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Embodied value: Wealth-in-people

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In a world of social inequality, health disparities, and poverty, the economic value of people remains unrecognized, undervalued, and exploited. Recently, the ongoing conflict between capitalist markets and human value came to the fore again during the coronavirus pandemic, when many health systems were unprepared. In the United States, business and government leaders feared that quarantines would damage the economy. Their public statements urging the reopening of stores and public spaces pitted market value against the value of human lives. How can anthropology bring the value of people to light? How have varied societies valued human lives, qualities, and works? The articles in this special issue develop the 2019 Society for Economic Anthropology conference theme "Wealth-in-People." Inspired by ethnographies of certain African societies, the wealth-in-people literature has moved from politics and demography to inequality and marginalization to the pricing of life, and has settled on wealth-in-people as a collective that assembles individuals with diverse and complementary qualities. Collectives of wealth-in-people build on these qualities, including knowledge, skill, beauty, emotional and distributive labor, and artistic expression. They become more than the sum of their parts. Seen from our current moment, wealth-in-people as a theory of value takes us beyond false choices between the economy and people. By illuminating forms of economic life from the ground up, the wealth-in-people approach, like similar recent concepts, including the human economy and social worth, can catalyze a more democratic economy.

Keywords Knowledge; Labor; Social Capital; Social Inequality; Valuation; Wealth-in-People

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, health systems in many countries faced critical shortages of supplies. To fight the advance of the pandemic, governments worldwide ordered quarantines. Much of the economy was shuttered. Yet, in the United States, the business community pushed back on the restrictions. President Trump seemed to have their concerns in mind when he assured the country that America would soon be "open for business": "This is a medical problem. … We're not going to let it turn into a financial problem" (Wan, Albergotti, and Achenbach 2020). Lieutenant governor of Texas Dan Patrick suggested that he and other elders should be willing to die to prevent the economy from suffering. A *Washington Post* commentary actually took the idea seriously and assessed the economic benefit of sacrificing the old: "Even in a hypothetical world where the economy was valued above human life, many economists say it wouldn't necessarily make sense to sacrifice the elderly" as demand for goods and services would likely still remain low (Sonmez 2020).

Is the value of human life at odds with the market or with what the economy says "makes sense"? How has the value of humans been lost, and how can it be regained? The pandemic and its massive threat to life urge anthropologists to examine how societies have valued people, persons, and personhood. At the 2019 Society for Economic Anthropology's annual meeting, the theme "Wealth-in-People" considered the ways that people are appraised to have value and how cultures understand the relationship between people and things. Wealth-in-people may include expertise, productive or reproductive abilities, or other intrinsic qualities; achieved or ascribed qualities like class, rank, or status; family, caste, or group membership; reputation; or spiritual or supernatural linkages. Human value may be influenced by hierarchy or inequality in the value of persons based on gender, class, race, identity, or disability, therefore including embodied inequalities.

In this introduction, I review the growth of the wealth-in-people idea in the ethnographic record of sub-Saharan Africa. Then I discuss how the assembled articles in this issue extend the wealth-in-people concept around three themes: first, the value of human qualities, including beauty, skill, and knowledge; second, the relationship between the value of people and the value of things and how the calculations and valuations of people affect the value given to things; and finally, a perspective on social hierarchy and inequality as a tension between belonging *in* and belonging *to*. Finally, this introduction reflects on the possibilities of wealth-in-people as a theory of the value of people, in comparison to similar and more commonly wielded concepts like social capital.

Out of Africa: Wealth-in-people

In the anthropological literature, wealth-in-people emerged from classic studies of social life in sub-Saharan Africa, including societies as diverse as the Yoruba, Kpelle, Beng, Fang, and many others, but the term was best formulated by more theoretical summary views of these studies, in particular in the work of Bledsoe (1980), Kopytoff and Miers (1979), Goody (1971), and Guyer and colleagues (Guyer 1993, 1995, 1996; Guyer and Belinga 1995). Wealth-in-people describes a world in which rights-in-people are the main basis of prestige, power, and access to resources. At the basis of wealth-in-people theory is a theory of value in which people seek to hold rights to other people—to their labor, support, reproductive capacity, or property. Wealth-in-people may also be invoked to describe institutions often found in Africa, such as gerontocracy, patron–client relations, and the high-status "big man" who publicly redistributes wealth (Daloz 2003; Mair 1961; Miers and Kopytoff 1979). It remains a persistent theme of African ethnography (Bledsoe 1980; Smith 2017).

