

# **A model of equity and sharing based on community money**

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## **Savage Landscape**

The process and growth of the community currency movement has not been isolated from the national problem. It would be impossible to comprehend the effects of community currency outside of this national context. The difficulties, the challenges, and even the states of being of currency in Mexico are interlaced with the circumstances that generate them. Therefore, it is fundamental for me to begin by describing some of the most sensitive existing problems.

Victor Manuel Toledo expresses in a clear way that the nation is a battlefield. Within the war, there are two projects for civilization: the projects of death against the projects of life. In the same sense, Naomi Klein in *This Changes Everything* emphasizes that climate change is not a matter of habit, of corruption or a lack of technological development; it is a matter of war waged by capitalism against the climate, and as a result, against humanity.

Mexico currently finds itself mining for megaprojects, “[allowing] mining corporations, hydraulic systems, the tourist industry, highway development, the energy sector, the financial sector, biotechnology, and the housing market to shatter to pieces the natural resources of the country, and extract the surplus value of the effort of millions of workers for private gains apart from the social services offered. The national political class, including all political parties, have become a part of an elite [class], making it their executive, legislative, and judicial responsibility to present candidates, dissolve obstacles, and reduce or exempt taxes. Thus oiling the machine of double exploitation. To them, the exponential growth of industry and the commerce of drugs is like the needle that broke the camel’s back.” (Toledo, 2015: 21).

With distinct characteristics within the urban and rural sectors, the logic of speculative money of Canadian and Chinese mines is imposed through Special Economic Zones in Michoacán, Oaxaca, and Chiapas, or through hydroelectric and wind projects. In cities, there is a growth of megaprojects in transportation and real estate, including the shameless construction of zones that control capital, such as ZODES. In addition, the processes of gentrification have intensified in zones that were originally undesirable.

This is all a response to the incessant growth required for capital to sustain itself. It is fundamental to note that this explosion responds, at the same time, to the speculative bubble created by the financial system. Enormous amounts of currency has been created out of nothing, searching to be invested in something concrete in order to acquire value. This currency has found free passage in countries historically colonized and with corrupt political systems.

Returning to Toledo, we are engaging in a war for territory, for vital space, for life. Speculative capital is taking control of homes and towns. Regions have been completely dispossessed and stripped of their inhabitants, substituting trees for concrete, parks for commercial plazas, *milpas*<sup>1</sup> for agribusiness, creating a monstrous civilization where it will be impossible to live with dignity.

In conjunction with the stripping of territory, there is a climate of extreme violence perpetrated by the drug trafficking and femicides. These lamentable problems can of course be explained from different perspectives. It is adequate that Raúl Zibechi's analysis, for example, demonstrates that both drug trafficking, violence and femicides are methods of control in countries of the southern hemisphere. Since they are nations "where capitalism has only been molded partially in daily life and in family relations. Mutual assistance, cooperation, the exchange of uncommercialized goods, and solidarity play a central role. Even money functions as use-value...in the south, it is not only too much for the poor to go

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional method of cultivation

into debt but social interactions are also [altered].”(La Jornada: 2017). In other words, control through marketing, consumerism, debt, designer drugs, and machine information are not as effective in these nations..

The individualist, accumulative, and utilitarian logic finds strong barriers in countries with a firm commutative culture and a large cosmogonic diversity. “Not only do formal communities exist, but also social relations anchored in collective labor, *tequio* or *minga*<sup>2</sup>, can produce goods for self-consumption and exchange. A good portion of these jobs are focalized in reproduction.” (La Jornada: 2017).

Zibechi understands that solidarity neutralizes mechanisms of control and asks “How can one control a part of humanity that still lives in world of affection and strong trust?” The response: through violence focused on young people and women.

In respect to the phenomenon of dispossession, el drug trafficking and femicides are summarized in the act of migration. Mexico particularly is a nation that receives many Central American migrants, and at the same time, expels thousands of men, women, and children towards the United States. The movements and associations of assistance that tackle this grave humanitarian crisis lack the necessary supplies. The concern is only exacerbated with the arrival of Trump to the US presidency and the latent expulsion of migrants to Mexico.

