, or controlled by the same group of people. Spread aims for plurality, it is an aspiration from the realm of the prefigurative movement political stance. Questions of recognition and acceptance are moved away from gaze of the law, state, or executive board members and instead found among the local neighborhoods.

While the benefits of having a roof or legally recognized status were attractive, they also equally entailed risks. The pressures of oppressive social constructs were internalized and reproduced within an ostensibly anarchist setting. The hegemonic norms were creeping into the internal RRFM conversations. In the past, concessions were made to the pressures of normative culture (i.e., rather than fighting the city on the principle of a permit to use common space as the RRFM saw fit, permission was sought to use the City Plaza). Those instances were less of a contradiction than a practical act of harm-reduction. To make a sideways leap into a legally recognized entity would risk losing the meaning of RRFM and merely reproduce the processes that the hegemonic system had imposed. Since participants had such differing opinions on the matter, additional knowledge about the ideological rift was sought. One organizer had been following and sharing information to the group about the Free Store for a few years and it was approached as a source of information for the group to examine. The Harrisburg RRFM group was interested to learn the general workings of this Free Store, particularly how waste or leftovers were disposed. Upon visiting, many more nuances were uncovered – both within the structure and among the volunteers and staff. These findings are summarized below.

Free Store Observations

The Free Store operates from a stationary physical structure and presents as a retail shop. It has storage facilities, racks and shelves for presentation, and opening hours for patrons during the week. All physical infrastructure was donated or secured for free (i.e., decommissioned shipping containers, porch, roof, solar panels). It is a legally recognized nonprofit institution, placing it closer to the regulations and measures instilled by general society or a Board of Directors. Because of its legal charitable status, Free Store can receive donations from retailers and philanthropists. It has an organizational mission statement, which some of the volunteers identified with or contradicted at different intervals of the conversations.[25] There is a nexus of institutional infrastructure present. After it was founded as a nonprofit entity, two additional sister-organizations were established to further the Free Store mission - Free-Range Inclusion and Free Food Cycle. Free-Range Inclusion operates with an intentionally low budget and one staff person. It acts as an 'umbrella' entity which encompasses various projects such as development of a co-working space, mentoring children, fundraising for a local dance team, providing grants to residents, and partnering with a separate nonprofit called Stuff Link. Stuff Link obtains goods identified for disposal by major brand retailers. These are new items that are underselling, but rather than devalue the brand by lowering the price, the retailers destroy the goods. Stuff Link intercedes and redirects the goods to other nonprofit organizations. Free-Range Inclusion pays $10,000.00 annually for this service. Free-Range Inclusion then holds pop-up events (what one co-founder calls "Free Markets")[x] for the community. Free Food Cycle is a separate nonprofit organization which obtains and distributes food from grocers that would otherwise be discarded.

Free Store operates from a decommissioned shipping container on a donated lot, where all furnishings and even the solar panels for electricity are donated or salvaged. There are deep role-dependent demarcations among the Free Store participants. "Volunteers" maintain the Store. "Donors" drop off items. "Shoppers" benefit from receiving the material and food items at the Store. There is very little overlap. The demarcation extends to the use of the Store itself. Barriers designate the volunteer working area and shoppers may not enter the area or take items from it. Special items including diapers, Narcan, contraceptives, and crayons are hidden and guarded by a

[25] The autonomous RRFMs I was familiar with did not have the legal or physical structures or their attendant restrictions and (perceived) benefits. Furthermore, the Harrisburg RRFM does not have a mission statement. If at all, a core principle might be lifted from its social media: 'No strings' or 'Just free'.

volunteer. They are available to shoppers only by request. Other barriers include a lock and chain on a cardboard recycling bin to inhibit trash dumping, security camera(s) to inhibit vandalism, and a donation drop-off bin to reduce vandalism and theft. Volunteers maintain the Store's appearance and update the floor stock. Old items are periodically "purged", and clothing is rotated from the storage unit to reflect seasonal needs.[xi] Most of the items at Free Store are gently used donations from individuals, not retailers. Like the Harrisburg RRFM, you never know what you are getting, and it is not predictably stocked like a traditional retailer. Left-over items are donated to charities or nonprofit organizations or thrown out, but certain items, particularly food, might see volunteers personally redistribute them elsewhere to ensure their productive use.[xii]

The Free Store's mission is to create a community space where everyone is welcomed, embraced, and received with kindness. It is meant to change individual relationships with material goods while combatting poverty through empowerment. The core beliefs convey concern with excessive consumption and waste which complement a culture of reuse and recycling. The Free Store states that material insecurities from poverty can be met through local resource sharing (mutual aid and cooperation) within its community. Free things can be a catalyst to changing cultures of waste and insecurities due to poverty. The mission aligns with the founder's views on these matters. However, there was a tension in perspectives evident at Free Store. The founder acknowledged an occasional disconnect between the opinions of other volunteers and the core vision for social equity, safety, and waste reduction. Volunteers outwardly rejecting the organization's core beliefs was never observed, but some expressed varying reasons they support the project. Some conveyed different ideas for addressing systemic problems in the wider society.

The first core belief, to create a space where all are welcomed with love, is deemed possible when money is removed as a barrier, allowing more equitable relationships. But conflicts remained concerning vandalism, theft, and verbal arguments. All Free Store volunteers spoke of the meaningful relationships they have fostered over the years with each other, shoppers, and/or donors despite these concerns. It was not apparent how the participants saw the Free Store changing individual relationships with material goods except as a mechanism to address food and clothing insecurities. Filling these needs was a central purpose and source of pride for some volunteers. One volunteer saw the Free Store as useful anywhere, but asserted it was particularly needed in vulnerable communities where poverty and its attendant violence ran high.[xiii]

Free Store's empowerment of people to combat poverty was discussed in only two interviews. The founder explained how volunteers from the local community were encouraged to make decisions and changes to the Free Store operations. "This is their first-time volunteering. And many live here, most of them live here. They have now become like, faces of the community, whereas, like, that's something that was never in their thought[s], to even think that that's space for them. 'Other people do those kinds of things, not me.'" They explained how they began to think differently: "'No. It's actually you,' like, 'You're the most powerful voice and face to do this work.'"[xiv] Another participant stated they trust that the people in the Free Store neighborhood were able to make the best choices for themselves with what was given to them, rather than trying to impose restrictions on how things should be used. Rather than make impoverished people prove their need for something or tell them how to use it once they receive it, this volunteer simply believes that if a person says they need it, then they do and they can use it as they see fit.[xv] But not everyone sees free items as a means of empowerment. Quite the opposite, one volunteer opined that handing out free items fostered an anti-work ethic and resulted in dependency on free goods. They believed in "a hand up, not a hand-out" to impoverished youth.[xvi]

The third core value was recycling and reusing with the intent of disrupting excessive consumption and waste practices.[26] Other volunteers gravitated to the Free Store in part because of this purpose. One volunteer described that they were making similar personal choices to reduce or regift items rather than to dispose of them.[xvii] Before co-founding Free-Range Inclusion, Morgan sought a way to redistribute their children's excess toys rather than throw them out and, after meeting the Free Store founder, started a Free Store in a nearby district. Morgan feels passionately about ending the practice of designer retailers producing and then destroying unsold consumer items.[xviii] The perspective of distribution of free items as a catalyst for change was inconsistent among Free Store volunteers. None were directly anti-capitalist, but some were critical of the system that seemed to cause extreme problems. Some characterized capitalism as benefiting only the extremely wealthy or causing excessive production and waste.[xix] Others avoided being 'too political,' stating it difficult to determine whether moneyed systems

[26] This value arose from the founder's experience as an immigrant child furnishing their first U.S. home with furniture left out on the curb for garbage. This led to a critique of waste (and poverty) – that the world does not need more stuff, which is integrated into the founder's personal practices – they wear used clothing and buy food that they know will be deemed unsellable based on its appearance.

were "good or bad," but affirmed that the capitalist system was not working.[xx] If basic needs were met, people could pay for things rather than need things for free.[xxi] Some added other explanations for the systemic failure to meet the needs of the populace such as systemic and historical racism or the corruption of corporate nonprofit organizations.[xxii]

Other Free Store interviewees perceived systemic problems as directly connected to policy failures. Some advocated for a solution where nonprofit and policy makers collaborated to create a remedy, or for election of new officials.[xxiii] The Free Store founder characterized it as a *different kind of advocacy work*[xxiv] catalyzing change – whether in the policy realm or at the local level. Other volunteers expressed varied judgements on the Free Store's potential for change: One volunteer saw the Free Store as a "band-aid" that genuinely helped people without directly fixing the big picture problems of waste and poverty.[xxv] At the other extreme, one volunteer thought that Free Store was potentially making a culture of complacency worse.[xxvi] Others did not discuss potential solutions but focused on the ways Free Store changed circumstances for the community and individuals.[xxvii] Still other volunteers hoped that the Free Store would encourage others to "pay it forward," or "act in kindness," or even inspire others to start new free stores.[xxviii]

Free Store held some surprising findings for the RRFM. These were presented to the core organizers prior to our second group meeting in October 2021. Understanding the difference between the donation model at Free-Range Inclusion and Free Food Cycle as separate and complementary to the Free Store was helpful. While Free Store accepts donations from the community at large, the other organizational entities accept retailer food and goods, all to the benefit of those in need within the community. Some of the original concerns about the potential for corruption frequently embedded in nonprofit structures in America were tempered by this distinction, as well as learning that Free-Range Inclusion limits its budget and staff to direct resources towards doing good for the community without overhead structures. On the ground attitudes and activities were also different than expected. The volunteers were very concerned with hoarders, scammers, and people who violate rules (a topic revisited in Chapter 6). Physical barriers were deployed over time and after conflicts limiting access to workspaces, using locks and surveillance. Out of concern for potential exploitation, some Free Store participants proposed altering the Free Store model to incorporate more rules[xxix] or require a "quid pro quo" of the shoppers.[xxx] This is a re-institution of hierarchical standards seen in wider culture or in charity

models (see Chapter 2). Some of these developments seem linked to the burdens of maintaining a building, which RRFM does not have. While analogous tensions exist at RRFM, they are not as pronounced as in the nonprofit model. It seems that Free Store necessitates more rules and operational processes, and also generates more interpersonal conflicts, than the RRFM.

It was a surprise to see that the Free Store received more donations from individual households than from retailers. This is very similar to the RRFM practice. The struggle to find places to recycle or upcycle leftover items are also similar, with questions of how to or where to recycle or re-donate apparent at both sites. The RRFM removes all items at the end of the day, so each new event starts with nothing, while the Free Store is constantly receiving, stocking, and removing items. Each Free Store volunteer held different ideas about the impact of Free Store, but most saw it as filling a dire need for people living in crisis attributable to poverty and its attendant crime. Its mission is based on a transformational social and ecological mindset, which is executed in several ways (solar panels, success as a safe place to seek help, relationship building among volunteers across racial and economic divides). Yet there were limits. This was similar to the RRFM in that various perspectives within the organizer group and certainly among the wider attendees were sometimes disconnected from the underlying values of the group and engaging with these differences constitutes a continual process.

The Free Store interviews revealed a paucity of critical analysis around transformative systemic change. Several volunteers were mindful of failures in society but consider them better addressed by politicians and policymakers. One volunteer saw their work as “band-aids,” meeting real needs but not necessarily changing the conditions that created the need. The Harrisburg RRFM experienced similar complications: some see mutual aid as primarily meant to meet current needs of vulnerable community members. Some did not give up entirely on policymaking either. But RRFM distinguished itself by its commitment to creating a better world despite wider hegemonic pressures, beyond the constraints of politicians and policy makers.

When presented with these observations and reflections, RRFM participants reacted in various ways. Those most interested in having a physical structure with storage were less convinced of it because of additional obligation of labor or interpersonal conflict. There were concerns that a stationary location would bring about illicit dumping.[xxxi] Several participants still admired the Free Store mission.[xxxii] Others did not feel compelled to react strongly either way, resistant to

casting Free Store in a negative light.[xxxiii] *But all participants seemed satisfied to continue the RRFM as it is currently structured.* This research benefited this community of practitioners by adding to their knowledge, inviting reflection by looking at an external example, illuminating their insights, and ultimately leading to the organizers' informed reconfirmation of the RRFM's autonomous status.

Toward Distinguishing the RRFM and Free Store Practices

It is difficult to make a direct comparison between Free Store and RRFM because of the two very different models of free culture practices. While each model is engaged with similar work for overlapping reasons, the trajectory of activities and outcomes vary. At the core there are very different focuses and frameworks which directly impact their character. *Table 1: RRFM v. Free Store* describes each model's Focus, Arenas of Innovation, Visions for Change, and Limitations.

Table 1: RRFM v. Free Store

TOPIC	Harrisburg RRFM	Free Store
Focus	Protesting social, economic, psychological conditioning by prefiguring a different world based on mutual aid economics and relations. Direct Action.	Meeting material needs and social gaps across economic divides by eliminating retail and food waste through community and retail donation. Advocacy work.
Arena of Innovation	Challenging the nature of protest and social structures; Shifting relations toward creating different societies.	Challenging the nature of nonprofit (charity) and of advocacy work; Addressing needs without requirements.
Visions for Change	Society without monied exchange. Oppressions based in normative (capitalist) social arrangements. Collectivity, social freedom, autonomy, interdependence. Globalist solidarity.	Reduce poverty, trauma. Regional community reliance. The need for governmental interventions to meet basic needs. Reduce consumer and producer waste. Social equity.
Limitations	Obscured messaging and execution around horizontalism and protest vision. Internal pressure to conform to institutional model.	Sees change as happening in external authoritative structures. Internal pressure to conform to hierarchical structures and rules.

Both groups share an internal disconnect in their purpose or vision or reasons, as to whether to fill needs or to create transformational, non-transactional, relations as a challenge to hegemonic norms. There is no universal model for either the nonprofit or the grassroots version, nor can there be. The main concept is that everything is free and the items available for free come from the community of things and ideas that already exist, to eliminate waste and meet the needs and desires of the people involved. All other aspects, such as whether to institute limits, or otherwise manage the space and interactions, location, and organization, vary based on the local needs, restrictions, and desires within the community of practice. The process of disconnect and

recalibration of visions and mission to continue doing the free practice model are integral to the project itself. The apparent limitations are part of the process of the free culture models, a generative conflict that allows the practice to change.

Although there is much overlap between the RRFM and Free Store practices, the distinctions are significant. They are illustrated below using the practice theory's three pillars of the social world, the material world, and the body. In this analysis, the social world constitutes shared frameworks, norms, and values; the material world describes the infrastructure that encompasses each model and the goods available in them; while the body locates the human resources, roles, and individual attitudes. Each of these three pillars enacts force or agency on the other pillars to shape the activities of the collective group. Following practice theory, the specific characteristics of the RRFM and Free Store create a unique set of actions and reactions.

Figure 1: Free Store Agential Pillars of Practice shows the Free Store's three pillars of practice. The social pillar indicates the ideological framework, institutional influences and values that influence Free Store practices. Free Store is guided by hegemonic socio-political norms: civil society fills the gap created by systemic social and ecological problems, which are best resolved by policy reform. Free Store is a traditional institutional model. It is a nonprofit charitable organization with a hierarchical system of accountability. Free Store's codified mission is to address waste, address poverty, and build community at a low overhead cost. It answers to a Board of Directors and has a responsibility to its donors to ensure all goods are free and not sold. The material pillar displays the indoor and outdoor space which influence Free Store practices. The building is owned by the nonprofit institution, complete with storage and a courtyard. The structure and technologies attached to it were all donated or secured for free. It also features a dumpster, cardboard recycling dumpster, and a donation bin. The Free Store has open hours several days a week but has experienced vandalism during closed hours. Thus, there are locks on doors, dumpsters, and bins and a surveillance system. When the Store is open for business, there are demarcations where Volunteers, Donors, and Shoppers may enter or use the space. The body pillar indicates the distinct roles of attendees which have very little overlap. The volunteer is a consistent figure that sorts, distributes, and cleans within the store, depending on individual ability. They are empowered to make changes to the store's culture and infrastructure as needed. Shoppers are also consistent figures who take materials, but some deviate from the social norms

by engaging in vandalism, taking 'too much,' or looting after hours. Donors are generally transient figures that bring material goods. Individual donors are the primary source of (used) goods. Retailers make charitable donations of new goods, while foundations make monetary donations or grants to the nonprofit trifecta.

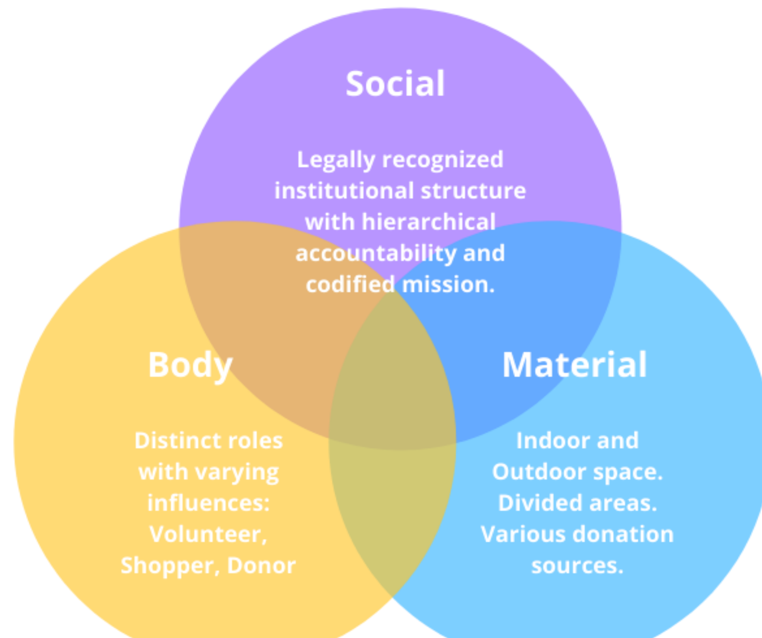

Figure 1: Free Store Agential Pillars of Practice

The social, material, and body pillars create systems and processes unique to the Free Store. For example, the nonprofit institutional model enables direct donations of goods from retailers, who receive a tax incentive for charitable donations. Receiving these unused items can create a sense among the shoppers and volunteers that these items are more desirable and potentially could be resold for personal profit. This would break the institutional commitment to donors to ensure items are given away freely. Furthermore, shoppers might potentially take more of these items, leaving none for others, which would violate the commitment to equitable access. Thus, volunteers empowered to shape the Free Store, create systems to restrict shopper access. Some of these may include physical barriers, or limits to how many new items can be taken by one shopper. This in turn can affect how all participants interact with the physical structure and each other and may cause conflicts. There are several ways these pillars enact force upon each other to create the characteristics of Free Store.

Using diverse economies methodology (Gibson-Graham 2006; See Methodology Chapter 3: Appendix F: Diverse economies Matrix), I examined both Free Store (along with the sister organizations, Free-Range Inclusion and Free Food Cycle) and the RRFM by transaction, labor, and enterprise types. For detailed analysis see Appendix J: "The diverse economies of Free Culture Practice. In Appendix J, *Table 5: The diverse economy of Free Store,* the nonprofit nexus

is illustrated as primarily an "alternative capitalist" enterprise (nonprofit, or socially responsible firm with a Board of Directors), with a considerable level of hybridization. The transaction types within the Free Store nonprofit nexus are market, alternative market, and nonmarket in nature. Its "alternative market" transactional nature is either ethical "fair trade" market, co-operative exchange, or informal markets depending on the level of interaction (nonprofit, volunteer-shopper-donor, etc.). Its nonmarket transactions stem from (indirect) household flows, gift-giving, gleaning[27], and theft. The Free Store and its sister organization utilize both wage (salaried, non-unionized) and unpaid (volunteer, neighborhood, self-provisioning) labor. Although it is an alternative capitalist enterprise, it retains communal or independent elements of noncapitalist enterprise. The diverse economies descriptions could change if the Free Store sister organizations were removed, but it would remain a nonprofit. If so, would the social practice theory analysis also change? Would real-life practices be modified? A change in practice shifts the diverse economies nonmarket/unpaid/noncapitalist types as well.

The RRFM's three pillars of practice are shown in *Figure 2: Really (Really) Free Market Agential Pillars of Practice*. The social pillar indicates the core autonomous, horizontal and informal structure that emanates from the idea: that people can take care of each other despite the failure of the state and capitalist economy. RRFM adapts common-use spaces and materials while incorporating a production and consumption practice based on localism, recycling, reuse, and less waste. Interpersonal relationships are based on affinity, collaboration, avoiding authority over others, checking moral judgements, and broad social acceptance. The foundation of the RRFM is an event with 'no strings attached.' The material pillar is constituted by an outdoor, public location with unrestricted access which is significant for the recurring RRFM. With permission, the City Plaza is used on days when the Plaza's regular businesses are closed. RRFM events are restricted to once per month, weather-permitting. The Plaza has six built-in platforms where material goods are placed, nothing is pre-sorted, and no signs or indicators are provided to direct attendees. The group makes use of the public trash and recycling dumpsters in various nearby locations. Material goods, knowledge, and skills are provided by individuals from their homes, gardens, handmade, or personally sourced. The body pillar illustrates the blurred roles within the RRFM. Givers and takers of goods and skills are transient. There exists an overlap between

[27] The term 'gleaning' is listed as a nonmarket type of transaction. Gleaning is a practice of taking leftovers after the goods were used for their primary function. For example, dumpster diving at a store for food that is unsellable.

activities: givers can take, takers can give, and often many are both givers and takers. Some help the core group with cleaning and redistributing leftovers. The core group is comprised of regular attendees at RRFM, although not all attend every event. Anyone is free to become a member of the core group, whenever they choose. They may give, take, clean, and redistribute, and sometimes answer questions from event attendees on-site. Some organizers in the core group also share social media administrative duties where the values of the RRFM are conveyed. But all these tasks are shared and completed only as individuals choose based on their physical and energetic abilities. For continuity and viability, the individual availability of organizers across the core group is communicated through internal group chats as well as face-to-face conversations.

