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The Transnational Capitalist Class, Social Movements, and Alternatives to Capitalist Globalization

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to rethink and globalize the concept of the capitalist class, to suggest ways in which this class uses social movements, and to explore what might come after capitalist globalization and the hegemony of the transnational capitalist class (TCC). The first section of the paper provides evidence that there is now a flourishing community of scholars largely but not exclusively connected with the Network for Critical Studies of Global Capitalism (NCSGC), who are building a substantial foundation for research on the transnational capitalist class all over the world. The next section poses questions around the hegemony of the TCC and highlights the importance of what is conceptualized as social movements *for* global capitalism. Relatively little attention is paid to this compared to the vast literature on social movements *against* global capitalism. The paper concludes with the question: Is there a non-capitalist alternative to globalization dominated by the TCC? The answer begins with the aphorism: "It is easier to imagine the end of the world, than to imagine the end of capitalism." My view is that this expresses a profound truth, forcing us to begin again to think through what we once conceptualized as democratic socialism.

KEYWORDS

Transnational capitalist class; social movements; socialism; anarchism; globalization

I. Introduction: precursors

This paper attempts to rethink the concept of the capitalist class, to suggest ways in which this class uses social movements, and to explore what might come after capitalist globalization and the hegemony of the transnational capitalist class (TCC). The theories of the capitalist class as a ruling class in one country proposed by Domhoff (1967), Connell (1977), and Useem (1984) seem to me the most useful starting places. As attention started to focus more and more on what were then most commonly labelled multi-national corporations, a stream of excellent studies emerged that began to "internationalize" the capitalist class. For example, Becker et al. (1987) proposed a new theory of the international managerial bourgeoisie; Fennema (1982) interrogated international networks of banks and industry (inspiring the later research of Bill Carroll); Goldfrank (1997) posed the subversive question of "Who Rules the World?" (in the short-lived *Quarterly Journal of Ideology*); Lubeck (1987) edited an important book on the African bourgeoisie; Stokman, Ziegler, and Scott (1985) documented networks of corporate power in 10 countries;

Mizruchi and Swartz (1987) edited an influential collection on inter-corporate relations; and Evans (1979), conceptualized the triple alliance of multinational, state and local capital. Around this time, a key source of insight into a global ruling class also began to emerge from the Gramscian turn in International Relations. Cox (1987, 271) discussed “an emerging global class structure” and Gill (1990, 94ff) identified a “developing transnational capitalist class fraction” (see also Embong 2000). An incisive contribution to this debate was the idea of “an Atlantic ruling class” (van der Pijl 1984). As an attempt to build on this rich literature, the concept of transnational practices and its political form, the transnational capitalist class, is a step towards consolidating the theoretical link between globalization and the ruling class and providing some evidence that these concepts have genuine empirical referents. This implies, conceptually, that the state is only one, albeit important, level of analysis and empirically, that state actors are losing power in some key areas of economic, political, and culture-ideology decision-making to non-state global actors—a transition from the international to the transnational mode of analysis.

Taking account of both the theoretical innovations and the substantive findings of these and other studies (including my own research in export-processing zones, for which see Sklair 2002, *passim*), my argument is that since the 1960s capitalist globalization has changed the structure and dynamics of the capitalist class and made it necessary start to explore the question of the extent to which the transnational capitalist class is the ruling class in the global system. This argument conceptualizes class in capitalist society in terms of ownership and/or control of the means of production, distribution and exchange; it resists the neo-Weberian attempt to separate class, status and command; and highlights the central role of the capitalist class in the struggle to commodify everything. The argument revolves around three working hypotheses logically deduced from global system theory (briefly elaborated below). First, I argue that a transnational capitalist class is emerging that is beginning to act as a global ruling class in some spheres; second, that the key feature of the globalization of the capitalist system in recent decades has been the profit-driven culture-ideology of consumerism organized by this class; and third, that the TCC is working consciously to obfuscate the effects of the central crises of global capitalism, namely the simultaneous creation of increasing poverty and increasing wealth within and between countries, and the unsustainability of the global capitalist system (Sklair 2002, 48–58).

