

Communism in the 21st Century by Shannon Brincat, ed.

Copyright © 2013 by Shannon Brincat.

All rights reserved.

Reproduced with permission of ABC-CLIO, LLC, Santa Barbara,
CA.

Crisis and commons today. In Shannon Brincat (ed.),
Communism in the 21st Century, 3 Volumes, Santa
Barbara: Praeger, Vol. 3. 2014

Crisis and the Commons today

Massimo De Angelis

One word, many meanings

While I was growing up in 1970s Italy, the word “communism” echoed many realities and horizons. There was obviously the Communist Party, the largest in Western Europe, with its bureaucratic structure, its parliamentary opposition to the Christian Democrats until the governments of National Solidarity in 1979 in occasion of the introduction of austerity policies and draconian anti-terrorist laws. There were the Red Brigades, with their secret cells, their shooting the legs of foremen, trade union members and magistrates, and their first homicides up to the kidnapping and killing of the leading figure of the Christian Democrat, Aldo Moro in 1978. There were the myriad of little parties and organizations of the extraparliamentary Left, each with their distinctive politics and often sectarian attitudes. There were the archipelago of collectives and informal groupings in schools, factories, universities, and neighbourhoods. There were also those who had found a way to mix their catholic roots with communist ideas, the so-called catto-comunist. Finally, there were the plethora of “unleashed dogs”, individuals who while not belonging to any particular organization, were surfing the movement to find in it the source of some conviviality and sociality. There was one word, communism, and many meanings and many organisational forms, often in open conflict with one another.

In all these very different cases, people would have defined themselves first as communist, and then as a particular type of communist, belonging to this or that organization, this or that strand of communist thought. Different groups held a different selection of the founding fathers’ thought to which they inspired: Marx-Engels, Marx-Engels-Lenin, Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin-Mao, Marx-Engels-Lenin-Trotsky, Marx-Engels-Lenin-Gramsci and, maybe among the Metropolitan Indians with some achievement in urban struggle, the influence of the Marx brothers was visible.

This just asserts the obvious: that ideas and organisational practices of communism are and have been many, and even more so in international contexts. How do I then distil from so many practices and theories a meaning of communism that advances our critical knowledge of the present and help us construct an emancipated future? Disfavouring communism as type of future society or a particular type of human action, that is a utopia, I prefer to stick to two broad classical indications, both coming from Marx, and that I use as two coordinates in which we can conceive emancipatory praxis at different scales and in particular contexts. The first coordinate is the understanding of communism as “the movement that abolishes the present state of

affair” (German Ideology)¹; the second, as the “community of free individuals” (Capital)². These two coordinates give me a communism that is a combination of struggle and negation while at the same time it is creation constitution of new social relations, a social doing based on democracy and emancipation. Once I extend the reach of “association” of free producers to also include the realm of unwaged social cooperation, in today’s context I translate this communism in terms of what I call *Plan C&D*, or “Commons and Democracy.” This is the name I give to the “sense-horizon” of a social force that is distinct from capital. In today’s context, capital seems stuck in different versions of plan A (Neoliberalism) and unable to shift to a renewed orthodoxy of plan B (Keynesianism) and probably trying to co-opt elements of Plan C&D, but most likely combining more strictly with elements of plan E&F (exclusion and fascism). But in order to give some depth to these assertions, we need to discuss few things. In the first section, I review with large brushes the class meaning of the current capitalist crisis and its origin with the establishment of the Neoliberal era in the 1980s and the end of the Keynesian class deal of the post-war period. In the second section, I discuss how the current crisis corresponds to a situation of impasse for capital, that is a moment in which capital must find ways to recover accumulation, through readjustment of strategies. This impasse however is also a condition of emancipatory movements and struggles, that need to coalesce and direct social cooperation in new ways for the creation of alternatives. In the third section I discuss the meaning I give to *social forces*. Borrowing here from social systems theory, I define social forces as social systems that coordinates action and strive to expand their social realm. In this sense, capital can be understood as a social force in that its systemic circuits of accumulation seek expansion. All the same, commons could be understood as social force, to the extent their specific circuits of social cooperation seek expansion. Borrowing the terminology from system theorists Niklas Luhmann, in the following section I then discuss the notion of “Plan” as the particular “sense horizons” of a specific social force in given times. By this term I mean an orienting plane within which a particular strategic direction is undertaken by the social force *given* other forces. Thus, Neoliberal and Keynesian orthodoxies are two examples of these capitalist plans. I fill then broadly outline the state of current plans which include Neoliberalism plus (Plan A), Keynesianism plus (plan B), Communism plus (Plan C&D) and Fascism plus (Plan E&F).