Because of the horizontal nature of the RRFM, the social pillar has a strong link to the individual attitudes that appear in the body pillar, resulting in free use of a common space. The egalitarian ambition enables an intersectional, permissive atmosphere that blurs the boundaries between roles of the actors and limits the obligations required to participate (even for the core group). The open-air infrastructure further invites attendees to access any part of the space as they might desire without social barriers to limit movement. The materials, skills, and knowledge are provided and dispersed in a similarly (dis)organized and organic fashion where individual autonomy might be exercised. As shown in Appendix J, *Table 6: The diverse economy of RRFM*, there is considerably less hybridization within the RRFM. RRFM remains within the nonmarket/unpaid/noncapitalist categories. Minor hybridization exists but does not interfere with individuals embracing their own practices. RRFM is comprised of (indirect) household flows and gleaning. Labor at the RRFM is unpaid (volunteer, neighborhood work), or self-provisioning. Lastly, the RRFM is a communal form of enterprise (ownership,

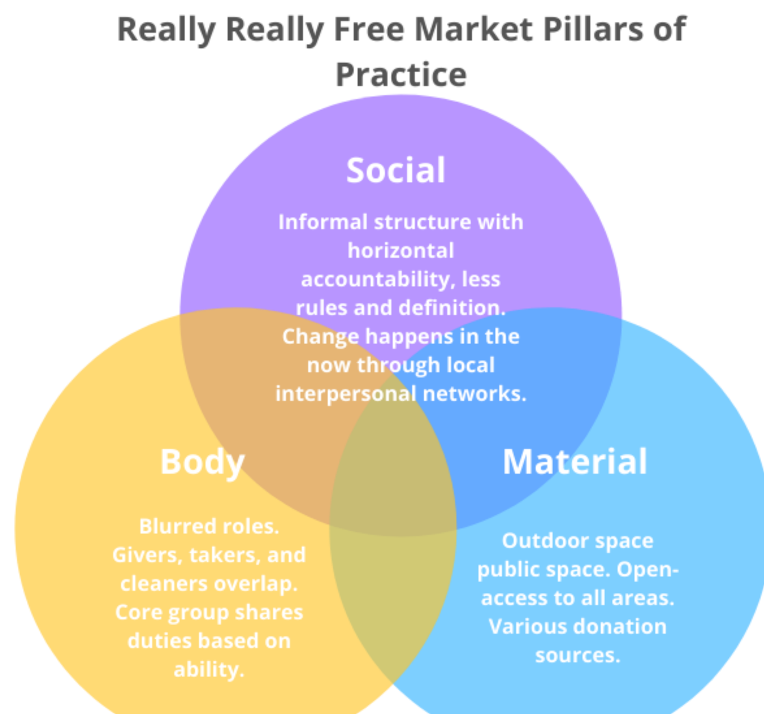

Figure 2: Really (Really) Free Market Agential Pillars of Practice

production, and appropriation of surplus) without any formalization. It does not exclude other transactions such as gift-giving, reciprocal labor, and independent enterprise activities.

Determining which model of free culture is desirable depends on the inclinations, interests, and resources of the organizing group. Their critical assessment of the social problems they wish to address and their assumptions about the available means to create change yields the conditions of the practice. They may become an alternative capitalist enterprise, with hybrid forms of transactional (capitalist) market, alternative market, or nonmarket in nature. Labor would be wage-based, alternative paid, or unpaid. The model could also remain beyond capitalist or alternative capitalist forms by seeking noncapitalist enterprise, with nonmarket transaction types and unpaid labor. However, the iterations of free culture practices under the current hegemonic systems can result in endless hybridization of these types. In the case of the Harrisburg RRFM group, obtaining a building or formalizing its legal status would change the fundamental nature of the RRFM's practice. Its values, roles, and relational aspects would also change, as would its mode of diverse economy. The internalized pressures to assume hegemonic traits raises an existential question that practitioners of the RRFM model must assess and periodically address as they go forward. In the Harrisburg RRFM, this controversy and discussion led to reconfirmation of the existing non-legal status and autonomous structure of the organization, for now.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, the RRFM was examined for its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The primary tension addressed here was the internal interest in becoming a legally recognized entity to obtain a building and receive direct donations of goods from retailers. Information and observations on the structure and activities of a nonprofit Free Store, were gathered and presented to the RRFM group. The RRFM made no major changes upon receiving the information, but the process itself uncovered new considerations and issues. Examining this tension reveals the persistence of external pressures to conform to hegemonic norms, which must constantly be balanced within the free culture practice.

My personal observation at the nonprofit Free Store confirmed that it was a much different practice than the autonomous RRFM. Thus, direct comparison between the Free Store and the RRFM was not sufficient. To see them each uniquely, the three pillars of practice theory's concept of agential interaction was applied. A diverse economies assessment of the transactions,

labor types, and enterprise forms was also applied to each to examine the heterogeneity of each model of free culture. The nonprofit Free Store is an alternative capitalist enterprise with a high level of hybridization with noncapitalist enterprise, wage and unpaid labor, and alternative market and nonmarket transactions. The autonomous RRFM is a noncapitalist enterprise with hybridization found only within unpaid labor and nonmarket transaction types. The RRFM was available for other individual interpretations of the noncapitalist/nonmarket/unpaid nexus. These conclusions are specific to the two models examined herein and should not be thought universal to all nonprofit 'free stores' nor autonomous 'RRFMs' but they may be useful in further research.

Most of the barriers faced by the RRFM come from the infrastructure, assumptions, and internalized pressures of the hegemonic world. But several of the core organizers concluded that becoming a legally recognized institution or gaining a physical building might bring more conflict than benefit. To enact a *really* free culture practice, it is necessary to maintain an informal and (dis)organized position. Critically, a horizontal group benefits from the generative conflict that comes from a diversity of ideas. This intersectionality enhances the prefigurative, emancipatory, transformative justice possibilities and process by embracing differences. In this case, it resulted in the RRFM's core organizers confirming their intention to continue as a prefigurative entity. But the discussion must remain ongoing for that conclusion to be authentic. Study of the Free Store practices allowed a reflexive examination for the RRFM group. It affirmed our activities and revived some interest in spreading the RRFM or reintroducing skill shares and music. But the research and conversations also left the possibility for change open. For now, the Harrisburg RRFM operates outside of institutional structures. This leaves the possibility of viral spread open, for mutual aid and care-practices to deepen. It can act as a tool for alternative ways of existing within the Harrisburg community. The autonomous RRFM movement, as in Harrisburg, seeks to prove that a group, even a world, does not need a bureaucracy or money to exist. When the rules are changed, people can adapt to a different economy. When a noncommittal free culture is created, a taste of freedom follows.

Chapter 5 examines the deeper social implications of the Free Store and RRFM practices in light of transformative justice praxis. It uses a trauma-informed approach to explore how external hegemonic structures and internalized assumptions influence free culture practice and how this must be continually addressed, questioned, and balanced between the collective participants.

Chapter 5. Being the Change and Getting Free

"*One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution.*" – Carol Hanisch[28]

The Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) movement prefigures (i.e., enacts in the present a vision of the future) a world based on cooperative problem-solving, where the 'common sense' social norms of community regulation, reciprocity, value relative to scarcity, entitlement, and property enclosures are disrupted. It generates a liberatory relationality by removing the constructs of economic and social barriers. The RRFM is also a protest of hegemonic capitalist structures for the inherent social and personal harms (i.e., trauma-oppressions) they cause, and which all of us endure (Chapter 3). Recognizing that "all our grievances are connected" (Schragis 2011; Myerson 2011), the RRFM builds communal resilience, establishes shared paths of recovery, and promotes mutual well-being. But creating utopia is never simple. There is a gap between theory and practice that requires continual mitigation. Prefigurative movements travel an inconsistent and contradictory terrain. The interpersonal flaws and tensions that fill the community of practice are not readily resolved but constitute the raw material necessary to create new practices. It is up to the people within this community to collaboratively address conflicts. The work of mitigating tension while learning new ways of being is known within abolitionist circles as transformative justice praxis. Transformative justice teaches empathy across difference and through shared vulnerability (Chapter 2). Two pitfalls of transformative justice are 1) the (often unintended) reaffirmation of power imbalances through binary relational constructs, and 2) failing to acknowledge the variety of ways trauma manifests itself interpersonally. These pitfalls are evident in this case study. This thesis employs an analytical autoethnographic approach to examine the RRFM practice in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and for comparison, a nonprofit Free Store[29] in a neighboring town. Chapter 4 concluded that, while both RRFM and Free Store are free culture endeavors, they constitute distinct practices.

[28] The term "the personal is political" is credited to Hanisch ([1969] 2009).

[29] It is important to note a terminological distinction. Sometimes, RRFM is colloquially called a 'Free Store' or 'Free Shop.' In this thesis the terms are not used interchangeably. The RRFM refers to the grassroots model while Free Store refers to the nonprofit, formal, state-recognized legal entity (i.e., nongovernmental organization, or NGO).

This chapter examines the research contributions from participants at both sites. The most ubiquitous themes were selected for an analysis using a (re)politicized trauma-informed approach, which draws the correlation between systemic and interpersonal trauma-oppression(s) with a lens that examines power in hierarchies (Chapter 3). The themes selected were poverty (hoarding and hustling), racism (structural and interpersonal), and control (as a trauma-induced behavior itself). Borrowing from SAMHSA (2014), this trauma-informed analysis discerns: 1) How participants realize trauma or *recognize* the signs and symptoms of trauma; and 2) Their *integration* of knowledge of trauma into their practices and *creating* paths of recovery. Applying a trauma-informed analysis of data within social research is novel. It necessitated using extensive quotes from research participants, which were analyzed to identify instances of trauma, understanding of trauma, or active resistance of re-traumatization. This demonstrates how a critical perspective on power can be combined with the trauma-informed principles. The same approach is applied to the topics of poverty, racism and white saviorism. Then discussion moves to whether the desire for control is itself a trauma-induced behavior. It concludes by examining the complications of addressing trauma-induced behavior within the free culture research sites and transformative justice praxis as a process of *becoming*.

Hoarding and Hustling Behaviors

Poverty is both traumatic and oppressive (TIC IRC 2021; See also: Chapter 3). Poverty can induce behavior, such as hoarding (amassing a disproportionate surplus of goods) and hustling (herein understood as taking items for resale). These behaviors were prominently mentioned by research participants, but they did not acknowledge the behaviors as stemming from trauma.

The nonprofit Free Store research site exists as a physical indoor location and operates more like a retail shop. At this site, hustling was sometimes characterized as a suspicious version of hoarding, theft, or vandalism. Alternatively, the RRFM takes place in an open-air collective commons so issues of hoarding and hustling were not a concern. The statements made by research participants reflect the similar assumptions which many people make about free culture practices (i.e., 'bad actors' are likely to abuse it). This section explores how the Free Store and RRFM practitioners recognize and respond to trauma-induced behaviors resulting from poverty and reveals the transformative justice potentials and contradictions within both models.

Recognizing the Behavior

All Free Store participants mentioned hoarders or hustlers as worrisome. Several described shoppers that routinely take excessive goods into their overflowing cars. The volunteers considered this behavior reprehensible:

> [We] watch the same faces every day [. . .] Just go through the line, through the line, pack the cars, hide the cars, put them down in the lower lot. So, we know every game 'cause we're out there. [. .] But yet they're taking high heels, evening dresses, and [. . .] I'm thinking, "They don't even use any of it." We made a joke. We should have a party on, everyone bring their- the best they got from the Free Store for a dress up party somewhere. Because no one - they don't even wear the clothes. [. . .] I know that they know that they [have] done too much, because I can see how they make their trips and where they park their cars. They'll park 'em on the street, on the far side, so they could walk right through between, throw it in the car, and come back with another empty bag and get the same thing again.[xxxiv]

Some versions of hustling were considered theft or vandalism and the volunteers installed a security camera. A volunteer noted individuals that came after-hours and rummaged through donations left on the Free Store porch.[xxxv] They mentioned theft of personal items belonging to volunteers or other shoppers (i.e., cell phones, personal bags, or shoes). According to one volunteer, "they'll grab anything."[xxxvi] The assumption was that hustlers and after-hours looters would sell items rather than stockpiling them for personal comfort.

This negative assessment of hustlers could be considered a fear of being manipulated or 'taken advantage of.' This negative assessment arises from the same fear that drives hoarding behavior. It stems from the trauma of poverty or scarcity. The Free Store organization has an obligation to their donors to ensure everything donated goes back to the community for free. These dual concerns may justify why volunteers take extra measures to discern the reasons why a shopper takes excessive items. In some cases, a shopper has excellent reasons: For example, one person shops for items to ship home to an African country.[xxxvii]

> Originally, I thought [the shopper] was kind of a scammer, too. And so, I went to [their] house one time [. . .they have] these boxes that says, "Freight Paid. United Nations. Postage.' So, [they'll] load all this stuff in there, [it] goes [abroad]. And [their] daughter meets it at the port, and they take it inland [. . .] You know, when I first met [the shopper], I said, '[Do they] live in [an] airport hangar?' But I went to [their] house, helped [them] unload some stuff, in the boxes ready to go. And then I talked to [their] dad on phone from [Europe - a professor] . . . and I think it's [the shopper's] daughter and she's a doctor there [in the African country]. And she goes inland. 'Cause she works with the organization called Doctors Without Borders. You ever hear of them? She's with them. And so, [the shopper is] legit. And [they] take the stuff that's just too excessive here. And

> like I said, everyone saying, '[They are] selling that stuff!' I said, 'Naw, I was in the house. I saw the boxes all about ready to go.'[xxxviii]

While this shopper was 'vetted' by one volunteer, others expressed frustration differently. As another volunteer explained:

> Oh my Gosh! [That shopper] still gets on our nerves! 'Cause [they] kept on tell how – how 'we [Americans] rich,' and 'we that.' And I said, 'You know, we're just as poor as anyone else around here. [. . .], 'What you mean?' I said, 'You know, I gotta pay my light bills. I'm struggling.' [. . .That shopper is] not hurting for anything. But, you know, [they were] just coming and just take it. So, we started just giving [them] the stuff that we wanted [them] to have. We sorted through everything, and we gave [them] what we don't want. [. . .The shopper wasn't] allowed to take anything else.[xxxix]

These reactions do not demonstrate an understanding that hoarding or hustling are related to trauma-oppressions. Instead, they sometimes impose negative attention on the shoppers displaying the behavior, irrespective of the potential underlying reason for the behavior.

Integrating Knowledge of Trauma into Practices

But some Free Store volunteers viewed hoarding or hustling as explicit signs of mental, emotional, or social trauma. When asked how they handle it, they cited informal rules: Shoppers were prohibited from accessing donations prior to sorting; some items were withheld to ensure even distribution (i.e., hygiene products or food). One volunteer was concerned that shoppers 'at the end of the line' get access to those special items.[xl] Another volunteer felt that if a shopper wanted something the Free Store had in excess, such as clothing, they were welcome to it.

One volunteer adamantly advocated instituting a "quid pro quo" structure.[xli] This response is antithetical to the Free Store mission. Shoppers already experiencing poverty-induced stress could respond with increased trauma-induced behaviors. Conversely, the very need to control access to items is a related and reactive trauma-induced behavior. The Free Store founder (also a regular volunteer) continually reinforced that "this is not our way."[xlii] Another volunteer mentioned the founder's role at reasserting the vision: "[The founder] being the most wonderful person I've ever met in my life, besides my daughter – I'll say, 'That guy came here, made three trips already, taking clothes.' [The founder just] says, 'Free Store.'"[xliii] While these perspectives indicate progress toward a trauma-informed practice, the fact that the founder must reassert the basic tenets of Free Store evidences that the practice is not yet fully integrated. One person, who had previous experience at a nearby Free Store, maintains the opposite approach. They explain why they moved away from Free Store volunteer work: "[At the other Free Store] there was a

little more concern with people taking advantage of things and a little more of a desire to kind of, you know, say, "OK, you can have five things not 10," or things like that. And that was a struggle for me 'cause that's not how I wanted to do it."[xliv] While the current activities at the Free Store site may not be evidence that trauma-informed activity is integrated, there remains a persistent desire to provide aid. The tension between these two views is like the tension between conforming to social norms and engaging in prefigurative practice as described in Chapter 4.

An integrated understanding that hoarding is a behavior connected to the trauma of poverty, inspires active resistance to re-traumatization. A volunteer stated:

> We have some people - that come back all the time and we know that they're hoarders. That's a hard one. Because I don't want to, you know; it's not my job. I never said I was going to help someone through a mental health issue, but also, I don't want to add to it. And I know, I see these cars and I know that they're not, you know [. . .] But again, I think that for us, at least, you know, in order to do this work, you have to know that it's not perfect. And if you're not asking people to prove that they need it, then they need it. [. . .] Either you're asking for proof and you're looking at paperwork and receipts and - or you're trusting that, you know, people are capable of doing for themselves.[xlv]

This volunteer avoids requiring a shopper to justify their behavior and instead trusts their ability to determine their own needs and limits. To them more rules do not solve the dilemma. This approach is aligned with trauma-informed principles and avoids re-traumatization of participants. Of the volunteers on-the-ground at Free Store, the founder continuously reminds others of the basic tenet: that everything is free with no restrictions. This recurring reminder is an example of *active* resistance to re-traumatization. This example originates from a reflexive personal practice. They have contemplated the concern of being taken advantage of and, rather than reacting with rules, they respond from a place of deliberation and empathy:

> I'm only responsible for how I react and how I respond to things. I can't control what anyone else does. [. . .] People say, 'Oh, people take advantage of you.' Why is that? Like, that doesn't reflect on me. Like, I don't care. [. . .] That's their behavior. Most things don't get to me. I know people are people first. I know that people are [. . .] the results of their environments, of their teachings, of their upbringings. And it allows me to see people as human, even if they're really terrible to me. I can still try to find a place to talk to them.[xlvi]

The perspectives of the RRFM organizers on the topic of hoarding and hustlers is radically different than those of the Free Store volunteers. Unlike Free Store, the RRFM has no obligation to ensure to 'donors' that things are not sold elsewhere. At RRFM there is no guarantee that certain items may be there because the aim is to build mutual aid networks, not to provide

specific goods.[30] Organizers hope attendees will take everything and ease the redistribution at the end of the event. As one organizer points out "Getting rid of everything is a good day," and this has instilled in the RRFM core group a feeling of "easy come, easy go."[xlvii] Regardless, several organizers have confronted their own discomfort when watching people stockpile items during the RRFM. One organizer reacted this way:

> I went through those stages through the [RRFM] several different times, going through there thinking, "Fucking assholes, taking the shit, and selling it!" to not caring, to getting mad again, to not caring. Because ultimately, I don't think it really matters, and how I feel at the moment doesn't matter either. Because if the stuff is getting out there, and somebody is using it to pay their rent or to make a couple dollars - they fucking must need that money, and it's not easy work.[xlviii]

This value must be regularly fostered in both internal conversations and to the wider RRFM community. One organizer stated:

> There aren't really rules. So, like people are looking for structure. Um, and so, there have been times when people come up and it's like trying to figure out who's in charge or trying to figure out what like requirements are for attendance or participation. And so, I just say, like, 'It's just a bunch of community members and we're just spending time together and sharing things that we don't need.' And so, I get a lot of like, very confused looks [. . .] After a little bit at the event they get more comfortable, and they're talking with people, and they spend more time there than they expected. So, they do definitely begin to learn that it's more. [. . .] I guess the whole fucking point is it's anti-hegemonic. [. . .] just like, a whole paradigm shift. It's not what you would expect. It's not what you would likely be used to or comfortable with because we're used to having highly structured lives, highly structured everything, being over-policed, and like living in the city I always have just like other – like neighbors trying to police me, too, on very little things. So, we're used to a world where we're all policing each other and trying to keep control and keep things orderly, and so when we remove that from people, it takes some time for their minds to readjust. And it seems like once they figure it out, they get more comfortable. And there are always a lot of questions. [. . .] We're always trying to rethink or unlearn, ah, consumerism, and ethics, and how we interact with each other.[xlix]

RRFM organizers respond to these requests for intervention (in situations where one or more attendees are ignoring social boundaries) by encouraging individuals to communicate their own need for space to the other attendees. But this is a process of empowerment that some attendees

[30] An apt example is diapers. The Free Store gets boxes of diapers and keeps them in a separate area to provide to shoppers only upon request. This prevents those who might try to sell or hoard them from taking too much and ensures that more people who need them can get them. Conversely, although an individual might bring diapers to the RRFM, there is no guarantee there will be any available at any given event. It is entirely serendipitous whether a particular need will be filled through with the material on hand. The organizers do not take 'stock' of the goods that come in during the event, thus no participant must ask an organizer for access. It is a 'free-for-all' event.

are not prepared for, as one organizer points out: "Instead of being able to articulate [their boundaries when other attendees grab unopened boxes] and being OK with that, it's like, 'Here's my box,' And they run away and then message us and say, 'You need to do something about that. You need to police that.'"[l] But this organizer later emphasized that the RRFM provides an opportune setting where participants might exercise their agency and personal autonomy:

> And I think [RRFM] gives people agency to choose what they want, it gives people bodily autonomy to say, 'I need some space here to unpack my box,' I think it gives people an opportunity to set boundaries. [. . .] And to say, 'You're in my space,' or 'I really wanted that,' [. . .] Now the other person doesn't have to necessarily respond in the way that you like, but at least you have an opportunity to say what you need.[li]

These suggestions come from a shared value among the organizers to avoid policing the activity. Attendees sometimes do the opposite. One organizer explained[lii] an incident at the November 2021 RRFM event where a participant set up a table of their own to disburse bags of vegetables. At first, this was confusing for the core group, but after assurances this participant was not selling anything, no one intervened. However, after speaking with this participant, the organizer realized how this kind of assertion of structure undermined the RRFM:

> I talked to her, and I said, 'Hey. Sorry if you've been berated by people who like, are making sure that you're not selling things. It's nice that you're bringing food.' I'm like, 'There's really no rules here except like, we don't want people selling things at this exact space.' And she kind of scoffed a little bit, um, about the concept of there not being rules. [. . .] She told me that she pre-bagged the food and she was handing it out to people because she didn't want it to be a free-for-all. Because she had witnessed people fighting over diapers, like two years ago at one of the [RRFM events. . .] She believes that she should have the right to decide who gets what. Or, what? It breaks out into chaos, I guess. If she didn't pre-bag the food and stand there at the table and make people approach her and ask her for food [. . .] if she just put the food out and then left, I guess she's under the belief that one person would take the whole thing and, then have a car full of produce that's gonna be [bad. . .] It's energy that – unless it's going to absolutely lead to some violence or coup, uh, I don't think it's energy well spent to sit there and try to regulate who gets what. I mean I think the diaper thing was just a handy example that she could point to, to then justify something else. [. . .] What made my brain flip flop is [. . .] she had no problem [saying], 'Well, I should decide who gets what,' like, 'Why shouldn't I?' I mean, she was very adamant about it. So, that was very off-putting. [. . .] That's your like, uh, the slippery slope thing - assuming that you're above - you're flawless.

This organizer continued with an observation that this behavior might cause conflict rather than prevent it. In contrast, they consider the relief when restrictions are lifted:

> It's interesting too, that once someone does the mental work to get to the point where you're like, 'No. Please don't regulate this. No, it doesn't matter that someone's taking it.'

> You know, if the worst case is that someone is taking something to resell it, and you've done the mental work to like, 'I don't even think about it anymore.' I don't think that that belief can be rocked back, you know what I mean? I think once you get there, there's kind of like an openness. Because it's freeing! 'Cause why do you want to worry about it? You know, it's not that hard to really connect the dots. [. . .] That brings up like, 'So, do you not let her show up?' which I don't see us [doing that even though] she's a food fascist.

In many ways, the organizers of RRFM consider it a reprieve from rules and expectations. RRFM practices constitute a potential path to recovery from the trauma of poverty and the fear of scarcity. The aim is that, with consistency, those taking 'too much' will learn to rely on the wider community to fill their needs, especially when they see that there is always more 'stuff' available. The hoarding behavior may decrease because the scarcity is relieved. Similarly, those with a desire to institute limits or a "quid pro quo"[liii] may also change their position by observing that a 'free-for-all'[liv] is not an invitation for conflict but rather quite liberating. Hegemonic thinking and norms are disrupted. As trust in the community allows healing to begin, the behaviors stemming from a fear of loss or lack of material items will subside.

Racism and the Nuance of White Saviors

Trauma-oppression arising from racism were discussed by most participants across both research sites, although it was not sought out. Some participants' statements recognize the historical fact and persistent nature of systemic white supremacy. At times, participants linked their recognition of racism to the hierarchical nature of charity or mission work. Others addressed the personal efforts of well-meaning (perceived) white people to 'do better.' Participants did not recognize that they were speaking about their own trauma from systemic oppressions, too. This is the trauma that comes from discovering that society was not as equitable as one was taught – and learning how entrenched systemic racism is within the American society. The tensions displayed herein indicate that trauma of systemic racism effects more than people of color.

