

Counter Ideology and Evolutionary Change: A Proposal for a Research and Political Action Program¹

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To obtain meaningful egalitarianism in socioeconomic relations, the legitimacy of the existing social structure must be challenged with a radical counter ideology disseminated among the working class that could then be transformed into militant direct action. Such action need not seek an immediate end or overthrow of government. Instead, it could seek strategic changes in the relations of production that would set in motion radical evolutionary epoch change. One such idea proposed is the use of militant mass direct action to require that all corporate boards of directors be comprised exclusively by worker and community representatives. This would provide worker-citizens real-world experience to habituate them with self-direction and self-organization that in turn can become the basis for new alternative and more equitable forms of societal organization. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: <journal@transformativestudies.org> Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2008 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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If one argues that a radically different society based on egalitarian anarcho-communist principles is possible and could benefit the majority

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of people, then it is necessary to directly address, however unpopular, the biggest threat to considering such more seriously: that is, the elite power-brokers that control much of the political, social, and economic sectors of our society. For example, the class-conscious elite of the United States (Domhoff, 1975; Mills, 1956) are in control of the means of material production, the result of which produces the following:

All necessarily subordinate themselves and their interests to the overriding need to serve the needs of the owners and managers of the society, who, ... with their control over resources, are easily able to shape the ideological system (the media, schools, universities and so on) in their interests, to determine the basic conditions within which the political process will function, its parameters and basic agenda, and to call upon the resources of state violence, when need be, to suppress any challenge to entrenched power. The point was formulated ... by John Jay, the President of the Continental Congress and the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court: "The people who own the country ought to govern it." And, of course, they do, whatever political faction may be in power. Matters could hardly be otherwise when economic power is narrowly concentrated and ... basic ... investment decisions, ... are in principle removed from democratic control. (Chomsky and Pateman, 2005, 149)

Thus, the elite perpetuate their control over ideological production through funding and staffing of think tanks, policy formation groups, and universities (Asimakopoulos, 2007; Domhoff, 2002); the dissemination of information through ownership of the mass media (Chomsky, 1994, 2002; Greenwald, 2004); and governance through political institutions (Chomsky, 1989; Domhoff, 2002, 1975; Mills, 1956; Palast, 2004). Furthermore, the elite effectively use their power to reproduce existing social relations by preempting the emergence of counter ideologies. In addition, they reproduce capitalist socioeconomic relations internationally, as predicted by Marx, through globalization based on neoliberal policies constructed and imposed by the U.S. government which they control (Asimakopoulos, 2006; McMichael, 2004; O'Hara, 2004).

Continuation of such total domination of society is achieved in large part by controlling the educational system for the masses. On the one hand, educational institutions (such as the corporate universities) are used as a tool of propaganda and indoctrination by the elite to reinforce

their hegemonic culture: “[the masses] are the ... targets of the mass media and a public education system geared to obedience and training in needed skills, including the skill of repeating patriotic slogans on timely occasions” (Chomsky and Pateman, 2005, 171). On the other hand, the quality of public education is attacked through funding mechanisms, resulting in inferior schooling for the poor and working class (Kozol, 1992, 2005). Access to affordable, quality, higher education is additionally being limited through reduced state funding, leading to rising tuition costs, thus putting higher education out of reach for working-class students (Attewell and Lavin, 2007; King and Bannon, 2002). And, since the poor are more likely to oppose existing socioeconomic relations, limiting the quality or extent of their educational opportunities also limits the emergence of working-class intellectuals (or what Gramsci termed *organic intellectuals*) who would be more likely to instigate radical ideological challenges such as the author of this work.

In addition, elite ownership of the mass media inhibits the spread of counter ideologies. Rather, it promotes the reproduction of the dominant legitimizing ideology by re-socializing the perceptions of entire populations (Chomsky, 1989, 1994, 2002; Goodman and Dretzin, 2005). “In a well functioning state capitalist democracy like the United States, anything that might frighten the men of property is kept far from public eye” (Chomsky and Pateman, 2005,160). Thus, more accurate and balanced reporting is supplanted by ‘news’ heavily laced with a dogmatic agenda that supports the socioeconomic elite. For example, the Program on International Policy (PIPA)/Knowledge Networks Poll found Fox network viewers were far more likely to have inaccurate beliefs regarding basic facts related to economics, foreign policy, etc., which reflected Republican propaganda aired on the network, and that, not surprisingly, were more likely to support Bush administration policies (Greenwald, 2004).

