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Source: *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, November 2014, Vol. 38, No. 6, Special Issue: Contemporary capitalism and progressive political economics: Contributions to heterodox debates about economic method, analysis and policy (November 2014), pp. 1307-1328

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24694961>

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# The future of capitalism: a consideration of alternatives

Wendy Harcourt\*

The article reviews three entry points into a discussion of alternatives to today's neoliberal capitalism. The first examines the need for a green new deal from mostly UK-based think tanks positioning the household as central to the economy, posing new core values for the economy that respect the environment, the social economy as well as the possibilities offered by Web-based technologies for new economic and political community relations. The second entry point is a review of feminists' search for alternatives to mainstream economics and global development processes with calls for a transition to place-based socio-economic practices built on the ethics of care, gender justice, the centrality of social reproduction and community livelihoods. The last section examines the alternatives to global development and neoliberal capitalism emerging from Latin America examining Buen Vivir, intercultural pluriversal political and economic practices and lessons from Latin American indigenous women and decolonial feminist movements.

*Key words:* Political economy; Sustainable development; Gender; Alternatives; care  
*JEL classification:* Q56, P16

The future holds in store for us far more wealth and economic freedom and possibilities of personal life than the past has ever offered. There is no reason why we should not feel ourselves free to be bold, to be open, to experiment, to take action, to try the possibilities of things. And over against us, standing in the path, there is nothing but a few old gentlemen tightly buttoned-up in their frock coats (J. M. Keynes 1929; quoted in Weintraub, 2009).

The technological transformation that occurred during the past few decades has already provided the means for unleashing a sustainable global golden age. The environmental threats offer an explicit [direction] for using that creative potential across the globe in a viable manner. The major financial collapse has generated the political conditions to take full advantage of this unparalleled

Manuscript received 10 February 2012; final version received 28 May 2013.

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\* International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University. This article is based on a keynote speech delivered at the conference 'The Future of Capitalism' in honour of G. C. Harcourt, sponsored by the Cambridge Journal of Economics held in Cambridge, 25 and 26 June 2010. My thanks to all the participants of the conference for their encouraging reception of the paper, the anonymous referees and Claudio Sardoni for their suggestions for revision and especially to Stephanie Blankenburg for all her work in making the conference a success as well as her welcome and helpful guidance in my presentation and writing of the paper. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the Civic Innovation Research Initiative at the Institute of Social Studies for their encouraging comments at a seminar where I presented a version of this paper. Most of all, thank you to G. C. Harcourt for his inspiration and lifelong encouragement, including his comments on an early draft, which were as ever thoughtful, timely and precise to the last comma.

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opportunity. It is everybody's responsibility to make sure this possibility is not missed (Perez, 2009).

While neoliberal cultures inevitably place capitalist interests above the needs and hopes of people, it is people's movements (anti-colonial/anti-imperial, peasant, ecological, labor, women's, peace and justice, anti-globalization, etc) that have exposed the fault-lines of neoliberal capitalism and placed questions of democracy, equity, and justice at the center of struggles for emancipation (Mohanty and Miraglia, 2012).

## 1. Introduction

Since the financial crisis in 2008 there has been both a growing sense of hope and despair amongst progressive civil society that global neoliberal capitalism is finally unravelling. The atmosphere is somewhat like the late 1980s/early 1990s when I first become engaged in 'international development' in the wake of the United Nations Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At that gathering there was talk of a peace dividend with an end to the cold war with the expectation that finally money could flow into programmes to ensure 'human security' and a more just economic order based on 'sustainable development' (Harcourt, 2005, p 37). At the 20-year review of the Rio conference in June 2012, there was far more cynicism about international UN meetings being able to change the course of capitalism, but also a lot of re-engagement around challenging economic thinking and practice. The phrase 'green economics' is on the agenda, together with worries about global land grabbing, food and climate crises. There is serious concern around a changing geopolitical order—not only the rise of China, India, Brazil on the global economic stage but also the experiences of Ecuador and Bolivia in Latin America, the Arab revolutions and the rise of the Occupy movements. There is a questioning of systemic faults in economic thinking and practice in the wake of the interlocked crises of food, climate and finance, as well as the equally intertwined though far less visible global crisis of care work (Jessop, 2012). There is a search for new value systems responding to today's realities that current global political and economic institutions are failing to understand and govern.

This article reviews some of the alternative analysis that over the past decade has been seeking to displace the mainstream culture of economics that underscores models based on development as progress driven by economic growth, trade and aid and increasingly ruled by the international financial system. It looks at alternative visions for a different world order based on the values of ecological, gender and social justice. These proposals for alternatives to modern neoliberal capitalism are based on the experiences of networks of people in different places around the world seeking to imagine how to move to a more sustainable, harmonious, liveable and just world order. The article explores some of this thinking as an example of the fluid set of discussions linking economics with ecological, social and political spheres, variously connected through virtual debates, movement meetings, academic seminars and political enquiry by millions of engaged and informed civic organisations.

The article contributes to the ongoing critiques of capitalism from a politics of place perspective inspired by the work of Doreen Massey (2002, 2004) and Arturo Escobar (2001, 2008). Massey argues that there is profound meaning and hope for global transformation in the struggles carried out by people in places looking at the articulation between the global and the local (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005). In this understanding, places are not static but are sites of negotiation and continuous transformation. Escobar argues for a recognition of 'the importance of place and place-making for culture, nature, and economy' (2001, p 140). He sees:

the growing realization that any alternative course of action must take into account place-based models of nature, culture, and politics. While it is evident that 'local' economies and culture are not outside the scope of capital and modernity, it also needs to be newly acknowledged that the former are not produced exclusively by the latter; this place specificity, as we shall see, enables a different reading of culture and economy, capitalism and modernity. (2001, p 141)

By paying attention to the politics of place, we can locate alternatives to dominant neoliberal capitalism already present. In this sense, a search for future capitalism is closely inter-related to present as well as potential future experiences 'in place'. For example, *Buen Vivir* a concept that has now travelled widely around the world as an alternative 'horizon' to capitalism, comes from the Andean peoples' engagement with their history and culture in place which is inspiring new forms of economies in communities around the world.

The spaces being opened up now by civic actors such as the 300-million-strong peasant network *La Via Campesina*, the millions involved in the Occupy movement in the USA, *La Indignadas* in Spain as well as in the institutional settings of UN meetings form the backdrop to the research done within and alongside movements by academics/activists discussed here: J. K. Gibson-Graham, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Nancy Folbre, Eduardo Gudynas, Arturo Escobar, Silvia Federici, Robin Murray and Susan George as well as a host of informed blogs and online journals, such as *Open Democracy*, the *New Economic Foundation*, *Compass* and the *Young Foundation*, to name just a few based in the UK. When looking at the future of capitalism, it is critical to look at the proliferating spaces of debate and discussion of civil society, online, in academic as well as popular spaces. These opinion makers are informing ideas and actions that are engaging with, shaping and understanding the groundswell of dissatisfaction with global and economic institutions to the point where those institutions will necessarily have to change. This combination of academic insight with passion and commitment to politics and policy as well as to students and comrades marks the work of G. C. Harcourt, to whom this journal issue is dedicated. As feminists, ecologists and internationalists the writers discussed here offer important insights into alternative approaches to mainstream neoliberalism that informs political economic questioning about the future of capitalism.