Recognizing the Behavior

> They just don't seem like they really doing anything about it, you know, even with all the protests. With George Floyd, stuff like that. You may got a little bit, some type of satisfaction, just a little bit, but you can't change a leopard [spots to] stripes. He's still going to have spots. He's still a leopard. So, white people will be that prejudiced if they are. That's not going to change now. You know? So, but I know there's some, there's some that try. And, you know, that's good. [. . .] We got a lot come down here.[lv]

There always have been white people who recognize systemic racism. Rather than simply recognizing structural racism, some research participants preemptively announced their anti-

racist position or awareness of structural problems. But do these actors realize that they too are exhibiting trauma behaviors?

> I-I would not take what our minority population has taken for 400 - You wouldn't tell me to wait another 20-30 years! I waited 400. OK? [. .] I would be in the mountains probably fighting you like a guerrilla. I'm afraid-I'm afraid I would. I would not accept this-this-this treatment. It is repugnant to think that you judge someone on the color of their skin. Who said it so succinctly? Martin Luther King. I mean, think of it! How stupid can you be?" [later] "But it's-it's difficult to talk about - being white - because it's a long conversation, and it involves many different facets of life. So, you'll think, 'Boy, [th-they] sounds like a - in one instance, [they] sounds like a closet racist.' No, it's-it's so complex.[lvi]

This reflexive statement displays recognition of systemic and historical traumas in the U.S. context. It also illustrates how the volunteer distances themself from pervasive racism by making themselves exceptional (i.e., an exception). This is itself a trauma-induced behavior, and also trauma-inducing by placing a burden on a person of color receiving the statement to reassure the speaker that they are, indeed, an exception. This volunteer went on to describe that they went most of their life without knowing "the other side" but now:

> I found that I can - I can get the people of color to accept me, and it takes a while. I dig it, man, I dig it. 'Cause, man, I'd be - I'm telling you; I'd be up in the mountains fighting like a guerilla. OK. They really accept me and trust me now. And it took a while. [. . .] But I'm happy about [it]. My volunteers are just - they're my family. They're my wives, they're my Free Store wives. I mean they literally take care of me. They're smart.[lvii]

Statements like these subtly confirm imbalanced power dynamics (both racial and gendered, as the case is here). While there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the relationships which this volunteer has built, there is a reassertion of difference contained in the statement: "the other side," or "them" instead of "we." This shows the sense of distance and desire for acceptance and affirmation from a racialized group of people. It can create a path of recovery from internalized guilt of racism for the speaker but might constitute a re-traumatization for others. A RRFM organizer clarifies that for some, 'helping' vulnerable and oppressed groups is a way to "feel better" about one's own privileged position in society:

> Well, when I think about mission work, so often it is created by the people who are the missionaries - and I'm just using that in the larger sense - without any input from the people they'll be working with. So, it is hierarchical, it's top down, it's 'I know what you need,' and it's very paternalistic, and like a savior mentality. 'I have just what you need and I'm going to fix everything for you,' and I think that's the case whether [. . .] it's a trash cleanup, you know, [or] going to South America, Central America. If you're not taking direction from the people who live there about what they need [. . .] and if you're not accountable to them for doing what they've asked you to do, then it's really just

> whiteness. [. . .] And so often I think mission work - and that includes trash cleanups - makes the people - the people who do it feel good because they're helping someone. And it's - and I'm not about making other people feel good. [. . .] It's not changing the conditions that people live in. [. . .] That's part of my thing about trash cleanups too. You know? Great. You clean up the trash and things look nice, but it doesn't essentially change the conditions that people live in. And by conditions I don't mean the surroundings, I mean the racist, white supremacist, oppression system that people live in. It does nothing for that, and mostly the people who picked up the trash just feel really good.[lviii][31]

The organizer recognizes a tension in the desire to 'help' others who are perceived as oppressed and connects it to a binary assumption that one group (people of color, poor) are in need, incapable, or in other ways deficient, while another group (white people, not poor) are perceived as abundant, able, and whole. This shows a subtle reassertion of hierarchy between racialized actors, which risks of re-traumatization; it might create healing for one at the expense of another.

Integrating Knowledge of Trauma into Practice

A RRFM organizer explains 'white saviorism' with examples from the history of social work in the U.S. During the Industrial era and onward, social workers were usually white people who entered poor urban communities of color and advised them to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps."[lix] This organizer is aware of this and its implications for current social dynamics:

> It's all about power and then when it's uneven. And so, I mean, that's also a thing with social work is there innately always power dynamics within a situation. So, if I'm somewhere and I'm a white [person] going into a community, if I'm the one who chooses whether their kids stay or leave at home, I have an immense amount of power over that person and that family in that situation. So, the [RRFM] takes away – or it doesn't take away power, [it] just throws out equal amounts of power. It recognizes that power's not a pie, and you can't like divvy it up and have to divvy up equally. Everyone always has that innate immense amount of power.[lx]

This organizer recognizes that deepened historical white supremacist structures continue to work in present interpersonal spaces. Similarly, one Free Store research participant understood historically racialized trauma when starting a Free Store in a neighboring district. They also internalized racialized separation from the community which they lived and worked in, "I knew I couldn't do it alone. [The neighborhood] is a predominantly black community [. . .] I'm a white person. I knew I couldn't just be like, 'Here I am everyone,' you know, 'take this free stuff.'"[lxi] This volunteer stated that if their friend Quinn was not a part of the community, they never would

[31] The "trash cleanup" event this organizer references are instances groups outside an urban neighborhood organize a litter clean-up within the neighborhood. The volunteers here do not generally live within the neighborhood they set out to improve. This organizer is indicating that this activity has classist and racialized connotations.

have gotten involved with Free-Range Inclusion out of concern for perpetuating a paternalistic and racialized missionary dynamic. The volunteer recognizes and integrates knowledge of racialized oppression in their current work, as indicated here:

> I only say this because I don't know what it's like to live in a - in a world where it's like trauma to trauma to trauma to trauma. And that's what a lot of our community members are dealing with, and the idea that, you know, that we can lessen one burden by giving them, you know, clothing for the fall. That's not charity. That's what anyone should do, you know? And maybe-maybe I'm thinking of charity and the like, you know, like, again me like 'white savior.' You know? But it's just, I just think it's - it should be just basic. Right? Like, it's what we should do. We should - we're not doing this to - we're not fixing the problem [. . .] Like, it's not charity in that way. It's just helping - trying to help people with basics that let them live, you know, let them have money left over for their kids' school uniforms or whatever. You know?[lxii]

While working to integrate awareness of structural oppression and poverty into their practice, this volunteer continues to identify as uniquely separate from racial trauma because they do not live "a life of traumas." By failing to acknowledge that trauma-oppressions are pervasive and diverse, there is risk of re-traumatization. This conundrum is evident in the RRFM too. Both sites provided perspectives that integrate knowledge of racialized trauma but also invertedly reaffirmed its hierarchical power imbalances. For example, one RRFM organizer likens their free culture experiences to their personal journey as a self-identified abolitionist and anti-racist. They consider their involvement in mutual aid groups as an act of direct reparations, even though the government is responsible for answering for systemic, historical, racial oppressions:

> That's yet another assumption that I think the [RRFM] challenges - in ways in which we can do things like reparations directly without waiting for government [and] without some hierarchical framework to make that happen. Do I think that as a - as a country, as a city, as a county – we still owe reparations? Absolutely. My personal reparations don't absolve th-those larger bodies of that. But it's what I - but it's what I can control. [. . .] I mean, the bill is there, and it's owed, whether I pay it or not, whether the city pays it or not. It doesn't matter. It's there and it's owed, and the debt is getting larger. And, so, I think ideas like the [RRFM] kind of crashed through that [. . .] And I use the term 'crash' because it does kind of punch through that barrier and say, 'You don't have to have this framework to do this. This is something that you can do directly.' And it is a way to imagine a future which is less hierarchical and more local.[lxiii]

This organizer acknowledges their actions do not absolve government bodies from their culpability. They also illustrate the direct-action character of mutual aid and the RRFM. But this position – that mutual aid operates as a mechanism of direct reparations – risks turning structural harm into an interpersonal mission while also affirming a racial binary. Concern of this risk

should not prevent individuals from taking direct action, nor should this absolve people with perceived privilege from doing intentional work to challenge the constructs they have assumed. It should rather inspire reflection upon whether one's actions are reasserting a hierarchical relationship. There is a nuance to this awareness, a 'both/and' scenario, by doing both personal actions and holding the broader system(s) responsible for causing *multivarious* forms of trauma.

Is RRFM functioning as a potential mechanism of direct reparations? It is an intersection of class, race, and status in the RRFM community. As one volunteer explains, the RRFM "looks like Harrisburg [with] blends of race and demographics."[lxiv] So, the RRFM does not exclusively benefit people of color, nor does it exclusively benefit poorer people. Another organizer, took offense at the notion entirely, and disavowed the reassertion of racial binaries at the RRFM:

> I think the white saviorism is interesting. I don't think it's the whole focus [at the RRFM]. But it is interesting because, especially right now, there is a focus on like helping the black community and being a white ally and 'blah blah blah.' And honestly, it's a little like, unnatural and tiresome. Because I think if you're being an ally, it doesn't actually have to be that forced. [. . .] They seem to make a point like every other sentence, bringing up what they're doing for black people. And it's like I don't - every black person I see come through doesn't look like they need your help. You know? And you haven't actually done anything to help them specifically, so I don't know why you feel like you're helping people. Like, what's the benefit that you're getting? 'Cause you actually didn't do anything except for stand there and clean stuff up. So that's a little weird to feel like you get a pat on the back, and you get to call yourself a white ally because you stood by and watched a person that happened to be black look at stuff. And you feel like because they're black they needed it. And somehow so you're taking some weird sort of credit for them just looking at something, and you watched. That's weird. [. . .] There was no social justice that happened there. Like, they weren't even there for that reason! So, now you're offering help that like, is unsolicited. [. . .] It's complicated, too, when you have people like us who are not - who are passing [for white or have light-skinned appearance]. Like, it's complicated! [. . .] There's like, other people, like there are people who speak Spanish, there are people that I assume are Middle Eastern descent. [. . .] For you to like somehow to make this - to specifically call out that this is the name of helping black people - yeah, you're doing a white savior thing. There's no room for that. It's so unnatural. You've made it a forced thing, again.[lxv]

This statement indicates that the "ally" position operates to determine who is or who isn't in need of help and invents a guise of racial reckoning where there may be none. Another RRFM organizer considers the personal reparations perspective to be based upon a larger systemic issue resulting in information being withheld in normative culture and educational settings.

> I haven't seen that [i.e., the RRFM functioning as an act of reparations]. There's people that I knew that came that – that are pretty well to do. Or are middle [class]. So. Yeah - so

> that doesn't apply to us. [. . .] That's their [i.e., the organizer who talked about reparations] bias to begin with - or that's their ideology to begin with. And it's not from the [RRFM]. It's from their perception of what goes on between white [people] and people of color. It's that -that's the thing that is so hard to change, because we don't really see it. Because we've lived with it, grew up with it. Just like I was appalled to think that I was never taught about Tulsa. I knew about the KKK. And I knew about lynchings, but not that much about lynchings. Maybe there was one here or there - I didn't know that there were, you know, so many. But we were robbed of that education, which is why today we have this discrimination. That it continues because we never had the education. It all comes down to education.[lxvi][32]

The RRFM is a protest against the oppressive conditions that created traumatic social circumstances (including the internalization of hegemonic constructs). It is inferred from the organizer above that highlights the apparent bias from well-meaning actors may stem from a purposeful, ongoing omission in hegemonic knowledge production (Chapter 1). Several factors, although at times seemingly mutually contradictory, work simultaneously in the RRFM group. The organizer arguing for direct reparations even holds varying opinions on this matter:

> I don't see free stores [or RRFMs] as a mission field. 'Cause we're - and we're also not really asking anyone to believe or do or act in a certain way as long as they're not violent or unsafe. Um, and then charity. Charity, again, is really a top down. You have to be 'worthy,' you have to tell me why you need it, 'Are you really that poor?' You know, there's a lot of questions around worthiness for charities. Just a lot of questions. And a lot of that I think as built on - actually probably both of them, charity and mission work, but more so charity - that somehow being poor is a moral failure. That you've clearly done something to deserve to be poor. Like you didn't spend your money right, or, you know, you quit school, or there was a drug, you know, drug addiction, or alcoholic. And it's neither of-of those, but especially charity, ever recognizes the systemic nature of things that create and keep people poor. And I think the [RRFM] challenges that. It challenges that because there's no moral judgment there. Right? Like, 'You can take what you need. We don't care if you're. . .we don't care if you're poor or somebody who ate lunch at the [Open Grill] and stopped by and saw cool painting.' Like, it doesn't matter.[lxvii][33]

This organizer implies that the 'no strings attached,' power-equalizing dynamics at RRFM is applicable to help address poverty issues. On the other hand, they see their reason for being involved as 'helping' people of color. This is contradictory since both poverty and racialized differences are sites of trauma, and they constitute intersectional oppressions. This contradiction,

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[32] The Tulsa race massacre occurred over several days in 1921 in the US state of Oklahoma. White neighbors burned a black district, the wealthiest in the nation at the time, commonly known as 'Black Wall Street' - along with homes, churches, and schools. Destruction spread for 30-40 square-blocks, injuries and deaths were undercounted. It is considered one of the worst incidents of racial terrorism in U.S. history.

[33] Open Grill is a restaurant criticized as a gentrifying force for attracting a white, suburban clientele into the city.

found in both research sites, demonstrates an incomplete knowledge of the multiplicity and pervasiveness of trauma-oppressions. This displays the tensions in prefigurative, emancipatory, and intersectional politics: *getting* free in a world that is not yet free of systematic, historical, and present cycles of trauma. A resolution requires an *active* resistance to re-traumatization.

Alternative to the ally posture is the approach of the 'accomplice,' which challenges the power imbalance of the 'helper' and the 'helped.' The approach acknowledges historic racism and unlearns internalized privilege while insisting on the innate power and agency of others. As per Lilla Watson, "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" (Lilla: International Women's Network n.d.).[34] The accomplice posture heeds this advice and operates with a sense of mutuality, working together in a horizontal relationality with awareness of the tangible social and material impacts of various oppressions (See: IndigenousAction.org 2014). In the extreme, the accomplice seeks a universal neutral equality but risks overlooking the full complexity of racial oppression. This extreme also risks re-traumatization through *erasure*. Erasure of trauma does not allow for discussion of harm-reduction, pathways to recovery, or possibility of expanded relationships. It can create misunderstandings, poorly informed responses, and unchecked pain. It confines the culture to a reactive or punitive construct, where neither collective recovery nor transformative justice is possible. The accomplice approach requires constant revision. It is a *process*, as opposed to a static role that one can *attain*. This is the case with intentional, horizontal, prefigurative social arrangements that embrace difference. Such arrangements create a collective environment where it is possible to acknowledge trauma, change behaviors, and end harmful cycles. The nexus of transformative movements is the process, not the intended end point. As one organizer put it: "I think it's just continually re-evaluating basic assumptions we have. And un-learning. So, I think there's always the tensions that occur but it's simply the tensions [between] the hegemonic view and what we're trying to do, or what may be possible, or what is available. And figuring [it] out."[lxviii]

[34] This quote is often attributed to Watson, and aboriginal activist, who said something like it at the 1985 United Nations Decade for Women conference in Nairobi (Leonen 2004). However, it may have come from a collective group process during a period of organizing for Black Power and Indigenous Rights between 1965 and the early 1970s (Mz.ManyNames 2008; Lilla: International Women's Network n.d.).

Avoiding re-traumatization is best pursued by actively balancing extremes, such as the erasure of racialized trauma or the subtle reinstitution of the hierarchy that caused it. At Free Store, the founder provided a personal example of how to actively resist the re-traumatization(s) of erasure or of hierarchy. They have biracial children who are perceived as being white while the founder is not and is even sometimes mistaken as the children's nanny. In other instances, they have been told they are an "exceptional immigrant." They have discovered different ways to process these assumptions. "It's choosing how I respond to that, in a way that it's actually going to be effective," they explain, "I can get hurt and I can cry, which happens. Or I can try to understand [it's] because someone taught them to feel this way. Right?"[lxix] By taking the latter perspective, the founder can work toward collective healing rather than personally vindication:

> There's a quote I love, and it says, 'If we don't transform our pain, we will transmit it.' So, I think I'm around a lot of people that are transmitting that pain. And I chose to transform it. Like, whatever I experience that wasn't great, how can I respond to that in a way that's beautiful? Free Store, [Free Food Cycle, Free-Range Inclusion]. So, that it changes that feeling into a reaction that's beautiful, and one less person has to feel whatever that feeling was.[lxx]

This example shows the trauma-informed approach: 1) accepting pain (trauma) as pervasive and unique to each individual's experiences and acknowledging the behavior as connected to this pain; 2) integrating this knowledge into the activities of the nonprofit trifecta; and 3) resisting constructs that might recreate the harms (or transmit the pain) – opening a pathway to recovery by maintaining the potential to transform it. A RRFM organizer offered a similar insight into avoidance of re-traumatization caused by erasure of difference, or other assumptions:

> Yeah. Well, I think that we're about 97% agreed on everything. It's just in how we talk about it. I live in a rural area, I don't even like saying that, because some people use the 'rural people' as a certain monolith. And, you know, black people aren't a monolith, white people aren't a monolith, you know, gay people aren't a monolith. Nobody can fucking speak for everybody. In rural areas, people care that their kids are safe, they care about clean air and clean water, they - you know. There's some people that do dump shit because they're ignorant. And burning trash and throwing plastic bottle in it. You know? But people do care about these things. And if they were educated, and they were talking with people that weren't alienating them in some way, I think that it would get a lot farther. [. . .] I dunno. It's just how we talk to each other and-and-and being truly open why you're here, and-and-and not looking for an offense. But maybe actually looking to avoid that. Just say, 'Overlook that,' or just say, 'See where they're going with it,' or whatever. You know? And trying to understand people. 'Cause I think that we all are more alike than we think, you know? And there's a lot of ignorance out there. If you've never been around something that's different, you only know what you know and what you've been exposed to. You are your environment, to a great deal.[lxxi]

The organizer expressed a desire for better communication across social difference by actively avoiding alienating people or reactive judgements. Generalizations about identities and impatience are the sources of communication failures. This organizer enacted a parallel to the "transform pain" approach:

> But trying to change people's minds isn't gonna change anything. And the very sad truth of it is, is the difference[s] that divide the biggest people - the biggest assholes - from my perspective, is so little that we gotta find a way to communicate with them. [. . .] So, I figured, you know, I'm just trying to be cordial, you know, get along with these people. They're my neighbors. I got neighbors across the street with the fucking confederate flag. When I get extra food from getting a donation for Food not Bombs, I go around and give this food to some of my neighbors. And only one of my neighbors - and they don't sound like it - but I think only one of my neighbors is not really that prejudiced, you know? And don't always sound like that, but I don't think it's in their heart. I just think they say stupid shit sometimes 'cause they're ignorant. But you know, you gotta get along with people. You've gotta interact with these people, you know. I think that my way of interacting with them may in the long run helped them better become, you know, better people than, uh, trying to argue with 'em all the time.[lxxii]

This organizer empathized with their neighbors, despite "the pain they transmit." This attempt to get along with neighbors brandishing confederate flags (a long-recognized symbol of white supremacist identity) is not something everyone could (or should) take on for risk of re-traumatization. Like the volunteer at Free Store above, yet another RRFM organizer sees the social activities of the RRFM as aspiring to resist re-traumatization. But in contrast to Free Store volunteers, this organizer described it as a collective effort:

> I think that the people who do tend to show up and definitely the people who organize are actually concerned and try to be aware of the variety of people that might show up and making sure that their wellbeing is maintained. Not that it's their job to. [. . .] The people who are there I think try their best to be informed about the different walks of life that could show up there and so they want to make it an inclusive space. So then again, like what's happening there - that's like a counterdemonstration to like, capitalism and like, the way our society works right now and the way we treat each other is just like, again that expression in the acceptance with like identity or whatever. Yeah. But that doesn't happen in our capitalist society because you have to be a certain way for work, you have to be a certain way when you go to church, you have to be – there are expectations when you go into a store, there are expectations when you go into a bar.[lxxiii]

This organizer illustrates how the double meaning of 'free' works at the RRFM. A social or personal freedom follows the abandonment of hegemonic cultural norms.

The trauma of systemic racism effects more than people of color. Internalized notions of racial privilege can instill feelings of guilt and the urgency to remedy systemic problems by changing

one's own behavior. This can be a misplacement of responsibility is trauma-induced and results in two outcomes. First, it displaces the onus from the cultural and historical reality onto the individual. Additionally, internalizing guilt over racialized privilege can generate another version of the oppressive power dynamic that it intends to combat. It affirms the racialized binary and the power imbalances of hierarchical relationships under oppressive hegemony, and risks re-traumatizing everyone involved. It is possible to be aware of systemic racism yet to think that it does not change one's own behavior, especially if one is not receiving the greatest harm from it. One can even integrate this partial awareness into one's own actions, yet it may limit how one's actions are executed. This position can reduce some harms while introducing new harms. The practice remains in a transitional state rather than meeting the full transformative potential of the trauma-informed approach. A pathway to collective recovery is untenable when actors are operating from a perspective of guilt and assert their difference or exceptionalism to the pervasiveness of racial trauma(s). To transform society, understanding the realities and multivarious effects of traumas and acting from empathy to resist re-traumatization are all required. Although traumas come in many forms and are individual, they are certainly pervasive and often connected to systemic oppression. Oppression causes interpersonal cycles of re-traumatization but can be mitigated by looking at difficult truths and pursuing a cultural shift. Understanding that "all our grievances are connected" (Schragis 2011) and seeking to collaborate across our differences generates the potential for transforming pain rather than transmitting it.