Those of us that participate in the processes of community currency understand the importance of exposing the relationship that exists between the speculative financial system with the hyper-exploitation of humanity and nature. An exploitation carried on through sexist and racist violence, through legal and illegal mafias, and through the immoral concentration of speculative currency. Those of us that promote community currency walk

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<sup>2</sup> Forms of indigenous reciprocity based on the gift

with a diversity of groups: networks of territorial defense, ecological projects, educational organizations, etc., to generate holistic strategies where the subject of currency is central.

### **We are part of a tradition**

Looking towards the Mexican culture itself, it is easy to find historical clues for the strategy. Everywhere there are gestures, acts, rituals, and customs that hint to a cosmogony completely distinct from the one that has driven us to the limit on this planet. With our Andean brothers and sisters, we identify with Good Living. In Oaxaca, a state with profound indigenous roots, has been named Communitary. Holloway, after speaking of “Changing the world without taking power,” now returns to the action what was once passive, proclaiming “Let us be community.” The Zapatista Movement in Chiapas has had autonomous organization for 14 years through *Los Caracoles* and the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*, and mestizo movements in the center of the country represent a Sustainable and Worthy Well-Being for all.

What these proclamations have in common is an open criticism towards modernity, a criticism towards industrial development and the dominant economic logic. In contrast to this former logic, these proclamations manifest a consciousness of the intimate (and also mystical) relationship between humanity and nature. As explained by Toledo, “The consciousness of a species recovers an original perception of human beings that has been forgotten in the industrial reality: the belonging to the world of nature. This consciousness reestablishes the behavior of solidarity for other organic beings (humans and nonhumans) and inorganic beings. It creates an ethic of survival based on cooperation, communication and comprehension of a complex reality that not only belongs to culture, lineage, family, community, nation, political or religious association, but also belongs to a biological species denoted with a history and future mixed with the rest of living beings on this planet. The consciousness of a species bestows human beings with a distinct perception of space (topographical consciousness) and of time (chronological consciousness) that transcends

the extremely narrow vision of individualism and pragmatism of homo erectus” (Toledo, 2015: 32).

This vision is not exclusive to indigenous communities and ancestral peoples. Roszak refers to a third alternative, making reference to the polarity between individualist and collectivist ideology. The third alternative would be a politic that would overcome the modern love for science and industrial necessity, a human radicalism that unfolds the spiritual and natural dimensions of life. And here, Roszak cites thinkers like Tolstoy, Whitman, Thoreau, Gandhi, Kropotkin, Paul Goodman, and Ivan Illich. (Roszak, 1973: 163).

### **A Brief History of Community Currency in Mexico**

The community currency in Mexico initiated in the mid-1990s with the framework of *The Other Stock Market*. With much success, the first experiment occurred between indigenous groups in Hidalgo (the BOJA in Mezquital Valley). Because of the political climate shared with the 1994 uprising of the Zapatista Movement and the North American Free Trade Agreement, the community currency movement was politically repressed.

Not much time later, amongst civil society groups in the Valley of Mexico emerged Multitruque Tlálóc. Within its lifespan, it consolidated, amplified, and emulated. But like all cycles, it was exhausted. In 2014, after 20 years, the cycle of equity closed, giving way to the economy of gift and creating a space for a new generation of inherited currencies from this first phase. In 20 years, a rich history of teachings by these generated initiatives was produced. While not all teachings were spread by Red Tlálóc, a common history of community currencies was formed.

#### *Historical experiences of Community Currency in Mexico*

- *Tlaloc. First network of community currency. Originated in the Valley of Mexico, but extended to other regions of the country. Inspired the emergence of “Let’s,” a community currency.*

- *Romita. Monthly meetings of exchange, inspired by the Colombian experience. With ample environmental awareness emerged an urban-agricultural experience.*
- *Dalias. Meetings of exchange within a united community, combining education and environmentalism, and the care of water and nutrition.*
- *Xico. Propelled by microeconomics, searches for synergy between conventional currency and community currency in the Valley of Chalco, a town already urbanized in the periphery of Mexico City.*
- *Borja. First currency in Mexico, founded by the ñhañhu through a program of dwelling. Emerged in 1994, the same year it was repressed.*
- *Dinamo. Propelled with the support of local authorities of the municipality of Magdalena Contreras in Mexico City. Producers convened in this area.*
- *Compartiendas. Stores of Aguascalientes circulated through an electronic card*
- *Ecosol. Emerging out of the pioneer movement economic solidarity, a program mixed with feria [fair] and Radio Ecosol. Occurred annually through radio broadcasts from 2008 to 2012*
- *El Grillo. Currency for the development of ecological consciousness in children. Emerged in Morelos in 2000, until its last edition in 2012.*
- *Cajeme/Tomy. Propelled by philanthropic groups in Sonora, it was utilized in a definitive form through tenants, going as far as to be accepted at gas stations.*
- *IBS. Corporate process centered in Guadalajara, whose objective was to improve trading among participating enterprises.*
- *Macondo. Currency with a vocation on health, established a network for health and nature that offered training and services on natural and holistic health in Mexico City.*
- *Itacate. Experimented with currency between artisans in Guadalajara, Jalisco that recuperated a public space to provide artistic flourishing and products based on economic solidarity.*