2008-?: Capitalist crisis

The 2008 sub-prime crisis was an epochal moment, one of those moments after which the world is no longer what it seemed just few months earlier, or at least what the world as seen through neoliberal eyes seemed to be. The global crisis that followed *prima facie* indicated the end of the neoliberal era as emerged in the late 1970s.

¹“Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.” (Marx 1845: part 1).

² “A community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour power of the community”. (Marx 1867: chapter 1)

To contextualise the avenues open to different social forces, we need to write a brief historical outline of the dynamics of the last 30 years interpreted in the old framework of class struggle. *Neoliberalism*, in fact, arose as a response first by U.S.-UK capitalists and then generalised to the globe, to a threefold profitability problem that had resulted from the planetary struggles of the previous two decades: the anti-colonial, women, student, black and labour movements that in the 1960s and 1970s occurred around the world and in the West shook capitalist planners. The plurality of struggles left little room for capital to enact countertendencies to the falling rate of profit at the global level.³ The “Plan” that was devised was the post-war deal, Keynesianism, in which capital attempted to institutionalise and co-opt wage struggles into mechanism of economic growth, pledging to pursue full employment, growing wages (also in the social components such as social spending for housing, health, education and transfer to the poor or, in the Global South, food subsidies) and an horizon of betterment under capitalist growth. In the 1970s it was soon realised that this was no longer possible, as the democracy in the streets posited by many struggles in Western “democratic” nations were on the way of the sacrifices that were necessary to re-establish profitability and restart growth.⁴

Thus, for capital the threefold problem was:

- 1) How to cut the social wage (wages plus social benefits) received by the working class, and at the same time ;
- 2) Allow in some way the reproduction of the working class and their aspiration of “betterment”, whilst;
- 3) Intensify their working lives to increase extraction of surplus value?

The recent sub-prime experiment was the last of many moments taken by the neoliberal strategy to deal with this threefold problem. The first one was in 1979, the year in which Paul Volker – then chairman of the Federal Reserve – “officially” launched the neoliberal era with a sudden 1 percent increase in the interest rate, precipitating a global recession. The latter, in turn, created the conditions for neoliberal reforms such as financial market deregulation, union busting, cuts in social entitlements, tax cuts for the rich, and intensified free trade. The massive explosion in debt and financial markets (of which the sub- prime crisis is the latest expression) were a major consequence of this. “Excessive” public spending was identified as the major source of inflation and unemployment, together with “excessive” wage demands.

With the election of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the U.S. in 1981, a new “consensus” started to consolidate among world rulers that the wage, in its totality, had to be reduced. This meant not only wages received directly in exchange for labour power, but also the social component in the form of transfers and public spending.

³ There is generally an agreement among Marxist economists that the rate of profit generally fell in the 1970s. Disagreement is on the way to measure it and how this impacted as a “cause” of crisis.

⁴ See Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki (1975). For a discussion of the rise and fall of Keynesianism in relation to class struggle see De Angelis (2000).

With the opening up of capital's markets, Western governments decreed the abandonment of their commitments to full employment and began dismantling the social safety net, the central piece of the post-WWII deal. Economic and social policies must henceforth "please" financial capital markets. If governments granted popular concessions that redistributed resources from capital to the working class, financial capital would go off shore, thus inducing a fall in exchange rates, an increase in interest rates, a downturn in business and a rise in unemployment. In the view of neoliberals, a "stable economy" meant accommodation to the desires of international financial capital that started to act as a disciplinary device at the service of capital accumulation. Capital markets started to exert heavy pressure on conditions of work – whether waged work in factories or offices, or unwaged work of raising children and reproducing lives in the home – through capital's increased ability to migrate from place to place, pitting conditions of working class reproduction against one another. Governments now competed against one another to cut public spending that was part of the social wage: education, health, housing, to mention just a few.

In the global South, which did not have "advanced" capital markets through which to impose the discipline of global capital, the same effects were obtained through the management of what became known as the *Third World debt crisis*, precipitated by Chairman Volker's interest rate increase. In the event of a liquidity crisis in a debtor country, the IMF forced Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) on all countries in crisis with little variation: devalue the currency, thus making imports more expensive and enforcing a cut in real wages; privatize water, education, healthcare and other national resources, thus opening them up to restructuring and rising precarious employment as well as, in the early phase, unemployment; cut social spending; cut subsidies on necessities like food and fuel; open up markets to foreign investors; promote competitive exports that will help repay debt. In the case of basic resources like water, their privatization resulted in attempts to make poor people pay at prices they often cannot afford. This wave of "new enclosures"⁵ was resisted by millions of people across the world,⁶ often slowing the process of privatisation, sometimes even stopping them. But, as in the case of financial liberalization in the global North, in the South the management of debt crises became an opportunity to enclose common resources and make people more dependent on the market. In both the North and the South, through financial deregulation and free trade, neoliberal capital aimed to turn the "class war" of the 1960s and 1970s – when capital's power faced challenges in communities, factories, offices, streets and fields around the world – into a planetary "civil war". A civil war fought through pervasive competition, a way of life that pits each community against every other ↓ which in fact meant *shifting* costs away from capital and onto the environment, communities and human bodies, where they no longer count as economic costs. It has done this also by policing the divisions between the global wage hierarchies as, for example, through the management of borders with detention camps, deportation, and the criminalization of migration in both North America and Europe.