The global system theory propounded here is based on the concept of transnational practices, practices that cross state boundaries but do not necessarily originate with state agencies or actors. Analytically, they operate in three spheres, the economic, the political, and the cultural-ideological. These are superimposed each on the others rather than separate spheres. The whole is what I mean by the global system. While the global system is not synonymous with global capitalism, what the theory sets out to demonstrate is that the dominant forces of global capitalism are the dominant forces in the global system. The building blocks of the theory are the transnational corporation, the characteristic institutional form of economic transnational practices; a still-evolving transnational capitalist class in the political sphere; and in the culture-ideology sphere, the culture-ideology of consumerism.

II. Conceptualizing the transnational capitalist class

Despite its relatively short history there are already several ways of conceptualizing the transnational capitalist class. Prominent among these are the materialist approach of

Robinson and Harris (2000) and the network-oriented approach of Carroll (2010). In my own formulation developed over the last 25 years, the transnational capitalist class is the characteristic institutional form of political transnational practices in the global capitalist system (Sklair 1995, 2001, 2002, 2016). It can be analytically divided into four main fractions:

- 1) Those who own and control the major transnational corporations and their local affiliates (corporate fraction);
- 2) Globalizing politicians and bureaucrats (political fraction);
- 3) Globalizing professionals (technical fraction);
- 4) Merchants and media (consumerist fraction).

My argument is that together, these groups constitute a global power elite, ruling class or inner circle in the sense that these terms have been used to characterize the class structures of specific countries (see Domhoff 1967; Useem 1984; Scott 1996). The TCC is opposed not only by those who reject capitalism as a way of life and/or an economic system but also by those capitalists who reject globalization. Some localized, domestically-oriented businesses can share the interests of the global corporations and prosper, but most cannot and perish. Influential business strategists and management theorists commonly argue that to survive, local business must globalize (for example, Kanter 1997). I define domestic firms as those serving an exclusively sovereign state market, employing only local nationals, whose products consist entirely of domestic services, components and materials. If you think that this is a ridiculously narrow definition for the realities of contemporary economies then you are more than half-way to accepting my concept of globalization. Apart from small localized firms, the exceptions are mainly what are now commonly termed state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and quasi-monopolistic utility and services corporations (see any issue of the *Fortune* Global 500). The facts that SOEs are being run more like TNCs (transnational corporations) or are being privatized and frequently sold to TNCs and that the quasi-monopolies are being rapidly deregulated, enhances rather than detracts from my central thesis. Since the substantial wave of de-nationalizations and quasi-privatizations of state-owned enterprises from the 1980s to the present all over the world, a new category of corporate executives has been created—often the same people who ran the state-owned enterprises—and their links with the TCC will repay further study. Though most national and local state managers fight for the interests of their constituents, as they define these interests, government bureaucrats, politicians and professionals who entirely reject globalization and espouse extreme nationalist ideologies are comparatively rare, despite the recent rash of civil wars in economically marginal parts of the world. And while there are anti-consumerist elements in most societies, there are few cases of a serious anti-consumerist party winning political power anywhere in the world.

The transnational capitalist class is transnational (or global) in the following respects.

- 1) The economic interests of its members are increasingly globally linked rather than exclusively local and national in origin. This follows directly from the shareholder-driven growth imperative that lies behind the globalization of the world economy and the increasing difficulty of enhancing shareholder value in purely domestic firms. While for many practical purposes the world is still organized in terms of discrete national economies,

the TCC increasingly conceptualizes its interests in terms of markets, which may or may not coincide with a specific nation-state, and the global market, which clearly does not. There is overwhelming evidence to show that the global corporation of today is not the same as the multinational corporation of the past (Dicken 2011; Sklair 2001).

2) The TCC seeks to exert economic control in the workplace, political control in domestic and international politics, and culture-ideology control in every-day life through specific forms of global competitive and consumerist rhetoric and practice. The focus of workplace control is the threat that jobs will be lost and, in the extreme, the economy will collapse unless workers are prepared to work longer and for less in order to meet foreign competition. This is reflected in local electoral politics in most countries, where the major parties have few substantial strategic (even if many tactical) differences, and in the sphere of culture-ideology, where consumerism is rarely challenged.

