Cultivating Change:

Seedlings of Economic Alternatives

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Letter from the Editors

TODAY MORE THAN EVER, global environmental challenges are shaking the stability of life on Earth. Causes and solutions have been discussed and researched for decades, and yet the necessary changes are happening very slowly. As our world leaders debate technical fixes and economic costs, many argue - our editorial board included - that it is time to question our established systems from which many of our problems seem to grow. Harold Wilhite argues that "deep reductions in energy use and carbon emissions will not be possible within political economies saturated by the capitalist imperatives of growth, commodification and individualization".[1] It is time, he insists, to "break the habits of capitalism".

Two years ago, Tvergastein Issue 6 tackled the topic "Leaving the Box: Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Initiatives". The issue presented private initiatives that challenge the mainstream way of doing things; from zero-waste lifestyles to sustainable fashion. Although these initiatives have emerged from within the capitalist system and function within its limits, they suggest a desire for something new. Could these initiatives be seedlings from which economic alternatives could bloom? Scattered within a wider discussion of the connections between economic systems, social relations and environmental problems, the following pages seek to understand the potential of such seedlings. What is it with the capitalist system that leads people to seek alternatives? What makes these alternatives different from capitalist way of thought? And are they viable alternatives to the system in which we are embedded? These are some of the questions Tvergastein Issue 9 raises.

The contributions in this issue offer a mix of ideas and perspectives on economic alternatives. Although these articles offer different seedlings of such alternatives, they are united by a desire to cultivate change. This change, it seems, is rooted in local, small-scale initiatives attempting to branch out of capitalist roots, asking new questions and finding unconventional solutions.

[1] Wilhite, Harold. 2016. The Political Economy of Low Carbon Transformation: Breaking the Habits of Capitalism. Routledge. p. 2.

The Power of the Market[1]

DESMOND MCNEILL

In this article Desmond McNeill makes the argument that to use the market as a governing institution also means to opt out of ethical decision-making, which can have dire consequences, especially on a local level. He looks at theorizations of the market system and its implementation as a social institution, discussing discrepancies between the model and reality. Though much can be gained from the academic discipline of economics, and the market system has many merits, it is important to retain the human dimension in the way we govern our lives. But what's the alternative to the market system?

"The 'market' is a bad master, but can be a good servant."[2]

Introduction

In the world today, more and more interpersonal interactions are replaced by market transactions. The market system is both an economic and a cultural phenomenon, yet we seem to be hardly aware of the values that are bound up in it. This phenomenon is manifest at many levels: from the family, through the neighbourhood and the enterprise, to the nation and the globe. If there is such a thing as global ethics, I suggest, then they are – like it or not – the ethics of the market. My purpose here is to elaborate this claim, and to assess its implications. I shall distinguish between the market as a theoretical construct in economics, and the market as a social institution.

My main hypothesis can be briefly stated as follows: the most convincing ethical argument currently being made in favour of the market is its neutrality. Whether the market is in fact neutral may be disputed. But if one accepts this claim, it implies that the market is amoral, rather than immoral, and there remain, I suggest, two objections to allowing the market ethic to prevail. The first is that this is an abrogation of moral responsibility. It implies delegating decisions of major social and material significance to powers which are beyond our control, and whose outcome is uncertain. Second, the neutrality of the market comes at a cost in social and human terms; social relations between persons are replaced by contractual relations between economic agents.

All countries of the world are, today, part of the global market system. Even in the poorest countries more and more individuals are being drawn into the national market system, and hence the international also. Peasant subsistence is being replaced by the marketing of crops and the selling of labour. At the other end of the scale, in the richest countries, the same process continues, as I shall demonstrate below. There are undoubtedly many merits in the market system, and many valuable insights to be gained from the academic discipline of economics. I suggest, however, that it is important to retain the human dimension in our lives, and to recognise the alienating, desocialising effect of the market.

The Scope of the Market

The market as we know it today has developed over many centuries. A truly historical study should perhaps begin with Aristotle who, in the Nichomachean Ethics, sought to comprehend the phenomenon of exchange and money, and to examine how relations between persons were affected by (and indeed reflected in) what would today be called market transactions. His text has been the subject of various interpretations, but there can be little doubt that he was describing a society in which, to use the words of Evans-Pritchard in his introduction to Mauss' The Gift: "exchange of goods was not a mechanical but a moral transaction, bringing about and maintaining human, personal, relationships between individuals and groups."[3] Over the centuries, there has been a very gradual shift – if one can trace the society which Aristotle described through to our own – from a society in which the emphasis was on persons and relations between persons, to one in which the emphasis is on things and relations between things.[4]

Aristotle did not cast judgments – either positive or negative – on the market; rather he sought to comprehend a novel phenomenon in terms of the norms of his own society. But moving forward about two millennia to the eighteenth century, we find that the market was seen by writers such as Montesquieu and Tom Paine, as a very positive influence, as Hirschman has described in his article Rival Views of Market Society: "Commerce is a pacific system, operating to cordialise mankind, by rendering Nations as well as individuals, useful to each other ... The invention of commerce ... is the greatest approach towards universal civilization that has yet been made by any means not immediately flowing from moral principles."[5] By contrast, Marx, writing in nineteenth century Britain, was very critical of the capitalist system, both in material terms as pauperising, but also in social terms – as alienating. He was also critical of the role of economics in supporting this system. But, as Hirschman notes, the perception that «all social bonds were dissolved through money» did not originate with Marx.[6] This view was "voiced during the 1730s in England by the opponents of Walpole and Whig rule."[7] More recently, Karl Polanyi (1957) has been a powerful critic, using a variety of metaphors to describe the effects of the "juggernaut market" on ancient social norms, ranging from "the outright 'dissolving' to 'erosion', 'corrosion', 'contamination', 'penetration', and 'intrusion'."[8]

But the argument of some commentators that commerce may be positive - replacing non-existent or antagonistic relations - has been made in relation to international trade rather than inter-personal relations. It is on the latter that this article is concerned, and here the effect has generally been regarded as negative; yet the scope of the market has continually expanded.

In modern society, an increasing number of tasks which used to be undertaken by family members have now entered the market: care of the elderly, for example, or of children. And the duties of parents are even being seen as responsibilities enforceable by law, with children suing their parents for failing to carry them out properly. What is lost in this process are personal relations which may also be valued. Social and inter-personal relations are replaced by economic and legal relations.

Within a neighbourhood, social ties are generally weaker than in the family, but similar issues arise. In Norway, collaborative voluntary work ("dugnad") is carried out to, for example, organise a concert or raise money for new musical instruments for the school band. Why not – one might ask - buy a cake for the lottery instead of baking it oneself? Why not simply give money to the band instead of organising jumble sales? The answer is that something is thereby lost – a sense of community. The recent massive, and sometimes ill-directed, interest in the concept of "social capital" is, I suggest, explicable not solely by reference to new ideas and empirical evidence, but also a widespread sentiment that in modern society something important is being lost.[9]

Before considering what if anything might be done about this situation, I will discuss some of the theoretical literature concerning economics and the role of the market.

Economic Theory and the Market

In economic theory, the market is seen as fulfilling a central function – the allocation of resources; and the concept of a 'perfect market' is important – that is, a market which satisfies certain prerequisites such as perfect information, many buyers and sellers, zero transaction costs. According to economic theory, if these prerequisites are fulfilled then the market 'clears', with all buyers and sellers 'satisfied' – in the sense that they do not wish to buy or sell more at the market price. Economists do not, of course, believe that these prerequisites are actually satisfied in practice, and they therefore recognise that no perfect market actually exists. It is an ideal concept which is useful for theoretical purposes. Nor does the word 'perfect' imply a moral judgment of the outcome. To the extent that the merits of the market are assessed in economic theory this is largely within the field of welfare economics, where the concept of a 'Pareto optimum' plays an important role. But this

is widely misunderstood by non-economists who make exaggerated claims about how economics can demonstrate the superiority of the market system. To quote Solow: "The general educated and interested public thinks that economics has 'proved' that the free market is efficient 'perhaps even the best of all possible worlds'. Not one reader in a thousand of the Wall Street Journal has any grasp of the qualifications without which the theorem, as a theorem, is simply false."[10] My concern with economic theory concerning the market is not that it claims that the market system is morally superior. Rather, my concern is that 'mainstream' economic theory is based on a representation of the economic agent ("homo economicus") as a person who is immoral – or at best amoral – according to widely held views of morality: self-interested and maximizing; and also autonomous, i.e. asocial, independent of personal relations with others. The economic system which is modelled on the basis of this representative economic agent is subject to the same criticism. And the theoretical assumption - of self-interest and autonomy - can, perversely, become self-fulfilling.

The relationship between the subject under study and the manner in which it is studied is a complex one.[11] An economic system is affected, indeed upheld, by the beliefs and values of those who adhere to it; and economists themselves play an important role here. They are not simply independent objective commentators; they are formed by the system, and they themselves influence the system. Thus there may well be a self-fulfilling, or at the least self-reinforcing, tendency in the manner in which economists portray markets. Economists generally seek to exclude discussion of values as far as possible from the discipline; it is common in economic textbooks to seek total separation between fact and value. But any discipline concerned with social phenomena

"Economists [...] recognise that no perfect market actually exists. It is an ideal concept which is useful for theoretical purposes."

will, either explicitly or implicitly, be concerned with normative issues. Ideology enters 'at the ground floor'. To portray the market as "a kind of natural or moral order"[12] and to treat "the market as free and institutions as constraints; the supreme medium for the expression of individual Choice"[13] is in itself to adopt an (implicit) normative perspective.

Considering its importance as an institution forming our lives, it is remarkable how little the market has been studied in empirical terms. It apparently falls between the disciplinary stools of economics and sociology. Economists do not study institutions (that is what sociologists do); and sociologists do not study markets (that falls within the scope of economics). It is precisely the 'conventions, routines and rules' of the market, and the mechanisms by which they bring about specific types of behaviour that are of interest in an understanding of the market as an institution.

Philosophical Critiques

Philosophers have not made much of a contribution to the study of the market. A rare but important exception is Elizabeth Anderson, author of Value in Ethics and Economics, who notes, with reference to the market: "Liberal theory has not yet come to grips with the full implications for human freedom and flourishing of *this most expansionary institution of the modern world." 14* According to Anderson the norms of the market display five features, which embody the economic ideal of freedom: "they are impersonal, egoistic, exclusive, want-regarding and oriented to 'exit' rather than 'voice'."[15] These five features listed by Anderson, of course, map closely onto the prerequisites of homo economicus in standard economic theory. Freedom is the freedom to disconnect; to treat others as objects. The cost of exercising such freedom is disconnectedness, and to be treated as an object.

Another of the few philosophers writing on the market is John O'Neill who has made a strongly argued case against the position of a number of economists, but most especially Friedrich Hayek. O'Neill distinguishes between two broad ways of arguing that markets promote the human good: the welfarist, and the perfectionist liberal.[16] The former argument, which was described in the previous paragraph, has a weaker, more pragmatic, defence: merely that the market provides a better alternative than any other that has been attempted (typically meaning the State). The second argument is of greater relevance to my concerns in this article. Here, the market is portrayed as not simply compatible with, but required by, modern pluralism. As Hayek put it: '"The Great Society arose through the discovery that men can live together in peace and mutually benefiting each other without agreeing on the particular aims that they severally pursue."[17] This certainly seems a virtue of the system, but such radical autonomy may have its drawbacks. And one may certainly question in what sense it constitutes a moral system. As O'Neill puts it, the market "allows individuals with quite different ends and beliefs about the good to cooperate with each other. ... Such cooperation occurs without rational dialogue or conversation about these ends. ... An actor informs others not by voice but by exit."[18] Neutrality, well-being, liberty, autonomy – these are the virtues which O'Neill identifies. They accurately portray the characteristics of modern life; but they are not, I suggest, unambiguously virtuous. A strong a priori argument in favour of the market seems to be its claimed neutrality – distinguishing between individuals only insofar as they differ in respect of their purchasing power. This could at best be regarded as an amoral system. But it depends on, and indeed encourages, disconnection between persons as social beings.

“A strong a priori argument in favour of the market seems to be its claimed neutrality – distinguishing between individuals only insofar as they differ in respect of their purchasing power. This could at best be regarded as an amoral system. But it depends on, and indeed encourages, disconnection between persons as social beings.”

The market is a social institution – indeed the dominant institution of modern-day life. As such it involves norms of behaviour. These may also be regarded as embodying a type of ethic, or morality: one which emphasises autonomy and choice, but also disconnectedness – in social and moral terms. The market is not in all circumstances either good or bad. But the process of commodification, the spread of the market ethic, is an enormously powerful and important tendency of which we must always be aware, and where necessary take steps to control or resist.

Is There no Alternative?

In critically assessing the market we should ask: what does it replace or destroy? At the national level, does it replace strife between warring parties; or promote anarchy, leading to insecurity or environmental damage? And at the local level, does it strengthen or undermine family relationships, social bonds, trust, and a sense of community? It is both its strength and its danger that the market is a totalizing system. The international, national and local markets cannot easily be kept watertight, so that despite the merits of local solutions, these may be swept aside by global market pressures. In summary, my argument is that the spread of the market tends to be homogenising, negative and extremely powerful. This is an extreme position which I to some extent qualify. First, because 'really existing markets' actually differ significantly from each other and from the ideal. Second, I recognise that the market has undoubted positive features and merits that must be taken into account in a balanced assessment. But in relation to my third claim I see little cause for qualification. I believe that the expansion of the market has a considerable and negative effect on human, personal, relationships between individuals and groups; and there is scant evidence of any countervailing force.

At a global, macro level the continued expansion of the market is surely irresistible. But is there perhaps some hope that local initiatives can create alternative spaces – countering the apparently irresistible force of the market?

Some recent attempts that have shown great promise – such as couch-surfing and car-sharing - have been increasingly replaced by more market-based versions: Airbnb and Uber. But there are also other interesting examples of local initiatives to create what might be called alternative economic spaces. In Oslo, two very recent examples are the Oslo Food Cooperative and the Restart project. The former was founded in 2013 and acts as an intermediary, connecting local farmers' produce to people in the city who want organic, local food. The core values are expressed in ten principles that incorporate dimensions of care for people and the environment into the processes of the organization and the goods the Cooperative provides. Important among these principles – and one of its attractions for members – is the emphasis on social relations, both between the consumer members of the cooperative who manage the operation, and between them and the local farmers who supply the produce. The cooperative was immediately extremely popular, with waiting lists of several hundred people.[19] The latter example, Restarters Oslo, has sprung out of The Restart Project, an initiative which began in London with the organisation of so-called 'Restart Parties', or community repair of electronic devices. These are three-hour pop-up events where participants arrive with broken electronics devices to get help repairing them together with skilled volunteers, called "Restarters". This form of community repair is positive in environmental terms - contributing to the transition to a circular economy. But it is also apparent[20] that a motivation for participating in the project is learning new skills and the social dimension – the inter-personal contact between individuals and groups.

Though these are, of course, modest – in comparison to the "juggernaut" of the market - they can perhaps achieve two things. At a minimum they can give satisfaction to those who participate in them; who can enjoy the inter-personal ties that are normally replaced by the market. More ambitiously, they can draw attention to the negative aspects of the market that have been pointed out here. The market is and will remain embedded in political, cultural and moral contexts; but we should be wary that it does not destroy these from within.

"(...) is there perhaps some hope that local initiatives can create alternative spaces – countering the apparently irresistible force of the market?"

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[3] Mauss, M. 1966. The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies, London: COHEN & WEST LTD, ix.