⁵ With reference to this period, the term was coined by Midnight Notes Collective (1990). Subsequently, a series of different analyses has mushroomed to refer to the role and concept of primitive accumulation in "advanced" capitalism. See for example, Bonefeld (2002); De Angelis (2001; 2004); Harvey (2003).

⁶ See for example Walton and Seddon (1994).

In this context, the development of information and communication technologies, together with the drastic reduction in the monetized (but not the environmental) cost of global transport, has offered capital a major opportunity to restructure global production and construct a system that facilitate its flows from high cost (high struggles) into low cost (low struggles).

This global restructuring developed in the last few decades, along with the development of financial speculation and the use of debt, has allowed the reduction in the *value of labor power* of global North workers without a proportional decline in living standards. This, simply by lowering the price of commodities that enter in the wage basket of these workers. For example, the planetary expansion of sweatshops in global commodity chains means that U.S. workers could buy pants or digital radios at Wal-Mart at low prices. Because of cheap service labor from the South and East ↓ the result of massive poverty caused by Structural Adjustment ↓ households in Europe and the US now hire Filipina, Mexican or Eastern European women to take care of children and aged grandparents.

In the South, meanwhile, this process has made it possible to discipline new masses of workers into factories and assembly lines, fields and offices, thus extending enormously capital's reach in defining the terms — the what, the how, the how much — of social production.

In both North and South, the enclosure of resources means an increased dependence of working class communities on markets to reproduce livelihoods, less power to resist the violence and arrogance of those whose priority is only to seek profit, less power to prevent the market from running their lives and, in general a generalized state of *precarity*, where life is precarious and nothing can be taken for granted.

Indeed, both North and South workers were systemically linked, something that is revealed by a pattern in global finance that some describe as Bretton Woods II⁷ and is expressed by the enormous U.S. trade deficit and correspondent surplus in China and other exporting countries. This systemic link between surplus and deficit countries allows the creation of new debt instruments like the one that resulted in the sub-prime crisis. The ongoing recycling of accumulated surplus of countries exporting to the USA, such as China and oil producing countries, is what has allowed financiers to create new credit instruments in the USA.

This global system saw the integration of a series of “deals” made nationally with their working classes.⁸ For example, the (informal) “deal” offered by the elites in the United States to its working people has been to buffer the reduction in money wages with access to cheaper consumption goods, access to credit and a renewal of the illusion that gains in terms education, health, pensions and social security could be made through the speculative means of rising stock markets and housing prices

In turn, to allow the reproduction of labour power of 250 millions of unemployed, under-employed and dispossessed Chinese, the “communist” leaders need double digits rate of growth, and therefore they need both Western markets and their capital, know-how and technologies. It is for this reason that they have been willing to recycle

⁷ See for example Dooley, M.P., Folkes-Landau, D. and Garber, P. (2003).

⁸ For a conceptualisation of “deals” as a control grid within which class struggle is regulated, see Midnight Notes Collective (1985).

back to the US their enormous trade surpluses, thus contributing to the liquidity necessary for the expansion of the many forms of debt in the US. This is a vicious cycle that locks everybody into an endless rat race.

At the same time in China and other zones in the Global South, people are being offered a different sort of “deal”: industrial employment at wages that, while very low by international standards, are still substantially higher than anything obtainable in the impoverished countryside. But attached to this there is the promise that, through their link to global markets, their conditions of living will gradually improve. While over the last few years wages in many such areas seem to be growing thanks to the intensification of popular struggles (particularly in China), such gains are impossible to generalize. What is being offered to the South is the promise to expand the existing urban middle classes who already model their lifestyle and consumption patterns on Northern ones. Although an understandable longing for “betterment” is at the basis of what has been sold as the “American dream”, what makes it a dream is precisely the fact that, even in the US, it has never meant eliminating wage hierarchies, but reshaping them. This is a game in which there must, necessarily, be losers.

At the global level however, this is impossible to generalize for two reasons. First, environmentally speaking, no matter how much we recycle or how many energy efficient light bulbs we use, it would still require several planets to accommodate an “American dream” way of life modelled on high energy and individualized consumption patterns for six billion people. Second, precisely because this way of life requires the further expansion of competition of all against all, of borders and property regimes, of enclosures and dispossession, it must always necessarily be dependent on hierarchy and exclusion and must be premised on a massive devaluation of capital and labour demanded by the crisis. In other words, middle class “betterment” is an illusion constructed inbetween the Scylla of ecological disaster and the Charybdis of poverty. The only thing this model of development can create are gated communities of whatever is left of middle class families accessing privatized social services within the borders of their patrolled walls, surrounded by hordes of poor with little access to public services and whose entrance through the gates of those enclaves is managed for the purpose of serving those gated middle class communities. But as we will see, capital plan A still insists this is the way forwards.