The thread running through the article is how to build on these critical analyses of capitalism aware of alternative understanding and practice of economies that are grounded in place by considering the questions that Escobar has posed in his work:

can the world be reconceived and reconstructed from the perspective of the multiplicity of place-based practices of culture, nature and economy? Which forms of 'the global' can be imagined from multiple place-based perspectives? . . . What notions of politics, democracy and the economy are needed to release the affectivity of the local in all of its multiplicity and contradictions? What role will various social actors—including technologies old and new—have to play in order to create the networks on which manifold forms of the local can rely in their encounter with the multiple manifestations of the global? (Escobar, 2001, p 171)

These are the questions I see as underlying current debates on 'the future of capitalism' in different localities as people shape alternatives to the current order of things. The opening quote from Keynes indicates that confidently questioning the current order of things is indeed necessary. Keynes created major changes to the world's economy in the wake of crisis by thinking boldly. The world is still inspired by his economic vision and the institutions he helped put in place. The other two epigraphs speak to our times. The first points to the possibilities that technologies and financial collapse offer to rethinking economic and social relations. The second reminds us of our responsibility to act as progressive intellectuals aware of

and listening to non-‘neoliberal cultures’, their visions and insights that challenge capitalist interests.

The article’s discussion of alternatives to dominant neoliberal capitalism as located in place reveals some interesting tensions: between universalism and particularism; reform and transformation. Although the article does not claim to reconcile these tensions, it does suggest that it is important to consider them productively in the discussion of how to navigate the future of capitalism.

## 2. A new green deal?

I start with a review of some of (mostly UK-based) proponents of a new green deal based on changing core values around which the economy and state are organised as environmental issues and ‘the social economy’ are taken on board. I briefly review the work of the New Economics Foundation and the core ideas of Plan B, Tim Jackson on ‘prosperity without growth’, the Transnational Institute and Susan George’s writings on the crisis and the concept of the social economy by Robin Murray.<sup>1</sup> This writing emerges from the progressive British-European tradition that aims to engage critically with the state, challenging the injustice of capitalist practice and advocating for profound social and economic reform.

### 2.1 *Envisaging green policy: the New Economic Foundation and Plan B*

The New Economics Foundation (NEF), a think tank founded in 1986, challenges mainstream thinking on economic, environment and social issues by working towards ‘a new economy based on social justice, environmental sustainability and collective well-being’ (NEF 2012). In July 2008, NEF published the first public Green New Deal (NEF 2008) of the Green New Deal Group (named after Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal on social and economic measures in the wake of the Great Depression). NEF’s Green New Deal called for a ‘new initiative for economic and environmental transformation’ and the re-regulation of finance and taxation and major government investment in renewable resources. It was the first in a long line of reports that picked up on the phrase ‘green new deal’ including the UN Environment Programme.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am not addressing in this article US-based organisations and writers such as David Korten, who is promoting ‘The Great Turning’; the new economics institute of Gus Speth, former head of UNDP; and the Boston-based ‘Great Transition Initiative’ which have a flourishing set of discussions based on the US liberal tradition of individualism and the need to move to community focused economies. See <http://www.davidkorten.org/>; <http://neweconomicsinstitute.org/>; <http://www.gtinitiative.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> UNEP launched its Green New Deal in October 2008 as a green economy initiative that aimed to value and mainstreaming nature’s services into national and international accounts; employment generation through green jobs and laying out the policies; instruments and market signals able to accelerate a transition to a green economy. This line of thinking has shaped the 20-year review of the UN Conference on Environment and Development where the green economy is now one of the major themes. See <http://www.unep.org/Documents/Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=548&ArticleID=5957&l=en>. There are other British organisations working to change economic systems, for example, the Ellen Macarthur Foundation, an independent charity that works to promote the concept of a ‘regenerative circular economy’ with business media and academics. See <http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org>. ‘Unburnable Carbon 2013’ is another report to come out of the UK revealing, as Will Hutton, *Guardian* commentator, puts it, that ‘Contemporary capitalism faces both a crisis of legitimacy and effectiveness’. In the same commentary he argues that the report sets out a new vision of how to do capitalism in which enlightened self-interest is hard-wired into its operation, meshed ‘with larger arguments for stakeholder capitalism’ (Hutton, 2013, p 19).

In advocating a green new deal, the NEF fundamentally questions growth as the main focus of economic policies. NEF programmes with themes such as 'connected economies', 'natural economies', 'valuing what matters' and 'well-being' seek to undermine the apparent 'natural' arrangements of modern economics particularly from an environmental and social perspective. They state: 'growth is not making us happier, it is creating dysfunctional and unequal societies, and if it continues it will make large parts of the planet unfit for human habitation' (NEF 2008).

The Green New Deal aims to 'break that vicious cycle by building a new macro-economic model that is geared not towards growth, but towards achieving the outcomes that are important to society and that can be sustained by the planet's finite carrying capacity' (NEF 2008). Their aim is to produce a radical new approach to economic modelling that begins with the goal of environmental sustainability, equitable economic justice and high levels of human well-being and link these claims to relevant economic determinants.

Another report in the UK grounded in alternatives to current economic policy is 'Plan B: a good economy for a good society' launched in October 2011 by Compass, a network of 40,000 members described as an activist pressure group for the democratic left organisation.<sup>3</sup> Plan B was launched with the endorsement of 100 well-known economists<sup>4</sup> as a vision of an alternative political economy leading to a green new deal with plans for a British investment bank to leverage investment in low-carbon sectors in housing, transport and renewable energy.

It is presented as an alternative economic model to the UK government's public spending and lack of provisions for jobs. Plan B as announced in *The Observer* (Boffrey and Steward, 2011) would focus on reforming the banks, saving and creating new jobs and increasing benefits of the poorest through a financial transaction (Robin Hood) tax on banks. Plan B advocates the need to go beyond the gross domestic product (GDP) as the sole measure of economic success.<sup>5</sup> It proposes a different type of economy for a good society with a social investment state, and a green economy with a system that depends on healthy, flourishing people where the state is more accountable and time is more about enjoying and caring for each other and the planet, sustainably.

