Three Alternative Economies (That Work)

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Dollars have become scarce, so we need alternatives.

We are accustomed to thinking of money as being the object that will power action.

If alternatives can “pay” for projects—then the good ideas in this conference will have a chance of thriving.
So why do some alternatives work and others don’t?

- What are the defining qualities of the ones that work?
- What are examples of these?
- Unfortunately, there are a lot of good people trying examples that don’t work.
#1 Make Sure The Project Makes Money- Don’t Get Rid of Cash

- Examples: CSA Workshares, & WWOOF- ing.

- Farmers have extra produce and need labor. There are lots of people who are willing to work for food and education.

- This works because there is cash revenue coming to the farm so that the farmers can pay their bills.
How Most Food-shares Work:

- 35 People Pay Cash for their CSA Share-which is enough money to cover the Basic Operating Expenses for the Farmers.

- There isn’t much difference between growing food for 35 people or 40. So the farmers grow a little extra, and use that extra bit to get a lot of help.
#2- Economies only work when the value of an exchange is clearly defined.

- What is great about Cash is that we all have a good idea about what “value” should be. We can therefore determine “fairness”.

- In relationships that don’t use Cash, fairness is determined by the relationship. Therefore the ones that work are the ones where the relationship is clear.
Skilled Resident Exchange

- We exchange rent and utilities for 10-15 hours of labor towards specific projects in our community.
- More Risk / Bigger Reward
- Creates Affordable Housing and Enables LOTS of work to happen
- In EVERY community in America the conditions exist for this model to thrive.
How we keep the relationship fair:

- Spend a lot of time talking about expectations-
- AND MAKING AN EQUIVALENT TO THE DOLLAR ECONOMY
- What does rent run? What does manual labor cost?
- How much work is sane? This looks different everywhere
- Are there projects that YOU are capable of leading?
#3 Use Alternative Economies to Meet Needs in Ways That are Better

* Why? Because maintaining relationships is hard work. To be replicable there needs to be social and economic motivation to maintain them.

* If the cash economy can offer us something that is much cheaper, and easier, then we will be fighting an uphill battle.

* I think this is why most Timebanks are struggling
If you have the money to move out, you will.
#4 Forget about using Money. Use what you have in abundance

- We kept getting applicants that said, “I want to come to your program but I don’t have the cash.”

- At Transition Lab we have an abundance of empty spots in our program

- So we thought about what we could offer each other that would be both fair and of value to all involved.
Specifically here is how our arrangement works:

* A student will pay a small amount—enough to cover our basic expenses

* The student will then provide a valuable work exchange that we all agree is fair before we even start.

* Examples: Personal Cook, Personal Gardener, Massage Therapist?
This works at Transition Lab because:

- **Rule #1** Transition Lab has enough students paying enough tuition that we can cover our basic expenses.

- **Rule #2** We have a structure where the relationships and products being exchanged is extremely clear.

- **Rule #3** We are providing education and receiving incredible gifts by using what we already have instead of money.
Opportunities:

* In a world where most problems are caused by separation, this is the antidote. It gives us an excuse to really practice relationship again with our food, our shelter, and our community.

* Every Transition Town could adopt a Skilled Resident Model right now at no cost to get a lot of work done.

* Individuals could also use the Skilled Resident Model to independently “Pilot” dozens of projects.