



Women's Economic Equity and Participatory Economics

What is participatory economics?

It's a new economic model that uses neither markets (used in capitalism) nor command planning (used in communism), and hopes to remedy the flaws of both systems. Participatory economics (called "parecon" for short) strives to achieve solidarity, equity, efficiency, diversity, and self-management, and has the following four main rules:

1. All jobs are balanced for desirability and empowerment.
2. Payment is determined by effort and sacrifice in socially-valued labor.
3. Economic decisions are made by decision-making bodies, where those who are impacted by a decision have decision-making power proportional to the degree they're impacted by that decision.
4. Resources are allocated by participatory planning, where consumption or production plans are submitted, with the help of a facilitation mechanism, to those who are impacted by those plans, and revised if necessary by those who made those plans in a series of rounds based on assorted qualitative and quantitative feedback. The goal is to eliminate excess demand, without command planning and without markets.

What are some obstacles towards advancing women's economic equity?

- In the political realm, there are poor laws and ineffective enforcement of laws at helping to remedy wage discrimination.
- In the economic realm, the institutions of markets are critical to address in the matter of women's economic equity. Markets are defined to be a institution (a set of roles) of buyers and sellers, where actors are pitted against one another in antagonistic roles.
- Antagonism can lead to undemocratic consequences. In a competitive realm, actors have the incentive to behave like monsters.
- Present-day corporations, particularly the biggest corporations in America, are the legal equivalent of monsters in a market, since corporations are required by law to act to maxi-

mize the short-term profits at the expense of everyone and everything else.

- Despite recent gains that women have to break corporate glass ceilings, corporations have considerable numbers of men in executive positions (only 14% of 550 executives are women), bear hierarchies in pay and job empowerment, and concentrate greater numbers of women in jobs with lesser pay and empowerment.
- Much of caregiving and housework is overwhelmingly done by women and unrecognized by markets. This is an enormous irony since, if it were recognized by markets, caregiving and housework would comprise the overwhelming majority of economic activity.

How is participatory economics relevant to advancing women's economic equity?

- Parecon addresses the matter of unequally empowering jobs (where women tend to get stuck with disproportionately disempowering and undesirable work) by means of balanced job complexes (where jobs are balanced by desirability and empowerment).
- Caregiving work, which is not recognized or is poorly recognized in markets and which women have tended to do, is recognized in participatory economics since it involves effort and sacrifice in socially-valued labor.
- Corporations can't gain market advantage in a parecon since parecon doesn't use markets. Thus, corporations (which by their nature fight against economic equity) are at a serious disadvantage.

What can we do now?

1. Smaller businesses may want to consider implementing some of the rules of participatory economics in their own business, particularly involving balanced job complexes and payment per effort and sacrifice.
2. Connect with groups that work towards economic equity (for example, labor unions, living wage advocates), and bring the participatory economic model to their attention to see if it can help them enhance their success towards their goals.

3. Spread the word. Successes in activism often hinges on widening awareness and making connections. Every action towards this end can make a big difference over time.

Resources for more information

- "Economic Justice and Democracy: From Competition to Cooperation" by Robin Hahnel (Routledge: London, 2005)
- "Parecon: Life After Capitalism" by Michael Albert (Verso: London, 2003)
- "Real Utopia: Participatory Society for the 21st Century", edited by Chris Spannos (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2008)
- www.parecon.org (the main website about parecon, hosted by ZNet)
- www.chicagoparecon.org (the website of CAPES, the Chicago Area Participatory Economics Society)

What other sources are saying about this topic?

"I believe that participatory economics (parecon) is a specific political conception of the type that modern anarchist thought ought to strive for." -- Le Samovar (thesamovar.wordpress.com)

"Overall, I believe Parecon provides a comprehensive vision that is worthy of serious consideration and debate among those who are interested in more progressive economic structures." -- Review on the website of the Workers Solidarity Movement (<http://struggle.ws/wsm/rbr/rbr9/parecon.html>)

"What alternative form of social organization can be imagined that might overcome the grave flaws - often real crimes -- of contemporary society in more far-reaching ways than short-term reform. Parecon is the most serious effort I know to provide a very detailed possible answer to some of these questions, crucial ones, based on serious thought and careful analysis." -- Noam Chomsky

How to get involved locally

Visit CAPES (Chicago Area Participatory Economics Society) at <http://www.chicagoparecon.org/> for more information

Information on the Economic Equity Team and Cheat Sheets

What are Cheat Sheets?

The Chicago NOW Economic Equity Team has begun a new series of informational pamphlets or "**cheat sheets.**" The cheat sheets are intended to provide Chicago NOW members and interested others with information on issues that pertain to women's economic equity. We intend on distributing a new Cheat Sheet volume on a regular basis. Each volume will cover a different topics related to women's economic equity.

What is Economic Equity?

In the context of gender, economic equity is defined as an equal or fair distribution of resources or goods among women and men.

How to get involved in Chicago NOW's Economic Equity Team

1. Come to our meetings

The team meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Border's Café on Halsted and North Ave (755 W. North Ave). The meetings are informal and welcoming. For more information please call Rachel at 773.307.7763 or email at cnoweconomiequity@gmail.com.

2. Join our Facebook pages and invite other like-minded facebook friends to join

The team's page is:

<http://tiny.cc/eageo>

The team's pay equity page:

<http://tiny.cc/aT1dM>

3. Join Chicago NOW's action alerts

Email Rachel at cnoweconomiequity@gmail.com and ask to be added to our action alert list. This will keep you up to date on all Chicago NOW meetings and events.

4. Suggest a topic for an upcoming cheat sheet

Do you have a suggestion or an economic equity topic that you would like to learn more about? If so, email topic ideas to cnoweconomiequity@gmail.com