Central to Plan B is the concept of a core economy. In this concept Plan B places human resources and relationships at the centre of policy making, where they should be strengthened and enabled to flourish as society moves 'from an economy based on scarcity of economic resources to one based on an abundance of human resources'. The 'core economy' in this vision means the human resources that comprise and sustain social life:

They are embedded in the everyday lives of every individual (time, wisdom, experience, energy, knowledge and skills) and in the relationships among them (love, empathy, responsibility, care, reciprocity, teaching and learning). They are core because they are central and essential to society. They make it possible for the market economy to function by raising children, caring for

<sup>3</sup> See the Compass website for more details of the organisation. <http://www.compassonline.org.uk>.

<sup>4</sup> Such as Ha-Joon Chang, University of Cambridge; Sir Tony Atkinson, Nuffield College, Oxford; Susan Himmelweit, professor of economics, Open University; Frances Stewart, professor of development economics, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. For full list see the letter addressed to George Osborne at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2011/oct/30/observer-letters-economists-george-osborne>.

<sup>5</sup> See the details of the report on the Compass website, <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/news/item.asp?n=13946>.

people who are ill, frail and disabled, feeding families, maintaining households, and building and sustaining intimacies, friendships, social networks and civil society. They are largely unmodified and routinely overlooked and undervalued.<sup>6</sup>

Plan B recognises that families and gender relations need to be addressed if the balance between life and work is to be met fairly. The core economy transactions often involve women working without wages that generates lasting inequalities in job opportunities, income and power between women and men. These are often compounded by age, race, ethnicity and disability.

Plan B also recognises the importance of time to take into account caring responsibilities and proposes a slow but steady move towards much shorter and more flexible paid working hours. In this vision those who currently have jobs that demand long hours will have more time for leisure and unpaid activities as parents, carers, friends, neighbours and citizens. Flexible paid working hours will help iron out the practical and cultural barriers to equal participation and iron out inequalities between women and men.

## 2.2 Tim Jackson and prosperity without growth

Another British report that takes into account equality, care, community and also ecological change comes from the UK Sustainable Development Commission, presented by Tim Jackson in *Prosperity without Growth: The Transition to a Low Carbon Economy* (Jackson, 2009). Jackson, the economic commissioner of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, analysed the complex relationships between growth, environmental crises and social recession. The commission's report proposes a 'twelve step route to a sustainable economy, and argues for a redefinition of 'prosperity' in light of our evidence on what really contributes to people's wellbeing' (Jackson, 2009).

Jackson's writing and work in various projects before and since the commission questions the 'myth of economic growth', arguing that 'prosperity for the few founded on ecological destruction and persistent social injustice is no foundation for a civilised society' (Jackson, 2011). In his foreword to the German edition of '*Prosperity without Growth?*', Jackson speaks of the 'strong cracks in the shiny surface of capitalism that run right to the heart of our economic model'. He proposes a dimensions for a different economics built around his vision of prosperity: 'Living well on a finite planet cannot simply be about consuming more and more stuff. Nor can it be about accumulating more and more debt. Prosperity, in any meaningful sense of the term, is about the quality of our lives and relationships, about the resilience of our communities, and about our sense of individual and collective meaning' (Jackson, 2013).

## 2.3 Robin Murray and the social economy

Another entry point into the discussion of alternative economics in the UK context comes from Robin Murray, an industrial and environmental economist, co-founder of the fair trade company Twin Trading and associated with civil society initiatives such as the Young Foundation and Social Innovation Exchange, amongst others. He has alternated working for innovative economic programmes in local, regional and national governments with academic teaching and writing.

<sup>6</sup> The quotes are taken from a downloaded version of the report from the Compass website, <http://www.compassonline.org.uk/publications/>.

In his paper 'Danger and opportunity: crisis and the new social economy' (2009), Murray describes the concept of the social economy, which he sees as existing in parts of the public sector, the nonprofit world and enterprises, most of all in the places where those sectors interact. He describes it as a set of networks that are sustaining and managing relations through mobile communication technologies in ways that are blurring boundaries between production and consumption and with an emphasis on collaboration, care and maintenance and continuity rather than just one-off consumption. He suggests that it is in the social economy that social problems arising today due to pollution and climate change, ageing and inequality are being addressed, and in the process the social economy is promoting new forms of learning.

Murray argues for a radical transformation of infrastructures and institutions where environmental and social innovation can thrive through technological innovation using the dynamism of the social economy. He sees this landscape as including Web open sources practices such as wikis, e-platforms and digital technology. He adds to the communication technologies changes to energy technologies with a move to wind, solar, wave and geothermal sources of power. His vision harnesses the green push to recycle, reduce energy use and cut down on consumerism to a 'transformation in every part of the economy, from design and processing, to distribution and consumption'. Such shifts need to make space for new economic actors, what he calls the social economy of local enterprises and co-operatives operating in the market, and in the household economy, through social networks, informal associations as well as social movements.

He sees households as key, with systems being reconfigured around households connected in virtual and real ways through mutual interest and support groups. He positions households as 'living centres' where householders are producers, carers and active citizens who should be shaping new social and economic institutions.

He looks to the consumer citizen and social enterprise as the way forward where people as citizens, consumers and workers determine their engagement in the economy and society. Instead of the 'social economy' being split between a hierarchical and centralised state and a multitude of small organisations and informal associations and households he proposes a new techno-economic paradigm that could combine the 'energy and complexity of distributed responsibility, with the integrative capacities of modern system economies'.

In bringing together green technologies, work by progressive civil society and the household with the new social and information technologies, Murray sees a future beyond the failures of the current neoliberal paradigms. He envisages social enterprises meeting health, education, care and environmental needs as part of a vibrant social economy capable of competing with the market economy as innovators and providers in a new much more green and participative form of modern capitalism.

#### *2.4 The Transnational Institute, Susan George: towards a greener fairer world*

Across the English Channel, in France, widely read by English-speaking audiences, is Susan George, author and fellow of the Transnational Institute (TNI), a think tank founded in the 1970s based in Amsterdam.<sup>7</sup> At the 2008 TNI fellows meeting

<sup>7</sup> The Transnational Institute is an international network of activist researchers committed to critical analyses in support of movements struggling for a more democratic, equitable and environmentally sustainable world. It has worked to analyse the links between the different elements of the financial, environmental and social crisis and proposing alternatives.

'Globalisation in crisis: analysis, prospects and opportunities', George spoke on credit and food crises and the need for an ecological Keynesian solution. Her version of the new green deal examined the world facing a convergence of crises—rising food prices and environmental, financial and economic collapse. She spoke of the need for a re-regulation of the finance sector. Her proposal is for banks to make environmentally sound and aware investments, for new economic institutions to rebalance the power of labour and capital by regulating trade regimes and in the process moving from an economy based on expanding consumption to a low-carbon economy.

