

Worldbuilding as Economic Experimentation

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A key problem in advancing economic theory is that one cannot conduct significant experiments with new systems or paradigms. We have only one planet, and only one global economy. There are a handful of exceptions and natural experiments, but new policies must largely interact with existing structures and institutions that confound results. This creates inherent uncertainty as to any new approach's consequences, which in turn impedes policy implementation and knowledge creation. We propose a way forward by enlisting expert speculative worldbuilders to work with economists to conduct experiments with alternative models as imaginaries. These imaginaries can then serve as a kind of evidence for economists to use in building theory and evaluating policy proposals..

We'd like to explore **property** in the first working group meeting. Property ownership regimes are a fundamental component of any economic system, determining who and what can participate in extraction, production and exchange. The scope of the question is necessarily broad, and both philosophical and practical. What types of things can be owned? What does ownership entail? How would different ethical understandings of property manifest in practice?

We propose a two-day meeting of a working group composed of seven individuals;, four world-builders, one of whom will serve as facilitator, and three heterodox economists. The first day will begin with a three hour seminar covering

- Commons, private and open access regimes,
- Appropriation and enclosure,
- Indigenous perspectives on property,
- Classical perspectives on property, and
- Survey of specific policies proposals.

The seminar will be followed by a facilitated 'sticky-note' session where the group makes its own sense of the property themes and develops a structure within which to develop imaginaries. We anticipate that the remainder of the meeting will consist of breakout creative sessions mixed with group discussions and brainstorming. The desired outcome is two-fold; a set of imaginaries exercising different philosophical understandings and practical implementations of property, and a network of individuals interested in continuing conversations during theory development based on those imaginaries.

In this context, we will treat the worldbuilders as consultants, who provide 'experimental' evidence to the economists for use in their research programmes. As such, the worldbuilders will be provided a consulting fee. Travel and lodging expenses will be covered for all participants, with meeting location to be determined based on the home locations of interested parties, but we expect to be able to obtain meeting space free of charge. Breakfast, lunch and breaks will be catered, along with dinner at the conclusion of Day One.

The proposed budget for this event is:

Travel	airfare	3 nights hotel	participants	total
	\$1,500	\$750	7	\$15,750
Catering	per meal	meals	participants	
	\$30	5	7	\$1,050
Consulting	Fee		worldbuilders	
	\$2,000		3	\$6,000
Total Request				\$16,800

We anticipate that if successful, these imaginary-theory working groups could become a useful methodology for exploring economic alternatives, and applied to other economic themes in the future.