Consequently, fundamental social change can only occur through social movements promoting counter ideologies, challenging the legitimacy of the current dominant ideology that reinforces existing relations in production and consumption (Asimakopoulos, 2007; Gramsci, 1971; Weber, 1978). The threat of the power of divergent thought or ideas is demonstrated by totalitarian regimes which censure the mass media while persecuting those who espouse non-sanctioned ideologies. Regimes like China’s behave in this manner because, as Weber (1978) had argued, when a system’s legitimizing ideology/authority is undermined, it becomes unstable and prone to

collapse. We need look no further than the demise of the former Soviet Union to substantiate this.

Furthermore, for change to be lasting, the relations in production and consumption and so the mode of production itself, would have to be transformed. Anything short of a change in the mode of production would leave the fundamental system intact, exposing working-class gains to constant attacks by capitalists (Rocker, 1938). This is demonstrated by the erosion of working-class gains in Western European economies as a result of globalization; the race to the bottom from competition with low-cost labor in developing nations; and a disciplined American contingent workforce (Asimakopoulos, 2006).

However, as Gramsci noted, before advocating new societal arrangements, first there would have to be a demonstration of their superiority and feasibility relative to existing models. Here its important to remember that capitalism, as with anarcho-communism, was not developed overnight by Adam Smith, nor did it take immediate political control of society. Instead, capitalism evolved over a long period of time and involved numerous hegemonic struggles between the aristocratic and bourgeois classes. Likewise, anarcho-communism's theoretical principles have been evolving for the last few centuries, but unlike capitalism has had only sporadic real world examples emerge at various times and places. Yet, in its limited actualization, anarcho-communism has been able to demonstrate the feasibility of the theory in practice.

Theoretical Analysis

According to Kotz, McDonough, and Reich (1994) ideology and political institutions shape class conflict and thus, the relations in production and consumption. The outcome of class conflict and the resulting shape of class relations determine the creation of new economic, political, and ideological institutional structures referred to as a Social Structure of Accumulation (SSA) that determines the distribution of expansionary gains as well. However, the SSAs may or may not be conducive to future expansion and accumulation, depending on the capitalists' willingness to invest which is determined in turn by these external institutional arrangements.

The institutional approach to capitalist expansion by Kotz, McDonough, and Reich (1994) underscores the classic Marxist critique of overproduction-underconsumption (Marx, 1978b, 1978c). More so, Wolfson (2003) observed that stagnation results when either capital or labor dominates the other. As Table 1 shows, in free market periods

capital dominates labor, leading to contraction caused by underconsumption; but when labor dominates capital, it leads to contraction due to a profit squeeze.

Table 1. Power, contraction, and expansion

Dominant capital period	$\uparrow\pi$	$\downarrow W$	$\downarrow C$	$\uparrow Q$	contraction due to underconsumption
Dominant labor period	$\uparrow W$	$\uparrow C$	$\downarrow\pi$	$\downarrow Q$	contraction due to profit squeeze
Capital balanced with labor	$\uparrow W$	$\uparrow C$	$\uparrow Q$	$\uparrow\pi$	economic expansion

Whereas π is corporate profits, W is wages, C is consumption, and Q is output.

Accordingly, he argues that periods of expansion are based on SSAs that regulate class conflict, leading to a balance of power between capital and labor. This can be expressed roughly as profit and wage considerations being balanced—leading to a level of purchasing power, consumption, and aggregate demand capable of clearing output. However, historical contingencies would make it difficult to sustain such a balance of power between capital and labor, which would lead to long periods of expansion under stable SSAs and contraction under crumbling SSAs. Ultimately, all SSAs, regardless of the power arrangements will be destabilized because these are based on a capitalist mode of production. As such, capital inevitably obtains the upper hand relative to labor:

Capitalists have a decided advantage in a capitalist economy: they own the capital. As a result, they also have more income and wealth. They can use their privileged position to influence the state to their advantage, both when they share power with labor and when they dominate labor. (Wolfson, 2003, 261)

This triggers a reaction from labor, leading to the ongoing dialectical succession of emerging and declining SSAs, depending on which class dominates at a given historical moment.

Wolfson’s argument of a profit squeeze underscores another important fact. Even if labor obtains an upper-hand through revitalized movements and pro-labor government policies as many left wing theorists predict such as Clawson (2003) or Silver (2003), it still would not provide a lasting solution. Instead, this would lead to a temporary illusion of prosperity and ephemeral gains for the working class. This is true because it would inevitably result in a profit squeeze which would trigger a recession and a realignment of class power anew. Such a seesaw

between downturns caused by either insufficient purchasing power (underconsumption) or a profit squeeze will continue as long as class conflict takes place within a capitalist framework.