Those of us who are a part of this movement make a series of questions in respect to our practice. Why are the life cycles of the processes of community currency so short? Or, what

are the reasons for which they are unsustainable? Why is it so difficult to multiply these experiences? What elements are necessary to generate a community currency network?

To continue this reflection, it would be beneficial to first review the current panorama of community currency in Mexico.

## **Panorama in 2017**

Currently, 13 processes of solidarity exchange exist in Mexico, ten of which practice with usury-free currency and where the relationships between prosumers (producer-consumer) are close.

### *Current experiments of community currency in Mexico*

- *Red Tláloc, 1994, Systemic, Mexico City, Tlaloc*
- *Multitruque Mixiuhca, 2010, Systemic, Mexico City, Mixiuhca*
- *Red en Transición, 2011, Systemic, Querétaro, Kuni*
- *Casa de las Sábilas, 2015, Monthly, State of Mexico, Sábila*
- *Feria Multitruque Fausto, 2011, Semesterly, State of Mexico, Fausto*
- *Flor de Maíz, 2016, Bi-semesterly, State of Mexico, Trueque*
- *Tianguis de Trueque Purepecha, 1995, Bi-weekly, Michoacán, Trueque*
- *Feria Nacional de Vida Digna, 2008, Annually, Guanajuato, Mezquite*
- *Feria de San Marcos, ..., Annually, Aguascalientes, Esmeril*
- *Amanatli, 2014, Monthly, Guanajuato, Amanatli*
- *Ollin, ..., Systemic, Morelos, Ollin*
- *Verdillete, 2011, Semesterly, Querétaro, Verdillete*
- *Red Libertaria, 2008, Systemic, Quintana Roo, Caribe*

### Networks and exercises of Multitruque:

- Red Multitruque Tláloc. Mexico City. Its currency, tlaloc, serves as a memory of acts of gratitude and as an identifier for its adherents. Offers panels, public forums, and

sessions of Cinemoneda to inform, debate, and orient the whole person of good will.

- Multitruেকে Mixiuhca. Mexico City. Utilizes the community currency, “Mixiuhca,” to carry out exchanges based on fair prices between *prosumer* and without the necessity of conventional currency. Consumers in solidarity can participate in offers in the network, by exchanging conventional money for “cacaos,” neutralizing the entropic and consumerist effects of conventional money.
- Multitruেকে Kuni. Querétaro, Qro. Multitruেকে system that belongs to a network of sustainable and ecological projects called Querétaro Transition.
- Sábilas. Nezahualcóyotl City, State of Mexico. Monthly fair of exchange for prosumers in the east of the city, utilizes the 'Sabila'
- Fausto. School of Economics, UNAM, Mexico City. Laboratory where economic students reflect on and practice the use of the community currency called 'Fausto'
- Flor de Maíz (Flower of Maize). San Vicente Chicoloapan, State of Mexico. Trueque fair that takes place in a horticultural center, that aims to find ways of self-sufficient nutrition and to promote an economy of solidarity there as well
- Tianguis Purepecha. Engages in a bi-weekly trueque, and conducted by indigenous women around Lake Patzcuaro in Michoacán. The gift [*don*] prevails in the dynamics of exchange.
- National Fair for Worthy and Sustainable Life. Dolores Hidalgo, Gto. Prompted by the Mexican Network of Community Commerce, it has conducted more than 15 annual fair, utilizing the “mezquite” for exchanges.
- San Marcos Fair. This grand fair is realized every year in Aguascalientes, independent artisans organize this fair and conducts exchanges with the Esmeral coin
- Amanalti. For two years, it has functioned the prime process of Multitruেকে in San Miguel Allende, Guanajuato; has Zapatistas sympathizers
- Ollin. In the State of Morelos this currency emerged with an ecological character and inspired by cities in transition.
- Verdillete. Querétaro, Qro. Multitruেকে created for children in primary school, where they can learn to be prosumers caring for the environment

- Caribe. Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo. Emerged from Libertaria Network whose vocation was the care of the environment through the purchase of products free from pesticides and through the use of the electronic coin, Caribe.