[4] McNeill, D., 1990, "Alternative Interpretations of Aristotle on Exchange and Reciprocity". Public Affairs Quarterly, 4(1): 65.

[5] Hirschman, A. 1992. Rival Views of Market Society and Other Recent Essays. Cambridge,MA: Viking Penguin.

[6] Marx's analysis was based on the social relations of production. I have argued elsewhere (McNeill, 1988) that in modern, wealthy countries we need to analyse the 'social relations of consumption'; we need to better understand how people relate as consumers, and how this can be alienating in ways that are analogous to the alienation of workers under capitalism.

[7] Hirschman 1992, 112.

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[15] Ibid., 145

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Photo credit: Laurynas Sužiedėlis

Travel Freely, Sleep Easily

LAURYNAS SUŽIEDĖLIS

This article describes the author's personal experience of Couchsurfing and hitchhiking around Eastern Europe, Asia and Australia. He argues that these two modes of travel are strong alternatives to the dominating modern world system, which is based on market rules, and where values are measured by the gain or loss of material wealth.

COUCHSURFING IS A WEBSITE where people offer their homes to travelers entirely free of charge. The only requirement of the host is to provide a sleeping surface (hence "couch surfing"). The host gains no monetary profit for offering this service to a traveler, but of course there are intrinsic benefits. Both host and guest engage in an exchange influenced by each individual's country, social group, age and of course, personality. This relationship begins with an exchange of conversations, experiences and feelings, and evolves to cooking food and exploring the area together, ultimately leading to lasting friendships.

"The beauty is that there was no money involved."

While traveling in Romania, my fiancée and I hitched a ride from a man who built wooden churches for a living and who spoke no English. We communicated through his nephew who could speak the language quite freely. Their hometown was in Northern Romania, on the slope of the highest mountain in the region called Hoverla. We planned to travel there, camp next to the trail and attempt to summit the peak in the morning. Suddenly, this man proposed we pitch our tent in his garden. We agreed. However, after we arrived we were immediately taken to his nephew's home in another area, to meet his lovely family – a wife and four children. Darkness soon fell and we were eager to pitch our tent and sleep. We returned to our driver's house, but instead of pitching a tent, we were invited inside to meet his family and join them for dinner. We communicated with our hands and through Google translate, and that's how we talked silently for almost two hours, and how we got to know each other better. This was not a forced process, but naturally evolved through a shared trust between our host and us as guests. The beauty is that there was no money involved. This adventure, as with Couchsurfing experiences, creates alternative social relationships compared to those built on cash exchange.

A closely related form of travel is hitchhiking. It has many similarities to the social sharing of a sleeping space. I argue that it is an even broader and more extreme alternative to contemporary norms. First of all it is not institutionalized. For real, classic hitchhiking there are no websites, strict rules or etiquette. It is straightforward: all one needs to do is to stand on the roadside, raise a thumb and smile. It is broad because the community involved is not limited to those who have internet access, but is for anyone driving along that road at that moment. During our travels, we felt that it created a genuine and free connection to the cultures we were immersed in. We met people who took us to places they enjoyed or that were important to locals. There was no need for money, no ticket required and we were free to embrace the open road. Throughout our travels we hitchhiked; sometimes for just a few hundred meters and in one instance over one thousand miles! In Iran, a young couple gave us a ride, and by then end of our five hour journey, invited us to stay with them. We cooked together, shared stories together and went sightseeing together; time flew by and soon ten days had passed. Both Couchsurfing and hitchhiking gave us a freedom that we rarely encounter in our complicated and

Photo credit: Laurynas Sužiedėlis

perplexed social system. We formed lasting relationships built on a shared experience, not an exchange of cash.

The advantage of Couchsurfing and hitchhiking is that it frees people from the monetary based system. Nowadays many are trapped in a cycle: studying, working, earning money and spending money. Couchsurfing and hitchhiking let one jump over this long and sometimes tiring way of life to travel freely. Also, these two forms of travel are a perfect way to allow cultures to interact, breaking stereotypes and opening minds.

Of course, there are many threats and dangers that exist to these alternative approaches to travel. Initially, both host and traveler may experience a powerful feeling of fear, distrust and uncertainty. Knowing that you will sleep in a stranger's apartment or ride in a stranger's car can be unnerving. Every day, the news is filled with stories of terrorist attacks and kidnappings, which are increasing the distrust within our societies. For us there was a stark difference between Australia and Asia; in Asia, hitchhiking was relatively easy, but in Australia we often had to wait for hours on the road. We later discovered many people were afraid to stop in the wilderness of Australia, mainly as a result of fictional movies portraying criminal hitchhikers, which has led to increased fear and distrust. Furthermore, Victoria State in Australia has made hitchhiking illegal, tainting its reputation for the country as a whole.

Today, these alternatives are being modified and incorporated into the capitalist system to make profit. Airbnb.com is the biggest competitor to Couchsurfing, and there is only

"Hitchhiking is broad because the community involved is not limited to those who have internet access, but is for anyone driving along that road at that moment."

Photo credit: Laurynas Sužiedėlis

one major difference between the two: money. Similarly with hitchhiking, many western countries have created car-share websites, where people advertise for passengers/drivers for a particular journey they have planned. Once again, this "institutionalized hitchhiking" requires money; it is almost the same as paying for a bus ticket. Although these alternatives can be easier to organize than Couchsurfing and hitchhiking - they are less time-consuming and there is a guarantee people receive what they pay for - they have lost the core values of their predecessors. While these initiatives are still community based and not the products of corporations, non-monetary relations are lost, and material gain is the central motive.

It is hard to predict how these two forms of travel will progress in the future. It is assumed that in some countries they will increase in popularity and in others decrease. It is interesting to note that in the USA today, hitchhiking is almost non-existent, even though it originated there. Furthermore, Couchsurfing has become more and more popular in Iran, a perhaps unexpected location for this form of travel to emerge. While spending time with locals by staying in their home free of charge may be more appealing to travelers in general than the insecurity of hitchhiking, both forms of travel are threatened by their profit-seeking alternatives. With perceived security and time efficiency, these institutionalized versions are likely to increase in popularity. Couchsurfing and hitchhiking may continue to exist as alternative forms of travel for those who are truly adventurous or simply on a tight budget, but in our capitalist world, are we losing the ability to trust and build relationships without the assurance of money?

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"Today, these alternatives are being modified and incorporated into the capitalist system to make profit."

Photo credit: Laurynas Sužiedėlis

Doing Things Differently: Cracks in the Tourism System

MICHAEL O'REGAN

In this essay, Michael explores cracks in the tourism system, such as moments, activities, and spaces in which relations of domination are broken and other relations are created to assert new ways of doing, moving, encountering and dwelling.

Introduction

AT A TIME OF ECONOMIC AUSTERITY and political turmoil around the globe, the fear of cultural, ethnic, religious or socioeconomic externalities has escalated. There are growing tensions within and outside the tourism industry as cultures of fear and mistrust arise from the financial crisis, immigration, terrorism, sectarianism, the war on terror, and military interventions. A hardening of attitudes toward "Others" has led to the Tourist-Other binary installing itself into tourist discourses and practices of everyday life. As a result of this dualism of splitting and naming, tourism's growth is often based on naive representations and assumptions of otherness, so as to allow tourists to reaffirm their identity without the development of accountability and responsibility. There is concern that despite supportive government policies, the lack of dignity and suffocation caused by unsustainable tourist practices is removing the need for solidarity. This essay calls attention to alternative modes of engagement and encounter seen to be re-establishing trust and solidarity. I argue in this essay that "cracks" in social relations, spaces, times and activities can enable individuals to find new ways to structure their experiences so as to deny and resist the social determinations of modern society and an overpowering tourism system.

Tourist Cultures

Set-in configurations within tourist cultures and their signifying practices mean many tourists are bound-up in networks with little connection or knowledge about the people and places they pass. Their practice and performance of tourism is often far from the lives of those they reroll as objects of their gaze. Each new attraction and temptation is sold through the possibility of encountering "real" places, people and cultures without risk, entanglement, turbulence or friction. However, tourist "dalliances" in the margins often means keeping the marginal at bay. From volunteer tourism to ecotourism, the tourism industry mobilizes seductive imaginaries of the other, but through immense institutional and organizational forces; they reinforce otherness and limit any particular relationship or interaction with the destination, its people or its culture. The tourism industry has invested heavily to prevent individuals from experimenting and communicating with those outside tourist cultures. They lock tourists into particular styles of dwelling, encounter and movement through spatial segregation and enclosed architectures, like hotels and resorts, to ensure tourists are circulated without friction, undesired socio-spatial interstices or the possibility of traumatic social antagonisms with others. Furthermore, a low friction design is built into systems, technologies, products and services, from hotel apps that create seamless hotel check-in to platforms such as Airbnb, that generate the illusory of "friction-free" exchange with hosts.

Because the tourism industry largely sees all relations between people in market terms, they have embedded fixed roles into the fabric of the tourism system. It reproduces a form of social organization that is profitable, but involves little intersection, encounter, empathy, and collaboration. Whether driven by institutional forces for efficiency and profit, appeasement for insider groups, or an expression of an individual's own fear and search for safety, security and cultural capital, splitting and naming processes have risen to become major organizing principles of social relations in tourism imaginaries. It seems hosts and guests are obliged to gaze at each other; with the tourist model solidifying mutual distance. This leads NGO's, local authorities and tourism academics to wonder about the benefits of tourism in sustaining the exchange process (e.g. where strangers meet and interact) and whether modern tourism destroys its cultural and social merits.

Economism, or the reduction of all social relations to market logic, has created a more individualistic, transactional, less creative tourism commons; leading to manipulation, appropriation, exploitation and commercialization and less participation and solidarity, as shared values weaken. Those stripped of agency feel marginalized when unable to reduce the inequality of exchange with tourists. 'Tourists go home' graffiti appeared in Palma de Mallorca in 2016. A 'neighbours, not tourists' campaign in New Orleans and 'tourists go away' posters in Venice point to accusations that visitors are accused of taking more than is given back (figure 1 & 2). Communities in destinations such as Santorini in Greece, Omori in Japan and Cinque Terre in Italy are considering restrictions on tourist arrivals. While there are a range of issues that have led to these calls, blame primarily falls on the tourism industry as they enrol cultures, peoples and places too weak to resist and make "strangers out of people who should be able to see themselves as being in relationship where discretion and moral responsibility go hand in hand."[1] Therefore, not only is disenfranchisement exacerbated by market interventions, new nationalism etc., but also the failure of tourism institutions like UNWTO to address the desires for accountability, responsibility and trust that extends beyond a code of conduct.

Figure 2: Anti-Tourism Stencil in Barcelona. [3]

Within tourist imaginaries, nonmarket relationships are defined by fear. Those who fail to "articulate" themselves in terms acceptable to tourism are invalidated, immobilised or marginalized. It is the particular experience of those who utilise cracks, as they work through space, time and events, exploit ambivalence and ambiguity for fleeting victories, to who I now turn. However temporal, Holloway[4] argues it's "Better to step out in what may be the wrong direction and to go creating the path, rather than stay and pore over a map that does not exist."

Cracks

Holloway outlines the pain created by the social relations of capital, and how refusals can be seen as cracks in the system of capitalist domination. Holloway argues that as each one of us actively creates capitalism, individual subjects should take responsibility for their actions, utilising what Castaneda[5] referred to as the "crack between the worlds", where commonly held beliefs and clichéd role-play are stripped bare and boundaries become blurred. A refusal to fit into the pattern of capitalist social relations is based on an individual questioning traditional division, to occupy the cracks, including those in the tourism system[6], to provide glimpses of possible alternatives. Holloway defines[7] a crack as "the perfectly ordinary creation of a space or moment in which we assert a different type of doing".

Figure 1: Anti Airbnb posters in Berlin.[2]

A crack is where we can work against and beyond abstraction, commodification, alienation and market value. Holloway argues that just doing something for its own sake can be seen as an anti-capitalist crack, simply because it breaks the instrumental chain of reasoning typical of capitalism. There are millions of everyday cracks in the tourism system, such as moments, activities, and spaces in which relations of domination are broken and other relations created. Holloway[8] argues that "the acting-out of a world that does not exist, in the hope that by acting it out, we may really breathe it into life." These cracks can be spatial (places where other social relations are generated), temporal (at this event, we are going to do things differently) or related to particular activities or resources (e.g., platform cooperatives or activities that pursue a non-market logic with to travel and tourism).
This potential however has been hijacked by many in the "Sharing Economy" who promise disruption of the "out-dated" and "anti-people" tourism industry.

False Dawns

The erosion of ethical and moral compasses and an outright negation of responsibility amongst tourists have seen social entrepreneurs and start-ups disrupt and reinvent under the umbrella term “Sharing Economy.” Sharing platforms are increasingly intersecting with the established tourism industry and how tourists interact with each other, host communities and destinations. By connecting individuals to information, other people, objects, ideas, lifestyles, experiences and physical things, such as cars and apartments, in more efficient ways, they offer equitable exchange between tourists and hosts. However, from Dopios (locals who serve as guides and drivers), to EatWith (meals cooked by locals), there is absolutely no evidence[9] that commercial sharing economy platforms can “offset” ecological and human damage caused by tourism, make us responsible or more ethical tourists. The majority of these platforms place the responsibility for any unintended consequences, such as the degradation of labour and socio-spatial inequalities, onto those who share.

In a dystopian future, a seller’s day might include collecting tourists from the airport, sharing their house, cooking meals, doing their laundry and packing their bags. While receiving everything one desires by a commoditised transaction at the touch of an app can be liberating for tourists, it can also be dehumanising as they conceal any monetising of interaction and intimacy. While one’s intimate or private life will never be ruled by the absolute logic of market, much of the sharing economy is driving a new kind of flatness which threatens the very source of culture on which tourism feeds. As information, knowledge, and culture are produced through market rather than social relations, almost everything viewed or interacted with becomes an act or object of consumption. The expansion into intimate lives flattens the texture of the social fabric, and the illusion of affluence pushes the poorest, with little to share and little to lose into new terrains of rent extraction dominated by large online businesses. By offering false solidarity and hope, many platforms package their market communication along the rhetoric of morality and eco-ethics, but do not address or promote moral or ethical decision-making.

My Work

Over the past decade, I have paid attention to particular experiences of individuals who rethink their habits to get caught up within and between flows, networks, and systems, to utilize “cracks” in social relations, spaces, times, and activities. From those engaged in free hospitality exchange on bewelcome.org or trustroots.org, to hitchhikers who move beyond any deliberate plan; I remain fascinated by those living the world they want to create. While the drifters in the late sixties, found their collective power, to disrupt the tourism industry by “travelling” east to India, my research explores new practices, groups, ideologies and activities not subordinated to the logic of profit. I explore whether they engender trust in a tourist model or challenge it, and whether different ways of living, exchanging, and connecting can challenge growing mistrust, fear, and new nationalisms.

Hospitality exchange

The Couchsurfing (CS) platform, launched in 2003, as a non-profit, enables you to identify and find someone to give over sleeping space in their home for free. While CS was not the first hospitality exchange platform, it drew, connected and served a geographically dispersed network of strangers based around shared beliefs, norms of participation and attitudes towards hospitality, openness, communal uplift, ethical invigoration and intercultural exchange. Participation on

CS had not been market based, with stories of trust and intimacy circulated across differences in individual socio-economic background, ethnicity, motivations and self-interest. The community did not see CS as a corporation, but as a medium or tool where individuals in a self-organizing and reflexive manner could address each other as part of a community based on non-institutional sociability and hospitality.