3) Members of the TCC have outward-oriented global rather than inward-oriented local perspectives on most economic, political and culture-ideology issues. The growing TNC and international institutional emphasis on free trade and the shift from import substitution to export promotion strategies in most developing countries since the 1980s have been driven by members of the TCC working through government agencies, elite opinion organizations, and the media (Dreier 1982). Some of the credit for this apparent transformation in the way in which big business works around the world is attached to the tremendous growth in business education since the 1960s, particularly in the US and Europe, but increasingly all over the world.

4) Members of the TCC tend to share similar life-styles, particularly patterns of higher education (increasingly in business schools) and consumption of luxury goods and services. Integral to this process are exclusive clubs and restaurants, ultra-expensive resorts in all continents, private as opposed to mass forms of travel and entertainment and, ominously, increasing residential segregation of the very rich secured by armed guards and electronic surveillance, from Los Angeles to Moscow, from Manila to Beijing, from Lagos to Mumbai.

5) Finally, members of the TCC seek to project images of themselves as citizens of the world as well as of their places of birth, what I have characterized as their corporate global visions (Sklair 2001, esp. chapter 8). The concept of the transnational capitalist class implies that there is one central inner circle that makes system-wide decisions, and that it connects in a variety of ways with members of the TCC in each locality, country, and region. While the personnel in this inner circle may change (there may even be several overlapping inner circles at any one time), the TCC is a class with identifiable leaders.

What the inner circle of the TCC does is to give a unity to the diverse economic interests, political organizations and cultural and ideological formations of those who make up the class as a whole. As in any social class, fundamental long-term unity of interests and purpose does not preclude shorter-term and local conflicts of interests and purpose, both within each of the four fractions and between them. The culture-ideology of consumerism is the fundamental value system that keeps the system intact, but it encourages a wide variety of choices to satisfy the needs of the different actors and their constituencies within the global system, as Artz (2015) convincingly demonstrates in his book on the global entertainment system. The four fractions of the TCC in any geographical and social area, region, country, city, society, community, perform complementary functions to integrate the whole. The achievement of these goals is facilitated by the activities of local and

national agents and organizations which are connected in a complex network of global interlocks.

A crucial component of this integration of the TCC as a global class is that virtually all senior members of the TCC will occupy a variety of interlocking positions, not only the interlocking directorates that have been the subject of detailed studies for some time in a variety of countries but also connections outside the direct ambit of the corporate sector, the civil society as it were servicing the state-like structures of the corporations (Stokman, Ziegler, and Scott 1985; Mizruchi and Schwartz 1987; Scott 1990, volume III; Carroll 2010). Leading corporate executives serve on and chair the boards of think-tanks, charities, scientific, sports, arts and culture bodies, universities, medical foundations and similar institutions (Domhoff 1967; Useem 1984; Scott 1990, volume I, parts II and III; Sklair 2001). It is in this sense that the claims “the business of society is business” and “the business of our society is global business” become legitimated in the global capitalist system. Business, particularly the transnational corporation sector, then begins to monopolize symbols of modernity and post-modernity like free enterprise, international competitiveness and the good life and to transform most, if not all, social spheres in its own image.

Since the 1980s, most of the discussion about capitalist globalization has been framed within a discourse of neoliberalism, spearheaded by the terrible twins—Thatcher and Reagan. Neoliberalism has been celebrated and vilified much more as just another form of capitalist ideology and practice than for what it really is, namely what follows when capitalism starts to globalize seriously. Few bother to distinguish between generic, capitalist, and alternative forms of globalization. By generic globalization I mean 1) the electronic revolution that has restructured economic, political and cultural life rapidly in the richest economies, and more slowly but surely all over the world; 2) postcolonialisms; 3) the creation of transnational social spaces; and 4) new forms of cosmopolitanism (Sklair 2009b). Failure to acknowledge generic globalization often leads to absurd critiques of anti-capitalist protest as twenty-first century Luddism, as if somehow it is illogical to use mobile phones and the internet to organize against capitalism. Capitalist globalization has brought new attacks on the working class, on the trades unions, on the poor, welfare states where they exist, indeed, to a greater or lesser extent, on everyone who is vulnerable. While this is not new—capitalists have always fought against reductions in the length of the working day, increases in wages, and most forms of welfare—its global scope is unprecedented. This has been episodically noted for decades, for example, from the normally globalizing *Economist* (1996) which asserted that most of the extra profit generated by information technology and globalization was going straight to the owners of capital at the expense of wages, and the Indian *Economic Times* (March 4, 1997) which observed that as globalization makes India richer the peasants get poorer, a theme that is common in the so-called developing world and regularly since then. This was termed the race to the bottom by radical critics in the 1990s (see Ranney 1994; Brecher and Costello 1994). Recurring panics in the West about the dangers of sweatshop-produced toys and other goods imported from China are only one of its most recent manifestations. It is important to note that the race to the bottom occurs within countries as well as between them.