The goals vary in accordance to each process, but they can be summarized in the following:

-Stimulate local economies. The local is defined by geographic and empathetic closeness; the former is ecological, the latter is politic. It is preferable to buy from those nearby because it diminishes the energy that would be used in transportation. This also adds to empathetic closeness, that is to say, the preference for a product or service through the political coincidence created by an alternative economy. Empathetic closeness is preferable to those that share an ideal, and there exists an agreement to help one another through consumption and exchange. It is in this sense that community currency is useful: to serve as a limitrophic membrane for both the geographic and empathetic local.

-To transform production and to offer services in search for a breadbasket of decent life. In the majority of processes, prior to the question of currency, there is an inquiry for the type of consumption. With that, much creativity is needed to promote the satisfaction of needs with less of an entropic hold, needs that are deindustrialized and grant health to its consumers. These satisfactions find themselves in all environments: education, health, transportation, clothing, the home, hygiene, culture, art, nutrition, affect, care, etc. Community currency is the bond, not solely for individuals, but also for essential values. It is a kind circulation that proportions the interaction between the satisfier and what they need.

-Grow relationships of trust among participants. Trust is a creation of the horizontalist power of the collective subject, capable of overcoming the blind estrangement of a political and economic system (whether it'd be of democratic representation or of the market). By emitting itself as a form of commutative credit, currency is converted into a symbol of trust; to grant and receive community currency is an act of the constructive trust of a community.

-Initiate models for social self-management. Forming autonomous collectives, where economic interdependence is fundamental for the diminishment of dependence to the conventional system, monetary self-management initiates the understanding of emission and the use of currency itself. The transparency of its movements and the questioning of the measuring of worth, that is to say, its role as equivalent or unit of accountability.

### **What are the goals for the models of community currency in Mexico?**

These models of community currency seek to create an option for a life much more harmonious with nature; a simple and loving life. It seeks to find a good-being, a good-doing, and a good-living. Likewise, it seeks to engage in a logic of competence, to replace estrangement and war with a collaborative, creative, and life-giving logic.

Kuni, one of the prime drivers of the movement, once said, "The true challenge is not in the creation of a community currency, but in the development of new strategies of trust and community. The goal is to create a daily path of learning; community currency is only but a pretext for learning to value the community, to learn to listen to each other and to learn to love one another." (Velez, 2016:101)

It can seem as a paradox, of course, that through the creation of our own currencies we want to deplete the power of currency. Holloway point this out: "We need to desperately and urgently break the dynamic of currency, which is so destructive. But it is very difficult to think of how to do this without the development of alternative forms of social cohesion, through different means of living in community." (Holloway, 2015: 47)

For countries with communitarian traditions, the aggression of the instatement of the logic of currency is not only materialistically impoverishing or territorially despotic. More than that, it is a question of the destruction of existing communities, a question in the relationships of trust and friendship. "Currency, like the process of monetization of social relationships, down existing bonds and replaces them with a monetary connections" (Holloway, 2015: 48)

From here, the importance we have emphasized calls for a community currency.

### **The Importance of the Communal**

In Mexico, we have decided to refer to local and alternative currencies as "community currency." We are a part of a mixed culture, one that gives us the opportunity to take the better elements of the cultures that form us. We can substitute the values of mercantile society like competition, speculation and predation. For values of reciprocity, sharing and respect. That is to say, we speak of untraditional communities -better stated - a mix of indigenous principles and Western philosophies. As pointed out by Rivera Cusicanqui: "The idea of community would be founded on contentious juxtaposition between Indian radicalism with nonhumans and affinity as an exercise in freedom. That is to say, a community of affinity. Because it is no longer possible for a community of families, a community where only a few blood relatives are suspected of being a part of the current community. This is no longer enough. Sometimes one must abandon blood relatives to join a family of brothers and sisters in struggle; that is affinity. For me, affinity has always been an ethical and aesthetic matter much more than an ideological one." (Huácar, 2015: 146)

That is where community finds itself in our collective imagination: the need to be with the Other through concepts such as solidarity and mutual help. It is through these principles that community currency exists in Mexico. They retake these principles and converts them to a community credit deposited in currency. Through this manner, currency-worth is only through a symbolic manifestation of credit-trust that is invisible to the eyes but sensible to the soul.