Control and Surrender

Certain behaviors stemming from the traumas of scarcity or racism are generally overlooked. The need to control, manage, deny, or separate oneself from the harm itself is also a trauma response to scarcity or racism. The posture of over-correction can cause an unintended power imbalance that re-traumatizes people. The acceptance of trauma as a common condition allows an individual or group to begin transformative healing. It is hard work that cannot be overlooked or simplified. The RRFM free-for-all and (dis)organization creates a space where trust, autonomy, and freedom from control (both external and internal) may be realized. Yet, the desire to control continues to enter the RRFM collective framework. It appeared among RRFM ideological conflicts in multiple ways. When considering how Free-Range Inclusion obtains retailer goods by paying an annual fee to Stuff Link, one participant had a strong reaction during a group meeting:

> Now I see that they were getting donations that were off - that were going to be destroyed because there was too much of name-brand shit. And I could see that could be a slippery slope that you're supporting that and-and I would undermine it and I'd get kicked out of that program really quickly. [And later] If I got hooked up with those [Free-Range Inclusion] people, I'd get kicked out really quick 'cause I'd - that would not go over.[lxxiv]

Paying for a retailer's excess products seemed antithetical to the vision of a free culture. Capitalist profits are still made, and excess resources are still used in production. Monetary resources are pulled away from the local community and placed back into the globalist industrial complex. Another organizer had a contrary reaction:

> I don't agree with that at all. I think that's silly. [. . .] I can't stop IKEA from making that shit. But like, I can redistribute this good shit that's been handed to me. [. . .] When you gatekeep who can give help, how help is supposed to look, or whatever - I'm not even going to say help. When you gatekeep how the participation's supposed to look but it still, at the end of the day, happened, and somebody wanted it, and it went where it needed to be, like, who the fuck cares? [. . .If] somebody hands me a free IKEA 'blah blah blah,' I'm going to just fucking take it. [. . .] It's IKEA's problem for making too much. That's a whole different story and actually it's out of my control. And so, I don't have like, time to sit and try to like, figure out - to gatekeep - what goods come, how they got there, why they got there, and if it was like, morally right [or] in alignment to like, you know, whatever like, anti-capitalist or anarchist thing that I'm trying to do. 'Cause that's where you just - like you get different flavors of anarchist there, too. So. No. I can't. I can't sit and do that. That's unhealthy. [. . .] So, it's like, 'Fucking, OK then. That's cool. If someone wants to pay $10,000 to make sure they can get good free shit, that's on them. And it's not my problem.' I personally would not put that amount - as much effort into it. Because I'm not gonna say who can and cannot participate in [RRFM]. And if they [i.e., Free Store] wanna do it in a different way [so what?] That's no different than if you have somebody at our [RRFM] which is much on a smaller scale [than the Free Store] who goes 'I want to buy 100 brand new first aid kits to distribute at [RRFM].' Well, they just put their money into it, so it wasn't really free, but it was brand new, and it's useful, and it is better sterile. And am I gonna turn that person away because they spent all this money on sterile, brand-new things that they wanted to just distribute at [RRFM]? Like, am I gonna gatekeep that? Tell them they can't participate because they spent money? No. It's free.[lxxv]

This organizer concluded that there was no perfect way to participate in a free culture. They found it an act of harm reduction to allow for the free flow of things without getting too concerned about the associated details. They felt that creating change on a global scale might be unattainable for community-level practices. Further, local participants do not bear the same responsibility to change as does a corporate retailer, so why assume the feeling of guilt?[lxxvi] These two views illustrate the generative tensions in continuing a free culture, prefigurative

practice which contradicts the wider narrative that we can embody multiple, conflicting truths and still take collective action. Yet another organizer reflected, “All the things can be true.” [lxxvii] By doing things mindfully while also releasing obligation and guilt, a radical simplicity and acceptance is possible. As this organizer reflected on the Free Store (as well as the anecdote about the “food fascist,”) they see how multiple practices can accumulate toward a better society:

> People who wanna get things done wanna get things done in their own way. And they got their own complicated reasons for doing it. And it's hard to see some sides of that. There are sides of that that don't - at all – fit in with the way I would do things. But I don’t know that the way I would do things is perfect either. And [the founder is] getting something done. And that is a lot more important than I think I ever gave credit for in my youth. And I feel like Occupy [Harrisburg] was something that opened my eyes to how much that is true, and how little weight I was giving to other people’s viewpoints coming into it. So, I’m happy that they’re doing [Free Store]. I mean, it all helps. It all helps. It also all hurts and is not perfect and leads people in the wrong direction. But it’s part of what crowdsourcing is, to – that eventually, over time – Yeah, everybody picks up the reigns and steers it in a little bit of a different direction. But you’re looking – hopefully, at the overall arc of history – and every little bit does its part to get that way.

The RRFM practice is one of relinquishing control by refusing rules, accepting multiple truths, and allowing leniency for those choosing the path of harm reduction over perfection. This insistence on a real ‘free-for-all,’ (dis)organization, and horizontal co-creation benefits both the wider community of practice and the Harrisburg RRFM group. This intentional posture is both an *integration* of trauma awareness and an *active resistance of re-traumatization*. “I don't think [RRFM] asks for you to give anything whether it's your time, your attention, [or] a conversion in your values in life. I don't think it asks any of that of you,” one organizer says, “It's free! So, like, you are like spiritually free there. You're free to be a person. [. . .] I think most people just want to be in spaces where there are no strings attached and I think that's how most people actually want to live. We're just accustomed to living the way that we're living right now, and that's under, like, the capitalist umbrella, you know?”[lxxviii] This organizer indicates that the RRFM is a political demonstration of mutual aid, the antidote to capitalist life. The organizer stated:

> We might not be able to like change capitalism and production of stuff on a mass scale, but like, we can change how we interact with each other, and how real we are with each other, and how we spend our time. [. . .] It's even like, step away from feeling like everything has to have a purpose. Like you're either helping somebody, or you're making money, or you're making yourself better. It's like, “No, sometimes you're just existing.” So, yeah. There's something more to the spiritual practice of this and breaking free of all of that - like feeling like everything has to have a purpose. Sometimes you just are. [. . .]

> So, for the people who show up there all the time, like, I don't even know that they're actually showing up because they're expecting to get something. [. . .] So why are they coming? It's the spiritual practice![lxxix]

Another organizer described the RRFM as an "intentional and mindful" activity, and that the collective community encouraged attendees to not take anything for granted.[lxxx] Similarly to the quote above, this organizer appreciated the non-judgmental atmosphere filled with great, unexpected conversations: "We're just kind of trying to figure out how to be human and exist in this new space together."[lxxxi] This organizer saw RRFM as a reprieve from other organizing:

> There are a lot of shitty things in the world right now. Sometimes we gotta just deal with the immediate issues, sometimes we gotta advocate for systemic changes, but sometimes just to like, keep our sanity, we need to create a little piece of that utopia. And when I've been burned out and when I was tired like, it's been a long-ass year, uhm, the [RRFM] was always refreshing. Not refreshing – re-invigorating, re-enlightening? No. Something like that. Like, it gave me the energy, it was comforting, it was celebratory, but like realistic and pragmatic. [. . .] That's the whole point of the Sabbath - is the world sucks you gotta live there every fucking day, so for the Sabbath, have your own little piece of that utopia, that heaven, that whatever you want to call it - that perfect space where you can do what you want like, be who you are, um. . .and take care of your like, spiritual self, your whole self, and just fill in those gaps that society does not give a damn about.[lxxxii]

In prefigurative movements, the means *are* the ends. While it is unclear whether the RRFM is a fully actualized trauma-informed activity, the benefits extend beyond filling material needs and toward a proactive, unique social and personal reality. It provides a lesson in relinquishing control, accepting things you cannot change, embracing multiplicity, and revaluing relationships.

Conclusion

The effects of trauma are not limited to those who receive its direct impacts. This analysis ascertained that trauma-induced behaviors include efforts to deny, erase, control, or to (unintentionally) restore hierarchy. Reaching a level of active resistance to re-traumatization is a dialectical, ongoing, collaborative process. If trauma is pervasive and diverse, all people living in society suffer from trauma to various degrees. Understanding the cultural sources of trauma(s) is essential to moving beyond the internalized and interpersonal oppression. The RRFM and Free Store show that when rules are removed, people can adapt but unlearning hegemonic culture is uneasy work. The potential pathways to collective recovery revealed from both research sites are specific to the practices of their respective models of free culture. In the case of RRFM, where resistance to rules is the most pronounced, participants describe it as a liberatory, spiritual space.

The tension between the hegemonic pressures and the prefigurative experience is addressed by free culture practitioners in a dialectical, collective, and iterative way. At Free Store, the institutional mission and the vision of the founder hold the notion of beauty and pain transformation in the foreground to counterbalance hegemonic or trauma-based behaviors. At RRFM the values of trust, personal autonomy, and refusal of rules circulate across the core organizers, and likely across the wider community. Both seek to alleviate human pain. Achieving a trauma-informed practice is an ongoing process of *becoming*. Both the Free Store and the RRFM core groups show a plurality of capacities toward a trauma-informed practice. Together, they display the two biggest pitfalls toward a trauma-informed or transformative justice practice: 1) failing to acknowledge trauma-oppressions in all their various forms and manifestations; and 2) unintentionally reaffirming hegemonic binaries by asserting difference over solidarity. The steps to a trauma-informed approach are not linear. Prefigurative projects are imperfect. They are iterative processes that are co-created, situated, and localized. They require active maintenance and constitute never-ending projects which are adapted from trauma and generative conflicts to produce possibilities for new future social arrangements. They exist in a liminal space, beyond transitional change and edging toward transformation, enacted in the now.

Combining a critique of hierarchy and the trauma-informed organizational principles may prove a productive exercise for future social research. This may also prove useful to autonomous free culture, mutual aid, and/or transformative justice practitioners for internal assessments. It helps uncover the complexities of the free culture social practices and show how these adapt to and engage with their inherent transformative justice processes. A given group should always reassess its strategies to minimize distress and/or mitigate common characteristics of traumatic experiences in its environment and relationships (SAMHSA 2015). Hence, the tension of persistent hegemonic constructs within prefigurative works becomes visible: We are not yet free until there are radical changes to systems of regulation and society at large, but we can try to get free. This exploration will continue through the Diverse Economies lens in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6. The Otherwise and the Meanwhile

The aim of diverse economies scholarship is to "disorder the capitalist landscape, to queer it" (Gibson-Graham 2006, 77). It studies and promotes experimentation with social, economic, and ecological constructs to enable the opportunity of different futures. Diverse economies studies are regarded as an ethical intervention (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski, 2020) which centers the interdependence between the human and more-than-human world. Toward 'queering the academic landscape,' J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) provided alternative terminology to accommodate diverse economies research seeking knowledge and practices beyond *capitalocentrism* (the hegemonic capitalist narrative which upholds inequality and environmental degradation). Gibson-Graham outline (2008) data analysis methods, such as: ontological reframing (to produce the ground of possibility); re-reading data to uncover or 'excavate' the possible (i.e., reading for difference rather than dominance); and generating actual possibilities where none formerly existed (Chapter 3). In this thesis, ontological reframing was covered in the first three chapters, particularly Chapter 1. The findings and analysis found in Chapters 4 and 5 were aimed at reading for differences and generating possibilities. This conversation is continued in this chapter through a diverse economies lens to excavate the possibilities that remain.

Pressure to conform to the capitalist metanarrative is a source of strong tension within the free culture practice as well as within social research. As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, diverse economies research paradigm has been roundly criticized for neglecting the racialized and gendered oppressions under capitalism as well as within the alternative economies which it studies. It may be difficult to work within diverse economies scholarship because these aspects of capitalist hegemony are not easily escaped. It is apparent in the perspectives of actors even within prefigurative socio-economic spaces, as the discovered in Chapters 4 and 5. Similarly, academic capitalism creates an overdetermining research paradigm which persists even in the presence of strong attempts to counter it. For example, as discussed in Chapter 1, previous research on the Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) focused on sustainable, collaborative consumption (Anantharaman 2018). By placing RRFM within a paradigm that seeks scalability, policy reform, or changes to consumer behavior, scholarship risks obscuring the socio-political implications and relational possibilities of the movement as an intersectional, prefigurative, and emancipatory endeavor. Capitalocentrism does not constitute a settled conversation (Alhojärvi 2020). The conversation continues in this thesis, and this chapter will engage it directly. Has this academic

presentation of the alternative knowledge-practices (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008) within free culture risked commodifying or subsuming these knowledge-practices into the capitalist metanarrative?

This chapter initially applies the diverse economies' lens to examine the research findings that the RRFM and Free Store[35] constitute different practices with lessons toward relational healing from systemic and interpersonal trauma-oppressions. The next section, "Sitting with Diverse Economies critiques," addresses how these findings may apply to previously mentioned critiques of various social research paradigms that obfuscate the oppression of capitalist culture toward a narrow narrative which supports the status quo. Next, reflection on the more controversial findings is introduced, particularly those findings related to racism and so-called white saviorism. I reflect on my dual positionality as both a researcher and an organizer. It is then considered whether this project has depoliticized the RRFM movement by economizing alternative knowledge. Finally, this critical responsiveness is applied to this thesis, considering the commodifying and narrowing impulses of academic research which this thesis may represent.

Diverse economies of Free Culture: Disturbing, Excavating and Generating the Possible

The views of organizers at RRFM and volunteers at Free Store conflict. The premise of anticapitalism and anarchism at the root of the RRFM does not constitute a shared notion among the research participants of the RRFM and the Free Store. Participants describe a variety of reasons for being involved. Some, who do not hold a vision of transforming social constructs, participate with the intent of mending societal ills. Some expressed an interest in helping people in need while awaiting macro-level policy changes. This is an example of group tensions which can function as generative conflicts toward creating more resilient socio-economic practices if and when they are resolved among the community/ies of practice. One such source of tension was the impetus for some of this research: the question at the RRFM as to whether to institutionalize (i.e., become a nonprofit, or NGO) or remain an autonomist (self-governing) grassroots demonstration. Toward resolving this ideological conflict, information about the Free Store's operations were sought out to add insight into the deliberations at the RRFM.

[35] Sometimes, a RRFM event is colloquially called a 'Free Store' or 'Free Shop.' However, in this thesis the terms are not used interchangeably. The Harrisburg RRFM or RRFM refers to the grassroots model while Free Store refers to the nonprofit, formal, state-recognized legal entity (i.e., nongovernmental organization or NGO).

This tension between formal structure and free operations without rules are present in both the RRFM and the Free Store. But this conflict between formalization and autonomy manifests differently at each site. The RRFM organizers who wanted formalization actually wanted an indoor space to increase the ability to meet the needs of vulnerable neighbors, while Free Store volunteers wanted more rules or requirements to mitigate conflicts with patrons (i.e., shoppers). Both sites had organizers or volunteers who rejected increased formalization. Further similarities existed between the two sites in what functions they both fulfilled: meeting needs, building relationships beyond normative social barriers, drawing attention to oppressions and failures of hegemonic systems, and creating a case for a different way to organize society. Both organizations endeavored to disrupt excessive production and consumption, approached questions of waste and reuse, and shared similar dilemmas related to disposing or redistributing unusable material. Each model has operated for nearly a decade and provides insights into free culture longevity while illuminating processes of a more equitable social praxis.

The ideological gap between the two models is clearly greater than that between the practitioners at their respective sites. The RRFM skews much more towards autonomy, while the Free Store is embedded within a formal, nonprofit structure which comes with inherent obligations to donors or a Board of Directors. To clarify the difference, social practice theory's three pillars analysis was applied (Chapter 4) to show that Free Store and RRFM constitute very different operations. Diverse economies terminology defines the nonprofit Free Store as an alternative capitalist enterprise, with a hybridization of labor and economic transaction types. Free Store is greatly influenced by the hierarchy of institutional needs (i.e., obligations to donors to ensure items are free or limits are in place on specialty goods), the physical infrastructure of their store, and the subjectivities of their volunteers. The main ideas advanced in Free Store practice are that too many material things are created and wasted, the system is failing poorer people, it is morally right to meet their material needs, and systemic change comes from policy makers. For example, if there were better laws regulating grocery store and general food waste and stronger socialized policies to end hunger, the nonprofit Free Food Cycle would have no need to exist. The nonprofit is thought to constitute a 'band-aid' on issues of disparity, which elected officials are presumed able to fix with better legislation. Free Store provides a reactionary response to address unmet needs on a local level, while waiting for transitional governmental reform. The founder uses the platform to advocate for systemic change. Free Store does not seek ontological reframing, or a

transformative cultural shift, but hopes for improvement of the existing socio-economic order. Meanwhile, the autonomous RRFM is a noncapitalist enterprise, with mostly nonmarket transactions and unpaid labor types. It is influenced by a horizontal (dis)organizational premise, an open-air structure that rejects rules or interpersonal regulation. It is constructed based on the ideological ambitions of its organizers, who actively situate themselves on a socially horizontal axis relative to other attendees and resist rules to regulate other individuals. The RRFM advances the position that an entirely new social system is desirable and might be accomplished without interventions by the state or bureaucracy. RRFM provides the possibility that humans can achieve alternative relations of care without rules and regulations from an authoritative entity.

Neither model claims to be a perfect example of free culture practices. The conflicts that attended each of these sites and how they are resolved, are dependent on the agencies of the parts that constitute the whole. The expression of free culture at each site stems from its community's needs and interests. Choosing to create a nonprofit Free Store or autonomist RRFM emanates from the perspectives of its collaborators (i.e., what is seen as possible, what is perceived to drive change, and the value ascribed to communal relationships). Due to the divergent attitudes within RRFM, no satisfactory resolution to the ideological dilemma of whether to conform and institutionalize or not existed. Some RRFM organizers did change their perspective on the need for a physical space, but there has been no effort to date to spread the RRFM to other neighborhoods. All participants remained interested in continuing the practice as it exists absent of notions on whether and, if so, how to spread or grow. While knowledge of the Free Store was useful, the quandary at RRFM remained in a liminal space between hegemony and free practice.

Chapter 5 examined behaviors stemming from the trauma-oppressions under capitalist hegemony, particularly caused by poverty and racism. It became clear that these free culture sites could develop a trauma-informed organizational praxis. By first removing certain norms of social exchange, they can expose residual trauma-oppressions and potentially perform an active resistance to re-traumatization. A range of trauma-induced behaviors are often overlooked. Trauma is multivarious and pervasive. The effects of oppressions extend beyond those who are the most vulnerable to them. Among the behaviors stemming from these various oppressions are efforts to control or contain others' impulses, performing exceptionalism (i.e., an exception), or an internalization or assumption of systemic guilt as a personal responsibility.

Failure to explore and acknowledge the range of trauma-oppressions(s) limits the potential for collective recovery. For instance, by restricting the movements and access to items with physical barriers and rules, those who feel the pains of poverty the most become ostracized into a lower category of 'shoppers,' while volunteers and donors are granted more power and ability. For example, a Free Store shopper who subsists on gathering goods to sell in informal markets is denigrated for engaging with this type of labor. Other shoppers hoarding material items for personal comfort or need are similarly judged. Because of these judgements, all shoppers are corralled into physical spaces demonstrating their difference from volunteers, limiting and restricting their movement disempowers them and might even belittle them. Similarly, by assuming the guilt of systemic racism or reasserting white exceptionalism to racist culture, a racialized hierarchy of difference is reasserted. The reproduction of hierarchy can risk re-traumatizing all involved, although this may take on different forms of intensity. For example, the talk of reparations at RRFM ostracized one of the volunteers who does not identify as white. The RRFM does not exist to benefit poor or people of color specifically, nor does it rectify systemic racism, the assumption of which added further insult to the ostracization. Re-traumatization can come from a space of ignoring differences or denialism – a form of erasure that does not allow a space of healing or conflict resolution to occur. There are ways of acknowledging trauma-oppressions without repeating the hierarchy of the hegemonic society by transforming pain rather than transmitting it. This requires recognition that "all our grievances are connected" (Schragis 2011) in horizontal relationships (i.e., the accomplice posture).

Both the RRFM and Free Store sites provided lessons on actively resisting re-traumatization and modeling different activities toward harm reduction. These include some form of elimination of barriers to social engagement and creation of a welcoming environment conducive to unlearning assumptions while in community. Neither RRFM nor Free Store characterized these endeavors as easy or without conflict. Despite ideological and practical differences, both models were consistently and actively *in-process* toward recovery from capitalist social culture and its trauma-oppressions. We begin to see a transformative justice praxis emerging – a proactive, collaborative effort to respond and counter harm before it becomes worse (Mingus n.d.; Davis et al. 2022). The RRFM and Free Store are not mere microcosms of the larger hegemonic regime. They disrupt norms of exchange and reciprocity and employ a radical inclusionary sense of community providing pathways to collective recovery from systemic and interpersonal trauma-oppressions.

These two sites both exemplify important lessons in transformative work, but do they create a space for new possibilities? Both models of free culture expose capitalist hegemony while also bucking it. The RRFM and the Free Store can learn from each other and are not mutually exclusive constructs. The Free Store does not seek to transform structural problems but focuses on interpersonal local relationships. It endeavors to expose what needs to be reformed by conveying that there are other ways of meeting material needs that policymakers can usher forward. Alternatively, the RRFM creates a culture that is more transgressive, and as such, open to more possibility. The RRFM might display emancipatory practices, even if momentary, and while consistently being pressured to conform to institutionalized and authoritative formality.

In theory, the RRFM movement aligns with the diverse economies' goals and tools. It engages with ontological reframing by disrupting constructs that perpetuate social divisions and material needs under capitalism. As an anarchist project, the RRFM "disturbs the grounds" (Bey 2020) rather than presuming to "produce the ground" – meaning that it creates a generative tension by inviting trouble, and unsettling conclusions. It turns the soil to enable the proliferation of new growth (but the ground itself has always been there). The RRFM disrupts expectations about social hierarchy, and thus creates the possibility to (re)enact or (re)discover an empathetic relationality across differences. Utilizing the diverse economies analysis further, the RRFM is found to be an intersectional and prefigurative endeavor which *invites difference* and *creates possible futures* with an expanded relationality enacted in the 'now.' This is an uneasy, ongoing, communal activity which remains unfinished and iterative (Chapter 5). The anti-essentialist nature of RRFM is similar to the hesitancy in anarchist praxis to create a prescriptive notion of an idealized future. It can be seen as an act of oppression over beings that do not yet exist (Bey 2020; Shannon et al. 2012). It is better to remove barriers and create possibilities now but leave the shape of things to come to those who will live in that future. In this light, the '*excavation*' and '*creation*' recommended by diverse economies to examine free culture might open possibilities but can disappoint when it comes to prescribing conclusions.

Sitting with Diverse Economies Critiques

Tuomo Alhojärvi (2020) cautions that capitalocentrism, the tendency to makes essentialist references to capitalism, haunts us (Chapter 1). Capitalist hegemony is not a settled concept, neatly tucked away from the free culture practices presented here, and it persists in this thesis too.

"The most promising of our emancipatory projects and postcapitalist imaginaries [are] inescapably implicated in a fabric of sedimented layers of capitalocentric hierarchies and violence; our vision burdened by centuries of capitalocentering ignorance; our 'otherwise' always already compromised by capitalocentric inheritances. They should trouble us, should they not?" (*Ibid.*, 303). Capitalocentrism results in three major blind spots in diverse economies research: 1) depoliticizing the context or minimizing the oppressions inherent throughout various economic practices (capitalist, free, or otherwise); 2) failing to examine how community economies operate within a larger system of capitalistic dynamics, or how degrowth ideas become transformed by local constructs and politics; and 3) failing to acknowledge complicity within perpetuating capitalist hegemony. This section examines these blind spots within this research of free culture, and how this thesis endeavored to expose them and operated mitigate them.

The violence that attends the capitalocentric narrative is corporeal and material. Diverse economies research neglects to acknowledge that in both capitalism and the alternative economies are racial (and gendered, abled) oppressions with real effects on marginalized people. A critical examination of power, politics, and conflict which re-centers a white/western-centric narrative of sustainability at the expense of Others is missing from traditional social research (Anantharaman 2018; Bledsoe et al. 2019). This sustainability research champions the ability to continue consumption patterns, but with a green spin. Greenwashing erases the existing and increasing social inequities and environmental extraction (Introduction and Chapter 1). The remedy might be to examine the alterity of the agents and practices to recenter Black, Indigenous, and gender as sites where economic relations are most steeped in transformative liberation (Bledsoe et al. 2019). By re-centering these groups, a more sustainable and actually equitable consumption practice may be realized. If the most oppressed are well, then the least oppressed should also be. These critiques call for an examination of relational and structural power to uncover how sustainable practices can operate to both oppress and liberate.