She published these reflections in her book *Whose Crisis Whose Future? Towards a Greener, Fairer and Richer World*, which damns modern capitalism where 'finance and the economy dictate a hugely unequal world where the most basic of all resources food and water are disappearing for hundreds of millions and the planet is mostly reduced to the status of an exploited quarry and rubbish tip, for these reasons we will continue to fight each other' (George, 2010, p 1).

She suggests that society is caught inside the walls of a four-sided prison: finance and the economy, increasing poverty and inequality, shrinking access to basic needs and conflict. She argues that instead of finance dictating our society, environment and the planet, we should reverse the order so that the needs of the planet determine our environmental, social and financial needs.

The main challenge she identifies is how we can overcome our state of fear, and thereby escape from the prison. She sees fear of losing jobs, losing our houses, losing our savings, losing the better life for our children, losing health care and losing pensions preventing us from making changes. That fear is combined with our anger that we are living in a grossly immoral state where the 2008 financial crash resulted not in a changed system but millions of euros being poured into rescuing banks and top bankers continuing to be rewarded bonuses with public money. This fear and anger is felt as a general sense of frustration and powerlessness. George asks how we overcome the latest spate of crises: finance, food, water, climate change and the continuing levels of conflict, inequality and poverty? She argues that we need to use the occasion of the financial crisis to tackle change in the economic system by bringing into economic decision making environmental and social needs through a green new deal.

Though she would like to imagine an overturning of international capitalism and its predatory ways and completely reverse the ecological and climate crises, she does not see that happening. We are going to be living under capitalism for a while longer. Even if there is to be no revolution, we still need to confront the economic system. Her proposed strategy is that citizens convince the politicians that ecological and social transformation can pay off politically.

She documents examples of activists and experts who are working with national politicians and governments to build alternative ecological solutions in the public sector working with the private sector. She proposes a coming together of business, government and citizens in a new incarnation of the Keynesian war economy. This would, she argues, build new social cohesion, bring together constituencies through coalition building of different interest groups: farmers, environmentalists, trade unions, social enterprises and social movement groups together with small and medium business. She sees such alliances working North and South so that globally we move to an ecological economy that counters the economy dominated by transnational companies.

George recognises that we are also facing apathy and a sense of helplessness. We require a new sense of mission to help convince us that we can accomplish change, as well as practical goals such as nationalising/socialising banks, encouraging social enterprises based on cooperative models, encouraging lifelong learning and new and better targeted taxes. She underscores that most of all we need to change from fear and anger to revaluing what is important in our lives. It is now obvious that we are drawing on more resources than the planet can provide. George argues that we understate the real state of our economies by indicators that bizarrely count as 'growth': more car accidents, cancer cases and wars.

She quotes Kenneth Boulding's statement that 'to believe the economy can grow indefinitely on a finite planet you have to be a madman or an economist'. She adds more positively 'if material growth cannot continue forever . . . the growth of education, culture, music, games, information, friendship and love can' (George, 2010, p 262).

Going green requires more equality and more trust as well as institutions that contribute to both. In this way the individual can be linked to help shape the global. To move to a genuine, clean and fast conversion of our economy we need not only money, machinery and technology and political incentives, but the grand narrative we can believe in, that the world is rational and beautiful with enough space and good life for all. For this we need more self-organising systems and a more resilient economy striving for more equal, more inclusive societies with more public services, more social protection and more democratic participation of employees and consumers. Resilience means designing and sustaining systems for food, water and energy supplies and incentives to encourage conservation and biodiversity. Essentially she argues it is important to create new social systems of resilience so that the current winners of the current economic system are forced to share.

These progressive British/European writers argue for major reform based on what George calls a 'grand narrative': that there is enough for all. What is required is better distribution, more equal relations and better democracy, which the writers assume a reformed capitalism can deliver. The current crisis is an opportunity to learn from mistakes from the past and adjust and make good the promise of modernity. Going green, being more socially aware; using technologies in a more savvy, less greedy way; putting care, family and well-being at the centre of modern economic life would produce a better, fairer economics that would be more sustainable and more responsible to society, people and nature. What is needed is to convince the political class, business and ordinary citizens to work together more fruitfully and flourish together.

The future of capitalism in this vision is about far-reaching reform rather than transformation, and in this sense does not question capitalism as such but looks at the required policies that will make capitalism more palatable and recentres the family, society and nature in economic analysis. The next set of literatures is more critical of capitalism as a system built on gender injustices that have to be overturned and transformed.

### 3. Feminist imaginaries

Feminist scholars have long been engaged in a critique of capitalism and a search for alternatives. There is now a major set of literature that aims to engender macro-economics and overturn gender bias inherent to capitalist logic (Charusheela, 2010;

van Staveren, 2010).<sup>8</sup> In this section I examine recent critical work of feminists on capitalism by looking at US-based feminist economist Nancy Folbre, Italian feminist Marxist and ecologist Silvia Federici, the dual writing team of J.K. Gibson-Graham and place-based feminism, referring to my own work with Arturo Escobar and its use by Indian US-based feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty.

The literature discussed here probes deeply into the masculine bias that informs capitalist practice and values. Some of it is directly linked to a feminist understanding of the potential of place-based politics (Harcourt and Escobar 2005). A place-based approach seeks to uncover masculine bias and patriarchal values related to women's experiences of their lived body, the local economy and the environment in struggles that are transforming neoliberal capitalism (Harcourt 2006).

### 3.1 Nancy Folbre: *Overtaking the economics of greed and lust*

A dynamic feminist critic of neoclassical economics is Nancy Folbre, who challenges economists to look at social reproduction, care and gender as key components of how to reform the workings of capitalism in the future.

Folbre's book *Greed, Lust and Gender: A History of Economic Ideas* (2010) brings women's work, sexuality and feminism into the centre of the dialectic between economic history and the history of economic ideas. She maps the link between the evolution of patriarchal capitalism and the larger relationship between production and reproduction. In so doing, she sets out some important feminist premises in the move towards a more humane and sustainable form of capitalism. Her attempt to push the reader beyond the comfort zone breaks myths around concepts such as the rational man and the neutrality of the market, highly relevant in our response to today's financial meltdown. As an *Observer* article (Adams, 2011) stated, 'the new science of "neuroeconomics" is proving the point beyond doubt: hormonally-driven young men should not be left alone in charge of our finances'.

Folbre makes the conceptual and moral point that society needs to be working to find a less gender-biased balance between self-interest and care for others in a profound reform of capitalism. She challenges standard economic narratives as she looks at economic thought as part and parcel of particular times, marked by the specific patriarchal politics of the UK, French and US capitalism over three centuries of capitalist development.