In contrast, anarcho-communist principles of societal organization resolve the problems of overproduction-underconsumption and a profit squeeze. Wolfson and other SSA theorists imply that the real problem is private property, a long-held position of anarchists and Marxists:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression of the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. (Marx, 1978a, 4-5)

If, for example, private ownership of the means of production is replaced by communal ownership, profit considerations are eliminated from the production decisions. Thus, there could be a situation where $W = C = Q$ = market clearing (whereas W is wages, C is consumption, and Q is output). This is because under anarcho-communist societal organization the worker is also the owner (self-direction). Since all workers would also be owners, it is reasonable to argue that all net profits (or the majority of them) would be paid out to the workers either as wages or profits which would become synonymous. This creates a far broader distribution of purchasing power and thus aggregate demand, leading to market clearing by eliminating the conflict between profits and wages. This is in contrast to capitalism where profits are concentrated in the hands of a few whose demand is insufficient to clear markets and who are likely to invest in either low-wage or non-job generating sectors (Aronowitz, 2005). Thus, the capitalists have replaced the aristocracy in terms of who determines how societal resources are managed and distributed. Anarcho-communism replaces individual with societal control over the decision-making process of how major societal resources are to be used. This can be alternatively stated in Marxist terms as private life merging with the public good or civil society absorbing the abstract citizen.

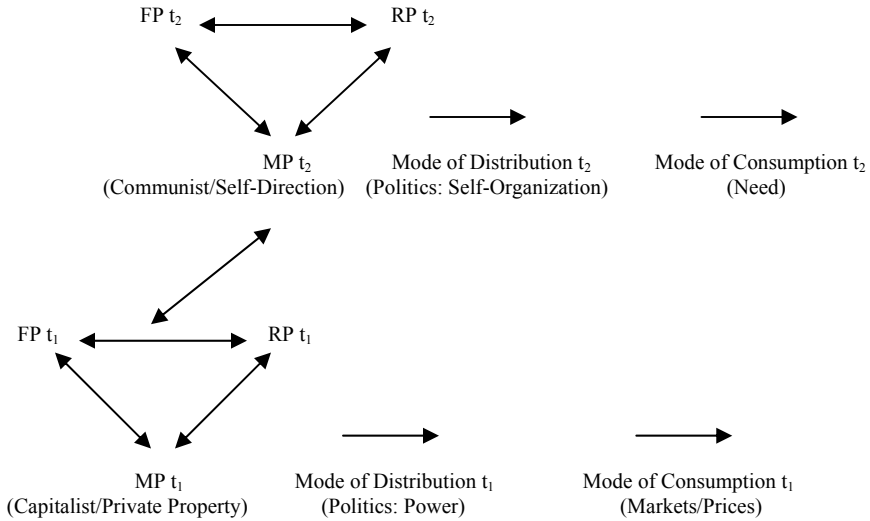


Fig. 1. Dialectical Change. Mode of Production (MP); Relations of Production (RP); Forces of Production (FP)

Furthermore, according to Marxism, the forces and relations of production are independent of each other although the two interact (Braverman, 1998). Also, there is nothing predetermined about the relations of production that can take on a life of their own which explains the emphasis by Marx on class consciousness as a precondition for working-class *action*. In turn, the forces and relations of production shape the mode of production while the mode of production determines the mode of distribution and thus consumption (Marx, 1973). Changes in either the forces or relations of production alter the system, causing it to evolve into a different epoch in t_2 (figure 1).

In other words, Marxism argues that although the forces of production reside primarily in the economic sphere, they are determined by multiple, interrelated variables that shape the growth of the means of production, such as knowledge, political structures, culture, and the very relations of production. The forces of production are in and of themselves unrelated to distribution, which is determined by the relations of production. Moreover, the relations of production are also relations in consumption. It is within both spheres that *dominant* ideological structures of legitimation are constructed and promoted through political and cultural institutions like the media. Therefore, economics and ideology interact to form a given mode of production and distribution. Once a mode of production is established, the forces of production reproduced within it do not necessarily remain unchanged, but can be altered. Similarly, a

mode of production reproduces the relations of production which do not necessarily remain unchanged, but can be altered. In addition, “While Marx did give primacy to the means of production, he never conceived of it as a simple case of the means of production determining the relations” (Elwell, 2006, 36). Therefore, the relations of production can be altered by chance/evolution but also deliberate human agency such as direct action (Rocker, 1938) fuelled by the ideological delegitimation of society’s production-consumption structures in industry and politics (Weber, 1978). Since the relations of production are a determinant of the mode, altering the former can alter the latter and in turn the mode of distribution and consumption.