This thesis did not provide a 'celebrated sustainability narrative,' but rather insisted on a focus on the 'nitty gritty' as prescribed by the diverse economies framework (Roelvink 2020). It has revealed conflict and remained uneasy in the liminal space of the prefigurative projects. This work did not shy away from issues related to oppression surrounding identity, in particularly racialized identities. This is in part owing to the self-awareness of the research participants

themselves. Black feminist, queer, and anarchist theories have been utilized throughout this thesis. The topics of racialized oppression, scarcity, and hierarchical relationships were highlighted in the trauma-informed organizational analysis. The analysis revealed both the oppressive and transformative potentials within the RRFM and Free Store models. At times, one participant's act of recovery might actually cause (re)traumatization of another. There were vigilant reminders stemming from actors at both sites aiming to transform pain rather than transmit it. Furthermore, this thesis was tempered by the personal experience of the thesis writer - a multiracial black femme with childhood experiences on the edge of poverty. Hegemonic notions of whiteness and class-based hierarchies are replicated within the free culture context. Their prevalence raises questions on whether (and how) differently appearing participants are affected. They did, at times, alienate me in the dual role of both researcher and practitioner. Chapter 5 covered that it is crucial to first acknowledge the many ways trauma-induced behaviors and postures manifest. Only by acknowledging the multivarious effects of oppression can these communities move toward a more fully realized trauma-informed structure and avoid actions that re-traumatize participants. This generates a stronger transformative justice practice, and thus proactively addresses or reduces harms. It creates contradictions and difficult truths that become the fodder of collective analysis toward resilient and healthier communities.

Another critique proposed that diverse economies literature provides opportunity for degrowth scholars to return to theorizing about how alternative economies operate *within* governance structures, affording opportunities to change institutional activities (Krueger et al. 2018). They seek to examine what they feel degrowth scholarship misses - how community economies operate within a larger system of capitalistic dynamics and how degrowth ideas become transformed by local constructs and politics. This critique illuminates a divide in degrowth scholarship between ecosocialist reformism (the state can be 'decoupled' from capitalist growth paradigm for greater social and ecological equity) and decolonial autonomism (grassroots, localized, direct action without dependency on state or capitalism). This critique asks: *How can diverse economies studies operate within the structures of the state in order to reform it?*

This is a question steeped in capitalocentrism and invested with maintaining it. It is important to note that in this case study, 'degrowth ideas' did not come emanate externally to the research sites as a type of inspiration to start free culture practices. Both the Free Store and RRFM were

inspired differently (none of the research participants had heard of ‘degrowth’ until the time of this study). There is a concern that degrowth academics are too steeped with top-down notions that academics influence local politics and movements, as opposed to the opposite way around, or even that it is a dialectic. It is reiterated that the state is invested in capitalist enterprise and expansion. It is nonsensical to insist that governmental reforms or mitigations will arrive in the much-needed immediate future, nor should it be trusted, that governance will divest from an infrastructure of exploitation, extraction, and dispossession (Harvey 2004). Moreover, reforms do not adequately disrupt these imperatives: “The mitigated capitalism of a ‘green new deal’ will be little help, because it leaves the overall system of commodification, and the motors of expansion, firmly in place” (Burton and Somerville 2019, 104). Since the capitalocentric narrative is our cultural and socioeconomic inheritance and continues to haunt us (Alhojärvi 2020), we must ask whether we are able to move away from an ecosocialist or reformist agenda. Will we remain gripped to the notion of the state as a formidable site of systemic change?

Paradoxically, some diverse economies scholarship remains vested in capitalocentrism. It questions how alternatives might be ‘scaled up,’ or replicated universally, and some include a caveat that local or regional institutions and traditions might make a positive difference (Krueger et al. 2018). The free culture movement does indeed make a difference. Through its autonomous free culture practices, it is more than a ‘caveat,’ it is itself a fundamental principle. Free culture’s radical nonconformity creates systems and relationships that can lead to healthier and more just possibilities. To be certain, this thesis does not preclude state or regional governance interactions with the free culture movement, although it is critical of it. Seeking state support or intervention should never be part of an emancipatory endeavor but could perhaps be considered as a transitional effort. The example of the nonprofit Free Store offers such a possibility. It does not overly subvert hegemonic narratives, but rather draws attention to systemic failures and personal conflicts while offering alternative capitalist options and community space. It also challenges notions of how a nonprofit behaves by insistence on exchanges that are nonmonetary and nonreciprocal and highlights that collective care is necessary on a local level. The Free Store vision is premised on the assumption that the nonprofit sector might complement and influence governments toward equitable change. In the meanwhile, it does fill gaps where policymakers are failing to deliver. This conforms well to the capitalist hegemony.

An autonomist degrowth or an anarchist rendering of diverse economies scholarship shows how the state and institutional structure might be an unnecessary impediment to transformative justice and anarchist economics. The RRFM appears to constitute what diverse economies terms 'noncapitalist enterprise' which may include 'nonmarket transactions' and 'unpaid labor.' Whether mutual aid, autonomous free culture practice, or anarchist economics always fit into these categories, or disturbs them, is worthy of subsequent examination. Mutual aid does not need capitalism nor the state, to exist. Mutual aid relies on a persistent tendency toward cooperation, which constitutes a much older knowledge and practice than the capitalist system.

Academic Capitalism

We must scrutinize the commodification of alternative socio-economic practices under capitalist knowledge production in higher education. All too often, knowledge produced within Northern and Western universities is leveraged to uphold the capitalist hegemony (Giridharadas, 2020). This is one characteristic of "academic capitalism," but its knowledge-production operations can also replicate other features of the hierarchical difference and power imbalances including – racial, linguistic, and educational (Paasi 2005, 2013). Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014) conclude that scholars produce work that centers on white/western-centric perspectives at the expense of Others or fail to assess relational and structural power, politics, and conflicts. The insistence on archiving stories of Others can amount to a kind of erasure that justifies social hierarchies to maintain capitalist development imperatives. We may attribute the reasons, in part, to the trap of capitalocentrism. Knowledges that do not meet (academic) capitalism's recognized and reproduced standards of rationality are excluded or considered to stem from an anomalous minority. As we have seen through Tuck and Yang's assessment, knowledge deemed to be niche is included only in as much as it can be subsumed, repressed, or recuperated. It is a risk to bring forward alterity or nonconforming knowledges under such conditions.

One may ask if the result of this analytical (auto)ethnographical thesis has been to depoliticize, domesticate, erase, or recuperate the RRFM and anarchist economic practices? It is capitalocentric to avoid this question (Alhojärvi 2020). The existence of nonprofit Free Stores – now owned by musicians or other celebrities – implies that the free culture movement has already been coopted. Yet, the example of autonomous RRFM movement persists on a global scale. There is no perfect RRFM practice, and this thesis does not claim to identify one. The purpose

has been to study and, in the process, bring more awareness about this movement, showing the diversity and complexity within it, and perhaps even to instigate cultural change away from trusting the primacy of the state or the invisible hand of the free market to stabilize society and the environment. It is hoped that this thesis demonstrates that localized community efforts can constitute a sound and stable approach to deal with the social and ecological problems at hand. This thesis in no way aimed to devise ways to 'tame' autonomous groups, but it is an academic work, and it is an inherent risk of making an accidental contribution in this (wrong) direction.

This thesis started by actively calling into question the hegemonic 'way of knowing,' or common-sense, by embracing alterity and anarchist knowledges. Following Tuck and Yang (2014), refusal is an action which registers *something*, and resisting the dominant forms of knowledge production while uncovering alternative knowledges (outside academic capitalism) can be seen as itself an act affirming alterity. It is also part of the framework of desire-based research. This thesis project rejected academic capitalism's imperative to reify separation between subject/researcher or academy/life. It refused the impetus for singular, universalized or prescriptive narratives of the inevitability of capitalist dominance and instead looked to both the past and the future to situate analysis. There are no simplified conclusions to complex questions to glean from this thesis, although there are preferences for transgression toward emancipation as a social (and academic) change paradigm. In this way, the gesture of prefiguration and research is evident within this project. The RRFM movement is itself an experiential study *in desire* – for freedom, for another way to exist, and for recovery. A prefiguration is an act of desire and by engaging in a critical analysis of past and present, it can embark on expansion of future possibilities beyond that which capitalocentrism claims is inevitable.

Paradoxically, this thesis itself remains a commodity of academic capitalism's industrial knowledge-production. It cannot be escaped. It is not a question of money, but of the way academic work can be used toward capitalistic ends. The extraction of free culture knowledge-practices are subsumed into hegemonic educational epistemes, which can add fodder for Thought Leaders (Giridharadas 2020) to improve upon the green economy narrative. In other words, this alternative knowledge might be co-opted in support of evolving the capitalist metanarrative. As a result of this research, free culture practices might be commodified, used as greenwashing, subject to other forms of depoliticization, and used as a footnote in policymaking regimes. This

research could be used toward ends that I would not personally condone. But the reality of ecological degradation and climate changes necessitate the risk of academic hijacking. This research is offered as one tiny step toward emancipation of the intellectual restraints surrounding capitalocentrism, for the purpose of robust debate, and flourishing future(s) for all.

Conclusion

By using the diverse economies tools, enhanced with anarchist critical theory, this Chapter examined findings from the RRFM and the Free Store by *disturbing* the grounds of possibility, reading for difference to *excavate* the possible, and *generating* some actual possibilities. Each free culture activity encompasses an ontological and behavioral shift on the road to liberation from hegemonic oppressions. Each activity produces its own knowledge-practices that are viable social records. By peering into their activities, we learn more about the work needed to create a degrowth future. Both models of free culture expose hegemony while simultaneously bucking it. RRFM creates a culture that is the most transgressive, and as such, open to more possibility and displays emancipatory practices even while facing the compromising pressure to conform.

This chapter addressed social research critiques, specifically those of diverse economies. These critiques included a failure to acknowledge that capitalism and the alternative economies that develop around it are based in racialized (and gendered, abled) oppressions; failing to examine oppression and liberation existing within alternative economic practices; and failure to include reform possibilities. With these critiques in mind, this thesis has sought to (re)politicize social research paradigms by actively seeking differences and assessing free culture practices for their traces of oppressive hierarchies. While inherent tension in emancipatory, intersectional, prefigurative projects exists, it is a source of creative thought and action. The debate itself allows for the discovery of alternative possibilities. This thesis did not to exclude the potential for system reform but pronounced its preference for transformational options over transitional change. Then, the persistent specter of capitalocentrism was inflected back onto this thesis as a knowledge-product that could risk upholding capitalist hegemony. Despite the risks of compromising or subsuming alternative knowledge into academic capitalism, I have concluded it is more beneficial under the current pressures of ecological and social crisis to share knowledge of the RRFM movement than it is for it to remain separate and isolated. The concluding section provides a summary of the thesis and a final reflection on the connection of free culture practices to the well-being of the more-than-human world.

Conclusion

For research of prefigurative possibilities for human and more-than-human future(s), if the intention is to bring forward potential routes of change, this is achievable and perhaps it is desirable to: (re)politicize the narrative, to embrace entanglement between researcher and subject, and to highlight the emancipatory nature(s) of the subject. It is neither transformative nor liberatory to expect or attempt to generalize from each case study of localized movements, but the tensions examined herein could have some applicability in other free culture contexts, or perhaps serve as a starting point for other research. More to the point, even in research paradigms, the means to transformative change are also the end goal. This concluding section summarizes the thesis work, including findings pertaining to the research questions posed, and offers reflections for further research. Then, the ecological possibilities inherent to this project is offered. The expansive relationality discovered in autonomous groups displays a transformative justice practice which teaches empathy and shared vulnerability. This expanded relationality can extend across humans to the more-than-human. To achieve this requires acts transgression toward emancipation from the trauma-oppressions of capitalist hegemony.

Throughout this research, an ontological reframing was presented to include anarchist theory, prefigurative movement politics, and diverse, intersectional subjectivities. Chapter 1 explained why the RRFM surfaced as a protest demonstration. It reviewed the legacy of neocolonial, global, corporate, and neoliberal capitalism. "A Pluriverse of Alternatives" explained alternative narratives to the capitalist story and provided critiques of social research. These emancipatory, intersectional, and prefigurative social movements require a reflexively changing community that deconstructs capitalist hegemony. These groups create knowledge-practices (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008) which can teach an empathy for the unknown or unseen Other (Tschakert 2020). This lesson in empathy across vulnerability might extend to the more-than-human world, reaching the emancipatory politics of social movements to a relational multispecies justice politics. RRFM is one such example of this kind of social movement.

Chapter 1 provided a critique of the only research of the RRFM, a collaborative consumption study. But Chapter 2 attempted to contribute to scholarship by providing deeper understanding of the understudied and underacknowledged RRFM movement. This chapter illuminated the RRFM as a multifaceted movement: a unique protest, an anarchist economic direct action, mutual aid

site, transformative justice experience, and disruption to consumption and waste processes. It is decentralized and location-based, with knowledge-practices generated being unique to its community of practice. As such, it belongs within the pluriverse of possibilities studied within the post-development, degrowth, and diverse economies scholarship. The development of autonomous RRFM(s) in the United States threads a counter narrative to global, neoliberal, neo-imperialist, corporate hegemony. The historical narrative of the RRFM was traced from the 17th century Diggers movement in England to the 1960s San Francisco Diggers, the Black Panther Party, and the Young Lords. Parallel impulses to claim common space, challenge property enclosure, eliminate monetary barriers, and disrupt hegemonic assumptions were found within the international Squatters movement. The early RRFM movement in the 2000s had ambiguous and parallel 'grassroots' origins. These origins are fraught with a legacy of repression and recuperation, but the free culture activities persist. A brief history of the case-study was provided that aligns with this map of free culture lineages.

The Harrisburg RRFM is unique in that it has been running consecutively for nearly a decade, and the researcher was linked to its activities over this period. Chapter 3 presented a methodology for studying the RRFM which was crafted to meet its unique nature and the researcher's positionality. This amalgamation of three frameworks was termed Practitioner Trauma-Informed Diverse Economies Researcher (PTIDER). This analytical (auto)ethnography and action research methodology guided both the research design and the critical analyses of field data. It allowed researcher and research participants alike to be affected. This transgressive interdisciplinary approach was also a useful tool to address critiques of social research paradigms by including an examination of power dynamics and structural oppression.

This thesis addressed how free economic practices elucidate pathways toward emancipatory social-ecological constructs. There are several material limits and barriers that prevent the expansion of the RRFM. These are treated as they come, as based on the resources and people present at the time. The largest barrier was, and remains, pressure to conform to hegemonic social, bureaucratic regimes. What was discovered from the researcher-practitioner lens was that even within the free culture practices there is diversity; – there are diverse economies nested within diverse economies. Chapter 4 utilized social practice theory and diverse economies

terminology to illustrate that the nonprofit (i.e., NGO) Free Store and autonomous RRFM[36] models are different socio-economic constructs tailored to their communities of practice. There is a plurality of possibilities within the 'free' paradigm. The Free Store experienced different barriers and controversies from those of the RRFM. Free Store practices prescribed far different solutions (i.e., locks, surveillance cameras, divisions in the space).

Chapter 5 made a deeper dive into the tensions within the prefigurative movement. By using the trauma-informed approach to organizational analysis, statements from free culture practitioners were examined. This process revealed the contradictory and generative process of an experiential transformative justice practice. The 'celebrated sustainability narrative' was rejected and replaced with the nitty gritty descriptions as prescribed by diverse economies framework (Roelvink 2020). It revealed conflict and remained uneasy in the liminal space of prefigurative politics; these are iterative processes at work, which are co-created, situated, and localized. Chapter 5 provided example of some potential pitfalls of emancipatory, prefigurative, intersectional politics and how they are continually mitigated. As such, this thesis did not shy away from issues within the case-study related to oppression surrounding identity, particularly racialized identities. This is in part due to the awareness of the research participants themselves. Throughout this thesis, black, feminist, queer, and anarchist theories were utilized. Furthermore, the topics of racialized oppression, scarcity, and hierarchical relationships were highlighted in the trauma-informed organizational analysis. The analysis revealed both the oppressive and transformative potentials within the RRFM and Free Store models. It was also partially informed by the personal experiences of the researcher, a multiracial black femme with childhood experiences of poverty.

So, *Which model of the free practice is it desirable to spread and why?* Both models of free culture, RRFM and Free Store, meet some material needs within their widened community of practice and employ socially expansionary ideals. Both models expose hegemony, while also bucking it. The models have the potential to learn, and indeed have learned from each other being (not completely) mutually exclusive. Ranking which model of free culture is more desirable really depends on the inclinations, frameworks, interests, and resources of the organizing group. Their critical assessment of the social problems which they wish to address and their assumptions

[36] Sometimes, a RRFM is colloquially called a 'Free Store' or 'Free Shop.' In this thesis the terms were not used interchangeably. RRFM referred to the autonomous model. 'Free Store' referred to a formalized legal entity.

about the available means to create change yields the conditions of the practice. State or regional governmental interactions with free culture movement is not precluded, *but this work is critical of it.* Such interaction dilutes the emancipatory endeavor and brings the work closer to a transitional effort. As it was argued, transitional approaches to systemic change tend to leave the overall system of extraction, exploitation, oppression, and dispossession firmly in place. Given the pressure of environmental degradation, a radically transformative change is necessary for healthier and more resilient socio-economic and ecological futures.

The nonprofit Free Store is an example of transitional free culture practice. By using social practice theory's analytical framework of three pillars which constitute and coproduce a given practice, we have seen how the Free Store operates within a traditional nonprofit (i.e., NGO) apparatus, which is an alternative capitalist enterprise (Gibson-Graham 2006). This illustrated how the Free Store model exists within the larger system of capitalist dynamics, although it also challenges notions of how a nonprofit behaves within this paradigm by persistent insistence on exchanges which are nonmonetary and nonreciprocal and direct. The Free Store vision is premised on the assumption that the nonprofit sector can fill the gaps where policymakers fail. It infers that the nonprofit sector might complement and influence governance toward equitable change. This thesis aligns more closely with autonomist decolonial degrowth studies and provides an anarchist rendering of diverse economies scholarship. It shows how the state and institutional structures might be an unnecessary impediment to prefiguring anarchist economics. The RRFM constitutes what Gibson-Graham (2006) terms "noncapitalist enterprise" (*Ibid.*). Mutual aid does not need capitalism, nor the state, nor bureaucracies to exist. Mutual aid relies on a persistent tendency towards cooperation, which is a much older knowledge-practice (Casas-Cortés et al. 2008) than the capitalist system. The autonomous RRFM creates a highly transgressive culture and as such is open to more possibility. The RRFM might display emancipatory practices, even if they are consistently fraught with contradiction and pressured to conform, which are tensions inherent to a prefigurative project.

Chapter 6 advanced these complications by recognizing that capitalocentrism haunts our emancipatory projects, our postcapitalist imaginaries (Alhojärvi 2020), and our research paradigms. The chapter covered how this thesis attempted to work with and through the tension of capitalocentrism and provided some parting thoughts for academics towards (re)politicization

of their works. This can be considered controversial input for researchers, but it can be executed with thoughtfulness and care to not compromise the work. The post-development, decolonial degrowth, and diverse economies scholarships sometimes study prefigurative, intersectional movements, but embracing the imaginary of an emancipatory politics might enhance their conversations toward creating transformative change. This work aimed for radical transformational possibility, not for transitional or incremental socio-economic-cultural shifts.

This thesis attempted to challenge the researcher-practitioner's personal notions of exactly what the RRFM is and what it accomplishes by examining ideological differences. The grounds were disturbed (Bey 2020) in terms of the culture of my community of practice by going outside of it and learning about the nonprofit Free Store practice in another town. While this has caused some discomfort, it is also a generative conflict which might enable more resilient possibilities for the autonomous RRFM movement. This work is itself an exercise in the prefiguring of a social and personal liberation by highlighting the tensions which the researcher has experienced first-hand as a practitioner. In this tension is the unsettled and generative conflict – of *getting* free when the rest of the world is not. These contradictions and difficult truths become the source of collective analysis and efforts toward resilient practices and a healthier community.

Implications for the Further Research

Some thoughts are offered on implications for future research regarding other localized and autonomous movements. The 'framework of desire' (Tuck and Yang 2014) within the radicalized view of diverse economies embraces any method of research for the break-thru possibilities which may be revealed. There are five parting thoughts presented regarding 1) the imperative to embrace transgressive and complex subjects; 2) seeking difference rather than dominance; 3) the usefulness of a (re)politicized trauma-informed approach when studying prefigurative movements; 4) anarchist praxis as a critical tool; 5) being affected and integrated as a researcher. Some notes toward future research of free culture practices are provided.

The autonomous RRFM unsettles the standard diverse economies, degrowth, and sustainable consumption traditions by being unscalable, although they are reproducible (i.e., the difference between 'growth' and 'spread' discussed in Chapter 4). Taking on anarchist or autonomous movements as a subject of research, particularly as a former and future participant, may be seen as a fruitful way to subvert capitalocentric narratives because they defy institutionalization.

Embracing the subjects' transgressive and contradictory nature enables complexity and diversity of thought to proliferate. On the other hand, the nonprofit Free Store presents alternative capitalist pathways to realizing a free culture and transformative justice praxis. Using social practice theory's three pillars to map the two practices exhibited that they are distinct models sharing similar paradigms. These maps exposed the heterogeneity within a supposedly subcultural phenomenon, specifically the spectrum of individual differences (within a diverse economies subgroup). The examination of each model's transactions, labor, and enterprise types uncovered hybridization and diversity within each model which (re)politicized the practices as antidotal to hegemonic capitalism. This challenges traditional scholarship which can homogenize practices that share similar attributes. Activities which are commonly lumped under labels like 'sustainable consumption,' or 'collaborative consumption' can be markedly different practices.

A trauma-informed approach to research design invites the researcher to collapse the separation from the subject and their place in relation to it. Both the researcher and participants can be collaborative and thus affected. If a trauma-informed analysis is coupled with a perspective critical of power, the analysis can elucidate the nuanced processes of prefigurative, intersectional, emancipatory politics, and transformative justice praxis. It may even invigorate analysis toward a relational multispecies justice framework. A trauma-informed approach to data analysis can reveal oppression(s), and subtle harm, while elucidating potential pathways to liberation. This framework applied in this thesis was used to assess organizations but holds promise of being useful in other studies, where the needs of the researcher, subject, and participants require it.

Anarchism provides critical tools to bridge the gap between theory and action. It is an embodied criticality that interrupts hegemony and prefigures the 'otherwise,' or potential alternative knowledge-practices. In this work, anarchist economics provides a necessary example for diverse economies research to expand beyond its limitations. Anarchism disputes reformism by denouncing the primacy of the state as invested in ecological or social transformation. This facilitates options for direct actions. Anarchist theory infuses social research with the embodied, transgressive posture needed to articulate possible, plural future(s) in the current moment.

This thesis endeavored to display the potential for analytical (auto)ethnographic positionality. Examining literature and data to find difference and (re)politicization, using trauma-informed frameworks of research design and analysis, and utilizing anarchist theory are not unique by

themselves within academia, but combining them to meet the needs of the research subject, participant and researcher subjectivities, is novel. This combination is offered as a demonstration to perhaps, in small measure, inspire others interested in exploring transformative socio-economic and ecologically minded pathways.