Subjects took the risk of entering into a relationship via the site in which the divisions and boundaries became continuously blurred or contingent through encountering and negotiating difference, unexpectedness, unpredictability and ambiguity. In far flung housing estates, flats and squats, far from town centres, guidebooks, tourist attractions, hostels and hotels, CS members did not perform a cultural authenticity flattened by a commercial tourism industry, a tourism policy or code of conduct. The private sphere of the home was a space that could be disciplined in line with fantasy, regulation or performed kinds of authenticity. For five years, millions of people doing the same thing "created cracks that move just as cracks in ice do, unpredictably, spreading, racing to join up with other cracks."[10] Holloway argues that the stronger the flow of dignity within these cracks, the greater their force will be. However, the creative resistance came to an end in 2011 after CS dissolved and became a for-profit entity. For many members, the social norms within CS were replaced by market logic, threatening the very source of culture on which the commons emerged (figure 3). While the initiative managed to survive in non-profits like bewelcome.org, the case study of CS shows the challenges of scaling up and maintaining a post-capitalist commons.

"As information, knowledge, and culture are produced through market rather than social relations, almost everything viewed or interacted with becomes an act or object of consumption."

Figure 3: Member resistance against the move to for-profit status (creator unknown).

Hitchhiking

A billion operating cars with people are on the road around 1.1h a day has spawned an emergent, complex system of roads and motorways no longer designed for people. The private vehicle has created car-dependent cultures with banal infrastructural spaces that have also come to influence the embodied mobility of hitchhiking. Rather than passive bodies in cars or motorways ramps and service stations, the hitchhikers I have interviewed have been driven to the surface because of environmental, political, social, technological and economic changes. Hitchhiking can transgress societal pressures and habitual social norms, and has become a collective practice that depends on the quality of relations between people.

Looking beyond comfort, speed or any other benefit inherent in vehicles themselves, hitchhiking has again become central to many people's worldview. It embroils hitchhikers in multiple relationships, emotional connections as well as intensities of risk, fear, atmosphere and excitement. Each year at various gatherings (figure 4); hundreds of geographically dispersed participants from around the world meet together and make visible the social phenomena of hitchhiking as a grassroots experiment. These gatherings show the collective power of individuals who, whilst doing their own thing, can also show how things can be done differently. They are a reminder of the power of individuals to critique and change the spatial domination by private vehicles, and the ability to produce feelings of trust, dignity, and mutual consideration.

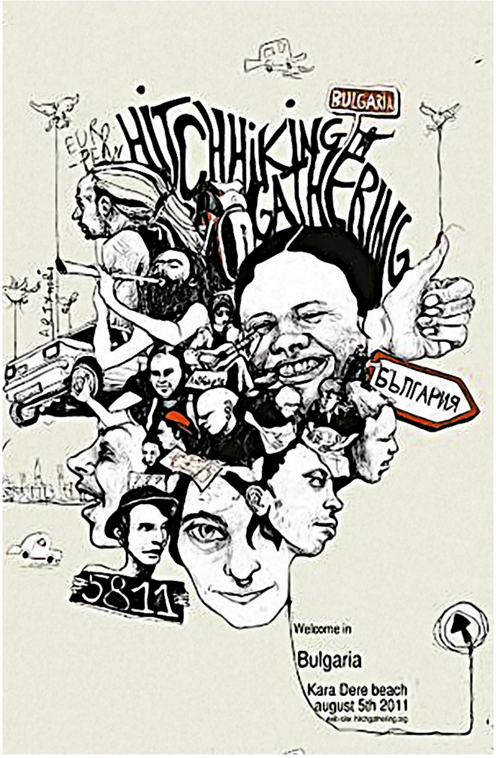

Figure 4: Hitchgathering 2011 poster. Artwork by Artymori.

Implications

Fluid practical values bind hitchhikers and hospitality exchange members I have interviewed. They are not driven by money but rather by care, creativity, dignity, love and fun. While their experiments are niche, and do not constitute a divorce life under capitalism, they are angry at the twisted social relations of capital and have sought to take control of their own lives to rework and subvert forms of capitalist social relations that the tourist system depends. Their practices assist them to become self-transformed, self-directed, self-managed. As they perform their lives together with others in homes and vehicles around the world, they became entangled with others. This opens us up to the possibility of doing things differently, as individuals move to shift the presumed oppositions and clear cut classifications. Dichotomies are continually challenged and destabilized, always open to change as subjects emerge through encounters, and thereafter set the boundaries that matter to them. Those with the necessary desire, determination, intention and resources, can challenge dichotomies such as insider-outsider, modern-traditional, authentic-inauthentic, mobility-immobility, host-guest, home-away, traveller-tourist, everyday-holiday, beaten track-off the-beaten track, us-them and near-far; so that they no longer apply in the way they once did. They are not willing to take on the fixed role of tourist (the interacting) and other (the interacted) so as to reproduce the form of social cohesion the tourist system requires.

Future

Hospitality exchange and hitchhiking emphasizes the capacity for doing things in ways which affirm dignity and the value of all life. There has been a rise in creativity that breaks distinctions of "set in" socio-cultural relations. New co-operative platforms and peer-to-peer communities open up opportunities for us to contemplate how we'd like to do things differently. From wikis like nomadwiki.org, nomad houses, hospitality camps, protests against Airbnb, and rainbow gatherings; individuals can constantly create "cracks" and allow them to take action in small and large ways. The collective force of individuals "doing" may not change the structure of the tourism industry, but Holloway argues cracks, fissures, and spaces of creation allow for the expansion and multiplication of cracks. It means resistance to the pressure of classification is not futile if the tourism industry finds it more difficult to continue to produce socially useful others on whom to push undesired consequences. I have sought to illuminate how encounters that unfold in the home or car hold subjects responsible and accountable to each other at some level, with cracks providing space to redefine, reveal and disrupt taken-for-granted orderings, alignments, institutions and networks. These creative engagements may result in new knowledge, alternative economic environments and communities, and spatial imaginings of possible pasts, presents and futures.

However, given capitalism's fluidity, and its constant need to accumulate monetary value from human needs and wants, such as experiential tourism, businesses are demanding even more from individuals in tourism destinations. In a time of austerity, many are stuck between wanting to create alternatives, but also the need to make a living. Holloway argues cracks are always questions, rather than answers and those individuals can only live against and beyond the system in so far as they can. However, I believe those who engage in cracks can come together to find a social centre and embrace their collective power, to critique modern tourism by doing things differently.

Conclusions

The dominant tourist discourses etched into social spaces, tourist movements and encounters help to cement certain networks that impose rhythms and habits on tourists as well as on receiving people, places and cultures. Rather than discourses linking tourism to emancipatory potential, we now have representations of dangerousness associated with it. In a world split into "us" and "them" wherein all relations between people are conceived in market terms, the concept of cracks opens us up to the possibility of doing things differently, and affirming the dignity of those we encounter. Even if the emancipatory potential of what I describe in this essay comes at the cost of speed and seamless, smooth mobility, cracks can expand tourism's emancipatory potential, and challenge the taken for granted ways of travelling, doing, and connecting.

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"I believe those who engage in cracks can come together to find a social centre and embrace their collective power, to critique modern tourism by doing things differently."

Gruten – Creating Value out of Waste

An Interview with Siri Mittet

BENEDICTE GYLLENSTEN

Pushed by her strong passion for coffee, the author of this article explores the many alternative uses of waste and the value it can create. She does so through an interview with Siri Mittet, an enthusiastic woman who uses one waste project as the inspiration and building block for her project.

Siri travels to coffee shops all over Oslo on her electric cargo bike to pick up used coffee grounds.
Photo credit: Inger Marie Grini


GRUTEN
OSLO'S
SORTE GULL
HurtiGRUTEN

The Many Faces of Coffee

Did you know that you can create soaps and scrubs from coffee grounds? That you can fertilize your plants with it, remove bad smells from the fridge and grow mushrooms in it? That you can make art or coffee cups out of it? I drink a lot of coffee every day, and I have worked as a barista in a café in Oslo, so I have certainly thrown away a lot of coffee grounds in my life. If I had known about all the alternative uses for coffee grounds, I would have thought twice before tossing them in the bin. I was surprised to learn that ten tons of coffee grounds are produced (and mostly wasted) in Oslo every single day. I am always looking for new opportunities to learn about coffee, so in February I signed up for a course called "The fantastic coffee grounds," held by Siri Mittet from Gruten (grut is the Norwegian word for coffee grounds). The course was very inspiring, and a couple of weeks later I had the opportunity to interview Siri about her project.

Gruten, Siri and HurtiGruten

Siri Mittet is the woman behind Gruten. You might have seen her cycling around Oslo on HurtiGruten, the electric cargo bike she uses to pick up coffee grounds from cafes and deliver her products. Siri originally comes from Ålesund on the West Coast of Norway. In Norway, people from that region are known for taking good care of their money and being inventive. With a laugh and a bit of self-irony Siri points out that maybe that is why she has come up with a business model that is based on turning waste into value. Siri has studied health, environment and sustainable development in the UK and the US. She is an enthusiastic woman with a lot of energy and her passion for sustainability is easy to spot when you are talking to her. She clearly enjoys what she does, and throughout our conversation she kept excusing herself for talking too much, but I was curious to hear it all.

Local Initiatives

Siri lives in Sagene in Oslo. Sagene is an area that is unknown to most tourists, but within Oslo it is known for its many green initiatives. Walking through the neighbourhood, you might notice the small-town community feel due to the many independent shops, cafés, and the popular community center. Siri has been involved in many projects in Oslo such as Omstilling Sagene, a transition town initiative, and Green Drinks Oslo. She is also a local politician in Miljøpartiet de Grønne Sagene, the green party. She is passionate about local business, and it is very important to her that Gruten has an attachment to the neighbourhood, so she was very excited when they secured a space with a shop window in Bentsebrugata in Sagene. This is where she makes the Gruten soap, holds courses and opens her shop one evening a week. Siri wants to inspire people to live more sustainably, starting at the local level.

Discovering the Value of Coffee Grounds

But how did this all come about? How did one person turn something most people consider waste into a business? "It was a bit random," she tells me. She built a worm composting system when she was a part of Omstilling Sagene, and discovered that just like her, the worms loved coffee! No one else seemed to be working on this, and she was at a point in her life when she wanted to do something on her own. "Volunteering is good," she says, "but if you want to be an alternative to the mainstream you have to build up local business." Siri was inspired by other projects she had visited and she had previous work experience from recycling and doing waste education. "Working with coffee is good," says Siri, "because everyone has a relationship to coffee." Norway is the second largest consumer of coffee per capita in the world, after Finland.

Learning how to make Grutenskrubben, a body scrub with coffee grounds in it.
Photo credit: Svein Gunnar Kjøde

At the same time, Siri says she could work with any type of waste. What is important to her is to show people that there are alternative ways to think about waste. She uses coffee grounds as a positive example, with the goal of opening people's eyes to the many opportunities out there.

Moving Forward

When I ask Siri about the future of Gruten, she tells me about the many ideas she has. She has given herself a time frame to see if the business can be financially sustainable, and she has experienced a lot of interest around her project. At the moment, Siri does most of the work herself, with help from a part-time employee, a trainee and an active board. Siri explains that growth is important to her, as long as it does not mean moving away from her original principles and local attachment. She has already travelled to other places in Norway to hold courses, and she is cooperating with businesses like Kolonihagen, ISS and Telenor to sell her products and spread the message. She would like to work more with growing mushrooms in coffee grounds, because she loves the idea of growing food out of waste.

"Ten tons of coffee grounds are produced (and mostly wasted) in Oslo every single day"

An Alternative or Part of the System?

Siri is passionate about her work and about creating a more sustainable society. This is apparent in her approach to business. The soap produced by Gruten is organic, and she uses an electric cargo bike for transport rather than a car. She was one of the first to own a bike like this in Oslo, and she believes in going in front and inspiring others to make "greener" decisions. I ask Siri if she thinks the solutions to climate change can be found in alternative projects and niches or if these need to become a part of the market to change the system. She tells me that she wrote her Master's thesis about the organic food movement and that her conclusion at that time was that it was better if it stayed a niche. Now that she is working with it, she sees the reality in a different light and she thinks that it is ok to be a part of the market as long as you stay close to your own principles and do not let go of the idealism. This is clearly something she has thought a lot about, and she tells me she is still not sure. In her eyes, Gruten is a niche, but it is also part of the market and she sees working with bigger actors as a benefit. To have a sustainable business she has to make money, but she will never let go of her values. Siri thinks businesses should push politicians to find green solutions, and with a smile she points out that that government should be paying her to collect waste. She tells me this is her dream job, and that she loves working with something she is passionate about. It is important for her to work with something positive instead of telling people that what they are doing is wrong and making them feel depressed. Siri believes in the power to make a change, and her enthusiasm is inspiring. ✷

"It is ok to be a part of the market as long as you stay close to your own principles and do not let go of the idealism"

Siri and her electric cargo bike HurtiGruten.
Photo credit: Grow Lab Oslo

Siri, the founder of Gruten. Photo credit: Mads Pålsrud

Turning waste into food. Photo credit: Gruten: Siri Mittet

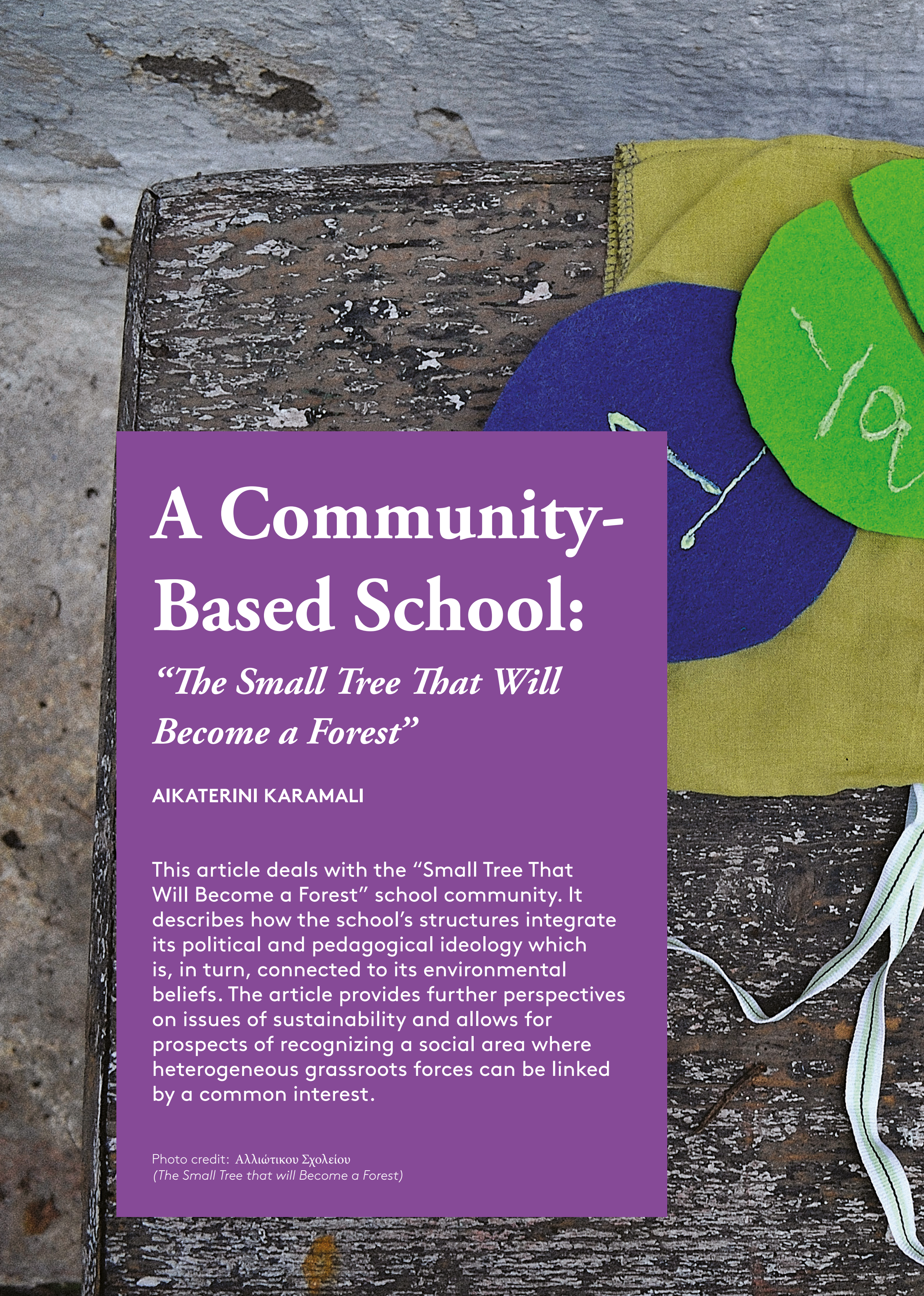
Call For Papers

Building Bridges

In celebration of Tvergastein's 10th issue, we are returning to the roots of the journal and the aspirations on which it was born. With a desire to contribute to environmental advocacy as a whole, Tvergastein hopes to reach readers not only within, but also outside of academic circles. The environmental challenges we face today present a great need for communication and collaboration between all parts of our societies. In light of this we ask; how are environmental issues, and the way they are communicated, perceived by different groups? How can 'building bridges' help to engage the general public, as well as policy-makers, in environmental issues that the academic community knows so well? And is engagement with these issues enough to result in action?