As for the fundamental principles of anarchist forms of societal organization Guerin (1970), Rocker (1938), and Ward (1982) provide an excellent review. Kropotkin (2005) was one of the first to develop an anarcho-communist variant of anarchism. To be clear, this paper considers systems such as that of the former Soviet Union, China, North Korea, etc. to be no more than brutal dictatorships often exceeding the hypocrisy of the U.S. especially the new communist-capitalist China. One concise description of the basic perspective of true anarcho-communism is as follows:

Anarchist communism stresses egalitarianism and the abolition of social hierarchy and class distinctions that arise from unequal wealth distribution, the abolition of capitalism and money, and the collective production and distribution of wealth by means of voluntary associations. In anarchist communism, the state and property would no longer exist. ... Systems of production and distribution would be managed by their participants. The abolition of wage labor is central to anarchist communism. With distribution of wealth being based on self-determined needs, people would be free to engage in whatever activities they found most fulfilling and would no longer have to engage in work for which they have neither the temperament nor the aptitude. ... Anarchist communists argue that any economic system based on wage labor and private property requires a coercive state apparatus to enforce property rights and to maintain the unequal economic relationships that inevitably arise. (Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarcho-communism>)

Interestingly though, an anarcho-communist society is not utopian. It has been the basis of societal organization, in one form or another, both spontaneously and planned throughout history. “An Anarchist society, a

society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence ... far from being a speculative vision of a future society, it is a description of a mode of human organization, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of, the dominant authoritarian trends of our society” (Ward, 1982, 14). Multiple examples of anarchy/communism in practice have been provided by the old U.S. labor movement such as the Seattle General Strike of 1919 (Brecher, 1997); the Paris Commune of 1871 and 1968; the early Soviets in Russia 1917; Kronstadt 1917; Makhnovtchina/Ukraine 1919-1921; post-1919 Italy; and the Spanish Revolution/Catalonia 1936-1939. It is generally accepted that these real life examples ultimately failed due to overwhelming reactionary state force, internal sabotage and betrayal, organizational problems, and timing. Timing is of particular importance in that according to Marxism economic preconditions need to be met for fundamental epoch change. Namely, the forces of production must be fully developed until the relations of production become their fetters. This would generate pressure to alter the relations of production in a manner that permits the full-employment of the productive forces.

However, anarchist theory implies that the relations of production also need a level of development for new forms of societal organization to be lasting. For example, Gramsci (1971) had argued through his theory of hegemony that a precondition for socialism includes the ideological development of a feasible alternative or *counter-hegemony* to existing forms of societal organization. This would be accomplished through the objective societal education of the working class, combined with experience functioning within alternative forms of organization. Rocker (1938) also emphasized worker education as a precondition for action. In addition, Bakunin, Malatesta, and Proudhon (as cited in Guerin, 1970) concluded that the anarchist experiments of their time ultimately failed because workers lacked the education and overall experience with these new societal forms of organization rather than inherent systemic flaws of anarchism. For example, the levels of economic efficiency in production during the Spanish Revolution of 1936 had been the highest relative to that of any other under capitalist organization (Chomsky and Pateman, 2005).

Evolutionary Counter Ideology

In order to obtain lasting fundamental changes benefiting the working class, anarchists and many Marxists argue direct action would have to be revolutionary, leading to new radical forms of societal organization

based on the principles of self-organization in civil society and self-direction in production. Such societal change can be both revolutionary and evolutionary. One way of measuring societal change is by the extent to which personnel in positions of domination are exchanged (Dahrendorf, 1959). This results in a continuum of structural change ranging from total change of personnel (sudden) to no exchange (evolutionary change) with partial exchange being the midpoint. However, sudden change may not necessarily be radical but radical change can be sudden or evolutionary. Thus revolutionary change could refer to and is used interchangeably in the literature to describe both sudden and radical change. What then determines sudden versus radical change? Radical change is positively correlated with the intensity of class conflict, whereas sudden change is positively correlated with the level of violence:

... intensity refers to the energy expenditure and degree of involvement of conflicting parties. A particular conflict may be said to be of high intensity if the cost of victory or defeat is high for the parties concerned. . . . The violence of conflict relates rather to its manifestations than to its causes; it is a matter of the weapons that are chosen by conflict groups to express their hostilities. Again, a continuum can be constructed ranging from peaceful discussions to militant struggles such as strikes and civil wars. . . . The scale of degree of violence, including discussion and debate, contest and competition, struggle and war, displays its own patterns and regularities. Violent class struggles, or class wars, are but one point on this scale. (Dahrendorf, 1959, 212)

Although sudden and radical change can occur together as with high levels of violence and intensity these concepts could also be mutually exclusive. This paper argues in favor of evolutionary radical change to prevent the rise of unforeseen new totalitarian regimes as with the Bolsheviks. As important, an overnight abolition of government or private productive property would result in various immediate dislocations. Specifically, sudden/spontaneous revolutions often lack organization and leadership resulting in ephemeral riots, random violence, or chaos. What is more, societal dislocations of catastrophic proportions have been the outcome of sudden radical change as with the sudden shift in the 1990s of the Soviet Union toward free markets that devastated an entire generation while giving birth to a new dominant class, the *oligarchs*. According to Polanyi (2001) the same catastrophic

impact was experienced in England when capitalism asserted total control over society within one generation.