Pia Albinsson and Yasanthi Perera (2012) already set a potential research agenda for future studies of the RRFM movement from the lens of sustainable, collaborative consumption studies. They have concluded that their study could not be generalized, and neither can this thesis precisely because the RRFM is a decentralized and autonomous movement. Instead of researching collaborative consumption, this thesis examined the dialectic of emancipation (Blühdorn et al. 2022) within the RRFM as a transgressive and prefigurative movement. By providing deeper insight into what RRFM is, this thesis may provide better context for consumption studies and for post-development, degrowth, and diverse economies movement research. Future research might examine how the autonomous and/or nonprofit models operate in different national or cultural settings. More field research into understanding a broader group of free culture participants would be valuable but could not be covered within the scope and resource limitations of this work. The RRFM's alternative and collective valuation of commercial or household waste could bring deeper insight using social practice theory. Leftover goods from the free culture sites are often donated to other nonprofit groups (or recycled or trashed). This raises further questions about the RRFM's positionality between the prefigurative and the hegemonic social order. *Does the RRFM need a capitalist superstructure to exist?* This thesis argued it does not. But to better address this question, a distinction between free culture practice (i.e., mutual aid) and the prefigurative process (i.e., RRFM demonstrations of mutual aid) is needed. *Are mutual aid practices transferable and can they be untethered from capitalocentrism*? *Can the free culture as it currently exists resist the persistent and insidious urges for conformity?* Such existential questions do not prevent the practical application of the knowledge-practices found within autonomous movements. In this 'meanwhile' present-time of prefiguration (i.e., *getting* free or *becoming*), free culture is one useful antidote to capitalocentric society.

An Emancipatory Turn toward the More-than-human World

It has been argued in this thesis that the current universalized capitalist socio-economic arrangement is a direct cause of the oppressions, repression, exploitation, and dispossession of

human and earthly others. Movements like the RRFM demonstrate that there are other ways of being beyond capitalist social constructs. But to continue the free culture practice requires consistent, active attention to mitigate the pressures and potential re-traumatization from structural (and internalized) hegemony. Through localized, noncapitalist economic practices, humanity and the more-than-human (Tschakert 2020) may benefit from a different kind of stability as the earth becomes less hospitable to civilization. Still, the conversation in this work seems to be markedly anthropocentric. *Wherein lies the ecological possibilities within this thesis?*

This work hopefully offers up more than an opportunity for altering human production, consumption, and waste practices. Recalling that if the most oppressed are well, then the least oppressed should also be, this section considers the unknown or unseen Other in the more-than-human world (Tschakert 2020). I would offer here that the phrase "all our grievances are connected" (Schragis 2011; Myerson 2011) entails an expanded sense of the 'we' in this statement. Humans are not the only entities (living, sentient, or otherwise) with agency on this planet. The experiential transformative justice praxis within autonomous prefigurative movements teaches empathy across differences. Rather than being a homogenizing narrative, this posture embraces interrelated, iterative, multiplicity that can recognize the agency of people, ideas, environment, and other earthly presences (Chapter 1). This lesson is a pathway to a relational multispecies justice perspective (Tschakert 2020, 2). But just like (un)learning hegemony and harm, (re)learning connection across vulnerability with more-than-human existence is a process of *becoming*. It is contradictory, uneasy and generative work. There are constant pressures from the human world to dismiss its necessity. One could try to conclude that simply altering our economic system would fix the massive ecological issues at hand. But this would be turning a blind eye to our entangled, interrelated vulnerabilities. Changing "the" economy alone would result in incomplete integration of knowledge-practices which create emancipation from oppressive regimes. It is likely a pathway to failure (repeating more of the same), not collective recovery.

Echoing Peter Coyote (1999; Appendix B: "The Diggers"), if you want a world that has free food and flourishing life, then you must create it and live it, now. The means are also the ends. The pathways to emancipation are the presently available possibilities. When we seek transformational change, we seek to disturb the grounds of common sense, uproot normality, and

rewild the landscape so that all the earth might resiliently flourish - differently. These types of transgressions have always been necessary and urgent, but opportunity is ripe. There are many ways to do this. The embodied praxis within prefigurative, emancipatory, intersectional socio-economic movements is but one pathway to a relational multispecies justice perspective.

Transgress!

This thesis began by challenging the delusion of 'common sense' that stems from capitalist hegemony. This common sense reinforces the universalized social order of free market capitalism and scarcity and legitimizes inequality and interpersonal conflict along line of class, race, gender, and geography. Capitalist hegemony perpetuates extraction, exploitation, and dispossession under the global development initiative. This metanarrative is disseminated and reified in social and educational institutions, fortified by the state, and internalized by individuals. The capitalist hegemony inflicts corporeal and devastating consequences for the planet, both human and the more-than-human. This metanarrative upholds a compliant yet tenuous social order by instructing, manufacturing, naturalizing, and mobilizing fear. This includes fear of the implied consequences of attempting alternatives to the dominant social order. Fear produces (and is produced by) trauma, yet it is appropriate to fear alternatives when there are negative consequences for trying them. "Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration" (Herbert [1965] 1978). Whether fear is a hegemonic manipulation or learned, it stifles creativity and instills a need for risk-aversion. Under such restrictions, alternative ways of being are rarely attempted, or even imagined, and freedom is denied (the little-death).

We should "not deny the experiences of tragedy, trauma, and pain," but instead recognize "the *knowing* derived from such experiences as wise" (Tuck and Yang 2014, 231, emphasis added). The wounds from trauma-oppressions become embodied and emerge as an important source of knowledge and power, and as a site for resisting oppression (Johnson 2009, 24) and creating pathways of recovery from capitalist hegemony. When knowledge and power are shared collectively, it creates more resilient practices of resistance, possibilities of harm-reduction, and even recovery. Therefore, we can connect across our difference, our vulnerabilities, and our trauma-informed wisdoms. Shared practices enable the collective to disrupt restrictive hegemonic thinking and norms. Imagination and a *really* free culture can follow. We must welcome change to become free, and it begins with fear and transgression of restrictions. We move through the fear, and then we must transgress to get free.

End Notes: Interviews Cited

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[ii] Interviews: 5, 7/2/2021; 6 7/6/2021; 9, 7/6/2021
[iii] Interview: 6, 7/2/2021
[iv] Interviews: 1, 6/27/2021; 2, 6/27/2021; 3, 6/30/2021; 4, 7/1/2021; 8, 7/3/2021; 10, 8/28/2021
[v] Interviews: 2, 6/30/2021, 4 7/1/2021, 10, 8/28/2021
[vi] Interviews: 8, 7/3/2021; 10, 8/28/2021
[vii] Interviews: 8, 7/3/2021; 10, 8/28/2021
[viii] Interview: 5, 7/2/2021
[ix] Interview: 6, 7/2/2021
[x] Interview: 14, 9/29/2021
[xi] Interview: 13, 9/28/2021 (1)
[xii] Interviews: 13, 9/28/2021 (1); 15, 9/30/2021; 17, 9/30/2021
[xiii] Interview: 17, 9/30/2021
[xiv] Interview: 16, 9/30/2021
[xv] Interview: 14, 9/29/2021
[xvi] Interview: 15, 9/30/2021
[xvii] Interview: 17, 9/30/2021
[xviii] Interview: 14, 9/29/2021
[xix] Interviews: 12, 9/30/2021; 17, 9/30/2021
[xx] Interview: 14, 9/29/2021
[xxi] Interviews: 14, 9/29/2021, 15/9/30/2021
[xxii] Interviews: 12, 9/28/2021; 15, 9/30/2021; 17, 9/30/2021
[xxiii] Interview: 12, 9/28/2021; 15, 9/30/2021
[xxiv] Interviews: 12, 9/28/2021 and 16, 9/30/2021
[xxv] Interview: 14, 9/29/2021
[xxvi] Interview: 15, 9/30/2021
[xxvii] Interviews: 13, 9/28/2021 (1); 13, 9/28/2021 (2); 17, 9/30/2021
[xxviii] Interview: 17, 9/30/2021
[xxix] Interviews: 13, 9/28/2021 (1); 13, 9/28/2021 (2)
[xxx] Interview: 15, 9/30/2021
[xxxi] Group Meeting 2, 10/24/2021
[xxxii] Interviews: 19, 12/13/2021, 21, 12/17/2021; 23, 12/18/2021
[xxxiii] Interviews: 22, 12/18/2021; 23, 12/18/2021
[xxxiv] Interview 15, 9/30/2021
[xxxv] Interview 13, 9/28/2021 (1)
[xxxvi] Interviews 13, 9/28/2021 (1); 13, 9/28/2021 (2)
[xxxvii] Informal Conversation: 2, 9/28/2021
[xxxviii] Interview 17, 9/30/2021
[xxxix] Interview 13, 9/28/2021 (1)
[xl] Interview 15, 9/30/2021
[xli] Interview 15, 9/30/2021
[xlii] Interview 15, 9/30/2021
[xliii] Interview 17, 9/30/2021
[xliv] Interview 14, 9/29/2021
[xlv] Interview: 14, 9/29/2021
[xlvi] Interview: 16, 9/30/2021
[xlvii] Informal Conversation: 4/10/2022
[xlviii] Group meeting 2, 10/24/2021
[xlix] Interview: 8, 7/3/2021
[l] Interview: 10, 8/28/2021

[li] Interview: 10, 8/28/2021
[lii] Interview: 18, 12/12/2021
[liii] Interview: 15, 9/30/2021
[liv] Interview: 18, 12/12/2021
[lv] Interview 13, 9/28/2021 (1)
[lvi] Interview 15, 9/30/2021
[lvii] Interview 15, 9/30/2021
[lviii] Interview: 10, 8/28/2021
[lix] Interview: 8, 7/3/2021
[lx] Interview: 8, 7/3/2021
[lxi] Interview 14, 9/29/2021
[lxii] Interview 14, 9/29/2021
[lxiii] Interview: 10, 8/28/2021
[lxiv] Interview: 5, 7/2/2021
[lxv] Interview 19, 12/13/2021
[lxvi] Interview 24, 12/19/2021
[lxvii] Interview 10, 8/28/2021
[lxviii] Interview: 20, 12/17/2021
[lxix] Interview: 16, 9/30/2021
[lxx] Interview: 16, 9/30/2021
[lxxi] Interview: 9, 7/2/2021
[lxxii] Interview: 9, 7/2/2021
[lxxiii] Interview: 3, 6/30/2021
[lxxiv] Group meeting, 10/24/2021
[lxxv] Interview: 19, 12/13/2021
[lxxvi] (Interview: 19, 12/13/2021)
[lxxvii] Interview 23, 12/18/2021
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Appendix A: US Condition - A Critical Perspective

Peter Coyote (1998) of the San Francisco Diggers collective describes this critical perspective in an anecdote:

> Billy had intuited that people had internalized cultural premises about the sanctity of private property and capital so completely as to have become addicted to wealth and status; the enchantment ran so deep and the identity with job was so absolute as to have eradicated inner wildness and personal expression not condoned by society. [. . .] To be free, as Billy understood it, was the antidote to such addictions. For most people the word free means simply "without limits." Harnessed to the term enterprise, however, it has become a global force, intimating limitless wealth; as such it is the dominant engine of U.S. culture. The belief that vanquishing personal and structural limits is not only possible but necessary to successful living is so integral to American ways of thinking that assertions to the contrary are regarded as heretical. In fact, personal freedom, as it is colloquially understood, has lots of limits: it limits aspirations (to adult adjustment, for instance), creates continual cultural and economic upheavals, forces relentless adjustment on an overstressed population, ignores biological and social principles of interdependence and reciprocity, violates the integrity of the family and community, exhausts biological niches, and has strip-mined common courtesy and civility from public life. Freedom within the relentless pressures of a market-driven society appeared impossible precisely because of its stultifying effects on the imagination in all realms but the material.
>
> From our point of view, freedom involved first liberating the imagination from economic assumptions of profit and private property that demanded existence at the expense of personal truthfulness and honor, then living according to personal authenticity and fidelity to inner directives and impulses. If enough people began to behave in this way, we believed, the culture would invariably change to accommodate them and become more compassionate and more human in the process. [. . .] Our hope was that if we were imaginative enough in creating social paradigms as free men and women, the example would be infectious and might produce self-directed (as opposed to coerced or manipulated) social change. People enjoying an existence that they imagined as best for them would be loath to surrender it and would be more likely to defend it. If this were to occur en masse, it would engender significant changes in our society (70-71).

Appendix B: The Diggers

Per the memoirs of Peter Coyote (1998), former San Francisco Digger, the notions of free food – not just for those with the most need – was difficult at first for even him to understand:

> I remember vividly the first day in 1966 that I went to the Panhandle with Emmett to visit the Digger Free Food. Hearty stew was being ladled out of large steel milk cans and dispensed to a long line of ragged street people. Each portion was accompanied by a small loaf of bread resembling a mushroom because it had been baked in a one-pound coffee can and had expanded over the top to form a cap. The morning fog stung my cheeks, and my senses were sharpened by the spice of eucalyptus in the air. Emmett and I stood to one side. The line of waiting people, clutching their ubiquitous tin cups, passed through a large square constructed from six-foot-long bright yellow two-by-fours: the "Free Frame of Reference." In order to receive a meal, one stepped through and received a tiny yellow replica about two inches square, attached to a cord for wearing. People were encouraged to look through it and "frame" any piece of reality through this "free frame of reference," which allowed them a physical metaphor to reconstruct (or deconstruct) their worldview at their own pace and direction. Emmett asked me if I'd like something to eat, and I said, "No, I'll leave it for people who need it." He looked at me sharply. "That's not the point," he said, and his words pried open a door in my mind. The point was to do something that you wanted to do, for your own reasons. If you wanted to live in a world with free food, then create it and participate in it. Feeding people was not an act of charity but an act of responsibility to a personal vision (87-88).

The Digger Free Store was yet another form of disrupting perspectives and creating a different world. He describes the experiential nature of this project:

> The Diggers created a series of "free stores," which were little more than bins of take-what-you-like goods. Peter Berg refined Arthur Lisch's original free store on Frederick Street with Trip Without a Ticket, a free store designed to encourage reflection on the relationships among goods and roles—owner, employee, customer—implied by a store. A number of us agreed to help him, and we begged the money from a patron and rented a building at the corner of Cole and Carl Streets. We painted the Free Store interior a tasteful white with donated paint, scavenged counters, racks, and hangers, and began

filling them with the available detritus of an industrial culture: clothes, jewelry, televisions, kitchen implements, discarded skis and trunks, tennis rackets, and waffle irons. The store's existence advertised its own premise: "stuff" is easy to acquire; why trade time in thrall in order to get it?

> Not only were the goods in the Free Store free but so were the roles. Customers might ask to see the manager and be informed that they were the manager. Some people then froze, unsure how to respond. Some would leave, but some "got it" and accepted the invitation to redo the store according to their own plan, which was the point. Your life was your own, and if you could leap the hurdles of programmed expectations and self-imposed limits, the future promised boundless possibilities. If you couldn't, you had to understand this either as a natural limit or as one to be remedied. There was no one or no system to blame. The condition of freedom was presented as an actual possibility, not "a message," the subtext of a play or literary tract. Transmission through action, heightened by the reality that we were living in the liberated commons of the Haight, made the situation potent and its implications radical (*Ibid.*, 106).

While Coyote evokes a rather American notion of individualist determinism, this explanation of the Diggers Free Food and Free Store demonstrations illustrate how "free" items might teach participants how to enact freedom.

Appendix C: OHBG to RRFM

The Occupy Harrisburg (OHBG) movement began as most others across the world, inspired by the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protest that began September 17, 2011. The OWS encampment in Zuccotti Park, New York City was started by a small group of anarchists and quickly grew with crowds of people from all walks of life and ideologies. It was an autonomous and anti-capitalist movement that intentionally refused to become a legally recognized formal entity or a political party. Often overlooked by dominant narratives is that OWS was a prefigurative movement, in part because of the 24-hour nature of the encampment protest. It was an intersectional, experimental space organized in horizontal arrangements, utilizing consensus-decision making models. Most of the physical needs of the protesters were met through mutual aid networks built on site and resourced through wider donations. Education, skills, and knowledge were shared in a peer-to-peer format and safety, or health concerns were addressed from within the ad hoc protester community.

> The movements of the Arab Spring and the 15M movement in Spain, which catalyzed similar "real democracy" movements of 'Indignados' in Italy, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Greece, as well as the Occupy movement in the US all started out with taking over – not buildings but – public and private squares and plazas. [. . .] Most of these movements used the (re)appropriated spaces to set up tents, kitchens, libraries, and media centers to collectively organize their assemblies and working groups, their rallies and marches, as well as their everyday lives in a horizontal, self-managed, and direct-democratic style. In the process, they have transformed public spaces into commons – common spaces opened up by the occupiers who inhabit them and share them according to their own rules. As with squatters of social centers or large buildings, the occupied squares represent(ed) not only a collective form of residence on the basis of shared resources, but also a political action: in this case laying siege to centers of financial and political power. Importantly, they have also served to explore direct-democratic decision-making, to prefigure post-capitalist ways of life, and to devise innovative forms of political action. As with squatting, the practice of occupying has enacted a democratic (re)appropriation of public squares epitomized by their inhabitation. As with squatting, the power of bodies that continue to be present – that don't go home at the end of the demonstration and that speak for themselves rather than being represented by others – exerts a forceful message as it gives ongoing presence to political protest (Mayer 2013, 1-2).

OWS was an enactment of a self-regulating, autonomous, collectivist community within a political protest. This inspired other similar protest encampments throughout the world, where place-based, intersectional, and localized mutual aid and learning networks developed in a similar fashion. OWS protesters raised consciousness of the growing wealth gap with the commonly

repeated slogan, 'the 99 versus the 1%,' however its contribution extended beyond this. It displayed a different nature of activism - a decentralized, leaderless organizing method. The direct democracy practices at OWS based on consensus enabled a way for communication across social difference to be enacted. And perhaps one of the most pivotal frameworks OWS popularized was the intersectional and politicized notion that "all our grievances are connected" (Schragis 2011; Myerson 2011). Many who participated in OWS-inspired protest carried these lessons forward in other grassroots organizing to come.

On October 15, 2011, a group in Harrisburg held a 24-hour protest in solidarity with OWS on the Pennsylvania Capitol steps (Malawsky 2011). Those in attendance elected to stay another day, past the state-granted permit limits. And after the next day, they elected to stay longer. As time went on, the group continued their protest, and with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), won the legal right to continue a presence on the Capitol steps, indefinitely, so long as the protest was active 24 hours a day. The group did not leave this post on the Capitol steps until November 2012. It stayed on through all seasons, outlasting even the original encampment in New York's OWS, making it the second longest Occupy Wall Street-inspired 24/7 protest in the United States (after one in Fresno, California) (Klaus 2012). It was only with support of the Harrisburg houseless community, and the resource-sharing of others, that this could have been possible.[i]

Following the OWS example, OHBG kept camp sites, developed working groups, engaged in direct democracy, and held affinity-group protests. Like OWS, OHBG co-created a space that encompassed people from a range of demographics – age, race, education, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliations, immigration status, and residential status. OHBG developed its own mutual aid network to take care of the needs of those living on site in encampments, to share skills and education within the protest group and with the wider public, and to develop demonstrations that another world was possible.

OHBG was more than a protest tent on the steps of the Capitol building. It spawned three satellite encampments: one in a nearby vacant lot (short lived, due to unusual October 2011 snowstorm), one in Riverfront Park (short lived - without a permit or ACLU support it was violently dismantled by police), and another at the local Quaker's Friends Meeting House (this was long standing, the Quakers were so supportive that they installed indoor showers and allowed OHBG

to maintain raised-bed gardens on their grounds).[ii] Local business owners would send material donations (coffee, pens, clipboards, sleeping bags) and individuals would provide skills or materials from their own homes. The 'Occupiers' were fed with support from a regional Catholic Worker, who would bring soup or leftover produce from farmers markets, or the Harrisburg Food Not Bombs group, who would bring meals. The overlap between Food Not Bombs and the Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) community has persisted to this day.

Like OWS, OHBG engaged in consensus-based decision making in regular open-air meetings, or General Assemblies, on the Capitol steps (or, just "the Steps"). There were various working groups, such as Communications and Press, Gardening, Farm Support (working to save a local farmer family from eviction),[iii] Direct Action, Paradigm Shift (formerly the Women's group, but experienced a name change due to the variety of participants, who did not always identify as women), and Mutual Aid, among others. Community was built from these activities, and Occupiers would also regularly meditate, practice yoga, or play games together.

The Occupiers developed a public educational workshop and speaker series, Occupy Your Mind, often held in the local independent bookstore. It brought notable speakers such as Bill Ayers (Weather Underground), Daryle Lamont Jenkins (anti-fascist and anti-racist), or panels on local politics, documentary movie screenings and discussions, and teach-ins from the OHBG participants themselves (like "Talk to an Anarchist," or "Patriarchy and Sexism," or "Survivalism"). For a period, some protesters maintained a Free Library which travelled between encampments. After the author, CT Butler (of Food Not Bombs) visited the OHBG, a regular book study of the *On Conflict and Consensus* manual began at Quaker Friends Meeting house.

The OHBG network engaged in other demonstrations beyond the Steps. These were often oppositional protest actions: to disrupt Pennsylvania Congress gerrymandering legislation, or marches against big banks invested in environmental devastation. Sometimes, these actions were in support of or connected to affinity groups, like the Quaker's protest of their traditional bank, which was investing in mountain top removal. One very important action led into another, as seemed always the case over that year. But the protesters were engaged in a long-term, prefigurative exercise of collective imagination, and thus readily turned to examining other ways of community structuring, outside of dominant concepts of governance, monied exchanges, and even punishment. This led to experimentation with creating a space where the rules of capitalism

no longer managed daily life. As theories and practices proliferated, whole identities and interpersonal relationships were reconstructed among the protestor group. Although not always in total agreement in what it might look like, the group remained in solidarity that *another world is possible*. OHBG held other demonstrations affirming this 'other world' and, just as with direct democracy and horizontalism, OHBG embodied the vision of a different way of doing and being that embraced complexity. This was not aiming toward a naïve utopia, as has sometimes been a broad criticism of the Occupy movement. Rather OHBG, like OWS, evoked a co-constituted praxis that was illegible to the hegemonic system, and as such, was demeaned as useless, flippant, idealistic, riffraff, and impractical. And it disturbed the status quo profoundly. So, it was a threat and a confusion, but impactful, nonetheless.

In OHBG (as elsewhere), the protesters enacted these different ways of being within the regular practices of our group and the Steps, but also in distinct externalized direct actions. Other experiential, prefigurative demonstrations took place under the OHBG banner. For example, we held a *Free Lunch*, a class-conscious, anti-austerity event, where we handed out paper-bag vegan lunches and literature, telling everyone that 'yes, there is such a thing as a free lunch.'[iv] Sometime in spring 2012, the concept of a Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) surfaced. No one I have spoken with during this research can definitively describe how RRFM idea was introduced, but it was likely suggested in the OHBG Mutual Aid working group.[v] I recall hearing the idea and doing a cursory web search. It was a simple concept, an act of protest, solidarity, community, and mutual aid all at once. The design straightforward: 1) locate an accessible, public space, like a park; 2) work with your community, and wider networks to advertise it – use social media if that's the best method; 3) Tell everyone the place and time; 4) Ensure that everyone understands the only concept that matters: everything is free! Bring things they don't want and take what they will – no money, no barter, no trade. 5) At the end, restore the space as it was found – take leftover items to a different location or dispose of them consciously (Luna, 2010).