Community currency is the concrete manifestation of complex community relationships. To speak of community currency is to speak of credit. Community credit implies a belief in the members of a group, depositing a trust in them. When something is granted in the present, there is a hope that there will be future compensation. Lopezllera (2008) reveals this as a memory of value.

Nonetheless, the future is uncertain and, for the most part, holds a certain level of risk. In the capitalist system, the level of risk is seen as a business deal and generates usury.

**Community credit converts risk into solidarity.**

In economic terms, the community is a social subject capable of securing the wellbeing of its members. It implies sovereignty to direct its production for the sake of securing basic needs. This is the inverse logic to capital. In the words of Laura Collin: before the logic of reproduction is amplified through capital, it is counterposed with the logic of the reproduction of life. A logic in which what is produced is done to satisfy the needs of the community, not for the demand of the market. In this sense, community currency only completes the role of a medium of exchange, as a medium for bilateral communication between what is needed and what is produced. (Collin, 2013: 145).

In a radio interview with Ecosol, David Barkin points out three characteristics of the community: 1.)Autonomy. That is to say, self-governance to avoid and resolve conflict and to do this as an internalized norm. 2.)Self-sufficiency. It implies an attempt to produce the most basic needs as possible. Not only nutritional, living, cultural, and celebratory needs, but also a diversification of production in exchange with other communities and the exterior. 3.)The sustainable management of local resources. Sustainability is not only communal; it also occurs on the level of ecosystems. That is to say, community implies a need to negotiate alliance and cooperation for the management, conservation, and rehabilitation of ecosystems.

There have definitely been historical processes of currencies in traditional communities, whether they have been by indigenous people or farmers. Currently, the most solid processes are found in urban environments, environments with the problems of time and distance, and where production doesn't satisfy primary needs. There are environments where capitalism penetrates all aspects of life and vague territory due to high migration and daily mobility.

In this sense, the great question is “How to construct community by affinity?” That is to say a community that doesn't necessarily share a space but shares common interests. A good clue to begin with is the notion of interdependence. Consciousness of interdependence is fundamental in the creation of a community, one where trust, solidarity, and reciprocity emerges.

The economy is the care for the home and those that live in it. Our home is a place where carry out our existence in communion with others. Care implies a relationship of eco-dependence and interdependence. We are not self-sufficient. We require from nature and from each other. This is the primary bond that produces life. We give and we receive in order to breathe, to eat, to clothe, to learn.

In political terms, we are a community measured by how conscious we become, by generating a new political subject that openly challenges the logic of the market. We are a community that opposes the egoism of familial love, and confronts a commercial democracy based individuals devoid of political power.

Community as a political and economic act of intimacy can transform the way in which people in it live, feel, and think. By its form, community grants a sense of commitment, identity, and dignity that is only possible in the sensible and conscious relationship we assume with others.

Through the manner, community transforms to a fundamentally basic unity, one in which it is possible to recreate life. It is not individual, there is no nuclear family. The community is the common subject that can experience the self-management of his capacities, resources, and organization.

Our currency is a common good in favor of life. That is to say, in favor of harmony of the relationships which compose it. Clearly marked Zibechi, “The commons are the bonds we construct to keep doing what we do to make life continue; bonds which can't be fenced away by an institution nor by things (such as water, land, nature). In this sense, the common goods

are not objects separated from people; they are bonds (common and communal) that make possible for water and land to remain a benefit to the common/communal.” (Zibechi, 2015: 77)

### **To count or not to count, that is the question**

Until now, I’ve attempted to expose the political and economic importance of the communal character of the currency we employ in Mexico. But other characteristics that we have developed in our processes are equally important. Characteristics that have to do with signature and the unit of accountability have been of particular importance.

Community currency is a simple paper, acquiring value the moment it is signed. The prosumer that receives money signs it as a vote of trust, assuming that this money has value and has the support of production and services offered in the system through the political construction of the community. The signature of the person who receives that voucher is converted into an agreement of continuity to this value system.