Moreover, even a revolution with strong leadership is doomed to fail. According to anarchist theory any elite group, including intellectuals, ultimately will impose its own agenda at the expense of the many. This led Bakunin to predict the rise of Bolshevik totalitarianism. According to Bakunin, the intellectual elites “will seek to assume the reins of state power ... exploiting popular struggles for their own ends, and in the name of ‘science’ and their alleged superior understanding will drive the ‘ignorant masses’ to a form of ‘socialism’ that will ‘serve to conceal the domination of the masses by a handful of privileged elite’” (Chomsky and Pateman, 2005, 151). In other words, every form of government is a form of control. As such, any true and meaningful change to obtain an egalitarian society must be led by the masses themselves. Marx had argued people need to achieve class consciousness in order to engage in class action led by the intellectuals. Similarly, anarchists also believe it is the people themselves that need to act rather than to be led by other elites—intellectuals included.

In addition, history has shown that people themselves fail to make new forms of societal organization achieve lasting power, let alone workable models, during sudden radical change. Many theorists and revolutionaries have concluded a major reason is the lack of experience and education of the working class with these alternative forms of societal organization (Gramsci, 1971). For example, Proudhon felt the revolution of 1848 could not bring full anarchism because it occurred historically prematurely relative to the level of development in the relations of production (Guerin, 1970). Additionally, for the masses to engage in a decentralized functional revolution without elite leadership requires societal education to obtain a level of class consciousness and understanding that would not require the reproduction of an authoritarian social structure. Thus the paradox for anarchists that Proudhon realized: to eventually obtain a communal society one must accept the state until there is a sufficient *base* developed among the population that can understand and function within an alternative socioeconomic framework (Gramsci, 1971). According to Guerin:

Proudhon, in the midst of the 1848 Revolution, wisely thought that it would be asking too much of his artisans to go, immediately, all the way to “anarchy.” In default of this maximum program, he sketched out a minimum libertarian program: progressive reduction in the power of the State, parallel development of the power of the

people from below, through what he called clubs, and which the man of the twentieth century would call councils. (1970, 152-53)

Therefore, it is transformative societal education and objective information via a free mass media that will ultimately spark action and change (Asimakopoulos, 2007; Gramsci, 1971). In addition, such change must be evolutionary by a process of transformative education and direct social action in order to challenge ideologically key elements of existing relations in production and consumption. This does not mean that such change cannot be highly revolutionary and radical (Dahrendorf, 1959) because changing the relations of production makes it possible to alter the mode of production and thus the relations in production and consumption (distribution). This is why national elites through their control of the state always attempt to control the free flow of information and the media. This is true in dictatorships like China with overt control and censorship and true in Western democracies like the U.S. with covert control and censorship, via a more advanced and sophisticated concentration of media ownership and corporate governance (Chomsky, 1989, 1994, 2002; Domhoff, 2002; Greenwald, 2004).

The Radical Seed for New Relations of Production

The working class does not need to end or overthrow democratic government to obtain egalitarianism. Instead, it could engage in militant direct action for strategic demands that challenge existing relations in production laying the foundations for fundamental and lasting evolutionary change. But what would be an example of such a demand? Corporate domination of government has replaced the state as the power base of societal control. Therefore, to paraphrase Marx and Lenin, it is control of the corporation that workers should target to obtain control over production-consumption arrangements, including the state in the process. Practically speaking, this translates into control of corporate policy-making and staffing of the corporations' boards of directors. The working class can demand that each corporate board of directors be comprised exclusively by workers of the enterprise and community representatives, while leaving stock ownership private. This is synonymous with ending *private control* of private productive property and establishing private ownership, but with *public governance*.

This proposal is the logical evolution of the anarcho-communist concept of self-management (Proudhon, 1980) and Bakunin's Federated Communes that would be the basis of self-rule. Such communes would

then evolve into Labor Councils to replace government (Rocker, 1938, 73). Although much of this has not occurred on any long-term basis, the related Anarcho-Syndicalist concept of works councils has become a reality in some industrialized nations.