To conclude this section I think it is no exaggeration to say that there is now a flourishing community of scholars largely but not exclusively connected with the Network for Critical Studies of Global Capitalism (NCSGC), who are building a substantial foundation

for research on the transnational capitalist class all over the world. The pioneering work of Bill Robinson, Jerry Harris, and Bill Carroll, publications from NCSGC conferences (Murray and Scott 2012; Struna 2013; Haase 2013; Sprague 2015), and my own research on the TCC in Australia (Sklair 1996), in the tobacco industry (Sklair 1998), in the corporate capture of sustainable development (Sklair 2001, chapter 7) and human rights (Sklair 2009a), and in architecture and globalizing cities (Sklair 2016) attest to an expanding disciplinary, geographical and sectoral spread of the idea of the TCC, further details of which can be found in the NCSGC bibliography.¹

III. Social movements for global capitalism

While there are mountains of books, articles, and e-sources chronicling social movements against capitalism in its local and global manifestations, there is relatively little attention paid to social movements for capitalism. This is yet another triumph for capitalist hegemony—labelling opposition to capitalism as irrational protest, and support for capitalism (and especially capitalist consumerism) as common sense. The first step in exposing the ideological foundations of support for capitalism is to show exactly how hard capitalist ideologues work to create social movements to sustain the capitalist system (Boies and Pichardo 1993–94; Sklair 1997; Dinan and Miller 2007; Walker 2014). There are many examples of institutions and organizations that promote the interests of capitalist globalization and the four fractions of the TCC (corporate, political, technical, and consumerist fractions) work together to sustain it—comprising what can be conceptualized as social movements for global capitalism.

The political organizations of the corporate elite are the peak business associations and bodies that connect business with other spheres (governments, global politics, culture, social issues, etc.) operating at various levels. Research on these bodies has flourished since the 1970s, and they include the Business Roundtable in the US (Burch 1981), the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) in Britain (Grant and Marsh 1977) and their equivalents in Europe (Charkham 1994) and Japan (Lynn and McKeown 1988) plus a truly global network of inter-linked chambers of commerce. Also important in recent decades have been capitalist-inspired think-tanks, for which see the exemplary studies of Sklar (1980), Gill (1990), Cockett (1995) and Shoup (2015). The major corporations, not surprisingly, dominate these bodies and are often influential in setting the rules for global production and trade (Ryan, Swanson, and Buchholz 1987). The culture and ideology of TNC executives is an emerging consumerism, where global brands and tastes are promoted in the effort to turn all cultural products into commercial opportunities. It is important to distinguish here between the individual preferences and lifestyles of executives, which might vary considerably, and the culture and ideology of the class as a class. Irrespective of how individual executives live their lives, there is no doubt that global marketing and selling have become the ideological rationale for the system as a whole. This does not, however, preclude modifying these global formulae to suit local tastes as happens frequently in, for example, the fashion and fast foods sectors. The same can be said for more specific political tastes with respect to the neoliberal agenda (Sklair 2001, 2002).

¹ See, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SzooNM4_4pQUkPPK-vlwYSGE46ijFITqRVGsMMgAAH0/edit.