The signature is a sign of trust in the other and in the community. It signifies the moment in which value emerges in its three dimensions: use value, exchange value, and bond value. The use value of a product or service finds its manifestation the moment in which someone needs it. Use value is created through labor, but it manifests itself in exchange (exchange value). When this exchange occurs in the community, it also creates a bond value.

At the same time, through the mechanism of the signature, the quantity of value that can’t be accounted for by conventional money can be realized. Each signature symbolizes an exchange. If the number of signatures for each coin is counted then the amount of value generated can be counted. This count extrapolates all the money circulates in the community in order to know the wealth generated by everyone.

This system of counting provides us with a solid model of equity, where it is possible to account for values and generate a model of exchange where a balance of exchange is

desirable. But another very important reflection is our experiences in regards to the unit of accountability that permits the purchase of value.

To execute exchanges, it is necessary to compare values. For this comparison to occur, a means has been invented. We measure multiple things, just like distance is measured in meters or yards, or temperature in Fahrenheit or Celsius. For any exchange of products or services in Mexico, we use the peso, mixed with its relation with the dollar, as a measurement. The global financial system uses the dollar as a form of accountability by which our model of the peso/dollar relationship is mediated.

Each system of community currency could be self-determined if it can measure its value on its own terms, becoming independent of the language of the dollar. The unit of accountability inspires us to have a different scale to measure value. This is all together difficult because of the habit of rating prices in pesos. Nonetheless it is important to begin to symbolize our intentions to change the thought. From here it emerges the idea of having a unit in accountability that permits us of acquiring a political sovereignty in the value of our coin and the creativity of the mediation of our values.

The linguistic symbol is arbitrary. In fact, there would only be one language in the whole world: unit of accountability in the symbol of the coin. It would likewise seem arbitrary, but it is not. As of now, there is only one unit of accountability in the world, one that is corrupted and mutilated. It is the one imposed by the dollar as the unit of accountability of value in the world economy. The language of material reproduction of life is converted to private property.

In the case of banks today, the result is very clear: its unit of accountability of exchange is the hour. In the case of Red Tláloc, it began with a unit of accountability based on social work, which later transformed into an act of trust. In the case of Multitruque Mixiuhca, the unit of accountability was happiness. Happiness contains a sign, both significant and meaningful. Happiness can be expressed in multiple ways, for people experience so much. Also, it is a measurement of value, one which finds its equivalent even in a traditional bar of amaranth.

Happiness permits us to establish systems of equivalency and accountability away from any support of the dollar. Happiness creates identity with exchange it utilizes. We learn to use new words, we create a new code of communication that takes as example a model whose end is happiness. What is the price of happiness? How can one measure the joy experienced with a loved one?

In search of a unit of accountability there is also a search for a distinct scale. This scale can be translated into pesos, that way, we can translate an act of trust and happiness to pesos. From translation we are sovereign. Each group decides how to translate pesos to their unit of accountability. This creates an autonomy from the conventional financial economy. For example, if the peso is devalued or enters a process of inflation, through the mediation of a unit accountability, a community can decide to modify the equivalency of its unit with pesos.

The unit of accountability is a path to overcome one of the greatest problems of our process: slavery to the prices of the market. Nonetheless, this is not possible in a network where all consumables and satisfices that can be found do not exist. The membrane created between the alternative system and the conventional is very permeable and allows for price speculation to pass through.

To overcome this logic of market price, we have explored another path. That of gratitude.

### **To give, to receive, and to return**

For community currency (economy of equity) to be a transformative force, it is necessary to accompany it with a model of sharing. A model that it can be offered without calculation, one where the following is offered: time, energy, knowledge, and resources. Morin writes: "Where capitalism and individualism have expanded monetization to rule the favorable sectors of life, we must recover the satisfaction of the gift, through which the giver can gift the best of himself (Morin, 2011:252)

To replace one currency with another doesn't change the existential logic. It is an effort to overcome the quantitative logic and, with it, the egotist-utilitarian logic. "The chief challenge that emerges from our development as ethical beings is assuming responsibility for our action in the world, and to be capable of understanding that our quality of life can reach a peak when we transcend from our individual consciousness towards a form of consciousness capable of feeling one's own. It is not only our necessity, but much more: it is a necessity of every other human being and all form of life. The unfading will be our daily life." (Bernal 2016).