We encourage contributors from all disciplines and segments of society to send in their interpretation of this topic by 31st September 2017. We accept contributions in Norwegian and English in two categories: op-ed style (2,000 - 5,000 characters) and academic style (10,000 - 20,000 characters). For more information, see our website: www.tvergastein.com.

Photo credit: Kenneth Frantz
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Nile#/media/File:Sebara_Dildiy_Bridge.jpg



A Community-Based School:

“The Small Tree That Will Become a Forest”

AIKATERINI KARAMALI

This article deals with the “Small Tree That Will Become a Forest” school community. It describes how the school’s structures integrate its political and pedagogical ideology which is, in turn, connected to its environmental beliefs. The article provides further perspectives on issues of sustainability and allows for prospects of recognizing a social area where heterogeneous grassroots forces can be linked by a common interest.

Photo credit: Αλλιώτικου Σχολείου
(The Small Tree that will Become a Forest)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Introduction

THE SMALL TREE THAT WILL BECOME A FOREST is a community-based school located in a small settlement near a forested area in Greece (Krioneri, Touba Thessaloniki). It is self-organized and operates based on communal volunteer action. It is also located close to my hometown in Greece, which helped me write about it.[1] The school is inspired by anarchist and libertarian educational traditions[2] and is thus radically opposed to the neoliberal way of thought. As such, I consider the following questions:

How did this different social entity initially take form and emerge within the social reality?
How is the school structured and economically organized?
What importance do environmental values hold in the school?
Are the characteristics of the school similar to those found in so-called "Sustainable Schools"?

As the representatives of the school argue, the school's structure and organization contributes to the educational and political character of the project.[3] Thus, this article first outlines the initiation of this venture and the school's structures and organization, considering the political and pedagogical ideology of the school, which is in turn connected to its environmental values. In this regard, the article builds on aspects of the school's ideology that can further allow for perspectives on issues of sustainability. Prospects of recognizing a social area where heterogeneous grassroots forces can be linked by a common interest are also discussed.

The Establishment and the Pedagogical Approach of the Community School

The Small Tree That Will Become a Forest is a self-organized pedagogical venture whose initial inspiration was captured during a camping event for children and adults in Flamouri, Greece in 2012. Among the participants was a pedagogist[4] from a "free school"[5] in Alicante, Spain, who gave a small presentation on how such schools work. During the event, the educational system in Greece was discussed and some of the participants were inspired to establish a self-managed community school which would encourage the emancipation of children, freeing them from adults' expectations in favour of self-reliant development. It would also attempt to bridge the school-home-community trinity. Within eighteen months, the school was established and open to children aged from 2.5 to 12 years (today it averages at 10 children every year, ranging in age from 2.5 to 6 years), regardless of ethnicity, gender or class.

The Pedagogical Framework of the school encompasses, among other theories, Montessori tools and practices.[6] Montessori believes children are intrinsically connected to nature and advocates that "(t)here must be provision for the child to have contact with Nature; to understand and appreciate the order, the harmony, and the beauty in Nature…".[7] Accordingly, the Pedagogical Framework of the school provides children the opportunity for nature exploration, discovery and active experience-learning to awaken their intuition and their need to take care of other people, plants and animals. This gives children the chance to learn about the life and death of the creatures around them. They can move freely without the bustle of the city and the dirt of its surfaces. Soil is not just dirt, it is the land you can dig, plant, irrigate, even taste. [8]

Furthermore, there are no compulsory activities at the school. Children can engage in any activity (e.g. theater, music, literature, arts, geography, gymnastics, planting). This non-directional

Photo credit: Αλλιώτικου Σχολείου
(The Small Tree that will Become a Forest)

method is central to pedagogical philosophy[9]; "the children are free from the moment they arrive to prepare their breakfast in the kitchen, play individually or in groups, concern themselves with some material or organize an activity. They are also free to wander in any area of the school, to move or to muse."[10] The pedagogists are there only to support the children by encouraging their curiosity and inherent momentum for exploration.

Through self-education and the re-thinking of school procedures, the Pedagogical Framework becomes modifiable, building on feedback from its participants.

"This gives children the chance to learn about the life and death of the creatures around them. They can move freely without the bustle of the city and the dirt of its surfaces."

Organizational Structure of the community School

The organizational structure of the school is community-based and managed by its participants - the parents, pedagogists and

Photo credit: Αλλιώτικου Σχολείου
(The Small Tree that will Become a Forest)

children - all recognized as equal members, according to the representatives of the school. A pedagogist does not need to have an official academic qualification, as the school follows a broader educational training approach (through educational-training sessions, self-experience, etc.).[11] The self-education and re-thinking processes of the school enables the participants to reflect on and improve the educational procedures and daily life of the children in the school. Self-education includes documentaries, lectures, discussions, experiential workshops, etc. Re-thinking occurs through meetings that have a self-critical and reflective character. These meetings are divided into the children's meetings (where the pedagogists meet with the children) and the adults' meetings (one with the pedagogists and one with the parents). These meetings are an area of self-training in cooperative decision-making procedures of direct democracy, accountability, participation and implementation.

These meetings are combined with the general meeting where pedagogists and parents come together to make important decisions regarding the school. The general meeting is divided into different working sub-groups which function horizontally (e.g. the networking group, the economic group, the group for food and everyday needs, the group for constructions of pedagogical materials etc.). These sub-groups present their ideas, suggestions and plans for improvements at the general meeting. In addition, suggestions from children's meetings are taken into consideration. The children's meetings take place at regular intervals and can be called at any time by a child or a pedagogist. Finally, parents support everyday activities in the community by cooking, cleaning etc.

The representatives of the school explain that through building a pedagogical environment with ongoing communication between the school and home, they try to approach a community and solidarity based way of living by building strong relationships of trust. [12] Such relationships, as they say, "conflict with existing values of 'the system'. We do not hide these values from the children, which they meet every day anyway; nor do we pretend that they do not exist." [13] This network of relationships operates through anti-hierarchical structures of direct participation. This way, community-based relationships become a learning tool for all participants. Their venture is an example of a community-based horizontal organization attempting to broaden societal norms.

Self-funding

The Small Tree That Will Become a Forest operates within a two storey detached rented house and is self-funded; there is no state financial support or subsidy for the school. Funding is based on the capabilities of the parents and all the pedagogical materials are made or provided by the parents and the pedagogists. For those families who are unable to contribute, the remaining cost is divided among the rest or earned by selling handmade materials (notebooks, aprons, dolls, ornaments etc.) at eco-festivals, bazaars and other events organized by the school. "The economic working group manages our funds and seeks creative and imaginative plans for the self-funding of the school," the representatives say. [14]

The money collected through selling products covers the needs of the community school or goes into savings and is not accumulated for profit. Self-funding ensures that there are "no school-customer relationships created within the school, but relationships based on solidarity and cooperation," according to the representatives. They further add that the school does "not inculcate consumerist culture and its standards upon children" and is "not advertised as a product," but recommends a way of organization, and an attitude towards life.[15]

Social Values

The school's pedagogical approach does not follow a specific "recipe" but is inspired by different viewpoints and traditions of anarchism and libertarianism.[16,17] The school's anti-hierarchical procedures of direct democracy constitute an attempt of cooperation in decision-making processes. "Solidarity, mutual aid, cooperativeness, respect, dignity, freedom and individual autonomy are the values we want to experience," the representatives say. The school aims to develop the participants' co-movement and self-experience for building self-consciousness and self-discipline, both individually and collectively, as the representatives explain [18], but it does not include the transmission of its values to the children. "As we are talking about children, we are not seeking to create a particular model of a man or fighter, namely to put expectations on children for what we want them to become or to be (…) Just like we are looking for freedom, we would also want the children to look for their own ways to live freely and together."[19] Non-violent communication for resolving conflicts is achieved through "empathy and active listening in an effort to understand the position of the other, without the dichotomy of right and wrong."[20] By citing Karageorgakis they added that anarchism and libertarian theory is not enough on its own "unless a movement is born that is inspired by these theories and can bring about the necessary changes for a real socio-political-economic change with libertarian characteristics."[21]

Environmental Values

One of my main considerations was with the environmental concerns of the school and whether any environmental values are inextricably intertwined with its social values. I was also interested to know how environmental values are expressed in the daily life of the school. The representatives of the school stated that nature has "an intrinsic value" and that the world constitutes "an organic unity and on its biodiversity and balance depends the survival and development of all its parts."[22] The school aspires to instil this idea upon the children without coercing them into these values: ecology is part of the community's attitude, which is conceived by the children as fair and self-evident. They further referred thoroughly to Bookchin's Social Ecology.[23] Bookchin argues that environmental problems derive from and reveal deeper social problems and systemic crises which, in turn, come from hierarchically structured social relationships. Thus, Social Ecology argues for the removal of hierarchy from human societies.[24] As Bookchin states, "[the] notion that man is destined to dominate nature stems from the domination of man by man - and perhaps even earlier, by the domination of woman by man and the domination of the young by the old." [25]

On a practical level, the school operates in a forest area, giving children the chance to study the surroundings, to "observe insects, birds and mammals" and to acquire "pulses and information that are brought inside the school… observing the environment, urban and natural, is a basic tool," the representatives say.[26] The school yard is divided into several parts: there is a part kept free of human intervention, a cultivable part with a seedbed and nursery bed, a part with sand, and a part with tiles. Animals, such as cats and dogs, run free in the yard. The participants are involved with the garden and gardening is part of the daily routine of the school. "Through this process various issues arise, which we discuss, e.g. caring for the environment and managing water. We keep a recycling bin and we discuss

Photo credit: Αλλιώτικου Σχολείου
(The Small Tree that will Become a Forest)

the issue of recycling. We also discuss the use of public transport while using it on excursions."[27]

Inside the school there are thematic corners associated with nature, such as corners with plants, animals, insects, minerals, stones and recycling. The representatives of the school mentioned that it is important that the pedagogical equipment is handmade of natural and recyclable materials, e.g. wood, glass, metal, fabric and paper. They prefer to use materials which are able "to be processed and reused."[28] There are also activities that offer relevant stimuli (e.g. geography, sciences). The school aims to construct a material and emotional environment for children full of various pulses and experiences through experiential learning. "For us, the city and the nature are the most important learning fields; therefore, we use excursions as another tool of lived experience," they explain.[29]

What About Climate Change? Any Skepticism?

Climate change denial is part of the public debate as to whether global warming is occurring, to what extent it has occurred in modern times, what its causes and effects are and whether and how it should be constrained.[30] In this regard, the representatives of the school were also invited to express their beliefs on climate change.

Their response had its origins once again in Social Ecology. The school stated that: "The community of Little Tree recognizes the enormous problem of climate change as another expression of political, ecological and social crisis, not as a result of natural factors. It is because of the exploitation of the natural environment by humans for the purpose of "development" of the capitalist model."[31] They also mentioned that a social and ecological balance seems impossible within capitalism. To justify their views, they referred to Tokar, who has categorized the "false" solutions to the climate crisis promoted by capitalism into two groups: technological interventions (e.g. geoengineering, which "threatens to create a host of new environmental problems in the pursuit of a world-scale techno-fix to the climate crisis") and the tools of the "free market" (e.g. markets in tradable carbon dioxide emissions allowances).[32] Finally, the representatives of the school mentioned that the school itself is a pedagogical and political venture, which aims to bring out a different form of organization in resistance to the capitalist model.

Filtering Through Sustainability

As Kalaitzidis puts it, the concept of sustainable schools is based on the idea that sustainability should be integrated in every aspect of school life (management of the building, administration, transportation to and from school, school's relationships with the school community, learning processes, etc.).[33] In a spectrum that covers a range of variants (from a light green to a dark green end) of sustainability, the most radical (dark green) version of a sustainable school could refer to a school which adopts "a holistic approach to sustainability, including challenging the dominant production and consumption patterns, the dominant values of the consumer society, the dominant distribution of power and financial resources, while at the same time, challenging the dominant schooling values. The dark green approach implies a more thorough reform or radical change of both environmental and social interactions in the school, allowing students and teachers a more democratic process of decision making".[34]

According to Kalaitzidis[35], the characteristics of a sustainable school can be classified into three general domains: the pedagogical domain (participatory and student-centered approaches, development of critical thinking, intercultural understanding, team teaching around issue-based topics, student participation in the design of a lesson, discovery of new knowledge by the students themselves while teachers function as coordinators, etc.); the social and organizational domain (school relations with local communities, relations with parents, democratic and participatory processes of decision-making, student councils, staff meetings, cooperation so that the school generates improvement plans and undertakes relevant actions, etc.); and the environmental domain (reduction of the ecological footprint of the school and the families, green building, paper recycling, etc.).

Could one trace such elements in The Small Tree That Will Become a Forest? To this regard, I believe that the description of the school detailed above suggests so.

Prospects

The ideology of this community school builds on a trust that social human nature carries the characteristics of cooperation and solidarity.[36] One could philosophically reject or accept this trust or argue that it is utopian. But this trust is fundamentally opposed to the individualism, competition and reductionism of social relations found in market logic, which characterizes neoliberal thought[37]; thus, it generates a whole different system of structures and processes to be realized. Therefore, the school's representatives consider their community to be not just an alternative economic space, but an alternative social space at large, which bears within it an alternative economic system that follows its own core principles.

The description of the school in this article has highlighted the community structure of it. Its establishment has been the result of a grassroots initiative taken by people who share common (political and pedagogical) ideas. As a self-organized project, their ideas were applied through a network of strong relationships (solidarity, egalitarianism, trust, cooperation) and shared responsibilities among its participants. Their ideology was reflected in the way the community was organized (anti-hierarchical processes, procedures of direct democracy, experiential learning, etc).

