



# A CAPITAL EXPERIMENT

*Amanda Brohman has a backyard chicken coop in North Portland's Kenton neighborhood. She's participating in Copiosis, an alternative economy where neighbors provide each other with goods and services without the exchange of money. Brohman gives her neighbors organic eggs and also offers babysitting and photography.*

PHOTO BY JOE GLODE

**BY EMILY GREEN**  
STAFF WRITER

**P**erry Gruber is taking a free-market approach to eliminating the market entirely.

Just as the cassette tape edged out the 8-track in the early 1980s, he said his software-based system for exchanging goods and services, called Copiosis, will eventually send capitalism the way of the VCR. Like any other new technology that replaces the status quo, he said, consumers will choose his system because it's superior to its predecessor.

"We're not fighting capitalism," he told an audience of potential Copiosis enthusiasts earlier this year, "but allowing money and capitalism to gently retire."

Street Roots first met with Gruber in spring when he was gearing up to get the first two "demonstration projects" off the ground.

Both projects launched in October; one in North Portland's Kenton neighborhood, where Gruber lives, and one in Chico, Calif.

While Gruber's long-term goals of eliminating money and capitalism may seem grandiose, participants said they're finding involvement in this economic experiment is bringing them closer to their neighbors and providing them with a sense of community they didn't have before.

Each demonstration project consists of a handful of households exchanging goods, such as homemade soup and ice cream, and services, such as business consulting, babysitting and massage. It's not a barter system, and no money changes hands.

It's a concept Gruber's been working on for nearly three years. Before that, he held various jobs, from U.S. Marine to program manager at Intel. He's also an entrepreneur who's launched several companies including the now-defunct NedWater LLC, a "charity-driven commercial water brand," in 2009 and, most recently, Copiosis.

Ironically, the system Gruber is convinced has the ability to replace capitalism is a for-profit company complete with a crowdfunding campaign.

He enthusiastically tells potential participants and donors that Copiosis has the capability to transform society. Once it is fully adopted, he prophesies, people will no longer have to work for a living; debt, homelessness and hunger will disappear; people will be free to pursue their passions; everyone's basic needs will be met; and taxes will be eliminated because government will no longer exist.

One could easily argue Gruber's seemingly utopian vision is blindly optimistic. But Gruber, 51, believes it's possible.

It's a vision similar to ideas touted by several outlier organizations worldwide, most notably the Zeitgeist Movement and Venus Project - which both promote moving to what's called a "resource-based economy." In this system, and this is a gross over-simplification, money no longer exists,

goods and services are free and available to all, and cultures are dictated by whatever resources are available in the immediate vicinity.

This economic model hasn't received a lot of mainstream attention, but amid concerns about climate change, capitalism has increasingly come under fire. In 2014, one of the strongest arguments against neoliberalism yet emerged from the confines of these fringe organizations when a book declaring capitalism led to climate change debuted on the New York Times best-seller list at No. 5. "This Changes Everything: Capitalism v. The Climate" by Naomi Klein was translated into more than 20 languages.

But what resource-based economy movements are lacking, Gruber said, is a strategy for making the transition from capitalism to another system - and that, he said, is where Copiosis comes in.

In the months leading up to Copiosis' kickoff, Gruber and his counterparts in Chico hosted dozens of free informational events aimed at attracting participants and generating interest and financing. When Gruber, a former motivational speaker, begins to talk about the future world according to Copiosis, participants say they find it very inspirational.

At one such event in the basement of Taborspace, a community center in Southeast Portland, about 35 people ranging in age and background showed up to hear what Gruber had to offer. Aside from one heckler, his lecture appeared to be very well

*A small group of North Portland neighbors is testing out a new economic model*

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