She shows the gendered aspect of desires, greed and want and how that has driven capitalism. She argues that all societies have faced the moral and economic problem of how to balance individual interests against the need to care for close family, friends and other beings. Capitalism, she suggests, has typically glorified the pursuit of individual self-interest especially for men as the basis of economic progress. In this dominant economic narrative, gender differences have shaped ideologies of self-interest, including concepts of greed and lust. She sees modern capitalism as founded in collective interests based on a moral double standard for men and women, one that is gradually being changed as women collectively seek to reconfigure it. 'To date economists have not tried hard enough to figure out how to discourage greed and lust: if we want to care for others we need to build social institutions that encourage care, rather than take moral sentiments such as greed and lust as given' (Folbre, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> In her review essay on post-Keynesian and feminist economics, Irene van Staveren looks at how key concepts of gender, household and unpaid work and caring need to be taken up as serious concepts by post-Keynesian economics (van Staveren, 2010). S. Charusheela, in the spirit of Judith Butler's work on gender as performance, argues that macroeconomics is a bearer of gender in her call to go beyond just a gender-aware heterodox economics (Charusheela, 2010, p. 1155).

In setting out the intellectual history of greed and lust as part and parcel of the story of capitalism, Folbre proposes necessary boundaries to the selfishness of modern economic market practices. She argues that the cultural legitimization of selfish pursuits has gone much further than the father of economists, Adam Smith, would have ever imagined. The problem she identifies is that there is no serious pressure to limit greed from within or outside the market. In addition, there is little understanding about the central role gender inequality has played in economic theory and practice. She shows how in early days of capitalism men asserted their rights to individualism but re-asserted women's obligations for the care for others. Over the years women have gained the power to assert the same rights as men but have been less successful in persuading men to accept greater obligation towards others. Women have continued to assume most of the costs and risks of family care, partly because they fear the consequences if they do not. Balancing the need to nurture social reproductive work and ensure gender justice in the paid work place has to be visible goals of economic policy making rather than trust in the so-called magic of the market.

### 3.2 *Silvia Federici: feminism and the struggle over reproduction and the commons*

Social reproduction is the focus of Silvia Federici's work. She comes from a radical Marxist tradition closely elided with ecofeminism.<sup>9</sup> Her recent influential critical work has been on care and reproductive work and on the commons (Federici, 2011, 2012; Barbagallo and Federici, 2012). She examines how neoliberal restructuring of the global economy has reshaped the organisation of care and social reproductive work: 'it has transformed our bodies and desires, reconfigured our homes, our families and social relations and, most importantly, what are the struggles that women are making in response to the new conditions of reproductive labor and the new forms of cooperation that are emerging in this context' (Barbagallo and Federici, 2012). She argues that the 'struggle over "reproduction"' is central to every other struggle because 'no struggle is sustainable that ignores the needs, experiences, and practices that re-producing ourselves entails' (Barbagallo and Federici, 2012). Furthermore, she proposes that the global economic crisis compels us 'to construct an alternative to life under capitalism, beginning with the construction of more autonomous forms of social reproduction' (Federici, 2012).

She calls for re-opening the 'collective struggle over reproduction' with forms of co-operation around care work outside of the logic of capital and the market. She argues that a new economy of social reproduction is beginning to emerge that 'may turn reproductive work from a stifling, discriminating activity into the most liberating and creative ground of experimentation in human relations' (Federici, 2012, p 194).

She suggests that women's care work, paid and unpaid, has ensured their family and community survival:

Through their subsistence activities . . . amidst wars, economic crises, devaluations, as the world around them was falling apart, they have planted corn on abandoned town plots, cooked food to sell on the side of the streets, created communal kitchens—ala communes—as in the case of Chile and Peru, thus standing in the way of a total commodification of life and beginning a process of re-collectivization of reproduction that is indispensable if we are to regain control over our lives. (Federici, 2012, p 193)

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the two most influential writers on ecofeminism in recent times are Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva. See their jointly written essays (Mies and Shiva, 1993).

In her writing on the commons, she puts forward the ecofeminist argument that it is women who fight against the commercialisation of nature. In her historical study *Caliban and the Witch* (2004) she points to how women have been in the forefront of the struggle against land enclosures in both England and the New World as defenders of the communal cultures that European colonisation has undermined through economic development processes. This struggle continues today in different settings, as women take over plots of public land, changing the urban landscape of African cities, joining hands to save degraded forests, blockading mining operations and preventing the construction of dams in India. She describes the local economies of women's credit associations as 'money commons'—autonomous, self-managed, women-made banking systems, providing cash to individuals or groups that can have no access to banks, working purely on the basis of trust.

In her writing on the commons, she argues that women's organised efforts to share reproductive labour, providing collective protection from poverty and gender-based violence are linked to women-led collective reforestation and reclaiming of land. For Federici, these practices by women are shaping 'a collective identity, constitute a counter-power in the home and the community, and open a process of self-valorization and self-determination' (Federici, 2011).

To move beyond the oppression of modern capitalism and development, Federici argues we need to build on the resources of reproduction. Women need to disentangle their social reproduction from the world market and in solidarity amongst North and South 'refuse to accept that our reproduction occurs at the expense of the world's other commoners and commons' (Federici, 2011).

She proposes an environmental feminist political agenda—the 'communalization/collectivization of housework', reversing the capitalist privatisation of reproductive work. She argues that the capitalist crisis is destroying the possibilities for reproduction in its fullest sense for millions of people across the world. She suggests that is 'women who must build the new commons, so that they do not remain transient spaces, temporary autonomous zones, but become the foundation of new forms of social reproduction' (Federici, 2011).

Breaking down the isolation of life in a private home is a precondition to meet basic needs and for protection from ecological disaster. She argues that we have to build an alternative society based on a more co-operative reproduction processes that put an end to the separation between the personal and the political and join together environmental need, political change and the reproduction of everyday life. She calls for an 'undoing' of the current 'gendered architecture of our lives' and a 'reconstructing of our homes and lives as commons' (Federici, 2011).

### 3.3 J. K. Gibson-Graham: community economies

J. K. Gibson-Graham's<sup>10</sup> entry point into the feminist debate on the future of capitalism is via a post-modernist critique of capitalism. They analyse capitalism as just one part of the economy and see it as decentred, dispersed, plural and partial in relation to the economy and society as a whole. They argue that through their intellectual project of decentring of capitalism it is possible to create a more just social and economic

<sup>10</sup> Feminist economic geographers Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson wrote together under the pen name J. K. Gibson-Graham.

future. J. K. Gibson-Graham's two books—*The End of Capitalism as We Knew It* (1996) and *A Post Capitalist Politics* (2006)—set out an original and unique feminist critique of political economy. In both books they present a rigorous critique of capitalism that challenges the idea of the economy as a unified and singular total. Their feminist imaginary takes apart the idea that we are trapped in the clutches of capitalism, unable to escape despite its devastating effect on peoples and the environment. They see their project as breaking through the hegemony of capitalism as they set out enlivening forms of economic thought and action and present a visionary statement on possible alternative futures. They argue that capitalism is best analysed not as a monolithic economic system but as one form of exploitation amongst many. For example, they locate other economies operating in the household and the community through the exchange of time, gifts and care.