Similar characteristics can be found in other alternative spaces within society (e.g. ecovillages, groups of activists and communities for nature conservation, relevant groups with political orientations, religious groups, etc.). For instance, ecovillages are small-scale grassroots communities where community members - eco-villagers - share the same ecological, social, economic and cultural values.[38] Ecovillages also rely on personal commitment, solidarity and cooperation.[39]

Of course, the community school discussed in this article holds its own distinct ideology. However it simultaneously exercises ideas of cooperation, egalitarianism and solidarity-ideas apparent in the underlying philosophies of similar social entities. All these social entities constitute experimental social spaces which attempt to transcend the imperatives of the neoliberal economic model; each of these attempts (to a different extent) offers a perspective of a sustainable social change or at least express a form of resistance to current unsustainable practices. This indicates a social area of convergent views where heterogeneous grassroots forces can be linked with a common interest.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to illuminate how a community school offers reflections on sustainability from within a diverse society.

"....the school itself is a pedagogical and political venture, which aims to bring out a different form of organization in resistance to the capitalist model."

Photo credit: Αλλιώτικου Σχολείου
(The Small Tree that will Become a Forest)

It is within the grassroots heterogeneous spaces that the vision of sustainability needs to be realized as a common thread. For this reason, this community school, inspired by social anarchism and libertarianism, has an interesting role to play. It is a social area occupying its own space within the puzzle of sustainability.

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Trash to Treasure

How UK based charity FoodCycle is tackling the problem of food waste

SARAH SHRESTHA-HOWLETT

Capitalism is built on waste and appropriation, particularly visible within our food systems. While many organisations are emerging to tackle the issue of food waste, they are limited by their commercial interests. FoodCycle offers a comprehensive response to the problem outside of capitalist ideology and demonstrates the importance of community in bringing about change.

Photo credit: NCVO London

> **"Startlingly, 4 million people in the UK are affected by food poverty, heavily contrasted with the 20 million tonnes of food the UK wastes annually, 30% of which is concentrated at retail, hospitality and manufacturing levels."**

Wasted Treasure

A TREASURE TROVE OF TREATS sat gleaming at us; 40 kilos of cheese well within date, a week's supply of baked goods, some slightly bruised or misshapen fruits and vegetables, and other perfectly edible food fished out of a supermarket bin. As students, we greedily filled our backpacks, neglecting to consider the many who could perhaps benefit more from such an abundant source of nutrients. Startlingly, 4 million people in the UK are affected by food poverty[1], heavily contrasted with the 20 million tonnes of food the UK wastes annually, 30% of which is concentrated at retail, hospitality and manufacturing levels[2]. Much of this food is defined as surplus, understood by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) as "food which is fit for human consumption, but has marginal or no commercial value or the sale of which is restricted by its date label… mislabelling; product or packaging damage; incorrect packaging; shelf life date expiration and over-ordering or over supply"[3]. Day by day this surplus filled our local supermarket trash bin, feeding only a few snooping students and the landfill it would otherwise end-up in.

The Commercialisation of the Fight Against Food Waste

For Jason Moore, this waste is a result of our capitalist system. He notes, "Capitalism is not a system of efficiency, and can only be identified as a system of profligacy and waste. Such wastefulness is, moreover, immanent to capital; it is bound up with the constitution of capital itself"[4]. Waste is not only concentrated after production, but also during, through the wasteful appropriation of life and energy. With capital devaluing labour and nature, waste appears throughout our food systems, as a report by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers states, "due to poor practices in harvesting, storage and transportation, as well as market and consumer wastage, it is estimated that 30–50% (or 1.2–2 billion tonnes) of all food produced never reaches a human stomach".[5]

Food waste is a growing concern in the UK; celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has devoted an entire campaign to the issue[6], supermarket websites detail targets to reduce their operational waste, and mobile apps, such as Too Good To Go, are growing in popularity. While these actions are certainly notable, the motivation behind them remains rooted in capitalist ideology. Whether to gain public popularity or increase profits, these actors are limited by their commercial interests and this in turn influences their customers. As Appadurai notes, "the consumer is consistently helped to believe that he or she is an actor, where in fact he or she is at best a chooser"[7]; while consumers make choices believing they are actively alleviating the issue of food waste, they are effectively feeding into a chain built on profit and appropriation. As the world is dominated by the capitalist mode of production, tackling this problem implies drastic change. However, it is perhaps more realistic to consider small-scale projects emerging within the capitalist system, but outside of capitalist ideology, which are helping alleviate these issues.

Photo credit: Tom Barrett

The Fresh Outlook of FoodCycle

FoodCycle is different. Established in 2009, FoodCycle reclaims surplus food at multiple stages of the supply chain to cook healthy meals for the community entirely free-of-charge. Dependent on the work of volunteers, FoodCycle has five central aims: to strengthen communities, encourage friendships, improve nutrition, and reduce hunger and food waste. Since 2009, 2000 volunteers have reclaimed 59 tonnes of surplus food, and have served 164,000 meals for communities at 27 FoodCycle hubs across the UK[8]. Nutritious three course meals are served to guests in a dignified and fun environment and 85% of those who attend say they have made new friends[9]. Leftover portions and recipe ideas are often sent home with guests, allowing their families to access nutritious, balanced diets throughout the week.

> **"FoodCycle reclaims surplus food at multiple stages of the supply chain to cook healthy meals for the community entirely free-of-charge."**

In helping rejuvenate community life, FoodCycle is building a strong foundation in which the issue of food waste can be more effectively tackled. As the Institution of Mechanical Engineers notes, "an increasing proportion of the world's population is removed from involvement in and knowledge of the food supply system, merely becoming food consumers at the end of a supply chain"[10]. By engaging in FoodCycle meals individuals have the opportunity to be involved, not just with the charity, but as agents within our food systems. In so doing, FoodCycle is challenging capitalist appropriation and profit, and is offering a renewed attitude to food and mealtimes for whole communities.

> **"By engaging in FoodCycle meals individuals have the opportunity to be involved, not just with the charity, but as agents within our food systems."**

Conclusion

As there appears to be growing public concern for the issue of food waste, many organisations are seemingly taking action to address the issue. However, with their central motivation in capitalistic gains, these organisations are limited by their commercial desires. Outside of capitalist ideology, FoodCycle offers a more holistic response to the problem. By working with the UK's major supermarket chains, FoodCycle allows marginalised members of society access to healthy, nutritious food. What's more, visitors not only access good food, but friendships too. Volunteers and visitors together tackle an issue born from the global capitalist food system, but renewed in the collaboration of a community. It is this comprehensive response that makes FoodCycle's work uniquely important and demonstrates the ability of community in bringing about change.

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Photo credit: Tom Barrett

Alternative Economic Spaces and Sustainability:

The Case of Occupy Wall Street

JONATHAN MICHAEL FELDMAN

This article is an analysis of the Occupy Wall Street movement as an alternative political space promoting an alternative economic model. Feldman makes the argument that the movement attempted to apply ecological criteria to the dominant growth model which lead to a political supermarket of ideas. The movement's inclusive ambitions possess some seeds for change, but Occupy Wall Street failed in exchanging its political and media capital in potentially durable spaces."

Introduction

IN THIS PAPER I will analyze the U.S.-centered Occupy movement also known as Occupy Wall Street (OWS) as an alternative economic space. Even though OWS manifested itself largely through political demonstrations and media performances, its self-organization provided a mechanism for alternative social relations. OWS mechanisms for such relations included political campaigns on climate and creation of a base of activists and followers who fed other, more explicitly ecological movements. A key sustainability challenge is the need to fight climate denial, something based on organizing media power financed by large corporations with huge economic resources[1]. In contrast, OWS demonstrated a system for accumulating media power with rather few economic resources. Moreover, more formal alternative economic spaces like cooperatives sometimes de-evolve or face constraints in the face of shifts in culture or consumption.[2] In contrast, OWS was able to help bring new discussions of inequality into the media and political mainstream in a relatively short amount of time, with few resources. The ability to transform democratic states requires moving beyond the incumbent models of neoliberalism or social democracy that have governed these states. The neoliberal model has proven insufficient in combating climate change by underinvesting in public goods like mass transportation or by failing to dismantle the oil industrial complex.[3] Likewise, the social democratic model has similarly left this complex in place by promising to reduce national emissions while continuing to promote the use of oil.[4] Neither neoliberal nor social democratic models necessarily challenge unsustainable technologies and growth patterns. In contrast, OWS attempted to challenge neoliberalism and some of the political routines associated with social democracy, e.g. a primacy on electoral politics, dependency on external foundation support for supporting movement activity, and potential cooptation by policy webs dominated by established interests.[5] While neoliberal and social democratic models have prioritized growth, OWS attempted to apply ecological criteria to the dominant growth model.

I will now analyze: (a) the key factors that helped establish OWS; (b) how OWS qualified as an alternative economic space; (c) how it was linked to the goal of sustainability; (d) advantages, challenges and potential limitations of this movement; and (e) whether such a model could be extended or scaled up. I conclude with some ideas regarding how OWS offshoots might be reconfigured to be part of a more sustainable space to challenge ecocide and dystopian regimes promoting climate change.

Photo credit: David Shankbone

Factors Promoting OWS: Crises and Foreign Exemplars

The larger movement arose immediately in response to the global economic crisis in the United States which began in the late 2000s. This crisis had two aspects. One part affected the viability of certain economic institutions, seen in various failures of banks and financial institutions. These failures, together with problems related to a lack of regulation, constituted the financial crisis. The other aspect concerns the real economy and can be seen in inequality, foreclosures, and economic layoffs.[6] Various statistics illustrate the scope of the crisis in the U.S. Considering economic inequality, between the years 2009 and 2011, only one percent of national income went to wages, but 88 percent of national income growth went to corporate profits. By 2010, “93 percent of all income gains went to the top 1 percent of Americans”. Between 2001 and 2012, “total employment did not grow at all”. Moreover, “over 97 million Americans” fell into a low-income category (defined as earning between 100 and 199 percent of the poverty level)” around 2012.[7] Between 2006 and 2012, about “20 million American households” were foreclosed, with “many … foreclosures…directly attributable to sub-prime loans, which generated trillions for the banking industry and resulted in hundreds of billions in lost wealth for communities of color". The economic problem of foreclosures and financial institutions' "lack of compassion toward homeowners" (many of whom profited from bailouts which were used in turn to "bankroll foreclosures") served as "a prime catalyst for OWS and the affiliated Occupy movements" emerging in 2011.[8]

While Americans losing their jobs or homes were a key trigger, the movement itself did not begin "immediately after the initial crisis and not in New York". The immediate financial crisis began in 2008. Yet, the mobilization began with organized protest in 2010 "as the crisis spread to Greece, Spain, Portugal and other parts of the Eurozone". In these countries, "occupation of prominent public spaces was a central dimension of activism". In the Arab world, activists led a movement in response to deteriorating economic conditions and repression. The European protests, the Arab Spring, and "protests as far afield as China" emulated the OWS movement.[9]

OWS as Alternative Economic Space

The Occupy Movement constituted an alternative economic space to the extent that it pre-figured a more participatory, democratic way to organize social relations and make decisions. The OWS camp was established in Zuccotti Park in New York City on September 17, 2011, "just a five-minute walk from the New York Stock exchange" in Manhattan. One argument is that "the combination of popular involvement, decentralized organization and prefigurative actions that Occupy drew from and came to embody exemplifies creative and affective forms of resistance to neoliberal capitalism". One measure of the alternative character of the movement is the way it helped side-step aspects of the established non-profit industrial complex. For example, "to occupy" became "a mechanism to directly promote citizen interests beyond representative, electoral politics and the normal routines associated with the division of labor between citizens and states".[10] In contrast, one legacy found in the history of citizenship routines has been an environment which was not "congenial to the full development of a view of the citizen as an active and responsible member of the public arena".[11]

Photo credit: David Shankbone

OWS and Sustainability

The linkage of OWS to questions of sustainability can be seen in different ways. In 2012, the "Disrupt Dirty Power" campaign, initiated by the OWS affinity group 99forEarth, emerged which supported direct actions around the United States and elsewhere. It called for environmental as well as economic justice. One goal was to "evict Wall Street polluters," in the words of the campaign's website. The campaign targeted "dirty banks, big oil, big coal, fracking, uranium". The campaign noted "the climate can't wait and neither can we". One organizer, Will Jesse, said that "the Disrupt Dirty Power campaign was inspired by the fact that political interests supersede what is best for the public". As an illustration of this engagement, many OWS activists joined the Keystone XL campaign in 2011 which helped President Obama to oppose the pipeline.[12]

During the fall of 2011, when OWS was in high gear, 1,200 were arrested protesting the Keystone XL pipeline in Washington, D.C. The Occupy encampments, teach-ins, and demonstrations also led to "a student-led divestment movement" consisting in pressing universities and institutional investors to sell billions of dollars in assets invested in polluting industry. Later, OWS helped generate an anti-fracking movement that led several cities, counties and states to ban fracking.[13]

Some left intellectuals associated with the 2012 Left Forum also tried to broaden OWS's vision of ecological change. William K. Tabb, a left economist, argued that an "occupy the system" strategy would connect various "areas of struggle – from health care, quality of education for all, and environmental sustainability to ending the systematic imprisonment and warehousing of black men, and to full employment and equal opportunity".[14]

OWS Advantages and Accomplishments

OWS built an extensive grassroots movement largely free from direct corporate influence and the problems of cooptation from the foundation patronage system. This system is rooted in the non-profit industrial complex theorized by various authors. The complex involves elites, the wealthy and foundations who distort social movement activity, sometimes leading movements to frame issues narrowly or otherwise become coopted and constrained by their funding sources.[15] Another accomplishment was when President Obama used some of the movement's rhetoric, referring to the economic advantages of the "1%".[16]

Craig Calhoun, a scholar studying the Occupy movement, says OWS provided "a tactical advantage by providing a de facto centre to a mobilization that sometimes denied having centres". The occupation of public space "gave the movement a more cohesive identity than the diverse ideologies of its members could do, including not least a visual identity to outsiders". The movement "made a meaningful project of the simple negotiation of everyday decisions". The physical occupation sites potentially acted as mechanisms for integrating diverse issues as "a constant web of contact and mutual awareness" emerged. Thus, "the person who thought fracking was a critical issue was not a distant ideological competitor to an occupier preoccupied with resisting corporate globalization: he was camped in the next tent". One claim is that the occupations created a bridge between those who were more or less centrally involved in activism: "New recruits could quickly be incorporated into the role of dedicated participants". Leaders could play a leadership role "more 'organically' or even unobtrusively than at the front of marches or in formally organized meetings".[17] An October 2011 Reuters/Ipsos Public Affairs Poll found that 28 percent identified or identified strongly with the movement, with 23 percent more identifying a little.[18]

"The occupation of public space 'gave the movement a more cohesive identity than the diverse ideologies of its members could do'"

The movement (or its offshoots) sometimes gained concessions from employers so that economic capital resulted from political pressure:

> One of Occupy's largely unrecognized victories is the momentum it built for a higher minimum wage. The Occupy protests motivated fast-food workers in New York City to walk off the job in November 2012, sparking a national worker-led movement to raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour. In 2014, numerous cities and states…voted for higher pay.[19]

On April 15, 2015, "tens of thousands of workers marched in hundreds of cities to demand better pay and conditions". This led McDonald's and Walmart to give incremental wage increases. Democrats in the Senate also "called for raising the federal minimum wage to $12 an hour". Another spin-off from the movement was the campaign to reduce student debt. The Strike Debt, Rolling Jubilee, and Debt Collective have addressed the student debt crisis in the United States "by buying back student debt for pennies on the dollar and forgiving it".[20]

Photo credit: David Shankbone

OWS Limitations, Barriers to Scaling Up and Extending the Movement

The constraints on extending this model center on how its strengths were the other side of its weaknesses. As one sociologist explained, "Occupation was a brilliantly powerful tactic but one with limits". The "displacement" from occupied spaces became "a nearly fatal disruption". Evictions by the police and security personnel were followed by great difficulties in the movement's ability to regroup. The lines of communication and its solidarity were considerably dependent "on proximity in space". Participation in this public gathering potentially encouraged "the illusion that one has found much wider support than perhaps one has". The occupations tended to drive "a wedge between protestors and liberals who were sympathetic to many of the mobilization's messages". Both university presidents and mayors became "enforcers of order" as these presidents and mayors were potentially subject to pressure from countervailing constituencies, e.g. "students of different views, members of boards of trustees, donors" or pressures based on traffic problems, waste removal or real or alleged public health concerns.[21] Progressive university presidents and mayors sometimes sided with the police to eliminate illegal activity or service elite groups in the patronage system. This polarization might have helped expose systematic limits, but the divisions become less useful when trying to cultivate policy coalitions involving more mainstreamed situated groups. Granted that splits with patrons are sometimes necessary as in the need to overcome constraints of the non-profit industrial complex, but OWS eventually needed to establish a kind of alternative patronage system. Yet, they were not on a pathway to cultivate economic power in this fashion.