Jack Goody (1971) set the stage through comparison, noting that the scarce resource in much of European history had been land, while in contrast, the scarce resource in politically centralized areas of West Africa had been labor or people. As he put it, in Africa, the means of domination belonged to people who could control others. The relationship between demographic control and political centralization is a thread running through wealth-in-people studies in ecological anthropology (Nyerges 1992) and in archaeology, as reviewed in the articles by McGill et al. (2020) and Callaghan (2020) that follow. Ethnographic studies of kinship and political organization echoed this point by drawing attention to rights-in-people (see reviews in Bledsoe 1980; Kopytoff and Miers 1979). The system of rights-in-persons was modeled as the basis for kinship organization. Relationships and relative statuses based on age and generation influenced how rights-in-people were gained through ties and allegiances. Importantly, too, rights-and-persons were accompanied and marked by transfers of material value, such as bridewealth. These property transfers could symbolize relationships and, like a legal contract, form the basis of rights-in-things:

> the transactability of such rights as discrete and separate items is remarkable. … Moreover, transfers of such rights are normally made in exchange for goods and money and may confer total rights in a person. Kinship, adoption, wives, and children are inextricably bound up with exchanges that involve precise equivalences in goods and money. (Kopytoff and Miers 1979, 11)

Wealth-in-people drew closer to a theory of inequality and marginality when Kopytoff and Miers (1979) described social relations aimed at controlling wealth-in-people as rights in kin, wives, and followers. They emphasized the wish to enlarge one's kin group, the willingness to absorb outsiders, and the desire to have clients, dependents, servants, and retainers (Miers and Kopytoff 1979). The production generated by these kin would produce more wealth, which could be circulated to gain more followers. Wealth-in-people, they noted, could be the wealth of individuals or of groups. They emphasized the social power of male elders and the incorporation of marginal outsiders in the context of warfare and political instability.

Because people were wealth, the societies surveyed placed great importance on social status and identity, group membership and belonging, and a social hierarchy around rights-in-people (Kopytoff and Miers 1979). Individuals seek to possess rights to others, but also to *be* wealth-in-people, they seek belonging in a kin group as a fundamental social, legal, political, and ritual protective unit. This "belonging in" is also "belonging to"; that is, people could be reckoned as part of the group's wealth and might become an instrument of a more powerful group member. Peonage, taking captives, and slavery would bring new members into the group. The continuum of inequality spans from full belonging and possession of rights-in-others on one end to the incorporation of individuals being seen as wealth-to-others at the opposite end.

Kopytoff and Miers's wealth-in-people connects rights-in-people to political systems based on accumulating, absorbing, and controlling people and their labor. In a context of low population density or in the interstices of more established societies in West Africa, wealth-in-people often led societies to be mobile and to fission as an often-competitive search for people played out within a status hierarchy. Many people left established groups and set out to found their own groups of wealth-in-people (Nyerges 1992). In other parts of Africa, a competitive scramble for labor and women's labor could be a driver of political conflict, fissioning, intensified agriculture, and environmental degradation (Robertshaw 2008).

Wealth-in-people was theorized in a different direction by Caroline Bledsoe (1980), who looked at how men, women, and youth sought to build their wealth-in-people using diverse means and resources. Among the Kpelle people of Liberia in the early 1970s, she described how both men and women sought social power, security, and status in ties of obligation to others, as well as the ability to mobilize others junior to them. With age and time, men and women moved through the life cycle acquiring rights-in-others and achieving positions of prestige. Women gained wealth-in-people by initiating girls and providing them as brides, by controlling cooking and food in households, or through the children they provided to husbands and lovers. She described how subordinates found benefit in being wealth-to-others. Even the vulnerable "know how to play high-status people off against each other to their own advantage, and they make sure that they have someone to support them in exchange for political allegiance" (Bledsoe 1980, 79). In strategizing their own wealth-in-people, individuals create a social identity and become important in the eyes of others.

Collective knowledge

Pivoting off Bledsoe's attention to agency, in a series of articles, Guyer, Belinga, and colleagues (Guyer 1993, 1995, 1996; Guyer and Belinga 1995) drew in the 1990s renewed attention to wealth-in-people. In contrast to Kopytoff and Miers (1979), they emphasized rights-in-people as not only a process of accumulation aimed at a political strength in numbers but also the creative process of cultivating new and diverse embodied qualities and positive attributes in individuals. Status and political authority came from demonstrating the ability to mobilize others and motivate them to come together willingly to form a new collective. Guyer downplayed structural principles like eldership and highlighted individuals' unique forms of expertise and knowledge.