They build on feminist work that sees the household as central to livelihoods. They argue that the household economy forms a separate influential economy that intersects with but is not totally dependent on the market economy. They argue that more people are involved in the household economy than the capitalist sector. Worldwide nonmarket transactions (often performed by women) account for a substantial proportion of transactions that are not predominantly a market economy.

In looking to the future, they argue that it is important to break down the view of capitalism as a unified system that crowds out all other economic forms and can only be defeated and replaced by mass collective movement. They instead suggest through empirical examples how capitalism co-exists with other forms of economies. This view of capitalism as one of many (rather than the only) economic systems creates possibilities or spaces for change in different places where communal production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labour can be formed in homes, in workplaces and at large in society.

In *Post Capitalist Politics* their focus is on how ordinary people, particularly women, are transforming politics and economies in different locations. These activities are creating a new type of politics, which they describe almost poetically as the 'politics of economic possibilities'. In these community economies new relations and ways of living together are emerging that are fruitful and fulfilling: 'a world with an ever replenishing sense of room to move, air to breathe and space and time to act' (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p xxxiii).

The book discusses a politics of possibility for new economies building on different economies sustained by ordinary people world wide. Gibson-Graham aim to 'support building new economies through a politics of collective action that enhances well-being instituting different relations of surplus appropriation and distribution, promoting community and environmental sustainability recognizing and building on economic interdependence and adopting an ethic of care of the other' (Gibson-Graham, 2006, pp xxxv–vii).

Their study of alternatives to capitalism offers a prolific landscape of diverse alternative local economic projects. They show how global transformation can be found in diverse contexts that are not exclusively or predominantly capitalist in the USA, Asia and Australia.

Their community economies (or social enterprises) are understood as ethical and political spaces in which negotiations with capitalist economies take place. They challenge directly the conventional idea that poor communities are deficient or on the margins of economic activity and need to be modernised or brought into the dominant market system for peoples to 'develop'. Their diverse economy framework challenges

the dominance of any one set of organising principles. Decentering the economy and challenging the hegemony of a singular capitalism set out a range of noncapitalist organisations and practices in the today's economies. They include feudal enterprises, informal markets, self-provisioning labour, gift and care as fully fledged economic activity. Their work is carried out by a network of scholars in USA, the Philippines, Australia, South Africa and Germany and aims to repoliticise the economy by looking at the ethical and political engagement of communities in a reshaping of economic activity.

Gibson-Graham aim to provide an alternative language for economic meaning of local practices inextricably linked to conceptions of locality, place, and place-based struggles. They show how capitalism is transformed by places, and local economic practices are not completely incorporated into capitalism. Central to J. K. Gibson-Graham's re-imagining of the economy is to start from where you are, linking up to different local places through networking to join different forms of economies within and outside of capitalism. As Escobar comments on Gibson-Graham's work: 'by criticizing capitalocentrism, these authors seek to liberate our ability for seeing non-capitalisms and building alternative economic imaginaries' (Escobar, 2001, p 154).

### 3.4 Chandra Talpade Mohanty: gender justice and place-based struggles

Building alternatives to capitalism was the aim of a research project I undertook with Arturo Escobar and J. K. Gibson-Graham and others (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005). The Women and Politics of Place Framework (WPP) has been taken up by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, who presents a reading of capitalism grounded in 'an anti-racist, materialist feminist framework that links everyday life and local gendered histories and ideologies to larger, transnational/global structures and ideologies of capitalism through a gendered "placed-based" framework' (Mohanty and Miraglia, 2012). The WPP framework focuses on a differentiated notion of gendered political struggles against neoliberal globalisation anchored in the bodies, environments and economies of the most marginalised communities of women—poor and indigenous women in affluent and neocolonial nations, and women from the global South (Mohanty, 2003; Harcourt, 2009). Mohanty's work builds on the experiences and analysis in the lives and struggles of marginalised communities of women (urban poor, working class, peasant, indigenous). She suggests that learning and building on those struggles is the way forwards for advocates of gender justice in the creation of alternatives to neoliberal globalisation and privatisation of social production.

Mohanty's feminist imaginary envisages 'a world that values and promotes gender justice within households and the larger polity; a world in which legacies of colonialism, violence, poverty, and deprivation are acknowledged and actively resisted' (Mohanty and Miraglia, 2012). Her struggle is to construct a post-capitalist world, based on the 'solidarity economy' which 'values co-operation and interdependency above profit and greed'. Her discussion of alternatives to capitalism is based on 'gender justice (the elimination of hierarchies and unequal power based on gender) as central to socio-economic practices and structural arrangements that value equity in access to resources, participation, leadership and the politics of knowledge' (Mohanty and Miraglia, 2012).

Her critique of capitalism includes differentiating the poor workers, peasant women and men into different categories taking into account how gender, race, ethnicity and nation shape the opportunities and constraints faced by women and men, utilising an intersectional approach. For example, the specificities of poor, indigenous women's lives in Latin America are different from the lives and struggles of poor male peasants in South Asia.

Fundamental to this imaginary is women's key involvement in social movements—indigenous, feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, environmental, labour, peasant, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer (LGBTQ) and anti-globalisation, 'creating and cross-pollinating more just, democratic and sustainable economic values, practices and institutions that many see as the basis of a new "solidarity economy"'. At the heart of these solidarity movements are the broad principles of Mohanty's vision of gender justice: 'embodied in the right to equity and dignity in varied economic practices, the right to clean, sanitary and sustainable living arrangements, the right to develop relationships and households based on autonomous sexual choices, the right to bear children or not, and the right to leisure for working class/poor women' (Mohanty and Miraglia, 2012).

Mohanty examines the importance of knowledge production in creating alternatives. She underscores that knowledge is produced by activist and community-based political work and that some knowledge can only emerge within these contexts and locations (Mohanty and Alexander, 2010, p 27). Mohanty therefore proposes that gender justice and alternatives can grow out of transformative gender justice strategy of place-based politics (Harcourt, 2005). The WPP framework looks at different levels of political engagement: women involved in social justice struggles around the body (e.g., sexual, productive and reproductive rights), the environment (ecological and environmental justice movements) and the economy (social and economic justice movements). WPP analyses women's politics in 'place' that is territorially based and also a site of struggle for global struggles for gender justice. By looking at the place where these political actions happen, the WPP framework is attentive to difference, diversity, and specificity in relation to these struggles as well to larger, global processes. It is the struggles over their defence of place that allow women to challenge hegemonic development discourses and practice in place and create new modes of globalised (global/local or glocalised) struggle. As Mohanty describes it: 'Places act as prisms that refract global economic and governance structures, bending and shaping them in ways that make sense within the politics of particular sites and in different communities, what Michal Osterweil (2005) calls a "place-based globalism"' (Mohanty and Miraglia, 2012).