Calhoun argues that the Occupy movement "was less an organizational effort – a movement – than a dramatic performance". This suggests that "its most important impact may lie in culture not movement organization," e.g. a "readiness to look seriously and critically at inequality and at the question of whether actual democratic institutions are really working". Occupy potentially contributed to what people thought was possible.[22]

Other observers argued that a number of books about Occupy falsely claim that the movement "fundamentally changed American politics". With "a more sober assessment" being that it "exposed limitations on popular protest against the failures of the neoliberal project".[23] The failures might be seen in the various statistics earlier described in this paper. A central question, however, is how the capital accumulation process of Occupy rested vicariously on established channels. While the pre-figurative politics of Occupy was beyond cooptation and can be read as "autonomous," the very movement's growth was partially dependent on the whims of the larger system.

Three of the core foundations for the movement illustrate the reliance on a kind of vicarious power accumulation system, sometimes based on concessions. First, at the meta-level, the movement embraced a politics of resistance in which its self-identity was established with respect to the parameters of power created by the very system it was opposing. For example, let us examine how one activist conceived of mechanisms to relate to economic capital. Yotam Marom, speaking with Naomi Klein explains:

> When we reclaim a foreclosed home for a foreclosed-on family, or organize students to do flash mobs at the banks keeping them in debt, or environmental activists to die-ins at banks that invest in coal, these are ways of speaking our demands in a new language of resistance.[24]

The reclaiming of a home is a defensive measure that may place limits on the prerogatives of banks, i.e. it directly contributes to a family's economic capital. Yet, flash mobs and die-ins[25] as resistance amount to symbolic protests in the face of the concentrated economic, media and political power of large corporations and state bureaucracies. Others suggest that although "some of the concerns of the [Degrowth and New Economy] literatures made it to the Occupy assemblies, but they were not always central, nor can one claim that the movement is liberated from the imaginary of growth".[26] While growth of green jobs and technologies are a necessary condition for sustainability, OWS did not provide a focused attention on developing either.[27]

Second, when it came to cultural and media capital, OWS did not simply create its own institutions, but also lived vicariously out of the larger system. The charitable interpretation is that Occupy subjects refused "to cede to the neoliberal dogma that social goods are available only through market relations". Instead, "Occupy subjects created schools, kitchens, libraries, cinemas, organized them in a matter commensurate with their political and ethical sensibilities".[28] In fact, some argue that one of the movement's main accomplishments "was changing the national conversation by giving Americans a new language – the 99 percent and the 1 percent – to frame the dual crises of income inequality and the corrupting influence of money in politics".[29] The movement's own media depended on: "filmmakers, photographers, and live streamers" who "formed the core of the Media Working Group and the affiliated GlobalRevolution.tv team". This group eventually incorporated "hundreds of volunteers" engaged in "live stream, video, photograph, and social media". The positive spin is that the movement "might well have amounted to little more than a blip on Americans' radar had it not been for the work of its own media makers". On October

1, 2011, the movement's newspaper came out, with 50,000 copies printed in the first batch.[30]

Yet, the less charitable view is that Occupy "was played out before and drew much of its sustenance from the [established] media". The movement's activists "tended to see the movement as a mobilization sufficient unto itself but this was never really true". Rather, "it was always at least in part a dramatic performance before audiences and cameras". Thus, a small occupation became "much more significant". This dependency on established media "also meant that it was hard for the movement to control its own message and self-presentation". While social media circulated media capital within the movement, it was "much more conventional broadcast media" which framed the movement "for the broader public".[31]

Finally, one of the key mechanisms that allowed Occupy to break into broader public view, and recruit some of its new followers, was its relationship with police forces: "police response helped to make the protest flourish and make it visible to a broader range of citizens and indeed the world". Very often, "police efforts to control or disperse crowds provide some of the most influential visual images in protest mobilizations".[32] While interactions with the police and the occupations rapidly expanded the Occupy movement to a global presence and expanded its horizontal scale, with affiliates in the United Kingdom, Sweden and other countries, the ejection from these sites eventually helped break down the solidarity mechanism and media coverage of this movement phenomenon. In any event, the Movement never accumulated the scale or forms of power necessary for dismantling the oil, financial, military, real estate or any other complex of power.

Alternatives to Fragmentation and Petitioning the System

The main problem facing the Occupy Movement was that it was bound by diverse political forces which in some cases had radically different ideologies. While some of these differences may have been flattened by joint participation in physical encampments defined by proximity, the differences placed barriers on certain kinds of political deal making which might have advanced the movement, e.g. the ability to cooperate with other groups and like-minded individuals.[33] The main stage for OWS in New York hosted advocates of economic democracy like Gar Alperovitz and Richard D. Wolff, yet the movement itself did not prioritize cooperatives and democratic banks as strategic priorities. This meant that OWS could not exchange its political or media capital for a relatively autonomous and democratic economic capital rooted in potentially durable spaces. As Michael Shuman argued, OWS should not "occupy" Wall Street, but "ditch it" through cooperatives, community investment and other alternatives.[34]

"…dependency on established media 'also meant that it was hard for the movement to control its own message and self-presentation'."

In conclusion, while the form of the Occupy movement represented a brilliant extension in the media sphere that created a platform for alternative ideas, the content was much defined by a political supermarket of ideas.[35] Yet, strains within OWS have certainly lent themselves to a more focused approach which hopefully will yield more expansive and durable, alternative economic spaces (Plate 1).The aftermath of the OWS movement includes the aforementioned growth of 350.org, focused on divestment from oil investments. In some cases, like Norway, this movement has been matched by local efforts to promote green jobs and investments as alternatives to oil exploration, development and exports.[36] Another tendency in the United States includes "efforts to take over and municipalize electric utilities as a way to address climate change".[37] The dominant "meme" (or soundbite and organizing principle) of Left movements in the United States today – resistance – appears to be an unfortunate OWS hangover. This meme basically means defining opposition with respect to the incumbent power of Donald Trump and his allies, in contrast to the idea of creating alternative institutions based on exchanges of diverse forms of power which helped Trump himself to gain power.[38] Divesting and resisting will not stop systemic oil production and use, however important these approaches may be. ✷

From People's Climate March 2014
Photo credit: Alejandro Alvarez

Plate 1.
Photo credit: Jonathan Michael Feldman

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A Better World is Possible

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In this article, Jakobsen and Storsletten emphasise the distinction between green economic ideology and utopian ecological economics, and discuss how we can implement changes in economic theory and practice in order to meet the interconnected challenges of our time.

Introduction

WE ARE LIVING IN TIMES littered with major contradictions. It has been pointed out that while modern society creates utility and welfare, it also brings about negative consequences that impact those other than the ones taking the lion's share of the benefits.[1] On the positive side, general welfare is higher than ever in many rich countries. Technological developments have made life easier and the development of the internet has contributed to increased communication between people all over the world. On the negative side, the dramatic anthropogenic climate change is leading to an imbalance in both ecosystems and social systems, while the gap between rich and poor has increased both within and between countries.

In this article we discuss how we can implement changes in economic theory and practice in order to handle the "interconnected global crises of our own making—from financial scandals, human rights violations, environmental side effects to eco-system and community breakdown, the extinction of many species and social inequality.[2]

To elaborate on these questions, we have structured the article in the following way: firstly, we describe and discuss the extent to which the major problems of our time are the result of the actions of corrupt individuals or the result of an inadequate, corrupt system - or maybe a combination of both. To delve into these topics, we refer to Merton's discussion of unanticipated consequences.[3] Secondly, we argue that another system is possible by referring to the utopian research tradition concretized through the current contributions from Levitas where she distinguishes between ideology and utopia.[4] Thirdly, ideology and utopia are exemplified by a brief description of mechanistic and organic worldviews. Fourthly, we describe the contributions from Galtung,[5] Næss and Rothenberg[6] where they differentiate between negative and positive peace and shallow and deep ecology, respectively. Thereafter, we synthesize green and ecological economics from the preceding discussion. Finally, we set out a number of dimensions relevant for decision-making and how to move away from the green economic ideology in favour of utopian ecological economics. In the final part of the article we discuss some core principles in ecological economics and give examples of how ecological economics can be implemented in practice.

Unintended Consequences

Merton, the distinguished sociologist, warned against unanticipated consequences of purposive social action.[7] Unanticipated consequences are the unintended consequences resulting from the introduction of new technologies, new forms of organization or new systems in a broad sense. Many of the challenges we face today regarding the environment, society or economy, are due to unintended consequences of intentional human behaviour embedded in the ideology of the modern society.

There are many explanations as to why negative consequences occur; short-term perspectives and limited cognitive capacity are relevant explanations. But it could also be a discrepancy in worldviews. Merton drew a distinction between negative consequences affecting the individual decision maker himself and consequences that affect other persons (micro), organizations (meso) or society (macro).[8] Consequences far away in space and time are most problematic.

With reference to Merton's argument, we agree that many of the challenges we face-locally, nationally and globally- are the results of fundamental systemic failures. Today many of these problems are so complex and integrated that it seems impossible to come up with solutions from the confines of a mechanistic worldview. According to Rees, this failure is so fundamental that, if it had been a scientific experiment, scientists would have disproved and dismissed the mechanistic neo-classical economic paradigm and would have sought for alternatives more consistent with reality.[8] In other words, it is not (necessarily) greedy people who are initiating the conflict between humans and between humans and nature. Maslow once claimed that even good people behave badly in a bad system.[10] Instead of trying to solve problems by transforming reality to fit the model, it is more appropriate to change the model to fit in with reality.

"Instead of trying to solve problems by transforming reality to fit the model, it is more appropriate to change the model to fit in with reality"

Although a great majority undoubtedly agree that something must be done straightaway if we are to prevent some alarming catastrophes, it has proved difficult indeed to implement any action which will have any significant effect. We argue, in accordance with Ricoeur, that the energy needed to implement the necessary change process is developed in the tension field between ideology and utopia:[11] "Utopia is the driving force in the change processes in human societies."[12]

Ideology and Utopia

Ideology, which includes standards and values (as defined by the dominant social groups) are important for creating identity, both individually and collectively. The dominant ideology is protected by legitimate authorities. If any development takes place within the framework of the established ideology, it is only a question of mere marginal adjustments to moderate some of the negative consequences of the established system. The objective for the decision makers is to make adjustments to ensure the position of the prevailing ideology.

“It is problematic to develop and implement deep change processes in the absence of visions or utopias.”


Photo credit: Sarah Shrestha-Howlett

Much energy is used up preventing alteration and limiting development.

Utopia (defined as "no place") describes an alternative point of view that makes it possible to evaluate the current society from outside. Utopias are geared towards the future and indicate the direction of change. Utopias will never be realized; by their very nature we can only approach them or work towards their direction. Since utopias always challenge the establishment and the authorities, they make a contribution to the tension which facilitates change. The assumption is that society is unfinished, dynamic, and always in a process of change. Ricoeur concludes; "A society without utopia (would) be dead, because it would no longer have any project, any prospective goals."[13]

Implementation of fundamental changes presupposes the existence of a potent tension between the existing ideology (actuality) and the vision of a utopian society (potentiality). According to Ricoeur, "the intention of utopia is to change - to shatter - the presented order."[14] It is problematic to develop and implement deep change processes in the absence of visions or utopias.

Levitas gives similar arguments for the necessity of utopian research.[15] Utopian research models are based on the idea that the differences between the dominant ideology, defined by referring to what "is" or “actuality,” and descriptions of utopia, as what "could be" or “potentiality,” are necessary if we are to create change.

As an illustration of the differences between ideology and utopia we will take a closer look at shift in worldviews, Galtung`s distinction between "negative" and "positive" peace[16] and the distinction Næss and Rotheberg drew between "shallow" and "deep" ecology.[17] Based on these examples we set out the distinction between green and ecological economics as, respectively, ideology and utopia.

From Mechanical to Organic Worldview

To illustrate the difference between ideology and utopia, we look at two ontological positions, the mechanistic and organic worldviews. We connect unintended consequences of economic action to the use of outdated maps that do not match reality. In other words, when we put forward mechanistic solutions to solve organic problems, unintended consequences could well occur. Although this inconsistency has been described and discussed by philosophers, sociologists and (some) economists for several decades, the mechanistic approach is still dominant within economics.

As an example “the green shift” has been launched as a measure for dealing with serious environmental and social challenges. Green products, green growth, and green economy are all concepts used (and misused) on an expanding number of occasions. It seems like everything could be environmentally friendly and socially responsible if we chose the right concepts. Instead of going into the problems there is a tendency to hide the problems behind green formulations, and this permits everything to go on as usual. The focus is on reducing symptoms rather than on criticizing the mechanistic system. According to Palazzo and Scherer we need more than a coat of green paint.[18] To cope with the many interrelated problems, we need to have an organic understanding of reality.

The mechanistic worldview has brought us into a state characterized by organized irresponsibility, where we individually and collectively have contributed to creating problems that have been proved very difficult to understand and to solve. One part of the problem is that from a mechanistic perspective the focus is on objects, not on relations. The result of not being aware of society as a set of integrated networks is that we are about to lose our common cultural context for understanding and meaning.

Negative and Positive Peace

Galtung believes that negative and positive peace are independent phenomena and that the one is possible without the other being present. Negative peace refers to the absence of symptoms of war, or more generally, that something undesirable is reduced or has ceased to exist. Negative peace achieved through various means, among others, aggression and violence, leads to reduction of active warfare without eliminating the causes behind war. According to Galtung the absence of violence is not a sufficient condition to develop a peaceful society.[19] If the structures that lead to conflict and violence are still present, then war is always a possibility. Within a negative peace the aggressive measures that reduce the symptoms of violence are given priority. When peace is ensured by the use of force then the motives for war are still there, while positive peace emphasizes structural changes that contribute to the harmonious interaction between economy, individuals, society and nature.

Galtung focuses on structural explanations for peace.[20] Positive peace is the presence of structural solutions that promote equality and justice, harmony and well-being. Positive peace presupposes the existence of integrative social structures, even in periods without war or threat of war.[21]

Positive peace is based on an organic understanding of reality that lays the foundation for social models that promote networked cooperation rooted in egalitarian distribution of power and resources. According to Galtung, positive peace is the best protection against violence because it is rooted in social practice in which injustice and oppression are minimized or eliminated.