The situation of globalizing bureaucrats highlights the struggles that take place within all states between the outward-oriented globalizers and the inward-oriented nationalists. Different state actors, thus, can be powerful forces both for and against capitalist globalization. Struggles between them are expressed in a variety of ways (more or less liberal or restrictive foreign investment regimes and trade policy, official multiculturalism or chauvinism) and through a variety of institutional forms (more or less intrusive foreign economic relations agencies, more or less powerful inter-governmental agencies). While the major international organizations (notably World Bank, IMF [International Monetary Fund], OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development], WTO [World Trade Organization]) are still mainly driven by nominees of their most powerful members, it is less clear that, for example, the World Bank can be said to be driven by the “national interests” of the USA. For example, in his detailed account of the life and work of the first President of the World Bank, Oliver (1995, 187) comments that George Woods was a “New York banker, not a Washington bureaucrat,” the implication being that bankers, unlike bureaucrats, are driven largely by the profit motive. The old Marxist argument that the workers have no nation has to be turned on its head—today globalizing capitalists have no nation and the demands of the global market, not national interests drive the global capitalist system while the working class and the labour movement that purports to represent it, calls on “its” state, politicians and business leaders to protect it against the ravages of globalization. The growth of powerful regional trading blocs like NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), the European Union, and APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), far from undermining this argument, point to the increasing weakness of nation-states to cope alone with the globalizing agenda of the TCC.

Globalizing bureaucrats fulfil a governance function for the global capitalist system at the local, national, interstate and eventually global levels where individual states are not directly involved. Typically, these people are to be found dealing with or actually working in national, regional and local growth coalitions led by corporate investment; national bureaucracies responsible for external economic relations (exports, FDI [Foreign Direct Investment] in both directions, market-driven aid agencies), and international organizations. The top ranks of the globalizing bureaucracies combine career bureaucrats with former corporate executives putting their marketing skills to use “in the public service” and the upwardly mobile en route to top TNC jobs (Kowalewski, Letko, and Leonard 1991)—the “revolving door” between big business and government. The culture and ideology of state and private sector globalizing bureaucrats tend to be more complex than those of TNC executives. Their dominant ideology appears to be in a process of transformation from state interventionism to a neoliberalism which privileges the unrestricted operation of the free market. This is the worldview in which is embedded the faith that a country’s best interests are to be found in playing a full part in the accelerated growth of the global economy through unfettered competition by destroying old systems of tariff protection and labour regulation and forcing all firms and their workers to become internationally competitive. The neoliberal dogma that this can only be fully achieved in an entirely market-driven system provides the economic theory for this strategy. However true this dogma might be for the privileged few, led by the TCC, it is patently false for the vast majority. The ideology is reinforced daily by cultural practices cohering into what can be termed an emergent global nationalism, a nationalism that seeks to make each country an integral part of the global capitalist system while maintaining its identity by marketing

national competitive advantages of various types through its own global brands (American fast foods and entertainment, Japanese cars and electronics, French wines and perfumes, Italian furniture, British pageantry, for example) and tourism (now the most important hard currency earning industry in an increasing number of local and national economies).

Robinson (1996), in his path-breaking study of US foreign policy, argued that it is necessary to distinguish “nation-state” centrism from “state” centrism and that global system theory needs a fourth set of transnational practices, namely transnational state practices. This idea has proved to be very controversial, partly for its aura of American exceptionalism and partly because it appears to imply state-centrism, which many TCC theorists believe is fatal to any genuine theory of globalization. The counter-argument is that transnational state practices are the business of globalizing state politicians and officials not the state as such. The struggle between globalizing and localizing politicians and state bureaucrats, then, becomes a key site in which the hegemony of the transnational capitalist class is mediated. The state is a site of struggle between the political fraction of the TCC and domestic capitalists as well as anti-capitalists (Sklair 2002, *passim*). As one of the most open countries in the world in terms of public access, research on these issues is most advanced in the USA. Findings on Political Action Committees (Useem 1984) and local corporate-politician connections (Stern 1988; Domhoff 1996; M. Tolchin and S. Tolchin 1993) have for decades attested to democratic flaws in business-government relations that are probably even more widespread in countries where there is less public scrutiny of such relationships. Empirical research confirms the important thesis that the corporate sector is well-represented in the higher non-elective offices of state by those who return to the corporations after their periods of “public service” (Scott 1990, volume I; Domhoff 1980). Capitalist politicians and globalizing bureaucrats have been increasingly persuaded that their “national interests” lie in the accelerated growth of the global economy through unfettered competition and free trade and that the only way ahead lies in a more or less extreme version of “transnational neo-liberalism” (Overbeek 1993). As politicians, necessarily responsive to the often contradictory vested interests of a variety of constituencies, members of this group rarely adopt a fully-fledged version of the emergent global nationalism of the globalizing bureaucrats. They are characterized more by a rich cultural mix, often reflecting regional factors, especially within federal systems of government. However, at base, they share to a greater or lesser extent the orthodoxies of a globalizing neo-liberalism against the localizing tendencies of their opponents. All the ingredients we find in counter-hegemonic social movements have their reactionary equivalents in social movements for global capitalism—ideology (green-washing in the environmental struggle), funding (often secretly), elite and mass organization and mobilization (astroturfing for mass mobilization), even protest and violence (in defence of the system, though rarely seen in these terms by the mass media)—are found in pro-capitalist social movements.