We propose to recover the logic of reciprocity of indigenous American communities. We generally conceive reciprocity as an equal relationship between two interested parties through an exchange. This is an arithmetic appreciation that quantifies; it is the same logic of voting, of prices, and of hours, limiting to the concepts of economic, political or social justices to a result of sums and subtractions. This is the impertinent rationality. We are a civilization that has "evolved," and this is why we have the capability to quantify. Nonetheless, focuses on the communal, the grateful, and the good-living put into doubt this civilizing logic.

The concept of reciprocity, in which we have alluded to, is the subject studied by Temple in indigenous communities. It is "the relationship between human beings that permits each of us to suffer the action of the same kind. In terms of consciousness, to act and to suffer means that consciousness is one that doubles that of the Other, equalizing both the consciousnesses to conceive a common consciousness." (Temple, 2015: 15)

Reciprocity is a relationship between people (not a simple exchange of objects) that generates common consciousness, it generates a value similar to friendship. It is this value that is converted to something superior in each person.

For Temple, the fundamental difference between Western and indigenous economics is uncovered in the difference in reciprocity and exchange. "Western systems are founded on interest and property. Western systems receive, take, and plunder without end. Its goal is

the accumulation of exchange value and its law is profit. Prestige is really the opposite of profit. Prestige is the distribution, not accumulation, of value.” (Temple, 2015: 20)

The gift in an indigenous community generates dialectic, since a person gives a gift, with the idea of satisfying a need, but also with the idea that another donation arises, it is indifferent whether it is the same or another member of the community. It generates “a moral obligation to the person who receives. It is an obligation for the self, an obligation towards the reciprocity of what is produced. The donor wants to give to another donor. The proof is that the gift is received as proof of friendship. As the creator of superior human value, the Other must return, whether through a network of gifts or bilaterally. Those who give also receive.” (Temple, 2015: 31) In other words, the gift is complete when it is received and taken.

In the Mexican context, there are many examples of the practice of the gift, like that of Guelaguetza or of Tequio. These examples teach us that sharing is the experience of being together and a feeling of communion. The beautiful definition of Guelaguetza is made by a Zapotec poet: “It means to have that spirit of serving with other men with the certainty that all forms of happiness and all misfortunes can, for a moment, be felt as one’s own.”

It is this recognition of the common, based on empathy that permits the existence of a profound sense of reciprocity, a reciprocity that appears as an agreement between people to share that feeling. Creation is of a new subject, our own production is a common subject. To share is to assume a dialect that gives what is necessary, but above all, it necessitates to give to oneself.

It is very important to note that the processes in community currency do not receive the systematic support of NGOs, nor that of governments. Conversely, community currency confronts a hostile market that perverts relationships of equity. Its sustainability is a constant risk. It sustains itself through unpaid volunteer work and at the margins of any political and economic power.

This has been a conscious decision due to the criticism we have received by “the considerable

sums of conventional money that has been distributed by agencies and funds with the goal of 'reducing poverty and alleviating the destruction of the environment.' Through projects labelled 'projectiles for development,' money that promotes indiscriminate consumerism and ends the financing of large capitalist warehouse, such as Walmart, which in turn distributes goods whose production and transport implicate a large entropic and anti-ecological weight....Only through the creation of circuits can we avoid the escape of energy and wealth (symbolized by values). We can create processes of autopoiesis." (Lopezllera and Caballero 2015).

In a virtuoso circuit of the gift, we find the key for generating a rhizome of mutual support that sustains the processes of community currency and ecosystems. "To learn to share use value between diverse generations, from individuals to organized groups, with the common goal of solidifying ecosystemic processes. From this method, an appropriate use of time and resources is engaged. It avoids unnecessary consumerism, and little by little we overcome the condemnation to the concept of private property in order to transition to common goods support by figures, such as the commodate, sharecropping, copyleft, etc." (Lopezllera and Caballero 2015).

To share an experience together is to be and feel together as a community. This acknowledgement of the common is based on the empathy that permits the existence of a profound sense of reciprocity. It appears as an agreement, and the "gift of the self" and the people share that feeling. Federici explains that "there is no common possible without us negating the basis of our lives in the suffering of others, and to remake a vision where we are not separated from others." And the basis of that principle of the common good adheres to a significance that overcomes property: "In fact, the 'common good' in some sense is the duty that we must subject ourselves to. This means that we have to obtain the slogan 'there are no commons without community.'" (Federici, 2013: 254).