Shallow and Deep Ecology

Næss and Rothenberg distinguish between shallow and deep ecology (ecosophy).[22] Within shallow ecology man exists outside and above nature. Everything in nature is reduced to instrumental values referring to human utility. Nature is a financial resource and environmental problems are solved by bringing nature into the economy. When we shrink nature to a means for human purposes, it loses its intrinsic value and we squander our natural resources.

Næss and Rotheberg claim that it is a fallacy to perceive the world, in accordance with shallow ecology, as something that consists of discrete and separate entities with no interconnections.[23] Shallow ecology accepts economic growth as the dominant assumption without any critical questioning. To expand quality of life we have to move away from our economic, technological, industrial control-systems and materialistic lifestyle towards a lifestyle in accordance with the principles of Deep Ecology.

Deep Ecology argues that everything in nature has value in itself. Deep Ecology is based on a holistic worldview, pointing out that we cannot consider the elements of nature in isolation. Everything is interconnected and at the same time, everything is changing continuously. Deep Ecology replaces the objective of material growth with sustainable qualitative development. Deep Ecology is looking worldwide for the fundamental causes of ecological problems in economic and social structures.

Green and Ecological Economics

Inspired by previous theoretical discussions about mechanistic and organic worldviews, with references to Galtung and Næss, we draw a distinction between green economy and ecological economics and we connect the positions to ideology and utopia, respectively. On the one hand we assert that green economy emphasises effective measures to reduce negative symptoms within the dominant ideology by means of the market economic toolbox. The goal is to reduce the damaging effects of established economic theory and practice and do it without making any fundamental structural changes. Because the methods do not depart from the established ideology we can see that green economy helps to maintain business as usual.

Ecological economics opens up new and exciting perspectives offers an interesting alternative to the dominant economic system. Ecological economics is not focused primarily on finding new answers to the old questions; instead, new questions are asked so we can uncover new perspectives and new solutions.

The term ecological economics refers to deep systemic change, so deep that it defines economics as subordinate to ecology. It is rooted in the organic understanding of reality, which is necessary to adapt the economy to the limits of nature and its principles.

The idea that research could in any way provide knowledge that gives man power over nature has to be replaced by a new approach, an approach in which the goal is to develop a knowledge that teaches us how we can best work with nature and fulfil human needs and improve quality of life.

A Birth Crisis

According to Lindner, we live in a time of great contrasts.[24] While the problems are becoming more dramatic, there is at the same time a growing attention towards more realistic models that open up new solutions. Scharmer and Kaufer believes that crises linked to "Finance, food, water shortage, resource scarcity, climate chaos, mass migration, terrorism, financial oligarchies" show that we have entered a time of dramatic change where the possibility of "a profound personal, societal, and global renewal" have never been more real.[25]

"We have entered a time of dramatic change where the possibility of 'a profound personal, societal, and global renewal' have never been more real"

Capra and Luici points out that there are solutions to the great challenges of our time and that some of them are very simple. But they require; "a radical shift in our perceptions, our thinking, our values."[26] They find many clear indications that the fundamental change is about to happen. It is not just about changing the mindset; it is also increasingly about deep structural changes.

The current civilization based as it is on mechanism, characterised by ego-centrism, competition, maximum material consumption and growth, is about to die out, and a future rooted in organic thinking, characterised by eco-centrism, humanity and living visions of who we are and who we want to be, individually and collectively (as society) is developing.

The implication of this reasoning is that economic activity is not an end in itself but a means to strengthen the life processes in nature and society. "The only valid purpose of economy is to serve life processes in all kinds of social and ecological systems."[27] If we are to strengthen life processes then reputation building, 'greenwashing' and green economy must all give way to an economy based on ecological knowledge and humanistic values.

Dimensions relevant for concrete decisions in the turning point

To understand the complexity of the change process from green towards ecological economics it is necessary to have an in-depth understanding of the historical development (ideology) and clear visions (utopia) directed far into the future. The realism of the utopian narratives is connected to individual and collective experience. It is neither desirable nor possible to force solutions that have no basis in human intuition, feelings and thoughts.

To generate the necessary energy, it is of the greatest importance to develop a realistic alternative to the existing economy, an alternative that is divergent enough to create tension. In other words, what we need today is focus on utopian narratives which contrast with the dominant ideology. In the previous paragraphs we have described some of the most significant dimensions of tension. In table 1 below we sum up some of these dimensions and argue that the decision makers in every decision made should evaluate the extent to which the different alternatives initiate system change or fortify the present system.

"It is neither desirable nor possible to force solutions that have no basis in human intuition, feelings and thoughts."

Table 1. The tension between green economy and ecological economics

Green economy (ideology)		Ecological economics (utopia)
Atomistic	←→	Network
Linear value chains	←→	Circular value chains
Quantitative growth	←→	Qualitative development
Competition	←→	Cooperation
Monetary values	←→	Value Diversity
Economic man	←→	Ecological man
Top-down	←→	Bottom-up

This list of relevant criteria is neither final nor absolute. Which criteria are relevant in different decisions depends on a number of situation-specific factors. Nevertheless, the criteria are relevant as examples indicating the tension between the two opposites. By using such a decision-heuristics, it is possible to fulfill the revolutionary goals by evolutionary means. The aim is to energize the process that strengthens the vitality of self-contained and autonomous communities by establishing collaborative networking venues for dialogue, creativity, learning and development of common solutions. According to Aristotle, harmonious moderation within nature's limits is the recipe for the good life.

Some characteristics of the utopian ecological economic society

In this paragraph we describe some of the most relevant characteristics of economy and society anchored in organic, utopian ecological economics. First we describe some key dimensions, then we give some practical examples on what they could look like in practice.

Networks

Firstly, the assumption made by the dominating economic paradigm that the market is made up of autonomous actors is replaced by a view of the market as an integrated network of interdependent actors. The focus shifts away from objects toward relationships. Since the individual has to respect broad public values, a transition is required away from the egocentric economic man towards the "I-We" understanding.[28] Although local production for local markets is the ideal, it is of course necessary to open up cooperation through international networks as well.

Circular value chains

Secondly, linear economic processes have to be substituted for circular chains where production, distribution, consumption and recycling are inspired by ecosystem circuit solutions. It is therefore important to facilitate the development of relationships that link all functions in the economic cycle together in decentralized integrated networks.[29]

Qualitative development

Thirdly, quantitative growth is replaced by qualitative development. Ecological economics, inspired by natural growth curves, (increasing rapidly first then stabilizing), makes it possible to initiate the continuous development of quality of life without increasing the consumption of natural resources. The focus on qualitative development will mean major changes in business; many companies and whole industries will disappear, and new ones, more in line with ecological principles and humanist values, will take over.

Cooperation

Fourthly, market mechanisms based on competition are replaced by a partnership approach founded on dialogue and cooperation.[30] Free competition on the world market means that small producers in poor countries are the losers compared to powerful multinational corporations. Poor countries are forced to accept free trade in order to gain entry to the markets and the result is that the big companies gain increasingly larger proportions of the global markets. The consequence is that poor countries have to receive aid for the system to work. This results in a vicious cycle where quality of life deteriorates both among those who have too little, and among those who have too high consumption. Today the resources are distributed in such a way that the gap between rich and poor constantly increases.

Value Diversity

A fifth point is that the transition to Ecological economics indicates that businesses have to include ecological and social values in the decision making process, in addition to economic profitability. Humans are part of the ecosystem and the ecosystem is a part of humans. By including social values business helps to create (optimal) conditions for quality of life. This perspective is often referred to as "the triple bottom line." As it is not possible to transform the different values into a monetary scale, policymakers should be able to handle the three different values simultaneously.

Ecological Man

A sixth point is that any transition towards ecological economics has significant implications for the definition of the economic actor. Instead of focusing solely on increasing the consumption (the economic man), the economic actors put more weight on natural and social implications of production processes as well as products (the ecological man). A practical consequence is that market communication must include information about the working conditions for the workers in the entire production process and the extent to which the production process meets environmental requirements, requirements for animal welfare, and health implications for all involved, the consumer included.

Bottom-Up

Point number seven is related to a turnaround in the direction from where the initiative for change comes. Instead of focusing on top-down solutions based on the initiative of politicians and business leaders, the focus within ecological economics is based on bottom-up initiatives. The change occurs when those who stand in the practical reality at the local level create solutions based on direct experience. It is of course necessary in top-down initiated rules and monitoring, for example through national authorities, to have the United Nations and other global organizations.

Conclusion

In this article, we argue that the solution to the major challenges facing modern society requires fundamental changes in economic theory and practice. We argue that without energizing tension between ideology and utopia and the existence of some kind of shock waves, the deep change process will not accelerate. The prerequisite is, in other words, more focus on utopian narratives and a development in consciousness that will make us able to be aware of the bundle of shocks going on worldwide today. To stop the change process from taking the wrong direction it is important that we develop visions (utopias) that are clear enough to serve as beacons.

Even if both green economy and ecological economics are based on a serious intention to solve the serious environmental and social problems escalating in the world today we argue that the major challenges in economy, environment and society require solutions that exceed the existing ideology. In addition, we have to go far beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries. To solve the interconnected complex of challenges we need solutions crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries.

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Look to the Grassroots for Hope and Goodwill

HELENA NORBERG-HODGE

In this article the author makes a case for localisation of the economy as opposed to the global, market driven economy that has thrived during the era of capitalism. She believes that a turn towards localisation and grassroots promotes an alternative economy, where community and ecology are accentuated.

Farmer's market.

AROUND THE WORLD we see an increase in anti-immigrant sentiment and xenophobia, a widening gap between rich and poor, and widespread ecological destruction. These crises are interconnected at root level, and they can all be solved by reducing the scale of the economy. The dominance of global businesses drives growth in xenophobia and racism by forcing people to compete against each other in an economic race that only a handful can win. But at the grassroots we can already see the multiple benefits of a systemic shift in direction - towards localisation.

Ladakh

I have witnessed the undermining of self-reliant economies and the rapid emergence of conflict in Ladakh, or "Little Tibet", where I arrived just as the area was thrown open to the outside world. For more than 600 years Ladakhi Buddhists and Muslims had lived side by side with no recorded instance of group conflict. But once the region was exposed to the global economy tensions escalated rapidly.

I saw how the transition to modernity meant a shift away from local interdependence to intense competition for scarce jobs. Development destroyed the local economy as mass-produced food and other goods were brought in on subsidised roads, in lorries running on subsidised fuel. The Ladakhi culture and way of life were degraded and replaced with the global consumer culture we know in the West. Almost overnight, Ladakh started to experience issues that we almost take for granted; environmental degradation, social isolation, mental illness, abject poverty, unemployment, homelessness and violent religious conflict.

The Global Problem

In recent decades, during the era of globalisation, the process has accelerated dramatically around the world. The dogmas of 'free trade', 'free markets' and deregulation have underpinned the economic and trade policies of most governments - favouring global corporations, and handing over wealth and

> **"In the global economy, it's as though our arms have grown so long that we can no longer see what our hands are doing"**

power to the 1% at the expense of everyone else. For most people job security is a thing of the past, and simply making ends meet is an increasingly difficult struggle. This leads to social fragmentation, personal insecurity and, ultimately, to deepening intolerance, to the fundamentalism and violence we are witnessing worldwide.

Globalisation had relatively benign beginnings; after World War II economic integration was seen as a way of maintaining peace and stability. This was not unreasonable, but it has not worked as hoped. Thanks to deregulatory trade and investment treaties, global corporations—including big banks and other financial institutions—gained so much power that today they are effectively able to hold nation states to ransom, threatening to move jobs elsewhere unless wages and regulations are lowered and subsidies and tax-breaks are granted. The Investor-State Dispute Settlement clauses in the current batch of trade agreements give corporations the right to sue governments over laws or regulations that impede not just actual but potential profits.

Hope in a Time of Crisis

However, there is reason for hope. People power has created a new economy movement that rejects these trade treaties. Additionally, at the grassroots we can already see the multiple benefits of a shift away from globalisation towards localisation.

Localisation means reducing the scale of economic activity, a fundamental change of emphasis: away from monoculture for export towards diversification for local needs. It doesn't mean retreating into isolationism or an end to technology or trade, even international trade. Localisation allows us to live more ethically as citizens and consumers. In the global economy, it's as though our arms have grown so long that we can no longer see what our hands are doing. But when the economy operates on a smaller scale, everything is more transparent. We can see if the apples we are buying from the neighbouring farm are being sprayed with pesticides; we can see if workers' rights are being abused.

Across the world, millions of localisation initiatives are springing up. The most important is the local food movement, since food is the only thing humans produce that we all require every day: from farmers' markets to community supported agriculture, from "edible schoolyards" to permaculture. Many reveal an ability to heal wounds and bring people together. The Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum (ZIMSOFF) brings together hundreds of farmers to share knowledge for the renewal of indigenous and sustainable agricultural practices at an agroecology centre. ZIMSOFF is also part of 'La Via Campesina' – a global network of 400 million small farmers which campaigns for food sovereignty and resists corporate globalisation.

We are also seeing the emergence of small business alliances, local banking and investment programmes (including local currencies), and local energy schemes. In Palmeira, Brazil, the creation of a locally-run community development bank and a local currency has helped revitalise the local economy, create badly needed jobs, and increase the collective self-reliance of the district. In 1997, 80% of inhabitants' purchases were made outside the community; by 2011, 93% were made in the district. This has inspired the creation of over 60 similar initiatives throughout Brazil, and spurred the development of the Brazilian Network of Community Banks.

Also the Global Ecovillage Network and the Transition Network have captured the imagination of people in both the global North and South. Thousands of other communities are consciously working to lower their carbon footprints. Economies rooted in community and ecology are emerging at the grassroots all around the world and prove that they can provide for humanity's needs far more holistically and sustainably than can the current global system. This is why I call localisation 'the economics of happiness'.

Beating Outdated Software

The Cancer of Smart Devices

MARTIN PERES

Martin Peres discusses how the Open Source movement has increased the longevity of personal computers, and the ways in which it is relevant to addressing technology waste problems following the proliferation of smart devices. He argues that we need a paradigm shift towards a more collaborative approach on software to assure that fully functioning hardware does not get thrown away as a result of software issues.

OUR SOCIETY RELIES MORE AND MORE on smart devices to ease communication and efficiency. Smart devices are transforming both industries and personal lives. Smart and self-organising wide-area sensor networks are now used to increase the efficiency of farms, cities, supply chains or power grids. Because they are always connected to the Internet, they can constantly and accurately monitor assets and help deliver what is required precisely when and where it is needed. Also, the general public has seen the transition to smart devices, cell phones being switched to smartphones, TVs to smart-TVs and cars to semi-autonomous cars.
This "Internet of Things" (IoT) revolution is happening at a frantic pace as companies digitalize the physical world. Gartner estimated that there were 4.9 billion smart devices deployed in 2015, with this number expected to grow to 25 billion by 2020.[1] With such high numbers, IoT devices have the potential to create significant amounts of waste, which may exceed their potential to reduce resource consumption thanks to their ability to keep the state of every asset of interest up to date.

In this article, I discuss how smart devices' software is an artificial cause that limits their lifetime. I then explain the need for an alternative model that decouples the software and the hardware, to allow the software to be changed according to its owner's need. Finally, I explain how the Open Source movement has already solved the software's planned obsolescence for personal computers and servers, and how this model also naturally applies to the IoT devices.