This process of creative composition of a mosaic of people as abilities, knowledge, and gifts as wealth-in knowledge was celebrated in literature and poetry from central Africa and drove political consolidation (Guyer and Belinga 1995). Wealth-in-knowledge is a holistic view of human capabilities and action as the building blocks of a collective: "People are assets in the social organization of knowledge" (Guyer 1996, 13; Guyer and Richards 1996).

The value of humans' abilities, aesthetics, and skills is richly described in several of the assembled articles. The South Asian tech entrepreneur is the embodiment of wealth-in-knowledge (Ghosh 2020). The pitch, seen as a performance, must convince an investor of the value of a business idea but is in reality a performance of the entrepreneurial identity. Ghosh shows how this identity is produced as wealth-in-people by one's social group and social positioning as well as through the corporality of the entrepreneurial performance. Cambodian dance is a symbol of cultural pride and a skill that requires a grueling apprenticeship (Tuchman-Rosta 2020). Wealth-in-bodies describes the valuations that dancers in the tourist industry make of their potential salaries, ability to express artistic freedom, and working conditions at cultural villages.

The skills of individuals assemble a collective of persons, each with unique skills or knowledge, that is more than the sum of its parts. King (2020) looks at the qualities of artisan food makers in alternative labor systems. Her holistic perspective shows that physical, organizational, and emotional labor are all mobilized to make a food collective work, bringing together culinary knowledge, individuals' networks of resource access, and the emotional labor of working together and resolving tensions among diverse individuals that may threaten the collective's joint work. Their solidarity is an ongoing process of negotiation of their differences, particularly in network and resource access. Similarly, a black farming collective in Mississippi thrives despite a broader climate that promotes large-scale industrial farming and that has dispossessed African Americans of their collective wealth. This cooperative is creating a fugitive space where the knowledge, practices, and culture of black farmers can be cultivated (Franzen 2020). The farmers uphold their knowledge, relationships, and assets as a form of stability and describe "true wealth" as the durable assets that allow the freedom to opt out of working for a living and pursue a more meaningful livelihood. Franzen (2020) describes how the cooperative purchases farm equipment and other inputs in bulk and how it raises cattle that are circulated and gifted in communal rituals.

A similar alternative economy is generated by people bringing new value to discarded goods in rural Maine (Isenhour and Berry 2020). Distributive labors describe how time, energy, and knowledge are used to find, acquire, fix, clean, market, and redistribute goods. Creativity, empathy, ingenuity, concern for the environment, knowledge of goods' quality, and the maintenance of distributive networks online and offline make it possible for people to find livelihoods, act as stewards of the environment, and, like Franzen's (2020) farmers, explicitly reject nine-to-five employment for more desirable lives.

Applied anthropology is itself a process of composition that brings anthropologists together with their publics (McGill et al. 2020) — in the case of the historic African American Oberlin Cemetery in Raleigh, North Carolina, a coalition of community members who worked to preserve the cemetery against planned commercial development. Oberlin Cemetery was the core of a free African American settlement as early as the 1850s. Central to preservation was a common effort to build and uphold the cemetery and its six hundred interred ancestors — including their experiences and achievements — as a form of community wealth. In the case of Oberlin Cemetery, not only were donations sought from a wide range of community members but there was critical need for individuals with a background in politics, law, marketing, real estate, and even web design to contribute to preservation efforts. As a sign of success, tourism and real estate values increased. The productive social tie between the anthropologist and the community partnership also emerges as wealth-in-people, as a contribution to a broader collective effort to preserve the cemetery.

Wealth-in-things

Rights-in-people are acquired through the exchange of things. Ethnographies of wealth-in-people explored how people are folded into circulations of things through debt peonage, clientage, and bridewealth. Circulations of goods and people created a relative ranking of people and things in hierarchical spheres of exchange in parts of central Africa (Bohannon 1959; Guyer 1995). Accessing things often involved converting them into people and then back again. Iron bars would decorate the bodies of wives and dependents and then be traded to create more wealth-in-people. Measures of value often ranked people and things in the same social hierarchies of wealth. In Cameroon, for example, the word wealth, *akuma*, could include wives, currencies, and livestock — people and things, which were often ranked against each other and were convertible into each other: "Interpersonal dependents of all kinds — wives, children, clients and slaves — were valued, sought and paid for at considerable expense in material terms in pre-colonial Africa. In some places they were the pinnacle, and even the unit of measurement, of ultimate value" (Guyer and Belinga 1995, 92).

Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century economists associated value with the labor embodied in goods. In Marx's view, people were the origin of all value incorporated in commodities. In contrast, in wealth-in-people, the value of things and the value of people may be convertible one into the other, with people at the top of the pyramid (Bohannon 1959). This perspective also describes how material things, particularly artistic products like ancestral figurines, were repositories of specific individuals' talents and identities (Guyer 1996, 6). Among the ancient Maya, objects became an extension of various selves and were used to spread political influence, create social debt, and even achieve immortality (Callaghan 2020). Things also exist to symbolize and materialize rights to others and act to account for and measure rights-in-others. These valuations may be contested, making things into a medium to negotiate and shape ties of obligation, debt, and alliance with others (Kopytoff 1986). The size of a bridewealth, then, indicates the depth of a family's social network and is viewed as an account or measure of a woman's value and, consequently, as an expression of commitment to the marriage, which would affect its stability (Cooper 1995).

Things often give people a means to generate wealth-in-people. When money was introduced to rural areas of Liberia in the 1970s, men and women used it to claim rights-in-others through ties of debt and obligation. High-status men let their juniors care for farms and property or paid for their schooling and bridewealth. Women used material transfers, such as the food they cooked or the money they earned, as a medium through which they could negotiate, transfer, claim, hoard, and call on rights-in-people and to shape ties of obligation, debt, and alliance with others.

The paradox of belonging *in*, or having wealth, and belonging *to*, or being wealth-to-others, describes the moral dangers of valuing, the risks and consequences of devaluing, and the political struggles around multiple, competing values. Cambodian dancers choosing work at various tourist villages may forgo artistic freedom and other positive working conditions in favor of better wages but, ultimately, have little control over either (Tuchman-Rosta 2020). The families of garment workers at the collapsed Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh were compensated based on these workers' very low wages, rationalizing the exploitative conditions that led to the disaster as part of a political settlement. Despite lobbying by labor groups, the bereaved families were denied a pain-and-suffering supplement that, it was feared, would acknowledge fault on the part of global fashion brands (Prentice 2019).

One form of valuing life comes from financial instruments, specifically insurance. Life insurance that prices a human life and its risk and acknowledges its social or absolute value can be studied from a wealth-in-people perspective (Maurer and Mureshghi 2013, 89): insurance "at once guard(s) family and loved ones against loss as well as create(s) and acknowledge(es) common membership in a polity." However, expressing the value of life in terms of money (i.e., death benefits) and years of longevity (i.e., risk assessment) may commodify life. Mulder (2020) finds that among African Americans in New Orleans, life insurance is often aimed not at compensating a family for the loss of a breadwinner's income but at providing a dignified funeral that can bring together traumatized communities in collective mourning and affirm the value of lives of young men lost through violent death. Life insurance policies designed and priced to support the costs of a funeral are aimed at vulnerable African American communities. More recently, lender and factoring intermediaries have also accepted life insurance policies as payment and converted their value to cash for beneficiaries at an added fee. The use of insurance thus gives value to undervalued lives lost through violence, but these unique forms of insurance also exploit these communities and, relative to forms of insurance designed as wage replacement for white-collar employees, devalue African American lives.

Considering the dilemmas of belonging in the South African workplace, Jeske (2020) rethinks capitalist relations of work and labor in the context of racialized inequality. The continuum of belonging *in*, and possessing wealth-in-people, to belonging *to*, and being wealth-to-others, as applied to relations of work brings out the qualities of obligation, autonomy, and loyalty that are often contested in these relations. Withholding loyalty to employers—and refusing to be a model employee—is a refusal to be wealth, a practical alienation from the promise of belonging that is in reality withheld or coerced from many low-wage workers. Retail workers arrive late, frown at customers, refuse overtime, or quit their jobs, insisting that they are "just laborers" in response to experiences of racism and work they find soulless. Here withholding their wealth-in-people protects them from further exploitation, even though it damages their ability to win employers' favor. In Jeske's (2020) analysis, the basis of wealth-in-people is a limited control, one based on certain obligations of patrons to their clients. She finds that capitalist relations have reneged on the promise of belonging *in*, creating a world of rigid and racialized hierarchy.