Germany and France offer good examples of how works councils operate. First, council members are elected by their coworkers. These works councils are mandated by law for firms of a certain size, but they are not unions (although in southern Europe they may act as such). This means the councils cannot negotiate over wage issues (as in Northern Europe) and are often required by law to seek cooperation with employers (Rogers and Streeck, 1994).

An important difference between national works councils is whether they are given codetermination in addition to rights of consultation and information. When only consultation and information rights are provided, the councils still have a high degree of power within the production process that greatly empowers workers, as is so clearly demonstrated below:

Works councils laws invariably obligate employers to disclose to the council information about major new investment plans, acquisition and product market strategies, planned reorganization of production, use of technology, and so on. And council laws typically require employers to consult with the council on workplace and personnel issues, such as work reorganization, new technology acquisition, reductions or accretions to the work force, transfers of work, over-time, and health and safety. (Rogers and Streeck, 1994, 100)

However, when works councils are given codetermination they become even more powerful labor institutions because codetermination requires that employers obtain approval for certain decisions from the councils. Should the council refuse to approve a managerial decision, it can mount legal action and challenge the employer. Therefore, the laws provide resolution mechanisms such as arbitration, grievance committees, and special labor courts. Germany is an excellent example of a country with works councils enjoying codetermination rights:

German works councils enjoy information rights on financial matters ... In addition, however, they have codetermination rights on such matters as principles of remuneration, introduction of new payment methods, fixing of job and bonus rates and performance-

related pay, allocation of working hours, regulation of overtime and short-time working, leave arrangements, vacation plans, suggestion schemes, and the introduction and use of technical devices to monitor employees' performance. They also enjoy prescribed codetermination rights on individual staff movements, including hiring, evaluation, redeployment, and dismissal, and the right to a "reconciliation of interests" between the council and the employer on a wide range of other matters bearing on the operation of the firm. (Rogers and Streeck, 1994, 101)

When talking about 'reconciliation of interests' it is important to note this means workers also have power over what is produced, as well as any closures and relocations in parts or all of the company plant. Consequently, codetermination indicates extensive workers' power in its active institutional form. Even in the absence of codetermination, works councils in and of themselves are indicative of higher levels of institutionalized workers' power, given their right to access company information. This is the case with France's works councils where they are given rights to information and consultation, but not codetermination.

The societal control of corporate boards represents the next evolutionary step from works councils toward anarcho-communist societal organization with an intermediary compromise to the abolition of private productive property. Such a fundamental change in class power relations will alter corporate behavior to reflect the public good and eliminate production externalities and corporate free-rider problems. Communities could prohibit the use of corporate wealth/ownership to influence the political process or the news media. The managerial class of capitalist private property could be instructed to operate under new parameters of production, using sustainable technology, offering all employees substantive benefits, living wages, and reasonable workloads. Furthermore, this would also eliminate the most common excuse that corporations offer for not being socially responsible: "we will not be competitive if we employ these practices, because our competitors do not." If the community has the final say on all boards (but not the share of the profits) it is reasonable to argue that a consensus of demands will arise with high corporate responsibility, which will level the cost playing field for companies. This form of evolutionary revolution is very radical in that the authority of private productive property over society would be seriously limited. Yet, this would provide fundamental changes that do not require the immediate destruction of societal institutions.

Table 2. Wealth distribution in 2001 for the bottom 90% top 10% and 1% of households

	Bottom 90%	Top 10%	Top 1%
Percent of:			
Total Net Worth	15.5*	84.4**	33.4
Ownership of All Stocks	15.5*	89.3**	33.5
Pension Accounts	39.6	60.3	13.3
Business Equity	10.4	89.6	57.3
Debt	74.1	25.9	5.8

(Source: Domhoff 2006, <http://whorulesamerica.net/power/wealth.html>)

*Bottom 80%

**Top 20%

Furthermore, what is suggested would lay the Gramscian foundation for a true anarcho-communist epoch via a combination of direct action and democracy to achieve the ending of corporate rule over the media, politics, and production. Also, worker and community governance of corporations could evolve into a ground-breaking real-life experimental school for the practice of self-direction and organization (Gramsci, 1971; Guerin, 1970; Proudhon, 1980; Ward, 1982). This would demonstrate to workers that they themselves are capable of self-directed production without corporate elite owners (Brecher, 1997; Chomsky and Pateman, 2005). Subsequently, the citizenry's realization that since the majority of stocks are owned by the elite few, ending private productive property would be in the interest of society at large. It may only take a public awareness of the fact that the top 1% of U.S. households received 34.8% of the stock market gains of 1989-98, while the richest 10% received 72.5%, and the bottom 80% received only 13.6% (Mishel, Bernstein, and Boushey, 2003). Looking at table 2 it becomes clearer just how concentrated ownership of productive property is in the United States. Combined with the lessons in transformative education and self-direction, this would provide the impetus for self-rule.