How Software Reduces our Devices' Lifetime

While a relatively old smartphone may still function perfectly as a phone, for many it is not good-enough if it does not support the newest applications. For instance, in 2016, the very popular messaging application WhatsApp dropped support for iOS up to 6.1, which is the latest operating system that can be used on the iPhone 3, which was taken out of production in 2012. This has left iPhone 3 users with three choices: they must either find alternative ways to communicate with their contacts, replace it with a second-hand phone, or buy a new one. Replacing an iPhone 3 with a new iPhone 6 would lead to 80.75 kg of CO2-equivalent in emissions.[2] Given that the world's average carbon footprint per year per capita is 4.6 tons of CO2-equivalent,[3] buying an iPhone 6 would represent 1.75% of the annual budget of the average world citizen.

For some, buying a new device every four years may be acceptable because the devices genuinely improve a lot, however, cars do not change as drastically. A lot of people only buy a new car when it is more expensive to fix their current car than to buy a new one. New cars, however, can come with internet access and a wide range of driving assistance features, such as lane or break assist, that can take control of the car at any time, in order to keep everyone inside and outside the car safe. This ability for the software to control the car also technically means that any security issues in the car's software can allow hackers to remotely crash the car, for example by driving it into a wall at full speed while disabling airbags, or ask for money to unlock the car (i.e. ransomware). While neither of the scenarios may have happened yet, hackers have already managed to remotely control a willing journalist's car through the internet.[4] Afterwards, they released some of their tools to help others replicate their work.[5] This opens the way for the same kind of viruses found in the computer world, which can lead to hackers asking for ransoms to retrieve your files.[6] For owners of hackable cars, either the manufacturer fixes the issue or the owner should consider buying another car to reduce the risks, provided that governments do not prevent such cars from being on the road, due to the safety risk. If a car is replaced by a new one, this incurs a significant environmental cost (1.5 to 7.6 times the global average carbon footprint per year per capita).[7]

On top of being an environmental cost, a financial risk and a safety issue, smart devices with outdated and insecure software are also a danger for our increasingly digital infrastructure. As these devices are meant to be connected at all times and usually never get automatic security updates, they make a valuable target for hackers to take control of the device and add it to virtual networks (botnets). These botnets can be used to perform illegal tasks such as to disrupt the internet access of an entire country, as demonstrated in the fall 2016 incident involving the botnet Mirai.[8] This botnet, constituted of smart toasters, web-enabled vibrators, and other types of smart devices, managed to bring down dozens of websites, including The New York Times, Twitter and Paypal. Manufacturers have very few incentives to make secure devices, as they view this as a cost that does not lead to more sales. Even when faced with public shaming, some of these manufacturers failed to fix the issue.[9]

Owners of internet-connected smart devices also have very few incentives and little interest to properly secure their devices. From a user perspective, the devices are supposed to be smart, as the name suggests. Since the device is connected to the internet at all times, why doesn't it use this connection to update itself? This automatic over-the-air update approach is the one taken by the automotive-company Tesla motors.[10]Thus they do not require their customers to make expensive trips to the dealer who sold the car in order to get security fixes and new features.

Even with automated over-the-air updates of smart devices, can we realistically expect manufacturers to provide security updates throughout the lifetime of the hardware? The average age of cars on US roads in 2016 was 11.6 years as opposed to software standards where a decade is considered like an eternity. For instance, Microsoft, the company behind the most widely-used operating system, announced in 2017 the end of the extended support for Windows Vista, released in 2007.[12] The general support had already stopped in 2012. If even one of the most stable software companies, who produces an operating system used by hundreds of millions of people, is not willing or capable of supporting the operating system sold along with most computers bought between 2007 and 2009, should we expect a hardware company to be able to do any better?

The planned obsolescence of smart devices is indeed planned, as the software's maintenance period is often explicitly mentioned by big companies. For instance, Google will stop updating the software of their Nexus phones two years after their introduction. Security fixes are however guaranteed for another year.[13] This behaviour results in a lot of perfectly-functioning hardware waste, and the unnecessary production and transport of new smartphones, which have a non-negligible environmental impact. Using a hackable device is, however, not only a financial risk to its user, but also a threat to our communication infrastructure.

The IoT explosion is analogous to the revolution of personal computing of the 80's when most computer hardware, operating systems, and applications were incompatible. This meant that programs had to be written for each computer and operating system. Over the years, both the hardware and software interfaces of personal computers

Smart watches are growing in popularity.
Photo credit: CC0 Public Domain

got standardized, allowing applications to be written once and used on multiple machines and operating systems. Nowadays, old applications can also run on newer versions of operating systems.

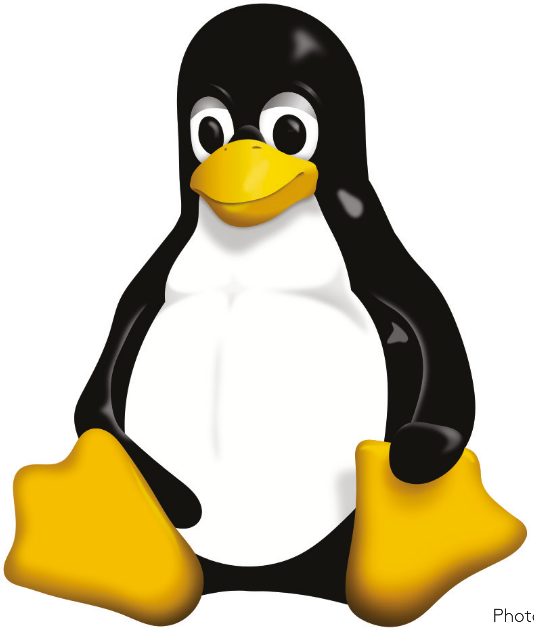
While applications may be executed on a wide variety of operating systems, the operating system sold with a computer may not necessarily be easily upgradable or even fully maintained during the entire length of the warranty. For instance, the user editions of Microsoft Windows 7, the de-facto standard operating system of the personal computing, were sold until October 31, 2014, while its main support ended on January 13, 2015, a mere 2.5 months later. Security fixes are, however, provided for another five years.[14]

When the computer's operating system becomes completely unmaintained, users are left with the following choices: buy a new computer; keep on using the current version; update to the next version; or install an alternative operating system. The first choice is the least sustainable one, as the hardware could be used for a longer time, until its processing power becomes unsatisfactory. The second choice is not a responsible one, unless the computer is not connected to the Internet, as it may be taken over by hackers. These hackers may use the computer as part of an illegal virtual network of infected computers (botnet), which can be rented to take down parts of the Internet.[15] They may also encrypt the users' files and request a ransom to decrypt them, like with the Wannacry virus from spring 2017, which infected more than 200,000 computers that had disabled or delayed Windows 7's security updates.[16]

"These hackers may use the computer as part of an illegal virtual network of infected computers (botnet), which can be rented to take down parts of the Internet."

With the third and fourth options, updating or changing the operating system, there are no guarantees that the computer will still be able to use all the features that it was originally sold for, or that it will be able to perform as fast as it used to. The ability to update to a newer version of Windows is not guaranteed and depends on the availability of all the drivers for the newer version and the knowledge to find out which ones are needed. Most alternative operating systems already come with all the necessary drivers and will most likely work without checking what components are installed or installing any driver. That makes them a good candidate for replacing an unmaintained operating system. They also provide new versions continuously, while remaining compatible with older computers. The most popular alternative operating systems are free of charge and based on the Linux

Ransomware Wannacry's window, asking users to pay to recover their files.
Photo credit: CC0 Public Domain



Tux, the mascot of Linux
Photo credit: CC0 Public Domain

kernel, which will be introduced in the next section. One of the most popular Linux-based operating systems is Canonical's Ubuntu, which can be downloaded for free and installed on most personal computers by following a simple tutorial,[17] usually without the need to install any additional driver.

The Open Source Movement Shifted the Paradigm

Linux is much more than free and open source software. It revolutionized the way software is developed. Instead of following a pyramidal approach where people at the top would design the entire project and give directions to people under them, Linux's development model is akin to a bazaar, where everyone can propose changes.[18] Before talking more about this model, let's introduce what the Linux kernel actually is, and how central it is in increasing the lifetime of our smart devices.

The kernel is a piece of software at the heart of the operating system. It exposes the ever-changing hardware to applications, through a set of standard and stable interfaces. This is what allows an application to work on multiple machines and operating systems. The Linux kernel is open source and, although originally limited to personal computers, it is now found on most computers. It powers most of the Internet's infrastructure (websites, networking equipments, etc.), and is used in/on more than 80% of smartphones,[19] 65% of tablets,[20] the majority of smart TVs,[21] most cars and in-flight infotainment systems,[22] and 498 out of the 500 fastest supercomputers.[23]

Linus Torvalds, the creator of Linux, attributes the success of Linux to its software license, the GPLv2. This licence guarantees users the following freedoms:[24]

- The freedom to run the program as you wish for any purpose (freedom 0).
- The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour (freedom 2).
- The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others (freedom 3). By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

This licence enforced an open development model,[25] which mandates anyone making changes to Linux to redistribute their changes back to the project. It created an incentive for people to collaborate, whether they come from academia, the industry or are private individuals. Nowadays, a new Linux kernel is released roughly every 3 months by Linus Torvalds. Linux 4.10, released mid-February 2017, saw the contributions of more than 1500 developers, out of whom 27% were private individuals and the rest were employed by 218 companies.[26]

Companies and individuals collaborate on the same Linux version for widely different reasons, making the Linux kernel very generic. The changes made by individuals or companies are accepted after people working on the project agree that the change will not cause compatibility problems with applications and/or hardware. This enables companies to optimize their products while allowing them to always update to the latest version and benefit from the other improvements made by the Linux community without having to re-do the same changes for every version.

Contributors to the Linux kernel use it themselves, and make changes according to their own or someone else's needs. Companies like Intel, AMD, ARM or TI contribute to Linux to make it as easy as possible to use their hardware platforms, which drive their sales up. If a company does not have the knowledge to make changes, they can contract service companies such as Red Hat or Collabora to do so. Individuals or companies may also collaborate to create a "bounty" that is high-enough to fund the development of a feature, using a platform such as bountysource.com.[27] Individuals can directly tweak Linux to suit their needs or for fun. In some cases user communities have written software to support decades-old hardware after companies stopped supporting them, beating this planned obsolescence (e.g. writing drivers for NVIDIA's deprecated graphics processors from 1998-2010).[28]

The development model of Linux is the opposite of Microsoft Windows'. No company owns or dictates the direction of the project, and instead of selling different versions every couple of years, Linux follows a gradual improvement model which is never allowed to break anyone's computer. This is sufficient to guarantee that users never have to throw away their hardware because of software reasons, as there will always be a new update to improve the operating system's performance, power efficiency, and security. This allows Linux-based operating systems to run on 29-years-old processors (Intel's 80486) when the more traditional product-based approach fails to deliver security updates a decade after its introduction. This helps to reduce the computer-related waste by keeping alive computers that are fast enough for their task, while not having to compromise on security or features.

This alternative development model is not just a nice idea, it is also a very profitable business. Last year, Red Hat became the first Open Source company to generate revenue of more than two billion dollars a year, doubling their revenue in just four years.[29] This model is being adopted by a lot of companies, Microsoft included,[30] which can be seen in the domination of Linux in most domains.

Multiple service companies now sell their services to other companies to modify Linux in the way they need, guaranteeing that anyone with a bit of money could make sure their IoT deployment is maintained. This is different from the current model where the hardware and software is controlled by a unique company, and users have a very limited control of the level of support they will receive.

The open source development model has however unique challenges. In order for the development to be sustainable, contributors need to stay engaged so as to: review other people's changes; verify that they do not have unintended side effects; and file bug reports if the bugs still managed to make it into a released version. Engagement leads to a virtuous circle, since the more used and developed a project is, the more likely it is that improvements will be made, which attracts more users and developers. Finally, the open nature of the development also brings certification issues as everyone is free to change the code. This may make this model not applicable to all software, as laws may prevent user changes.[31]

Beating the Planned Obsolescence of IOT devices

In order to increase the life expectancy of smart devices, the lack of software and security updates should never be a reason to scrap perfectly-working hardware. However, unlike personal computers, smart devices are too new to have enough hardware standardisation to expect Linux to automatically run on them. This increases the cost of maintenance of smart devices that use a modified version of Linux, or a closed-source operating system of their own.

Regardless of the technical choice, some manufacturers have shown a lot of hostility against the idea of users tinkering with and fixing their devices. Indeed, some manufacturers state that their customers merely buy a license to operate the device they bought. For example, John Deere actively prevent fixes for their tractors, forcing some US farmers to go back to their dealer for even trivial repair.[32] John Deere has been using the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DCMA) to prevent making changes to its software, putting farmers at the mercy of John Deere's dealers to fix their tractors in a timely fashion

"The lack of software and security updates should never be a reason to scrap perfectly-working hardware."

and will continue to do so in the future. This approach of fiercely protecting intellectual property rights opposes the collaboration-based open source model and promotes the planned obsolescence of products. These sort of problems arise when hardware manufacturers also write the software for their platform.

Fortunately, some companies do release products with open source software and allow users to tinker with it. For example, Google's laptops (Chromebooks), which are quite popular in the USA,[33] use a modified version of the Linux kernel along with their web-oriented user interface (ChromeOS). Automatic feature and security updates are provided for five years.[34] After this point, security-conscious users are free to switch to using any version of Linux,[35] at the potential cost of losing features. This is due to laptop manufacturers not only having no interest but also being negatively incentivised to make sure their hardware work for longer than the stated time. One or multiple users could, however, rework or pay a company to add the missing features and get them accepted in Linux, thus beating the planned obsolescence of the product.

Small environment-friendly IoT companies may not have the resources to provide security updates for their products for decades. By basing their products on popular open source platforms and by making sure they are upgradable over-the-air, these companies can give the best chances for their product to be maintainable as long as people are interested in them. Indeed, such open source platforms are beginning to appear (Raspberry Pi zero W, C.H.I.P. pro, etc.), and they already have an impressive community backing them, which maximizes the chances of security bugs being fixed.

Software Should Not Spell the End of Your Old Smart Device

The Internet of Things has the potential to make our society more efficient, offsetting the environmental and economic cost of deploying this network of smart devices. However, they are currently associated with security issues (ransomware or botnets) and, when they do get updated by their manufacturers, they still have an expiration date after which users should stop using them, if they do not want to expose themselves and others to increased risk.

Fortunately, another development model has been used for decades by the open source community. Paid and hobbyist developers collaborate on software development in order to improve it for everyone. The Open Source model, by providing system improvements, lowers products costs, increases device longevity and security. This even benefits people who do not have the skills or the experience to tweak computers.

This collaborative model creates a more environmentally sustainable and decentralized business model, while the rest of the industry is striving for greater centralization and control of the few over the many. This alternative model enables any software company to be contracted by anyone to maintain the software, or improve the software to fit the ever-changing purpose of the users of smart devices and wireless sensors. Thus the environmental and climate cost is reduced by the increased longevity of such devices.

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Arne Næss Symposium

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Photo credit: Sarah Shrestha-Howlett

Tvergastein bears the name of Arne Næss' cabin retreat in the mountains of Hallingskarvet. It was there that Næss, an activist and one of the most wide ranging philosophers of the last century, wrote the majority of his work. These writings, his unique ecophilosophy, and his life of activism continue to inspire environmentalists and scholars in Norway and abroad. In making this journal its namesake, we aim to similarly join academia with advocacy for the environment. We aspire to the "enormous open views at Tvergastein" and the perspective Næss found there.

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