Hierarchy and egalitarian hierarchy

This brings us to the question of hierarchy and inequality, one of the more sensitive topics brought out by wealth-in-people. In the classic ethnographies in question, the valuation of people and often women was reckoned against iron bars or other forms of currency. Recounting these examples often elicits disgust from anthropology students as it touches against some long-held moral frameworks. The philosopher MacKinnon (1986) discusses the origins of ideas about the sacredness of human life. Kant (as cited in MacKinnon 1986, 30), for example, in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), insisted that individuals were capable of moral reason and therefore possessed a dignity that placed them above any equivalent in price or money value. Of course, the dangers of giving people or bodies a market value include slavery, prostitution, peonage, and murder. On the other hand, the taboo against considering the value of people on the same terms as things has kept hidden the relational basis of economic life and the economic role of intimate relationships (Zelizer 2005). But these ethnographic worlds where the value of people was assessed and made visible through material exchanges point to calculations that people and societies must and do make routinely. For example, efforts as diverse as building construction and health care calculate the known risks and even the inevitability of the loss of lives (MacKinnon 1986).

The hierarchy of wealth-in-people, as proposed by Kopytoff and Miers (1979), seems to have had its limits. First, the subordinate found a pathway to incorporation, by providing either labor, children, or loyalty to the group; second, the dependent or subordinate was entitled to resources, care, and other sustenance as a result of its dependency and as a kind of valued wealth. In some forms of hierarchy, people in different ranks are thought to be created as different types of being (Dumont 1981). Rather, wealth-in-people descriptions indicate that people may fill diverse ranks and move along a continuum of trajectory. For these reasons, the hierarchy of wealth-in-people was less fixed than an "egalitarian hierarchy" (Haynes and Hickel 2016), where dependent status makes moral claims on the more superior.

The wealth-in-people logic can explain the endurance of a commitment to hierarchy, and to the moral obligations of superiors to their subordinates, in many parts of the world (Ferguson 2013, 2016), even as ideologies and political forms that prize human liberty and egalitarian citizenship come to the fore. The contribution of conference keynote speaker Erik Bähre (2020) examines the life of a Xhosa woman, Sylvia, as a struggle to acquire wealth-in-people. The pathway to belonging and incorporation is barely visible for many South Africans, and in the context of widespread despair and unemployment, the performance of kinship obligations may provide little security. Sylvia refused to initiate her son into his father's lineage or to demand bridewealth payments to her parents because of the control her in-laws would then claim over her. Instead, she found means to raise her son herself through other partners and a savings group. Ultimately, however, her family was left fragmented. Her son, left without a lineage, and in his isolation, took his own life. As with Jeske's (2020) struggling workers who also face a colonial legacy of structural disparities, the refusal to be the wealth of others can bring little in the way of an alternative.

As these ethnographically grounded articles show, our worth is counted in the eyes of others, and power may decide what we are worth. The risks of being wealth include devaluation, alienation, and control by others. When people are not valued, they feel certain responsibilities have been shirked, especially the responsibility to care for and build others. These contested valuations are measured in things, which are a medium to negotiate, transfer, claim, hoard, and call on rights-in-people and to shape ties of obligation, debt, and alliance with others.

Wealth-in-people, social capital, human capital

Everywhere, social relations and human actions sustain economic ties and activities. That is, the role of human abilities, knowledge, labor, and relationships is of general importance to explaining economic life. Not surprisingly, the value of human action in economies has been abundantly theorized around ideas like labor (Carbonella and Kasmir 2014), human capital (Becker 1962), social capital (Burt 2005; Coleman 1988; Portes 1998; Smith and Kulynych 2002), embeddedness (Granovetter 2011; Polanyi 1957), and reciprocity (Mauss [1925] 2016; Sahlins 1965). These ideas bring out the importance of social institutions, moral frameworks, and motivations for economic behavior that go beyond narrowly material, rational, or instrumental dimensions.

These concepts have broadened and multiplied in meaning (Narotzky 2007, 404; see also Portes 1998 on social capital and Graeber 2001 on reciprocity). Yet they are often attached to ethnographic findings, to "specific sets of profoundly historicized and localized human interactions" (Narotzky 2007, 405), yielding little explanatory power or comparative insight. Narotzky suggests more attention to specific histories and contexts of economic relationships, especially an approach to theory building based on a back-and-forth between ethnographic findings and general explanation. The articles in this issue apply wealth-in-people to a variety of cases and suggest a useful theory of value as an alternative to social capital in particular.