Inspired by the May Day protest legacy, OHBG held its first RRFM May 19, 2012, in the Riverfront Park. In advance of the event, a flyer was posted around town and in community centers and the event was promoted in OHBG social media. They had no city-issued permit, and in the vein of OHBG and squatting movements before, Occupiers reclaimed public space for this common use. It was an easy fit for the OHBG group, now accustomed to claiming public spaces,

especially after the success of the "encampment" on the Capitol steps (which had been continuously standing for at least seven months by this point). At the RRFM in the park, the Occupiers protesters placed an information table to share literature. Some protesters made chalk drawings of protest slogans on the sidewalks, or to encourage passersby to stop and take things. Material items were placed on top of tarps or even hanging from trees. Some Occupiers dressed in the most outrageous clothing they could find at the RRFM and canvassed the streets to distribute flyers and invite people to the site. In these early days, the Harrisburg RRFM incorporated teach-ins: Marxism, Bitcoin, How-to-Sew-a-Button, wheat pasting, stencil making, violin demonstrations, and music (often provided by musicians within the OHBG community). Affinity groups, like a zine distributor, would set up tables to share their materials at the event.

The biggest logistical problem was how to manage leftover materials. Things determined unusable were either recycled or trashed. For a time, Occupiers stored usable things in their homes, storage units, or cars until the next RRFM. However, it was clear they would just end up with more stuff at the end of subsequent events. Instead of saving things, the Occupiers began consciously cycling them to local community-based donation centers, or wherever else they could find. This remains an ongoing item for troubleshooting to this day.

Although in the beginning, few people attended outside of the OHBG network, it seemed successful enough to make the RRFM a monthly event. By November 2012, the OHBG protest tent on the Capitol Steps was dismantled by consensus among the protesters. Near that same period, the tents at the Quaker's Friends Meeting House were also dismantled. General Assemblies and working group meetings had ended, there were no more book studies, teach-ins, or documentary screenings. A year of liberatory exercise and experimenting had ended. It was a disappointment, but it was no longer sustainable, the energy was not there to see it through another winter. OHBG had stopped operating as such, but the RRFM continued onward.

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[i] Interview: 6, 7/2/2021
[ii] Interview: 5, 7/2/2021
[iii] Interview: 2, 6/30/2021
[iv] Interview: 3, 6/30/2021
[v] Interview: 2, 6/30/2021

Appendix D: What's in a Name?

Combining names to better impart their meaning, and as a mode of analysis, is a common exercise in academia and activist circles. There is a plethora of naming constructs pursuing the best representation of a concept. In hard sciences, the current geological era is called the Anthropocene, noting human induced ecological and climate change. But social sciences have responded with a slew of alternative names to better comprehend the era: Capitalocene (Moore, 2017; Moore 2018); Thermocene (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016); Necrocene (McBrien, 2016); Plantationocene (Haraway et al. 2016); and Cthulucene (Haraway, 2016). Naming constructs also follow a legacy within queer theory[37] and black feminist scholarship built upon a distinct understanding of intersectionality as exemplified in the work of bell hooks. She coined the term "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (and later added the modifier "imperialist") to better understand the oppressive nature(s) of our social condition. In an interview (1997), bell hooks described this portmanteau as

> [L]anguage that would actually remind us continually of the interlocking systems of domination that define our reality and not to just have one thing be like, you know, gender is the important issue, race is the important issue, but for me the use of that particular jargonistic phrase was a way, a sort of short cut way of saying all of these things actually are functioning simultaneously at all times in our lives (7).

To hooks, looking through only one lens of the "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" cannot fully inform us of the nature of our experience. The phrase is a reminder of the institutional constructs over the personal ones, "I don't know why those terms have become so mocked by people because in fact, far from simplifying the issues, I think they actually when you merge them together really complicate the questions of freedom and justice globally" (*Ibid.*). As hooks elucidates, this phrase is both an act of naming the domination that shapes social realities but also provides an analytical framework. It is a dialectical combination – each part informs the others. This novel amalgamation also insists that the parts of PTIDER are most compelling when combined, particularly to meet the critical praxis and complexity of the RRFM itself rather than

[37] While there are many examples, one need look only as far as the naming of a community of people as "LGBTQ" for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer. To be more inclusive, an elaboration on this name has been suggested as "LGBTQQIP2SAA" for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, Intersex, Pansexual, Two-spirit (2S), Androgynous, and Asexual (https://oie.duke.edu/knowledge-base/glossary/lgbtqqip2saa)

reduce it to a subtext of collaborative consumption studies. This draws parallel to the explanation Davis et al. (2022) provide for naming their book *Abolition. Feminism. Now.*

> Neither abolition nor feminism are static identifiers but rather political methods and practices. Is a project or a campaign feminist or abolitionist if participants do not use these words to describe their labor or campaign? Could we discretely mark what was 'feminist' about 'abolition' or 'abolitionist' about 'feminism'? How does abolition feminism take up the political questions that are germane but often obscured in the rendering of both concepts, considering racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, internationalism, and transphobia as examples? Because these and other questions continue to play generative roles without demanding reductionist responses, we punctuate each word in the title with a full stop to signify that each of these concepts, with their own singular histories, frames this project. As abolition and feminism continue to be theorized discretely by a range of scholars and organizers, our project is not to erase, correct, or supplant these preexisting (and ongoing) efforts. Rather the very meaning of the term *abolition feminism* incorporates a dialectic, a relationality, and a form of interruption: an insistence that abolitionist theories and practices are most compelling when they are also feminist, and conversely, a feminism that is also abolitionist is the most inclusive and persuasive version of feminism for these times. (1-2, emphasis in the original)[38]

[38] The question here "Is a project or campaign feminist or abolitionist if participants do not use these words to describe their labor or campaign?" has parallel in the Chapter 2's discussion on the intersectionality of RRFM participants and organizers: Is the RRFM movement anarchist, prefigurative, or evoking transformative justice praxis even if participants do not use these terms?

Appendix E: Trauma-Informed Approach in Research

While the trauma-informed care (TIC) approach is most applied care or education settings, it has been noticed and applied across academic and social science fields. Jordan Goodwin and Emmy Tiderington (2020) argue the need to develop trauma-informed research competencies in social work graduate research. They affirm although several TIC principles are reflected in standard Institutional Review Board research ethics guidelines, they must be enhanced in social work research education.

Sharon M. Ravitch, professor in education studies, goes further to state the need for a cross-discipline application of this model: "Trauma-informed methodology foregrounds learning about trauma and its intra-psychic and interactional effects, cultivating a research environment comfortable to those who've experienced trauma, and recognizing the resilience and resources of individuals and communities who have experienced or are experiencing trauma" (2020, para. 12).

Ravitch draws attention to an example of similar methodology in practice, via a recent doctoral candidate, Melissa Kapadia-Bodi. In her dissertation (2016), Kapadia-Bodi describes the Chronic Illness Methodology she created and employed during her research while living with illness. She distinguishes this framework as a challenge for the researcher to a) demand inventiveness and creativity; b) require spontaneity, openness, and flexibility; c) ask for rebellion (just as our bodies often rebel against us); d) require that we put materiality before theory; e) invite co-researchers; and f) view participants as key knowers and holders of truth. (67-8).

Kapadia-Bodi's framework is pertinent to a trauma-informed methodology. Not only does it empower the researcher to guide the process based on one's own epistemologies and limitations, but it also operates through the lens of one's own trauma to support knowledges from participants who may be dealing with traumas as well (68-9). Thus, the researcher can work from within their own frame of reference and trust local knowledges of participants and their individual, even painful, truths. Most significantly, Kapadia-Bodi asserts that this methodology teaches "A language of trauma, justice and empathy that is deeply threaded through every element of the work, beginning with empathy for the self and spreading out into the research context and participants' lives" (62).

Appendix F: Diverse economies Matrix

J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) focuses on a "weak" theory of economy as an intervention to the "strong" theory of capitalism. To see heterogeneity in economic practices currently operating in societies, they examine these in terms of different kinds of transaction, types of labor, and forms of enterprise. They provide a visual representation of a matrix of "alternative" or "nonmarket" versions of these three characteristics in *Figure 3: "A diverse economy"* (71).

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* *Nonprofit*
NONMARKET *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*	**NONCAPITALIST** *Communal* *Independent* *Feudal* *Slave*

Figure 3: "A diverse economy" (Gibson-Graham 2006, 71)

As Gibson-Graham explains:

> In this summary table, all of our axes of economic difference – the columns of transactions, labor, and enterprise – are included together in one framing. As many have pointed out to us, this arrangement, with the activities theoretically associated with

> capitalism lined up in the top row, visually reflects (and perhaps reinstates?) the capitalocentrism we are trying to dislocate. The point of this framing is really to highlight our deconstructive move. By marshaling the many ways that social wealth is produced, transacted, and distributed *other* that those traditionally associated with capitalism, noncapitalism is rendered a positive multiplicity rather than an empty negativity, and capitalism becomes just one particular set of economic relations situated in a vast sea of economic activity. (69 – 70)

This table becomes a useful analytical tool in the Practitioner Chapter, and it is a complement to the social practice research analysis offered therein.[39]

[39] The term ‘gleaning’ is listed as a nonmarket type of transaction. Gleaning is a practice of taking leftovers after the goods were used for their primary function. For example, dumpster diving at a store for food that is unsellable.

Appendix G: NSD Documents

Below is a sample of the information letter, consent form, and the research questions.

Information Letter and Consent form: Sample Template

Are you interested in taking part in the research project
***"What We Have at Hand: The Really (Really) Free Market model toward intersectional and emancipatory futures'*?**

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to examine the localized development of the Really Really Free Market (RRFM or Free Store) in the context of Harrisburg and ######## cities in Pennsylvania (USA) to understand how the Free Store concept can spread as a practice of expanding sense of community, sharing, and challenging capitalist consumption and waste. This research will explore the subjectivities of the people involved with maintaining the RRFM or Free Store and how they troubleshoot problems, limitations, or barriers.

In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The RRFM movement has been understudied in social sciences although these free stores have occurred for several decades in multiple cities and various countries. This research project will serve as data for master's thesis project conducted by a participant in the Harrisburg Really Free Market (or Harrisburg Free Store). There is potential research may continue to a doctorate level in the future.

The master's thesis research will have three main purposes: 1) to explore values and political acclimations of the RRFM organizers, as well as the wider socio-political-economic conditions the RRFM is in tension with; 2) to assist in the exchange of best practices between two Free Stores in Pennsylvania (USA), particularly while the Harrisburg RRFM troubleshoots barriers and limitations; 3) to examine the RRFM as a model of non-market exchange, expanded social relations and intersectionality for localized, sustainable futures.

By examining tensions and barriers, this research will have practical application toward expanding the practices internal to the Harrisburg movement and for possible use to Free Stores elsewhere, or similar projects. The main research questions include: What are the limits/barriers/tensions that prevent expansion of the RRFM movement (within Harrisburg and beyond)? Can (or how have) these barriers be mitigated within the Harrisburg RRFM? What parallel stories can be found between the Harrisburg and ######## RRFM models? How can knowledge of the barriers inform stronger practices at the RRFM or in other degrowth activities? Further questions include:

- What attributes of the people, community values, or concepts that maintain the RRFM viability and sustainability?
- Is there a correlation with people's values, decisions around consumption patterns, or political sensibilities and the phenomena remaining outside the mainstream?
- What are the markers of the community environment that precipitate the development of the RRFM? How does the local social context influence the character of the RRFM?
- Why does the RRFM model persist without a universalized or institutionalized structure?

- How do these questions compare between the different regional contexts of ######## and Harrisburg? How do the participants' values, principles or behaviors converge and diverge within the RRFM and comparatively in different regional practices?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or concerns with these RRFM models in Pennsylvania? What version of RRFM is desirable to spread, why? How can spread of the RRFM model be supported or conceived?
- What implications might the example of RRFM practices and tensions hold for a wider conversation on Degrowth, localization, resilience, and human identities in relation?

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Oslo – Centre for Development and the Environment is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You have been selected to participate in this research project due to your experience or affiliation with **either the Harrisburg Really Free Market (or Free Store) or the ######## Free Store** organization. Between both locations, there are roughly _____ total participants.

Due to your experience, your contribution will enrich the research collected here.

THIRD PERSONS: If we have not met in the past, you were recommended to me by a previous participant in the research project ___________________________[name].

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you complete an interview with me. This can take approximately 30 minutes. The interview will include questions about the history of the Free Store, your experience with it and feelings about the activities there, and the best practices. We may discuss how you feel your identity and world view fits in with the activities of the Free Store. We may also explore any tensions or conflicts involved in the Free Store or the larger community where it operates.

We can complete this interview in-person or by video call. The interview will be recorded on paper, with encrypted electronic written back-ups. There will only be digitally recorded with your permission. If you do not wish to be audio or video recorded, notes will be taken in written format only.

I will also ask others involved with the Free Store about the above topics in the same manner.

HARRISBURG ONLY: If you chose to take part in the project, I will also take notes during our group workshops or meetings where your participation or contribution will be noted. These working sessions will be recorded on paper and will be digitally recorded only with consent of all people present.

PARTICIPANTS UNDER 18 YEARS OLD: We will need consent from your parents/guardians to participate. The guardians may request to see the interview guides in advance.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

It will not affect your role with the Free Store or its activities.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation of Norway (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

I will have direct access to the personal data collected from you, under the supervision of Alexander Dunlap, PhD a Post-doctoral Research Fellow at University of Oslo – Centre for Development and the Environment.

I will take measure to ensure that no unauthorized persons are able to access your personal data, such as:

- Any personal data that is electronically stored will be encrypted, on a password protected hard drive. Any data that is transferred will be encrypted.
- I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of participant names, their contact details, and respective codes (a scrambling key) will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.
- This data will be anonymized as soon as no longer needed. This involves measures such as: deleting directly identifiable personal data (including scrambling key/list of names), deleting or rewriting indirectly identifiable personal data (e.g., categorizing variables such as age, place of residence, school, etc.), deleting (or editing) sound recordings, photographs and video recordings, as per the Norwegian Data Protection Services guidance.
- The data will be only accessible with multi-factor authentication, and an access log will be maintained.

Personal data will be collected, recorded, stored, and processed during field work and analyzed in the United States on my personal laptop and mobile phone.

I will ensure you are not easily identifiable in publications in the future, but the types of personal data used may include your age, gender, occupation, ethnicity, or other details relevant to your identity and worldview to show how it relates to the Free Store activities. These details are subject to your level of participation in sharing these details.

If you have a pseudonym in mind, please share it with me before we start our interview so I may begin coding your personal data now.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end June 3, 2022. At the end of this project the identification key will be deleted, personally identifiable information will be removed, re-written or categorized, and any digital recordings will be deleted. The remaining collected data will be stored in anonymised form and archived for future research or verification purposes.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent. Based on an agreement with The University of Oslo – Centre for Development and the Environment, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The University of Oslo – Centre for Development and the Environment is via Sarah Schubert, master's student, by email at skschube@uio.no or by telephone at +1717-418-5068 or supervisor Alexander Dunlap, PhD, Post-doctoral Research Fellow, by email at alexander.dunlap@sum.uio.no.
- Our Data Protection Officer: Roger Markgraf-Bye, by email at personvernombud@uio.no
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader
(Researcher/supervisor) Student (if applicable)

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *"What We Have Here at Hand: Really (Really) Free Market toward intersectional and emancipatory futures"* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ to participate in an interview *(insert method, e.g., an interview)*
- ☐ to participate in observation
- ☐ to participate in group interviews
- ☐ to participate in group workshops **[Harrisburg only]**
- ☐ for information about me/myself to be published in a way that I can be recognised by my own description of my identity and worldview
- ☐ for my personal data to be stored after the end of the project follow-up studies
- ☐ *for my child to participate in this project*

I give consent for my personal data (or my child's personal data) to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. June 3, 2022.

(Signed by participant or participant's guardian, date)
Parent's Name (if applicable):
Participant's Name:

Harrisburg RRFM Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Question 1: Can you explain, in your own words, what is the Free Store or Really Really Free Market?

Question 2: How did you first learn of the [RRFM]?

- How do you experience the free store (as a participant, as a protest, as a charity)?
- When did you get involved?
- What is your understanding of the basic principles of the [RRFM] practices?
- [if involved in starting it] What was it like in the beginning? Can you share some history about this [RRFM]?

Question 3: Do you think the [RRFM] has been successful?

- Why do you think it has lasted so long?

Question 4: What are the best parts of the [RRFM] practices?

Question 5: Are there any tensions between the [RRFM] and the larger Harrisburg region?

- Do you see any tensions during the [RRFM] event?

Question 6: What are the limitations to the [RRFM] as it currently operates?

- How do you think these limitations can be addressed?

Question 7: Can you explain your value system or philosophy of change?

- What experiences in your life have shaped this perspective?

Question 8: How do you feel your values are aligned with [RRFM] (and its participants)?

- How are your values not aligned with [RRFM] (and its participants)?

Question 9: Do you think the [RRFM] practices and participants adequately address conflict between individuals?

- How so? Or why not?

Question 10: What do you see in the future of [RRFM]?

Question 11: Are you aware of other [RRFMs]?

- Have you heard of the Free Store? It is a nonprofit organization, what do you think of that?

Free Store Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Question 1: Can you explain, in your own words, what is the Free Store or Really Really Free Market?

Question 2: How did you first learn of the Free Store?

- How do you experience the free store (as a participant, as a protest, as a charity)?
- When did you get involved?
- What is your understanding of the basic principles of the Free Store practices?
- [if involved in starting it] What was it like in the beginning? Can you share some history about this Free Store?

Question 3: How does the Free Store operate as a nonprofit?

Question 4: Do you think the Free Store has been successful?

- Why do you think it has lasted so long?

Question 5: What are the best parts of the Free Store practices?

Question 6: Are there any tensions between the Free Store and the larger region or other charities?

- Do you see any tensions within the Free Store?

Question 7: What are the limitations to the Free Store as it currently operates?

- How do you think these limitations can be addressed?

Question 8: Can you explain you value system or philosophy of change?

- What experiences in your life have shaped this perspective?

Question 9: How do you feel your values are aligned with Free Store (and its participants)?

- How are your values not aligned with Free Store (and its participants)?

Question 10: Do you think the Free Store practices and participants address conflict between individuals?

- How so? Or why not?

Question 11: What do you see in the future of Free Store?

Question 12: Are you aware of other Free Stores?

- Have you heard of the Harrisburg [RRFM]? It is a non-hierarchical grassroots organization, what do you think of that?

Appendix H: Research Participant Tables

The participants from each site, the duration of their participation, and their duties are listed in Participant *Table 2* and Participant *Table 3*.

Table 2: RRFM Participant Table. The Harrisburg RRFM Organizers. Organizers is a terminology used loosely. The group does not have consistent roles: logistical duties are shared fluidly and vary over time. For example, the are at least four administrators of social media, but not everyone actively or consistently maintains those sites. Those who are listed in the table below as staying 'to the end' assist with cleaning up the event site. Throughout the remainder of this thesis, the research participants from RRFM are referred to as 'organizers,' 'core group,' or (research) participants.

Table 2: RRFM Participant Table

Harrisburg RRFM Organizers			
Name (pseudonyms)	**Length of participation with RRFM Observed (in years)**	**Frequency of attending/aiding the RRFM (my observations)**	**Interview number and date**
Bea	9 (2012 – Spring)	Consistently (sometimes only at end)	9, 7/6/2021
Clementine	1 (2021 – Spring)	Consistently (from beginning to end)	10, 8/28/2021
Emma	2 (2020 – Fall)	Consistently (from beginning to end)	8, 7/3/2021; 20, 12/17/2021
Jeanie	9 (2012 – Spring)	Casually until 2021, now consistently (midpoint arrival to end)	2, 6/30/2021; 22, 12/18/2021
Jessica	9 (2012 – Spring)	Consistently (midpoint arrival to end)	5, 7/2/2021; 21, 12/17/2021
M.	9 (2012 – Spring)	Consistently until 2019, now rarely	4, 7/1/2021; 23, 12/18/2021
Mr. Cat	6 (2015 – Summer)	Consistently (midpoint arrival to end)	1, 6/27/2021; 11, 9/1/2021; 18, 12/12/2021; Informal Conversation 3, 4/10/2022
Rusty	9 (2012 – Spring)	Casually	6, 7/2/2021; 7, 7/3/2021; 24, 12/19/2021
Trillian	9 (2012 – Spring)	Consistently (midpoint arrival to end)	3, 6/30/2021; 19, 12/13/2021

Table 3: Free Store Participant Table. Free Store participants have defined roles within their organization (i.e., Donor, Volunteer, Shopper, Founder). These roles are indicated in the table below, although sometimes these roles change, or the boundaries are malleable, as indicated in some of the descriptions. Throughout the remainder of the thesis, the research participants from

Free Store are referred to as 'volunteers' or 'shoppers' dependent on their roles, or as (research) participants.

Table 3: Free Store Participant Table

Free Store Core Group			
Name (Pseudonyms)	**Length of Participation Reported (in Years)**	**Role (as per the participants)**	**Interview number and date**
Aria	9	Volunteer – Inside Free Store	Informal Conversation 1, 9/28/2021
Jack	3	Volunteer – Unload donations/trash, Former Donor	15, 9/30/2021
Kai	N/A	Shopper	Informal Conversation 2, 9/28/2021
Morgan	3	Co-founder and only salaried employee with *Free-Range Inclusion*	14, 9/29/2021
Pap	4-5	Volunteer – Unload donations/trash, Former Donor	17, 9/30/2021
Quinn	9	Founder – Hangs/Stocks, fields media, outreach, Handles monetary donations	12, 9/28/2021; 16, 9/30/2021
Shae	6	Volunteer – Hangs/Stocks, rearranges store periodically, manages the food table, former Shopper	13, 9/28/2021 (1) *two interviewed
Tracy	5	Volunteer – Hangs/Stocks, former Shopper	13, 9/28/2021 (2) *two interviewed

At either research site, I did not seek to interview participants who were attendees, or 'donors' or 'shoppers,' as the case may be. However, at Free Store I had informal conversations with one shopper (Kai) and another volunteer (Aria), and they are listed in *Table 3* above. The insights that might be afforded by these other practitioners or attendees would be worth examination in a future study.

Appendix I: SWOT TABLE

While findings from the first round of interviews indicated a gap or inconsistency in how we perceive of the function(s) of RRFM, this is a generative conflict that could improve the RRFM practice. Most of these organizers have participated for years in the RRFM, and the contradictions have always been present. This can lead to a stronger practice that benefits many more people. Furthermore, the RRFM events have a unique longevity despite ideological variations among the core group.

Toward bringing divergent ideas together, themes from the first round of interviews were analyzed and placed in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Table (*Table 4: SWOT*, below). Prior to our group meeting, I shared the SWOT (*Table 4: SWOT*) in the group chat with a preface that some of these ideas can overlap in the table. For example, a Weakness can be addressed with an Opportunity, or an Opportunity can also be a Threat. I felt the SWOT may be missing elements and had hoped we could explore this in some way during our meeting and gather constructive feedback from the group. I brought printed copies to the meeting. However, I elected to avoid over planning for our first meeting to allow conversation to grow organically with the SWOT or however others felt to share or get to know each other.

