

In the land of feminist movements, the water of autonomous resourcing run wide and deep, depositing accumulated knowledge like a river.

preliminary analysis on collated inputs from activists; definition 1.0

Feminist activists

creatively resourcing struggles for justice

while staying fiercely independent

2016 AWID Forum @ Bahia, Brazil

Emerging interests in understanding, thinking, & naming 'self-generating practices around resourcing'

2018 Money & Movements Convening @ Nairobi, Kenya

Looking beyond NGO-ised funding models

"We are here!"

Knowledge Co-creation Workshop Series

why? to connect with fellow activists; share and learn from each other

how? open-minded, empathetic presence and participation  
transparent, horizontal safe space

Collective Intentionality

what? collectively build a conceptual framework of AR through storytelling

2019-2020

Feminist Skillshare Series + In-depth Interviews with AR activists

# A Tree That Never Dies: A Case for Participatory Knowledge Co-creation on Autonomous Resourcing

## A Tree That Never Dies: A Case for Participatory Knowledge Co-creation on Autonomous Resourcing

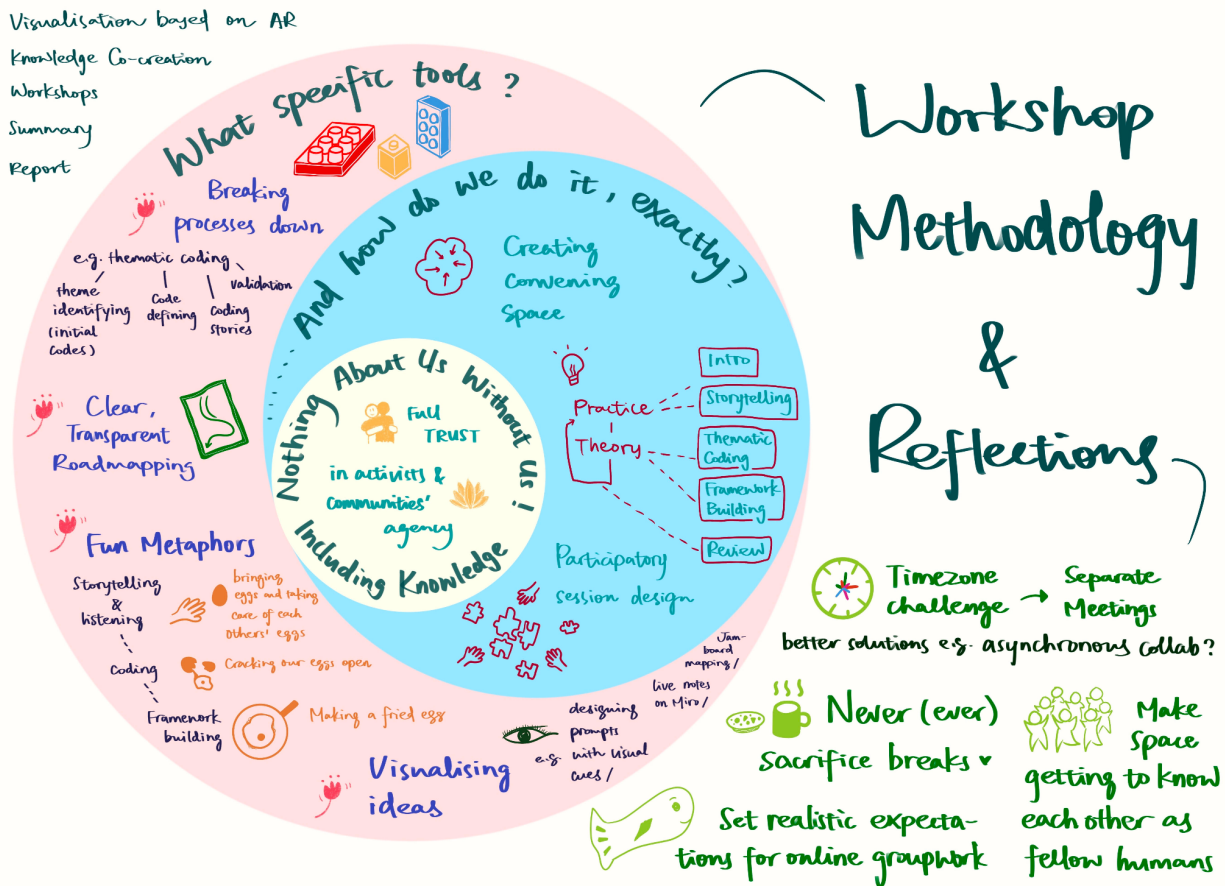
Can you think of a time where human knowledge was not co-created? I'll wait. As a species, we have been connecting and supporting each other since anyone can remember, but people have been made to forget this fact under neoliberalism. The very nature of knowledge suggests direct or indirect processes of co-creation; it's something that lives among us, not above us. Such an understanding of knowledge production processes have been applied by feminists widely, through practices in [feminist participatory action research](#), [feminist popular education](#), etc.

Drawing inspirations from knowledge built by pioneering feminists in this area, in collaboration with the Resourcing Feminist Movements team at AWID, I designed and facilitated a series of workshops at the end of 2021, bringing together ten feminist activists resourcing their movements autonomously to put together a conceptual framework for AR. Two things were special about this process: one, people in the room made up a 'community of practice' from a diverse range of contexts across the world, and two, the usually 'one-person work' of theorizing (which, of course, is a myth in itself) was done collectively every step of the way. Online group processes, especially participatory ones like these, are particularly challenging. How did we pull it off in a total of ten hours together digitally?