Many contemporary ways of looking at the value of people have employed the concept of capital. Capital usually refers to money that is invested in the means of production in order to create more money. The concept of human capital (Becker 1962) describes education, job skills, health status, and other attributes of people or groups of people that influence economic outcomes. Social capital is an even broader concept (see a review in Portes 1998). For Putnam (2001, 19), social capital was "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." It described group membership and shared commitment to social and religious causes, and it was also linked to the political sphere as a means toward trust and democracy (Putnam 2001). For Bourdieu (1985, 21), it described "actual or potential resources linked to the possession of a network or membership in a group." The concept referred more critically to how advantaged groups reproduce class and status, using social connections to access economic capital. Social capital especially in this sense may end up yielding a very instrumental interpretation of social ties as a means to economic value. If social capital, as Bourdieu defined it, referred specifically to the wealth-in-things that a person can get from social connections, then people are rendered merely the vehicle or a pathway for mobile capital (Narotzky 2007; Smith and Kulynych 2002).

Generally, wealth-in-people emphasizes the opposite relationship, where things are a means of getting rights-in-people. The distinction matters a great deal in terms of ethnographic explanation. Take as an example a recent study of money and gender in contemporary Nigeria (Smith 2017). Here proper masculinity requires demonstrating and building wealth-in-people over time. Men use money to negotiate obligations to older benefactors and to support wives and girlfriends, claiming their own clients as they move through the life cycle. Money and all it provides, including access to prestigious institutions, careers, goods, cars, and social circles, becomes a preoccupation and a necessary vehicle for men obligated to build wealth-in-people and to enable its pursuits for their juniors. Here the importance of money in Nigeria goes far beyond the imposition of capitalist and money relations into this Global South context. Rather, these relations are incorporated into a local system of wealth-in-people that imparts a moral order. Status is a privilege of time and the life cycle, which entails responsibility to others.

Wealth-in-people, by avoiding the concept of capital, does not assume capitalism as either the context, logic, or motivation of actors. The concept emphasizes broader kinds of wealth other than just capitalist money. Cross-culturally, wealth is that which is inconvertible, inalienable, and will endure over time: it "makes claims on the future" (Foster, as cited in Rakopoulos and Rio 2018, 280). Unlike capital, which expresses movement and convertibility through investment, wealth-in-people expresses a long-term temporality, often through the arc of the human life-span or relationships with ancestors. Importantly, many of the instances of wealth-in-people in this volume invoke this sense of wealth that began in a specific past, endures, and makes claims on the future.

Franzen's (2020) farmers claim as inalienable their land, equipment, and cattle as "gold" and "real wealth." Life cycle rituals build wealth-in-people and extend belonging to ancestors and the dead through their position of supernatural social power (Bähre 2020; Callaghan 2020; McGill et al. 2020; Mulder 2020). Bähre (2020) and Mulder (2020) both discuss how funeral insurance guarantees that loved ones become venerated ancestors through a well-attended and well-appointed funeral. For African Americans connected to Oberlin Cemetery, the life stories of those interred are told and retold as geneology to "reclaim our stories that are specific to us" (McGill et al. 2020, 186). Finally, among the ancient Maya, blackware pottery was specifically produced and placed in royal tombs to help Maya kings escape from the underworld after death and be resurrected as a divine ancestor of their lineage. A leader's social network continued in death, and descendants relied on their ancestors to further legitimize their own accession and political futures (Callaghan 2020).

Conclusion: Social worth and a human economy

Wealth-in-people was originally a way for Europeans to make sense of bridewealth and patron–client relationships. The articles in this issue extend the concept and compose a wealth of human values. Reviving wealth-in-people at this moment of pandemic, when the market is spoken of as being in opposition to people, reasserts that people are at the top of the value hierarchy and that economies are about people—"making people in their physical, social, spiritual, affective, and intellectual dimensions" (Narotzky and Besnier 2014, S14). In their critique of austerity, Narotzky and Besnier (2014, 10) examine how crisis and uncertainty have eroded the commitment to social worth, defined as "the value of people, but also the value obtained through people and the value invested and accumulated in people." Anthropologists can testify to social worth by showing how people look for and create value in everyday life.

Similarly, the idea of a human economy (Hart 2013; Hart, Laville, and Cattani 2010) begins not with economic institutions but on the ground with anthropological study of what people do, think, and want for a livelihood in the context of a plural and many-layered economy. This approach seeks to build a democratic economy where all people can plan and improve their circumstances. In the economic crisis the pandemic is engendering, some see an opportunity for just this: "a wholly new space has opened up: to not just keep people alive but to let them *live different lives*, where rent, bills and bosses don't determine their flourishing" (Jäger and Klein 2020). As the articles assembled here show, from Maine to South Africa, these spaces have existed all along.

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