In these feminist visions of how to transform capitalism, women mobilising for change is seen as both an analytical and political project that works by connecting particular sites of resistance around women's care work, community livelihoods, body politics and engagement in alternatives to hegemonic development processes. Key to these proposals is a transformative politics of place as opposed to reform or reactionary defence of the status quo. Such place-based politics maybe about resistance but it is also about re-appropriation, re-construction, re-invention of places and place-based practices and the creation of new possibilities of being-in-place and being-in-networks with other human and non-human living beings. These women centred and place-based responses challenge dominant social, cultural, and economic trends at regional, national and global levels connect together in Osterweil's 'place-based globalism.'

In the next section we turn to an inspiring set of practices emerging out of Latin America that has begun to inform current debates globally about the future of capitalism. The core concept of *buen vivir* if not directly mentioned in the official declaration at UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, for example, was central to the declaration of the 'People's Summit at Rio+20 for Social and Environmental Justice in defense of the commons, against the commodification of life' negotiated by 50,000 people attending the parallel summit, the largest gathering of civil society groups at a UN official meeting (Harcourt, 2012).

#### 4. *Buen vivir, cosmologies emerging from Latin America*

In this section I turn to Latin America as a place where important critical views and practices are emerging that challenge modern neoliberal capitalism and in particular the Western capitalist project of development. I review the Andean concept of *buen vivir* based on the analysis of the Uruguayan ecologist Eduardo Gudynas along with Escobar's writings on Latin America.

*Buen vivir* refers to a vision of well-being/good living based on new arrangements for society, the economy, environment, cultures and peoples. The concept of 'living well' with respect and rights accorded to all forms of life has been enshrined in the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador and is on the political agenda of many social ecology, social indigenous and peasant movements in Latin America (Gudynas, 2011; Thomson, 2011). As stated earlier, though of Latin American origin *buen vivir* has travelled far and is now discussed widely as an alternative to mainstream development associated with growth and global capitalism (Agostino and Dübgen, 2012, p 2).

##### 4.1 *Eduardo Gudynas and buen vivir*

Eduardo Gudynas describes the concept of *buen vivir* as an alternative set of strategies coming from different places in Latin America that aim to replace the logic underlying modern economic development. Instead of prioritising economic value by turning everything into commodities, *buen vivir* looks at different forms of value—aesthetic, cultural, historical, environmental, spiritual. As an alternative to the neoliberal growth model, *buen vivir* aims to create harmony between humanity and nature based on social equilibrium. It is a collective political project where reciprocity with others and with nature (not exploitation or competition) is the key element to well-being.

In this counter-discourse to economic development, *buen vivir* breaks down the dualism of nature/culture, society/nature. Nature becomes part of the social world, and the political extends to include the non-human, acknowledging that animals, plants, ecosystems or spirits have will and feelings.

*Buen vivir* also rejects growth as the aim of development. Its proponents do not seek to propose de-growth or reduce the consumption and means of life of the poor but would see de-growth as a consequence of different values leading to other ways of living in harmony with community, nature and culture.

Gudynas sees *buen vivir* as a post-capitalist platform that allows for inter-cultural explorations of how to build alternatives to capitalism beyond European modernity, moving away from Euro-centric political thought. *Buen vivir* questions the modern ontology that has determined the division between nature and society, a colonial

distinction between modern and non-modern indigenous peoples, the myth of progress as a unidirectional linear path and a strong confidence in Cartesian science.

The tensions in the different sets of literatures between universalism and particularism, reform and transformation is evident in the debates around *buen vivir*. The Bolivian case has revealed limits to establish at the national level radically new models of economic and social organisation. Gudynas comments that the discourse of *buen vivir* by Evo Morales did not move the economy away from growth, development and resource exploitation to conviviality. The Bolivian experiment floundered because its economic survival was 'premised on the need to break dependency on exporting raw materials', which opened the doors 'to all kinds of contradictions with those who claim the protection and integrity of Nature' (Agostino and Dübgen, 2012, p 9).

#### 4.2 Arturo Escobar: learning from Latin America at the crossroads

Escobar's influential book *Encountering Development: The Making and the Unmaking of the Third World* (1995) criticises development and the culture of the West, presenting development as a historically specific set of issues that ignored other cultures' non-Western ways of being. He links the analyses of popular culture with social and political struggles depicting hybrid formations of social economies and ecologies in the third world. He does not see a monolithic capitalism oppressing other cultures but a hybrid of different economies as popular movements resist and reshape capitalist greed and destruction of environments and cultures. In that book he was interested in alternatives emerging in different parts of the global South that are opening up spaces for cultural plurality, biodiversity and ethnicity. He depicts these groups as transformative forces that valorise their economic needs and opportunities in terms that are not strictly about profit and the market.

Escobar's work *Territories of Difference* (2008) explores how:

place-based and regional expressions or articulations of difference in contexts of globalizations . . . setting place-based and regional processes into conversations with ever-changing dynamics of capital and culture and many levels . . . this conversation is about a complex, historically and spatially grounded experience that is negotiated and enacted at every site and region of the world. (Escobar, 2008, p 1)

He looks in detail at these conversations and negotiations in Latin America in Escobar (2010) arguing that 'Latin America is stirring up a new politics of the virtual, of worlds and knowledges otherwise' (Escobar, 2010, p 1). He critically examines Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador as regimes offering radical proposals to change state and society based on a deepening of democracy, anti-neoliberal political economies and development models that involve a strong ecological dimension and scope for pluricultural decisions making in Bolivia and Ecuador.

In his own vision for moving beyond capitalism, he takes up the intercultural 'pluri-versal' approach of *buen vivir* that sees the world being shaped by the interaction between humans and non-humans. He poses the new 'cosmovisions' emerging out of Latin America as a way to overcome modern power constructs of the economy as an independent realm of social practice, with the market as a self-regulating entity outside of social relations. He sees in the different Latin American experiments a way to undermine the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism in new socio-economic, political and cultural practices and in new imaginaries and ideas about how to re/assemble the socio-natural economic practices.

There are many actors in this process of re-assembling political economy in a post-capitalist phase based on new ways of understanding nature and society. Escobar points to Latin American de-colonial feminism as one process that questions the colonialist practices of modernising Western discourses, including feminism, and is closely attuned to those cultural and political concerns of indigenous women. He looks to the growing Latin American and global trans-national networks of indigenous women and Afro-Latin American women's networks as spaces to articulate new gendered perspectives on the economy. He suggests these on going discussions of inter-culturality, decoloniality and *buen vivir* have the potential to lead to novel designs for society, the state and life, including the relation between humans and nature. A major challenge in this process that Escobar suggests needs to be confronted by intellectuals engaged in the new cosmovisions emerging from Latin America is how to 'think and act with the historically subordinated and marginalized peoples; to unlearn their uni-national, colonial, and monocultural learning; and to relearn to learn so as to be able to complement each other, and co-exist and co-live ethically' (Catherine Walsh, quoted in Escobar, 2010, p 64).