The bottom of it is trust (see inner circle below). There's no true participation without trust. It might be implicit, but it has to be there: trusting that all the knowledge can and should come from the activists from the community of practice, that each other will show up and stick through as much as we can, and that the process, however messy, will lead us to the goal. There has to be a certain amount of magical faith, and, for an easily-anxious facilitator like me at certain points, peace-making with the sense of losing control. This trust-building process started way before and extends way beyond this space: activists were invited on board as advisors on the basis of owning the outcomes as a community, and many of them have already engaged in [collective conversations on AR](#) before this space.

Full trust means the objectives and flow of the workshop were made transparent and open to flexibilities from the beginning. Learning from popular education methods, shared by the Knowledge Building Tactics Lead at AWID, the process took a "practice-theory-practice path", where practitioners start with lived experiences in AR, then analyze and theorize them together

into a framework, which will then feed right back into everyone's activism journeys (see middle circle below for how we structure the workshops overall following this line of thinking). To make it accessible, we visualized it into the process of egg-making (see outer circle below).



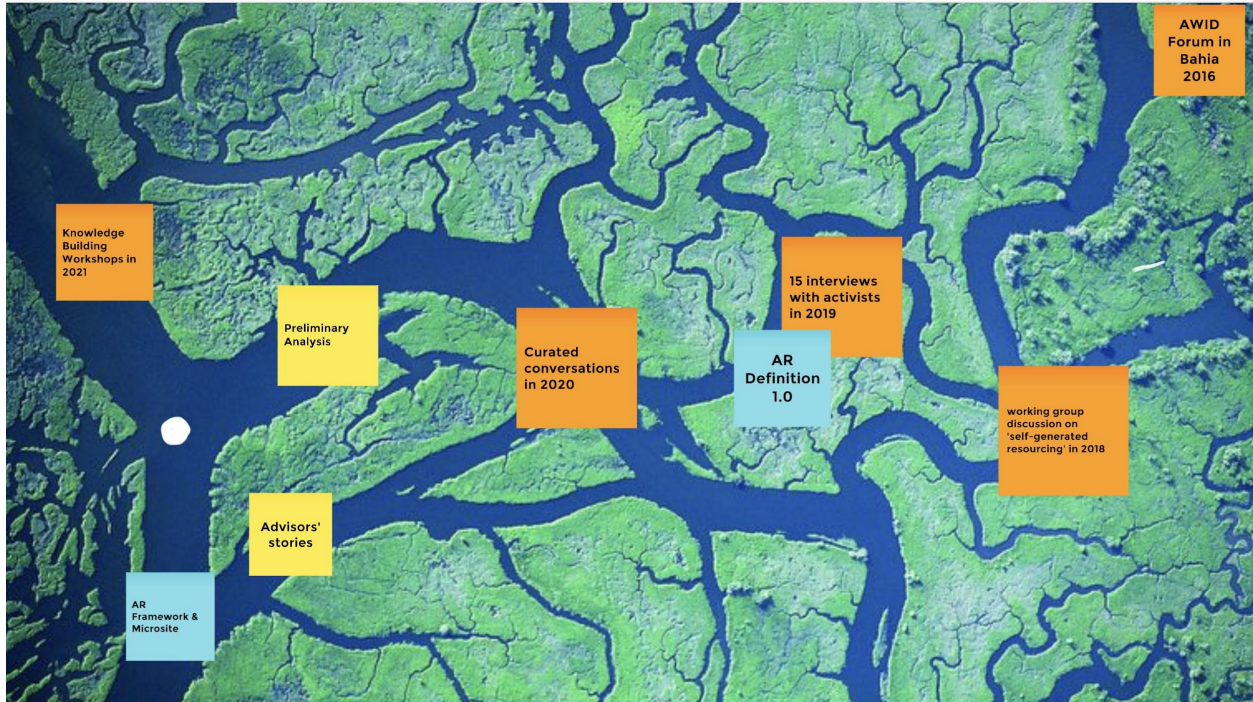
Trusting every participant's autonomy and agency also meant holding back the temptation of serving something on the plate as a draft and simply inviting inputs to that; we made sure the process had sufficient space of its own without being overtaken by the thinking coming out of previous conversations, so the preliminary analysis of the last five years of documentation of the autonomous resourcing work was only offered after themes were identified, right before the group went into framework building.

None of us knew how the framework might look before we made it - which is the whole point of participatory processes - so all I did as a facilitator was to offer 'scaffoldings': questions that might be helpful in leading us towards a framework. We started with a brainstorm of questions

AR activists get asked a lot, then clustered those questions with the help of a visual aid (a tree image), built consensus on which part should represent what, then went into each part to flesh them out with the more scattered thinking from previous workshops and thus bring everything together. This design proved to be a very useful guide, and we arrived at a rough structure within less than an hour.

Process aside, one of the many challenges of collaborating online is what I'll call 'vibing': so much of the non-verbal information like smell, touch, body movements, and aura get lost in the tiny zoom camera that it's hard for us to sense each other completely. We therefore loaded on lots of verbal interactions, made it human by factoring plenty of time for conversations, most of which without facilitators in small groups. Such a space that allows for solidarity-building was very much appreciated in our group. There was also a significant amount of visual materials used on Jamboard and Miro board to bring everyone onto the same page (see maps below for example). Some of the discussions also happened with live notes for everyone to see what's been put on the table, and how dots are connected. These tools helped us smooth out the conversations and allow everyone to focus on the substance.





*\*White dot represents where we were as a group in the fourth workshop*

At the end of the day, as one of our activists Nani beautifully said, connections are key to sustainability. This piece of knowledge co-created by the people who live with it will stay alive and keep evolving, just like how a tree in a sustained, interconnected ecosystem never dies - there will always be new energy blossoming. If this blog has provided any insight into how to facilitate such a process, consider it a seed growing through you. :)