Hopefully, as the public better comprehends that control of the economic base of society can result in working-class goals through control of productive property, government as we know it will be rendered unnecessary. Thus, new direct action to end government would be in a stronger position once the economic base of society is seized and relations of production have evolved. Its replacement could be the fruit of the radical seed of human social evolution: an administrative system such as Bakunin's federated communes based on anarcho-communist

principles including self-rule and self-direction. Mechanisms, such as those discussed by Proudhon (Guerin, 1970), could also be put into place to guard against the emergence of authoritarianism. For example, one-year service limits on governing bodies combined with the ancient Greek concept of filling public office by lottery, could produce a more advanced political system less vulnerable to large-scale corruption than many in existence today. This invariably could lead to the merging of private and public life and a great reduction in material inequality.

New Evolutionary Relations of Consumption

New productive relations would also require new relations in consumption. Namely, a socioeconomic system must address not only how to produce, whether it be under self-management or not, but also how to distribute products and services, whether it is based on a wage system or not. There is virtual agreement among Marxist and progressive scholars regarding the short-comings of distribution based on a wage/market system. Interestingly, whenever self-management was actually practiced in the form of works councils or community councils as in Spain, 1936, Russia, 1917, etc. they failed because of sabotage and betrayal. When left alone from intervention by centralized political control these forms of organization were as, if not more, efficient than under private ownership (Chomsky and Pateman, 2005). However, one of the main problems was to figure out how one pays in and gets from the community resources—distribution in other words (Guerin, 1970). Practically this meant counting hours worked as payment into the system for ‘community credits’ with which to ‘purchase’ supplies at the community ‘store.’ This was the practical solution to problems with more idealistic anarcho-communist formulas of exchange mechanisms that would try to create a working state of the slogan ‘to each according to need, from each according to ability.’ Unfortunately, such a simple idea turned out to be very difficult to put in practice. How can community governance be combined with an economic system that is egalitarian and fair? Namely, how do we *count*?

Unfortunately, many anarcho-Marxists are not economists and tend to associate words like price and wage with all that is wrong with society. The problem though is not the concept of price or wage. Rather, the problem is what determines them and how they are defined. More to the point, prices and wages serve the basic function of rationing/distribution. The real problem is that wage levels are set by class power relations that determine in turn which skill sets are valued. Consequently, wages are a

form of rationing based on class power. For example, many studies have found the exorbitant salaries of top CEOs in America cannot be justified by market economics but by class power relations. In any case, every society needs prices and wages or stated differently a system of distribution. However, what distribution and thus prices/wages represent/are based on can vary significantly. Community owned productive resources (large community employers) can keep prices and wages for their rationing function but by change the basis upon which these are set. In addition, combined with worker-citizen participatory empowerment through self-direction and organization people would feel as true stakeholders making this system more productive.

Sometimes solutions can be highly complex yet elegantly simple. More to the point, historically societies have gone from commodity barter to the use of commodity money to fiat money to pay-checks. Today, many people are not receiving physical pay-checks in their hands let alone actual cash payments. When society moved from cash payments to checks it was a cultural revolution. We became accustomed to thinking that a piece of paper (a check) is just as valuable as another piece of paper (cash) or actual goods. How do people make payments though? Today it is all put on credit cards paid online with bill-pay from our checking accounts where our direct deposit pay-checks are deposited! When did you actually get to physically touch that pay-check? Never! It is all digitized numbers moving around in the debt-credit electronic virtual banking balance sheet. This also means that payments for production (wages) and consumption (prices) are made electronically without actual money exchanging hands. Thus, postmodern capitalism has its own electronic seeds of its own destruction: the credit system.