## **Conclusion**

The excessive analyses of these difficult times plant a crisis to all that we call civilization. Before this imminent predicament, the question to the challenge of what is human returns.

If the crisis involves multiple dimensions (ecological, economic, ethical), a vision that confronts them will need to be holistic. The principal challenge is to change the mode of predominant thought: individual convenience and utilitarianism in social relationships. We have not become objects. We see in others opportunities for success. To act in each moment is defined as egocentric self-interest rather than for ethical interest.

Those of us who dream of a transformation of this reality constantly ask ourselves about this path. It is definitely necessary to act in different scales: en masse, through protest, through the public, internationally, in social media, or through the glocal. The new forms of manifesting life, autopoiesis, need to keep in mind a new dimension of intimacy: the existential.

No organization with the intention of changing the rhythm of society will prevail unless there is an essential change in the people within it. Contributions in biology illustrate this reality. "In the medium that is individual conduct of the members of a social system, like of a particular society, there characteristics of a society can only change through the conduct of its members." (Maturana, 2003: 142).

For this, it is necessary to generate new spaces with a distinct logic of reproduction of social life, matrixes that allow for individual flourishing, collectives for the sustainability of daily life, places where relationships of equity can be tested, and an interdependent economy. But above all, a place where sharing and gifting prevail.

Those of us who are in the subject of currency understand that we need a new currency that frees us from the being submitted to it. For this, we propose to identify ourselves with social processes that go beyond a felt emotion, and establish a reciprocity of mutual benefit. A reciprocity that allows for the sharing of tangible and intangible values, of materials and cultures, a reciprocity that is a form of reconstructing society and protecting the nature of today that is so harmed.

Before the harm of the system, the experiences of community currency lends to something much more than the satisfaction of material needs. It provides warmth and feeling, it

provides coexistence and sharing. It is something more necessary than ever before the atrocious individualization of a society with profound commutative roots.

The systems of community currency in Mexico seek to create these spaces, but faces great challenges:

- The Market. Schumacher's motto is very much valued: "What is small is beautiful." Nonetheless, there is a necessary minimum in a market of solidarity to satisfy vital necessities, which frequently isn't accomplished. On the other hand, it is clear that overcoming the threshold of the human scale would imply being in an anonymous market.
- Multiplication. Given that excessive growth comes into conflict with the principle of the systems of community currency, the option turns into one of multiplying the processes, to seminate seeds in fertile land that they may broker new processes.
- Involved in price systems. Without a doubt, the principal challenge is the quantitative dilemma: to replace the use of conventional currency for a commutative one is a great step. But when the same means are utilized to acquire products, they are still trapped by the price system. For them, some processes had assumed a distinct unit of accountability, one that is better for symbolizing but not effective.
- The complementary. Some speak of community currency because exchanges are not done totally with community currency or because the goal is not to substitute official currency but only to complement the shortage of official currency. We opted some processes in Mexico have distinguished us from this pattern. To speak of community currency, we expect to emphasize that the use of alternative currency has to generate new community relationships. Since this currency is local, it will be necessary to expand this task to generate public currency that is much more healthy.

The community currency (economy of equity) that we accompany is a model for gratitude, a model where things are offered without calculation, where "the one who has the most, offers the most." We accompany a model that is conscious that what is offered is this: time, energy, knowledge, and resources. From this way, bridges that help us transit are build...

- To move away from self-interest towards the other

- To move away from self-want
- To move from the want to possess to the want to share
- To move from scarcity to sufficiency
- To move from violence to peace

A model based on sharing is a transformative process persistent with the intimate life that parallels a creation of a new human politic, a politic without party foundations, without violent means, without decadent domes or superstructures. Moreover, we seek a new politic that teaches us to newly live, as defined by Viveret: “a common governance of collective humans.” We seek a new planetary politic that advocates new relationships between giving and receiving. This implies a new political that takes into account multiple dimensions. Morin points out correctly when he writes, “a politic based on the human trinity: individual-society-species. It is a thought that is permanent and simultaneously planetary, continental, national, and local.” (Morin, 2011:45)

A politic of this kind is capable of spreading its pollen with every movement of the rhythm of subtle dance. Like the pines that dance with the wind pollinating and rejuvenating, we must continue with a strategy of territorial re-existence.