IV. Conclusion: what is to be done?

We all know Lenin’s answer to this question, and it resulted in defining moments of the twentieth century, unmitigated disasters for many, formidable contributions to the military defeat of the Nazis, the Cold War and several proxy wars, its consequences still grinding on. What it definitely did not lead to was the capture of power by the working class.

What it definitely did lead to was eventually, by default, the capture of power on a global scale by the transnational capitalist class. Let me pose the question: Is there a non-capitalist alternative to globalization dominated by the TCC? And let me answer it: yes there is and start by repeating the aphorism: “It is easier to imagine the end of the world, than to imagine the end of capitalism.” Whoever actually said this first, it expresses a profound truth about what we can call the era of capitalist globalization. So, we have to begin again to think through what we once conceptualized as democratic socialism might look like. My argument is that this is best seen as a process of negating, avoiding, and eventually consigning capitalism to the dustbin of history.

The fatal flaws of capitalism are the crises of class polarization and of ecological unsustainability. Here I simply want to point towards some of the key elements of a progressive non-capitalist transition. The first is size. Huge transnational corporations and huge corporate states, serviced by huge professional and huge consumer goods and services organizations increasingly dominate the lives of people everywhere, so it seems obvious that smaller scale structures might work better and enable people to live happier and more fulfilling lives. My vision of an alternative, radical, progressive, non-capitalist globalization is based on networks of relatively small producer-consumer co-operatives (PCC) operating at a variety of levels to accomplish a variety of societal tasks, free of the capitalist profit motive and the hierarchic state. There is already a substantial literature on all of these themes, most recently and most powerfully Eric Olin Wright’s (2010) comprehensive *Envisioning Real Utopias*. As will be clear from what follows, I agree with most of Wright’s arguments apart from his analysis of the continuing role of the state in the transition. It is also worth noting that Wright does not engage at all with the globalization literature, hardly engages with what I have termed the culture-ideology of consumerism, nor with the idea of a transnational capitalist class.

The inspiration for this vision of the future starts with Marx and the dynamics of technological change and the social relations of production, continues with Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, and revisits the non-violent realist anarchic tradition. Gramsci (1971, 276), in the *Prison Notebooks* said: “The crisis [1930] consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.” We are in a different interregnum and I want to draw attention to more hopeful symptoms (waiting to be born) notably the digital revolution, which provides simultaneously the most powerful tool of capitalist exploitation and the means of changing the system. The TCC, to put it bluntly, systematically subverts the emancipatory potential of generic globalization (Sklair 2009b). For example, architects and urbanists with computers already have the capacity to create sustainable, affordable, and decent housing for all—even now to “print” them via 3-D printers. It is the capitalist market not lack of design talent or resources that prevents them from being readily available and affordable for all. The digital revolution could also contribute to eradicate racism, Orientalism, sexism, and related forms of prejudice and discrimination (it is already both doing this and its opposite). This is a project of many generations, a project that begins with damaged parents and communities gradually acquiring the insights and incentives to nurture children through new forms of upbringing and learning. New generations will be less damaged, these children in their turn nurture their own children to be a little less damaged, and on and on. As Kafka had written “nobody wants to introduce as many reforms as children do” (caption in Kafka Museum, Prague). The design of communities

all the way from villages to large cities could play an important part in this process. Transformations in housing, transport, nutrition, and other necessities of a decent life would free up space for everything that the capitalist market squeezes out or whose pleasures it compromises. The culture-ideology of consumerism has socialized populations all over the world to crave all the material rewards that capitalist consumerism flaunts. Better, more love-based parenting could help people to strive for other life goals and social structures to achieve them.