The appeal of *buen vivir* emerged strongly in the Rio+20 at the Peoples' Summit for Social and Environmental Justice, where more than 50,000 people critiqued the green economy and the financialisation of nature and to the destruction of local communities' economies, ecology and culture. The summit declaration deliberated on 'Buen Vivir as a counterpoint to the failings of the so-called "Green Economy"' and called for sustainable societies which respected women and indigenous peoples rights in order to 'live well in harmony with nature' (Final Declaration of the People's Summit, 19 June 2012).

At the summit, representatives of social and popular movements, trade unions, people, civil society organisations and environmental organisations from around the world declared:

The defence of the commons involves the guarantee of a series of human rights and the rights of nature, solidarity and respect for the world views and beliefs of different peoples, such as, for example, the defence of 'buen vivir' or 'living well' as a way of existing in harmony with nature, which implies a just transition to be built with workers and the people. . . . The strengthening of local economies and the territorial rights of communities contributes to the development of more vibrant economies. These local economies provide sustainable local livelihoods, community solidarity, vital components for the resilience of ecosystems. The diversity of nature and the cultural diversity associated with it are the basis for a new paradigm of society. (Final Declaration of the People's Summit, 19 June 2012)

The negotiations around the declaration brought together from different place-based networks holistic 'alternative' visions of capitalism, which were immediately shared via multiple communication technologies and translated into diverse languages amongst civil society groups around the world, instantaneously with the official UN process. This is a powerful example of place-based globalism, inspired by Latin American scholars and activists.

## 5. Conclusion: living economies and ethical ways of knowing

The appeal of all three sets of literatures is to find ways to live with and re-define capitalism aware of social and ecological limits and to see how to change our economic values to include care and respect for our families, communities,

other knowledges and cultures. The concept of living economies<sup>11</sup> proposes that we redesign our economies so that life is valued more than money and power resides in ordinary women and men who care for each other, their community and their natural environment. The challenge for the future is to build a broad platform for living economies or alternatives building up from community needs, which are inter-generational and gender aware, based on an ethics of care for the environment.

The diverse writers reviewed in this article are engaged in the project of moving beyond today's disastrously unequal capitalism. Whereas these views might have been dismissed not long ago as marginal, they are now informing a widespread challenge to neoliberal capitalism and the values of greed and lust. It is striking that all of them, from very different positions and places, argue for the greater centrality to care, the household and personal relations in economic analysis that link ethics, nature and culture. Whether the language they use is about new economics, new green deal, solidarity economies, social enterprise, social economy, core economy, care economy, social reproduction, place-based feminist alternatives or *buen vivir*, these are visions for the future of capitalism. They are based in beliefs and values that build on the ethics of care, have respect for diversity and question growth as the driver of economic development. These voices and experiences speak of the need to change current ways of living by adopting lifestyles that respect ecological limits in defiance of the greed and lust and gender blindness of powerful capitalist institutions.

What is important in considering the future of capitalism is to see that these alternatives are coming out of movements as spaces and processes in which knowledges are produced, modified, and mobilised by diverse actors who are co-producing, challenging and transforming economic discourses (Casas-Cortés et al., 2011).

The challenge is to work with these plural visions, the tensions within them, acknowledging the context in which they are formed, learning from popular movements and political activism in the co-production of knowledge. This requires that intellectuals whether in academe, think tanks or civil society organisations to be open to shared ethical ways of knowing and avoid any one group drawing up and imposing a blueprint for the future 'beyond' capitalism.

This is not an easy task, even if there is strong evidence that capitalism is based on inequalities and exploitation and destruction of livelihoods and natural resources. People in industrialising countries continue to strive for consumer goods, high-tech tools and a modern society. The politics of desire at the heart of capitalism remains prevalent.

When completing the final revisions of this article, I was very encouraged to find that the intellectual left in Britain is continuing to open up debate and question the neoliberal capitalist project. I found considerable resonance with my own concerns in the vigorous polemical analysis of 'The Kilburn Manifesto' by the editors of the UK journal *Soundings* (Hall, 2013; Hall et al., 2013). The manifesto, launched in April 2013 (Hall, 2013), is to be a rolling series of analyses of 'what needs to be done' in response to the victory of neoliberal capitalism. It aims to propose alternative approaches and demands working outside party politics—inspired by the new social movements, including environmental, anti-cuts and feminist groups. Though

<sup>11</sup> I first heard the term *living economies* from David Korten; see his online 'living economies forum' at <http://www.davidkorten.org/>.

originally anchored in the old left, the authors recognise the need to move beyond the past ideals of the welfare state to protect vulnerable social groups and find new ways to ensure redistribution, egalitarianism, collective provision, democratic accountability and participation. They speak of the need to disrupt the current common sense of 'the economic'. In this, they acknowledge gender, race, ethnicity and other oppressions along with class and the need to rethink social relations from other perspectives (for instance, re-framing the exploitation of labour in production from the perspective of the heavily gendered reproduction of social labour). They open up ways to unsettle the ideological neoliberal hegemony, including calling in ruptures in popular discourse, to arrive at 'an agenda of ideas for a progressive political project which transcends the limitations of conventional thinking that is bound by what it is "reasonable" (as dictated by the markets and political expediency) to propose or to do'.

These literatures propose different forms of imaginaries that move beyond the economic paradigm of neoliberal capitalism, reiterated by governments learning from the social and economic practices in place. The small attempts at alternatives, although not radically transformatory on their own, open up possibilities for changes to the 'order of things'. These place-based alternative practices are a shift of consciousness that could lead to greater economic and social transformations. They can be seen as transitory practices to overcome the paradox we live in between yearning for alternatives and sticking to the old ways of doing things.

In a discussion on the future of capitalism, it is important that in the process of knowledge training/production of economists, especially those who are being trained now, know about these multiple social, political and economic experiments, the new imaginaries and approaches to community economies, social enterprise, hopes for a new politics respect for care, family and the commons along with balanced ways of living with nature within the limits of the ecological and human limits. Rather than seeing them as distant to mainstream analysis of capitalism, this knowledge, action and hope need to be shaping a new political economy based on the ethics of care, compassion, conviviality, connectedness, community; being part of a change which, as the Rio+20 debates suggest, is already happening, one that we need to continue to envision together. The direct challenge then, of these scholar activists to heterodox economics is to be open to engage in a conversation with diverse place-based visions on how to transform capitalism's profound economic and social injustice, aware of the differences and working with them as we move to the future.

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