The credit system is what could eventually become the basis of an anarcho-communist system of payment and credit for resource consumption or simply distribution. The importance and problem now becomes changing the conceptual basis that those pay-checks and prices represent. We could say 10 credits pay is what you get for one hour's community work while a loaf of bread costs 1 credit. Yes, this sounds like restating the market system but we are now de-linking the cognitive association of what 'money' means. Now it is 'I help out the community for an hour at 10 credits to get what I need' versus 'I work for private interests for a wage with which I can buy what I want from another private source.' Once we de-link the number i.e. 10 from the concept dollars for wages and link it to the concept of credits for community contribution and de-link price from purchases and link credit to sharing

and meeting needs, then it becomes possible to start de-linking even those radical concepts even further. For example, the *amount* of credit will become irrelevant to the concept credit for both the production and consumption transactions. When the amount/number is not needed and there is no concept of credit then we will be witnessing the psychological withering away of a capitalist/market mode of thinking in terms of functional alternative forms of societal organization be it anarchist or whatever else. In short we need an evolution in the patterns of thought to come to the simple conclusion that ‘I contribute to society my honest fair share because society *is* me which takes care of me’ and we would be defining society as the global brotherhood of man and the ‘me’ as the refusing of civil society and public good. In other words this requires trust in the system. In fact it was always trust that allowed societies to move through every evolutionary step from barter to direct deposit. This is why we need the habituation of the citizen to these new forms of societal organization. And this takes time and education together for all.

In the mean time, a price system defined in different terms would still exist providing a guiding and rationing function and a system of equitable distribution that people can understand (see t_2 figure 1). Admittedly, this may not seem revolutionary because it’s not supposed to be. Rather, it provides people with a working economic model. What is revolutionary is the changing concept of prices and wages. By altering these concepts the model provides time for people to become familiarized with a new system without altering their entire lives overnight. Such sudden change often results in anomie while an evolutionary approach habituates people with alternative modes of thought and provides real world experience with an alternative functioning economy. Finally, this approach would help people move away from capitalist consumption based on *wants* which are insatiable and thus would lead to a straining of societal resources to meet them if these were not limited by the ability to pay. Instead, we would move toward consumption based on need and use which is limited thus not straining our finite resources.

Conclusion: The Ability to Evolve

Many systems can evolve, the question is at what cost and for whom. Few would disagree with capitalisms’ ability to evolve. However, its’ ability to adapt to change is distorted since it is based on the price mechanism combined with unequal wage incomes that are often artificially determined as through regionally/globally segmented labor

markets (Asimakopoulou, 2006). In addition, although capitalism does evolve, we need to consider at what cost to society at large. For example, Polanyi (2001) demonstrated the devastating effects of sudden radical change. Although he was writing about the disastrous effects of changing societal organization toward capitalism, the work still provides insight as to the social cost of capitalism's 'evolution.' Namely, capitalism already existed during the period Polanyi describes. What was occurring would accurately be described as capitalism evolving to take total hold within a generation creating social devastation in the process.

Today, we are continuing to whiteness capitalism's transformation into a neoliberal global system however the social costs are still high for the majority of the planet's population. Globally, segmented labor markets and contingent labor carry equally high costs for individuals in terms of stress and alienation and society in terms of inadequate aggregate demand caused by insufficient purchasing power. Thus, although capitalism is capable of evolution and survival, it does so at the expense of the great majority of society. Therefore, the superior system would be one that can be flexible without the socially devastating consequences needed to support it.

An anarcho-communist society would have a more flexible economic system. Politically, self-governance assures decision-making that reflects peoples' direct needs and beliefs without being filtered through unresponsive professional politicians and ossified political institutions controlled by elite interests. The elimination of special interests by self-governance also assures that the economic system adapts according to social needs. Instead, today we have a skewing of the economy for political considerations to benefit special interests such as subsidizing corporations (Zepezauer, 2004). In addition, there is greater acceptance of economic change when people know that their living standards would not be adversely affected. For example, in an anarcho-communist society, workers of a buggy-whip factory would be more accepting of their plant closing due to obsolescence if they knew their livelihoods would be socially secured and alternative work (social contribution) provided. Finally, capitalism's driving motivation is oppression and the desire to escape it through market success (the dominant ideology). Unfortunately, this is a statistical improbability for the majority of the population. Anarcho-communism's driving force is creative pursuit since freedom from want and wage slavery would be guaranteed for all.

However, there are specific preconditions in order for the working class to reject the exploitative relations of production-consumption under

capitalism in favor of societal change toward greater levels of egalitarianism. First, the legitimacy of the dominant ideology would have to be challenged with a radical *counter ideology* to erode the underpinnings of existing production-consumption relations (Asimakopoulos, 2007; Gramsci, 1971). Second, class consciousness and solidarity would have to be raised with transformative societal education disseminated through an independent-workers' media. Third, targeted direct action would be required to alter the relations in production and consumption and thus the mode of production itself. Finally, change would have to be evolutionary so as to avoid societal dislocations or the emergence of a new exploitative class. Hopefully, this would provide time to develop and acquire functioning alternatives to existing socio-economic relations and authoritarian social structures that would benefit mankind rather than an elite few.

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