Our present reality is capitalist globalization. How, then, could PCCs be organized to release the emancipatory potential of generic globalization in a non-capitalist world? The simple and encouraging answer is that they would work, in the early stages of transformation at least, much as millions of small scale cooperative groups work at present in enclaves all over the world. The viability of such projects rests on many untested assumptions. A simple example might be the internet in a non-capitalist world. How could a multitude of like-minded people in PCCs communicate across the globe with each other for the common good? What would they eat? How would they learn? What would they do for healthcare? Who would provide the power to run the computers? How would they be safe? This would depend on people who now work in the private or public sectors, directly or indirectly, establishing PCCs in their local communities producing food, organizing transport, setting up places of learning and transmission of skills, providing healthcare, running power systems, and so on. The internet already makes it possible to communicate fairly easily with anyone, anywhere, who is connected. PCCs do this all over the world on a small scale but such initiatives struggle within capitalist markets. The state will not disappear overnight, and democratically elected forward-thinking political representatives will be necessary in the transition to the new forms of global society. While Wright (2010) argues that they might actively contribute to the creation of the new forms of community, I would argue that the best they could do is to ensure that the state and/or the capitalist market did not interfere with PCCs. Neoliberal ideologues argue that there is no alternative to capitalist globalization. If we refuse to believe them and start creating alternatives and these alternatives prove to be successful in their own terms then the logic of the market can be refuted, undermined, or simply ignored.

As I argued above, the irony is that there is, of course, a large volume of research that is critical of many facets of capitalist society but practically none of it calls capitalism itself into question or raises issues around non-capitalist society. This would involve challenging the dogma of ever-increasing growth, the mainstay of both capitalist globalization and orthodox Marxism. This is already being discussed through the idea of convivial degrowth (D'Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2014). It would certainly mean that the richer would become less rich and the poorer would become richer in material possessions—though all would benefit in non-material riches, eventually. The culture-ideology of consumerism would be replaced by a culture-ideology of human rights and responsibilities prime among which would be a serious commitment to a decent, sustainable standard of living for all. But for this process to start, all the existing socialist critiques of capitalism must abandon the hope that progressive alternatives can thrive by directly challenging the market. Only by ignoring the market and replacing the hierarchic state can we escape the inevitable catastrophic consequences of capitalist globalization. Admittedly, this does sound quite utopian but only if we fail to acknowledge the Achilles heel of global consumerist capitalism: it is based on consumer sovereignty, and consumers cannot be forced to consume

junk food and drink, junk culture, junk addictions. The power of capitalist marketing, advertising, and the ideological corporate-state apparatuses is formidable, but in the last resort if parents can be brought to full awareness of how the market damages them and their children, there is still hope for the planet and all those who live on it.

In his book *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow*, David Goodway quotes Colin Ward:

[A] society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism . . . [non-violent anarchism] far from being a speculative vision of a future society . . . is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society. (Goodway 2006, 316)

Goodway continues: “Acceptance of this central insight is not only extraordinarily liberating intellectually but has strictly realistic and practical consequences,” as Ward says:

[A]narchism is already partially in existence . . . humans are naturally cooperative . . . current societies and institutions, however capitalist and individualist, would completely fall apart without the integrating powers, even if unvalued, of mutual aid and federation. (Goodway 2006, 316)

Put like this, these proposals will certainly alarm many people, and I join with those who see the importance of detoxifying and rethinking anarchist and socialist theory and practice and learning the lessons of crimes committed in their names. The alternative to failing to imagine the end of capitalism is to muddle along trying to “reform” capitalist globalization and hoping that the TCC will abolish itself is the easy option. However difficult it is to start to imagine the end of capitalism and the hierarchic state, the longer we leave it the more difficult it will be to bring it about.

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