While focusing on SWOT table and troubleshooting was in some ways productive in the first group meeting, not everything was addressed. It remains a useful document for later discussions and a productive achievement in this way. While SWOTs are best completed as a group exercise, this seemed the best format to share a summary of the data that was collected, as relevant to the whole group. Other considerations came into play for choosing a SWOT as a presentation tool rather than a group practice: 1) I was gathering information from each person about the RRFM; thus, I was holding too much information. Following the collaborative aims of Practitioner research, it should be delivered to the wider group for scrutiny and generative conversation; 2) A group analysis like a SWOT may have been too top-heavy for a first meeting, but also redundant to the one-on-one conversations I held with each person previously; 3) We agreed that meeting outdoors was the only safe way to meet considering the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns of the highly transmissible Delta variant. Thus, we had no access to presentation tools or space (internet, white board, easel, and presentation pad) to conduct a group exercise in an accessible

manner. As a result, some advantages of the SWOT exercise were lost, like group analysis and bonding.

In terms of practical troubleshooting matters, there are things on represented in the SWOT that remain ongoing discussions: how to better communicate to the wider participating community the function of the RRFM as a direct action and prefigurative movement against capitalist social structures; where to properly dispose of leftover materials; and core group burnout. These potential limitations are addressed by creating signs, brainstorming informational flyers, and continuing communication among ourselves in the group chat or on-site at the events. The question of burnout has been mitigated by leveling the sense of obligation the organizers might feel to show up consistently and complete certain roles. Furthermore, other people are invited to provide their free services at the event, or to assist in cleaning up at the end (and regularly do). Organizers also tend to limit the amount of elaboration on structured activities at the event as a form of harm-reduction (less skills shares, inventorying or organizing items, consistency in tabling is all part of this). By keeping it simple, sharing responsibility, and inviting others to help with redistribution and sorting at the end of the event, there is a sense of stability and less pressure on personal contributions.

Table 4: SWOT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
- Laid back: Noncommittal, open ended, fluid roles. Minimal energy. - Word is out – social media, news channels, flyers, word-of-mouth, regulars, consistency - Agility – flexible, unconstrained by space or regulations - Space – regularity, access, foot traffic - Permissive culture – counter-hegemonic, confronts norms of “how to be” in society. Free of anxiety. Can just be human. Agency of children and adults. - Information sharing, learning from others in conversation - Relationship building – cross cultural, beyond usual social barriers - Growing grassroots networks - Social media page has multiple admins - Can step away and come back? - Nothing else quite like it - Transformative (and not transactional). - Personal practices/perspectives/vision/interests/passions of people involved in this group - Runs itself – so long as someone makes the social media event and people clean up, resolve leftover items at the end. - Disrupts notions of consumption/production/waste cycles, encourages localism and mutual aid against looming climate crisis.	- Laid back means people are not aware of their importance - Commitment/titles/roles can scare people, but some people need them - Empowering others to do RRFM (either involved in this one or to create another) - Inconsistent place to offload leftovers (locally) - Big items - Junk/Trash – disposal and recycling - Outdoor space: No bathroom. Weather permitting. No winter RRFM. - Date/time could exclude church goers - People don’t understand that: free is not always junk; we do not police the space; “transactional” thinking of our larger society; bodily autonomy and personal boundary setting; that people can make a profit off what they find and that’s not a problem; some people want “new” things - Engaging those who “drop and leave” - First aid and care for weather – water, etc. - Communicating across difference; not much happening currently - Lack a shared vision/history (this could also be a strength) - No signage, is this undermining accessibility?
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
- Growing/solidifying network – grassroots and houseless community - Expand the base for RRFM. Encourage multiple RRFMs in Harrisburg - Skill shares (from community, crowdsourcing). Things to do at RRFM. - Food Not Bombs overlap – solidify relationship - Reconnect with Thrift Store and similar places - Music/Creative space – performance, workshops, karaoke, and puppet show - News stations – getting the word out and controlling the message - Facebook – utilize the Mutual Aid Harrisburg page - Broadcast needs list - Outdoors – pop-up tent - More RRFM group conversations (@ first and last of the season) - Making opportunities for deeper participation known - “Free Store Wobblies” - Using leverage of existing nonprofits to meet community needs - Connecting with Free Store - Becoming a nonprofit or co-op? - Informational flyer – to explain RRFM and encourage others to do it. Create sign (visibility, accessibility)	- Outdoor space: Can be displaced - Conflicts (how to mediate if shit gets wacky?) - If too few people, cannot continue - Too much “organizing” changes RRFM. RRFM disrupts the capitalistic, transactional, policing culture. Too much organizing can overwhelm/burn us out - If RRFM becomes an advocate (using nonprofits, leveraging political clout for meeting community needs, or becoming a nonprofit co-op or LLC), is it becoming what it stands to disrupt? - Does RRFM need capitalism to exist?

Appendix J: The Diverse Economies of Free Culture Practice

J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006, Chapter 3) provide a method for mapping the diverse economy of free culture. Diverse economies scholarship posits that nonprofits are alternative capitalist enterprises, so the Free Store is primarily seen as such, while the autonomous Really (Really) Free Market (RRFM) is a noncapitalist enterprise. Both models of free culture are mapped below to show their unique heterogeneity. Yet both maps are incomplete renderings of free culture practices because both the Free Store and RRFM have localized iterations. Other forms of these models (formal/informal) have not been studied and present opportunities for future research. Both maps display forms of transactions, types of labor, and enterprise classifications that might exist within these two free culture practices. The transaction forms diverge from the diverse economies traditions where the text is highlighted. These highlighted texts are elaborations on the diverse economies terms to better meet the language of the free culture practices. The sections below begin with Table 5: The diverse economy of Free Store followed by Table 6: The diverse economy of the RRFM. This section concludes this is a potentially nonprescriptive analysis.

Table 5: The diverse economy of Free Store

TRANSACTIONS (RULES OF (IN)COMMENSURABILITY)	LABOR (COMPENSATION)	ENTERPRISE (APPROPRIATION OF SURPLUS)
MARKET N/A	**WAGE** *Salaried* (Negotiated salary + benefits) *Nonunionized* (Unprotected)	**CAPITALIST** N/A
ALTERNATIVE MARKET *Ethical "fair trade" markets* (Producer-consumer agreement, or consumer-consumer agreement) *Co-operative exchange* (Inter-"co-op" – or nonprofit- agreements) *Informal market* ("Trader" – or volunteer-shopper- agreement)	**ALTERNATIVE PAID** N/A	**ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST** *Nonprofit/Socially responsible firm* (Board of Directors) *Producer and Consumer Cooperatives* (Producers, Consumers)
NONMARKET *Indirect Household Flows* (intra-household exchange through donation to third party without negotiation) *Gift giving* (Norms of reciprocity) *Gleaning*[40] (Traditional right) *Theft* (illegal right)	**UNPAID** *Volunteer* (nonmonetary) *Neighborhood work* (nonmonetary) *Self-provisioning labor* (food and other goods)	**NONCAPITALIST** *Communal* (Cooperators) *Independent* (Self)

[40] The term 'gleaning' is listed in these tables as a nonmarket type of transaction. Gleaning is essentially a practice of taking leftovers after the goods have been taken for their main or primary function. For example, dumpster diving at a grocery store for food that is still good but deemed unsellable might be called gleaning.

As shown in Table 5, the Free Store practices several transaction types. It permits alternative market structures. For example, there are private agreements between producers and consumers, or between the nonprofit entities. Product valuation may not be based on capitalist free market valuation principles (i.e., Free-Range Inclusion purchasing bulk surplus retailer goods through a third-party nonprofit). The Free Food Cycle nonprofit creates agreements with business (i.e.., local grocers, some who are corporate entities), to obtain leftover food, and the business can claim its value as a tax exemption under capitalist principles. But both Free-Range Inclusion and Free Food Cycle leftovers are provided to Free Store, which is based on ethical principles of decreasing retailer and food waste. On site at the Free Store, a volunteer-shopper (or “trader”) agreement is apparent through how material goods are accessed by shoppers and provided by volunteers (i.e., by special request, or with limitations, or in-turn). These transactions are dependent on value relative to scarcity within an informal market which is specialized to the Store itself. Goods may be considered more valuable based on relative scarcity within the Free Store or based on the utilitarian needs of individual shoppers (i.e.., how many packages of diapers are on hand, specific goods are available by request only; readily available items are freely accessible). These flexible “trader agreements” are based on very localized and personalized needs and the variable availability of goods.

However, Free Store also builds nonmarket transactions as an intermediary of redistribution by receiving goods from households (i.e., direct individual donation). The value of such donations is relative to the judgement of volunteers or shoppers (as in the alternative capitalist informal market described above). Some concepts of noncapitalist gift giving transactions (cultural norms of reciprocity) may remain (i.e., ‘pay it forward,’ ‘be kind,’). Furthermore, the Free Store (and its sister organizations) is (are) built on the idea that all people should have their basic needs met, and it operates by gleaning leftovers for its shoppers to accrue. However. there was also evidence that certain actors were seen to take donations ‘illegally’ (i.e., after hours rifling through donations), so theft has been included as a transactional type in this assessment.

In terms of labor types and compensation, the nonprofits employ some workers under a salaried and nonunionized structure, which is a capitalist labor practice. Employment of part-time workers was not examined in this study. Most of the labor, particularly at the Free Store, is voluntary or

neighborhood work (nonmonetary), although time and energy spent in this role allows for compensation by self-provisioning (i.e., volunteers also eat the food or retain material goods).

The Free Store does not meet Gibson-Graham's description of capitalist enterprises. However, it is operating as a nonprofit, socially responsible structure with a Board of Directors, which is squarely defined as alternative capitalist enterprise. The Free Store is also a localized producer-consumer cooperative, since business or individuals can directly donate material goods they have produced for free distribution. The lines between the roles of volunteer and shopper may also be blurred, and consumers create the social norms and rules that govern the Free Store's operation. It also holds characteristics of noncapitalist enterprises in that it is a communal endeavor. Cooperators – or the volunteers - appropriate and redistribute surplus within the Free Store, or shoppers and volunteers may selectively redistribute goods to other locations (i.e.., their apartment building or personal community network). But in the case of theft transactions, the Free Store becomes a sight of independent enterprise.

Thus, there is a high level of hybridization within the nonprofit model of Free Store. The transaction types within the Free Store nonprofit nexus are market, alternative market, and nonmarket. It also engages in labor types that are both wage-based and unpaid. Although it is an alternative capitalist enterprise, it retains some noncapitalist elements.

The matrix changes when the sister nonprofit organizations – Free-Range Inclusion and Free Food Cycle – are omitted. In this scenario, Free Store retains its nonmarket transaction types, unpaid labor forms, and noncapitalist enterprise descriptions. However, the wage labor types disappear. The alternative market transactional types – ethical 'fair trade' market and co-operative exchange also disappear, but Free Store remains an informal market. The description of the alternative capitalist enterprise is changed, although Free Store remains a nonprofit. Without the sister organizations, the social practice theory analysis changes as do the on-the-ground practices. This initiates a shift in the nonmarket/unpaid/noncapitalist descriptions themselves.

Table 6: The diverse economy of RRFM

TRANSACTIONS (RULES OF (IN)COMMENSURABILITY)	LABOR (COMPENSATION)	ENTERPRISE (APPROPRIATION OF SURPLUS)
MARKET N/A	**WAGE** N/A	**CAPITALIST** N/A
ALTERNATIVE MARKET N/A	**ALTERNATIVE PAID** N/A	**ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST** N/A
NONMARKET *Indirect Household Flows* (intra-household exchange through third party without negotiation) *Gleaning* (Traditional right)	**UNPAID** *Volunteer* (nonmonetary) *Neighborhood work* (nonmonetary) *Self-provisioning labor* (food and other goods)	**NONCAPITALIST** *Communal* (Cooperators)

The RRFM holds no institutional or legally recognized status or protection. The goods are not valued by the logics of supply and demand, and reciprocity is not formalized. There are no trade negotiations or entitlements. It is a nonmonetary event. As seen in *Table 6*, the RRFM is primarily a nonmarket, unpaid, noncapitalist practice. There are some levels of hybridization recognizable in the RRFM, encompassing alternative market transactions of an informal market or the noncapitalist market transactions of gift giving. The RRFM's primary transactional type is nonmarket, using (indirect) household flows and gleaning. While gift giving, or reciprocity by individual participants is apparent, the RRFM itself requires nothing of its participants. There is no adage to "pay it forward" and no requirement to build interpersonal relationships. However, some practitioners still choose such behavior (i.e., viewing their time spent cleaning and redistributing leftover goods as a gift to the community, meeting new people). Even when gift giving concepts are asserted, it is not consistent, advertised, or widespread enough to be included on the RRFM matrix as a transaction type.

Rather, the RRFM's noncommittal transactions are enabled by receiving goods from households (i.e., direct individual donation) without assigning values relative to their utilitarian use (Albinsson and Perera 2012). The valuation is specific to the participant who considers the goods (i.e.., bread – it has a presumed utilitarian value in other settings, but whether it is valuable relative to external productions costs, or relative to its availability at RRFM, or to other goods at RRFM does not matter. The individual valuation of needing or wanting bread is what matters). Transactions at RRFM are premised on the belief that people have a basic right to access all goods provided freely from the community. The RRFM does not have an alternative, informal

market (as does the Free Store). There are no site-specific rules governing the value of goods or the nature of reciprocity except that everything should be free, "no strings attached."

However, while the labor at RRFM is unpaid voluntary or neighborhood work, some RRFM organizers use self-provisioning mechanisms as nonmonetary compensation. All participants, regardless of whether they provide anything can take food, goods, or services. Self-provisioning is a matter of individual inclination rather than a RRFM practice but is included because it happens at each event. Some individual participants may use the RRFM as a source of self-employed labor which is a type of "alternative paid" labor (i.e., finding things at RRFM to sell elsewhere for personal compensation).[41] The diverse economies notion of reciprocal labor has been considered, but like gift giving transactions it appears as an individual valuation (i.e., a participant makes a "deal" with themselves that if they bring something, then they may take something of equal or more personal value; or a participant who is cleaning may offer their car to redistribute goods one time expecting other participants to reciprocate on another occasion). An exchange of labor is not a requirement or standard of participating in RRFM.

The RRFM is a communal mode of generating and distributing surplus, although some participants may view it as an independent enterprise. Goods and services are gathered, supplied, gleaned, and produced by participants for use of other participants – but none of these is a requirement to participate. Redistribution of goods is decided by whichever participants are involved in the cleaning and packing at the end of the event. In these moments, questions of utilitarian value in the wider capitalist world may influence how redistribution occurs. Independent enterprises, however, are constituted by self-employed producers who decide the distinction between their own compensation (unpaid or self-provisioning) and a surplus (leftover gleaned goods) and determine separately how the surplus might be redistributed or reappropriated (Gibson-Graham 2006). Like the case with gift giving transactions or reciprocal labor, the independent enterprise is a practice undertaken by individual participants, but it is not a standard of practice of the RRFM event.

Thus, there is no hybridization of the RRFM beyond the nonmarket/unpaid/noncapitalist categories. However, the RRFM does not prohibit individuals from embracing their own

[41] However, that was not measured or observed as a widespread phenomenon and generally the mechanisms of self-employment happen outside the RRFM event. Thus, it was not included on the matrix.

practices. As a nonmarket transactional space, the RRFM is constituted by (indirect) household flows and gleaning (although gift giving is considered on an individual basis). Labor at the RRFM is volunteer, unpaid, or (potentially) self-provisioning (although individual participants might employ reciprocal labor principles). The RRFM is a communal form of ownership, production, and appropriation of surplus without any formalization.

In summary, the nonprofit Free Store and the autonomous RRFM offer different versions of free culture practices. They were examined here to show that the Free Store is an alternative capitalist enterprise with a high level of hybridization with noncapitalist enterprise, wage and unpaid labor, and alternative market and nonmarket transactions. The RRFM is a noncapitalist enterprise with limited hybridization manifesting in unpaid labor and nonmarket transaction types. The RRFM was available for other individual interpretations of the noncapitalist/nonmarket/unpaid nexus.

It is thought provoking to note the "surplus" of material goods in both the Free Store and RRFM might find recirculation within other enterprises (capitalist or alternative capitalist), such as self-employed labor practices, or in a local thrift store or nonprofits which sell materials. This could provide an opportunity for future research, but it also troubles the limits of the RRFM, or Free Store as operating to reduce waste and extend the life of material goods.

And let us remember: The Free Store and the RRFM examined here remain unique to their own localized iteration of free culture practices. Furthermore, in common conversation the terms "free store" and "really really free market" are used interchangeably. The ideas uncovered using the diverse economies matrix cannot be universal to all nonprofit "free stores" nor autonomous "RRFMs". Yet, there are commonalities found that would be useful to examine in future research.

Appendix K: Glossary of Terms

anarchist economics –Practices that maintain certain characteristics – a widespread rejection of state control; decentralized planning; localized decision-making; individual autonomy; egalitarian rights; and synergy between economic means and socially useful ends (Kinna 2012). Anarchist economics are a uniquely prefigurative and embodied effort. There exist non-capitalist ideations of a market-based economic system, as in concepts of socialist economics. Communist anarchist economics rejects a market-based valuation and remuneration principles, this is closer to the mutual aid project.

autonomy – A framework of freedom from normative constructs, limitations, or rules. Autonomous groups aim toward self-governance and collective regulation rather than external regulation from governmental bodies or even social mores. This self- or communal- governance is often described as a *horizontal* social arrangement.

capitalocentrism – Refers to discourse where all economic activity and other aspects of social life are understood primarily in reference to capitalism – as in opposition to, subsumed under, or measured against capitalism (Gibson-Graham 1996, 6). It refers to primarily the overdetermining, essentialist logic that attends capitalist hegemony. This framework enables examination of multiple forms of economic activities and insists that capitalism is just one of many economic structures used in any given society – and it is not necessarily the most advanced or efficient model either (Gibson-Graham and Dombroski 2020).

desire framework – A decolonial research paradigm proposed by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014) which is both a 'no' (i.e., a refusal of complying with a legacy of colonial oppression) and a 'yes' (i.e., an affirmation of expanded possible futures). It was offered as a critique of hegemonic knowledge production within white or Eurocentric academic institutions and toward protecting and respecting experiences and knowledge of otherwise marginalized communities.

emancipatory politics – Refers to movements and social arrangements that aim toward liberation from oppression. These groups lean on a collective self-reliance, and transformative counter-narratives to capitalist hegemony and move away from the state's paternalism or autocratic authoritarianism (Blühdorn et al. 2022) toward intersectional social arrangements better oriented to the wellbeing of the human and more-than-human life. By challenging certain

boundaries of society, the emancipatory movement may create new ones to potentially exclude other groups from their ways of enacting freedom. But this is not a binary opposition. It is a conversational, liminal tension, a *dialectic of emancipation* (*Ibid.*).

emergent strategies – A method of building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions. It is utilized in social movement building and emphasizes relationships and embodied knowledge to influence creative actions for just and liberated worlds (maree brown 2017).

free culture – A social construct where goods, services, skills, and knowledge are provided without expectation of compensation or reciprocity. In this thesis, this term is used though it should be distinguished from the internet or media-related free-culture movement which advocates for freedom to use, distribute, or modify creative works without compensation or restriction. There are significant variations on how a free culture practice may present itself. A *really* free culture might operate on communal anarchist economic principles of antiauthoritarianism, autonomy, horizontalism, conviviality, localism, and mutual aid praxis.

hegemony – Following Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, this term references the predominant world view constituted through manipulation by the ruling class, elite, or political authorities which justifies and naturalizes the status quo of extraction, exploitation, dispossession of human Others and the more-than human world. It governs social norms, relationships, values, and constructs in society and is often accepted as established 'common sense' or simply 'the way things are.'

hierarchy – A system of ranking individuals or entities by their status or authority. It is an arrangement one is above and another below. This often includes a system of power where the one above has more agency than the one below. It is considered an opposite to horizontalism. In this thesis, hierarchy is complicated by the notion that individuals have varying power or leadership in any given situation (maree brown 2017) and thus hierarchy in relationships can be a fluid construct.

horizontalism – Refers to a social construct of self-governance and collective regulation rather than external regulation from governmental bodies or even social mores. As explained by Marina

Sitrin (2012), 'horizontalism' comes from the Spanish *horizontalidad* first used during the popular uprising in Argentina in 2001. During this period, the resistance movement created neighborhood assemblies and rejected representative democracy, seeing charismatic leaders as part of the cause of crisis in the first place. Horizontalidad, or horizontalism, is social relationality that creates and maintains equitable power across all actors. It seeks self-management, autonomy, and direct democracy.

intersectionality – This term is defined by Oxford English Dictionary as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage" (2015). The term was first coined by black feminist attorney and critical theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, pointing to the overlapping oppressions that a person who is black and a woman might face, and arguing for a politics that addresses overlapping oppressions rather than detaching them. An intersectional aspiration within the emancipatory, prefigurative process understands that oppressions overlap and sees them as emanating from the same source of domination. Intersectionality draws forth the tensions of (un)learning hegemony and creating a stronger relational culture toward enacting visions for the future. It is integral to the communal-autonomist projects that are explicitly anti-authoritarian.

mutual aid – Refers to the "collective coordination to meet each other's needs, usually from an awareness that the systems we have in place are not going to meet them" (Spade, 2020, 7). Anarchist mutual aid practices often are demonstrations of communal anarchist economics. The mutual aid practice strives for horizontal social arrangements and defies reliance on governmental or institutional structures to meet group or personal needs, often because of these structures' inadequacies (Spade 2020; Springer 2020). Mutual aid is best understood as cooperation as Peter Kropotkin ([1902] 2011) posited (Springer 2020).

prefigurative – Describes the practice of enacting a vision of a better future in the present moment. Prefigurative movements simply represent the change in the world that its organizers desire, in the way it is organized, how it is performed, and why it exists. These groups embody their goals for a better future society through the ways they organize, the relationships they build, decision-making philosophies they implement, the institutions they build, and in the economic arrangements they enact (Burkart et al. 2020; Davis et al. 2022). There is inherent tension in

trying to enact this future vision while existing within a greater society that does not adhere to this vision.

transformative justice – Refers to a practice from the prison abolition movement which is a community-based, often horizontal form of proactively disrupting interpersonal violence(s) and creating accountability. Transformative justice "is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm, and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence" (Mingus n.d., para 3). The endeavor of TJ is "to create experimental and collective practices of safety, accountability, and healing [. . .] these tools and practices (with accompanying analysis) provide and proliferate responses without engaging in the carceral or punitive state" (Davis et al. 2022, 5). Movements utilizing transformative justice frameworks seek to "transform the conditions which help to create acts of violence or make them possible. Often this includes transforming harmful oppressive dynamics, our relationships to each other, and our communities at large" (*Ibid.*).

trauma-informed research – An approach to research that accepts that trauma is pervasive TIC IRC 2021) and often linked to systemic and interpersonal oppression (Johnson 2009). This enables a critical perspective to examine issues of hierarchy and hegemony. It allows the researcher to engage with generative conflict (internal and external) to gather knowledge with flexibility toward uncovering sometimes difficult truths. It enables deep insight into the creative approaches research subjects use to resolve tensions and conflict. Trauma-Informed methods are emergent and depend on the needs of researcher and research subjects. Analysis of data can be applied in a range of ways, in this research it followed SAMHSA's (2014) definition of trauma-informed care. Ultimately, the trauma-informed approach to research can effectively re-politicize social research through an examining oppression and liberation (hierarchies), affirming the affective researcher, honoring the knowledge-practices of the research site, and creating opportunities for possibility and plurality. It can have a range of applications if used in other studies in research design, methods, and analysis.