It is in this context that we must read the crisis of 2008. This followed a series of burst bubbles and Federal Reserve interventions on interest rates which kept inflating the American and global economy with debt used to fund speculation, but also to pay for housing, for education, for consumption and, for many, bare essentials. In the late 1990s the dotcom bubble burst and high tech stocks crashed, opening a recession. After the 9/11 attacks there were widespread fears of financial collapse, as employment keep dropping through July 2003 (in spite of the recession being “officially over” in November 2001). Between January and December 2001, the Fed cuts its benchmark interest rate 11 times, dropping the key lending rate from 6.5 percent to 1.75 percent. This led to negative real interest rates (when inflation was factored in) which meant that banks borrowed money to make loans and, in real dollars, repaid less than they had borrowed. Cheap credit was a strategy to avoid and delay financial collapse and consequent global meltdown, but it is also how the Fed created the next bubble. *It was also a strategy to sell the American dream to the poorest in the context of declining real wages.*

After the dotcom crash, the era of easy credit led to speculation on the housing market. Home mortgage debt begun to show double digit growth, settling at around 16.6 percent a year in the period between 2000-2005, compared to about 9.2 percent a year in the 1990s. This added to other working class indebtedness which grew through the last three decades. Loans were made available to working class people who would not have qualified previously because of low incomes or inadequate assets, and lenders did not seem interested in checking borrowers' statements. This was not only due to cheap credit, but also the way mortgages were packaged into more complex debt instruments (which led to the international ramifications of the crisis.)

The novel aspect of the “new” mortgage market was the banks' offloading of risk to the market through *securitization*, i.e. repackaging of these mortgages into securities that combined a wide range of risks and promises of repayment by a variety of agents; investments that were sold off to hedge funds, pension funds, and back to commercial banks themselves. All these factors, plus the contradictory systems of incentives for different agents in their efforts to maximize profit caused drastic increases in home prices, which almost doubled in the 2000-2005 period.⁹ This was fundamental to allow working class people to turn into speculators and compensate their falling wages with capital gains on their houses. Ultimately however, this bubble burst because debt must be paid back, with interest. And this is not always possible, if the cost of repayment increases above what the borrower can afford. One factor contributing to the wave of defaults was the Fed's seventeen interest rates hikes between June 2004 and June 2006. The higher rates affected a variety of borrowers, but especially the more vulnerable ones with adjustable rate mortgages.

In July 2007, according to some estimates, a month before the official opening of the sub-prime crisis, home foreclosures were almost 100 percent above the previous year. The increase in foreclosures in turn contributed to a fall in further lending and a drop in home prices. By March 2008 average home prices had fallen by almost 20 percent from their peak in June 2006.¹⁰ A fall in house prices in turn prevented many homeowners from playing the speculator's game (borrowing against the rising value of their houses) for the purpose of maintaining their livelihoods.

What followed from the crisis was a multimillion state intervention to save banks “too big to fail” in the sense that their bankruptcy would threaten the stability of global finance capital and, more generally, the entire capitalist system in its current form. States have not been shy from Keynesian policy, with Obama attempting some stimulus to get the economy growing, with little success. The expectations of profitability are too low for investors to re-start the economy, and the accumulated debt is too high. The crisis turned from a private debt crisis into a sovereign debt crisis, with countries like Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Portugal on the firing line of “unpleased” financial capital for spending too much in debt services owned to banks that were saved by the public purse. Strong austerity policies are now back in fashion in Europe again, the same type of policies the cycle of neoliberalism started more than four decades ago.

⁹ Calculated from Case-Shiller Home Price Index (<http://www.standardandpoors.com>).

¹⁰ Calculated from the data provided by US Census Bureau (www.census.gov/const/uspricemon.pdf). The global trend is still downward (IMF 2012).

Impasse

Today economic crisis is a capitalist crisis of social stability, not a simple recession. It is a crisis that requires a realignment and reconfiguration of class relations and new systems of governance in order to re-establish growth and accumulation.¹¹ The last two times in which a real change in capital's governance occurred was the embracing of "Keynesianism" in the post-WWII period and in the late 1970s with the shift to "Neoliberalism". Both followed periods of intense social struggles that developed *senses* and perceptions guiding and orienting social movements towards alternative socio-economic arrangements. When this happens, capital, fearing that "ideas grip the masses" is suddenly willing to shift "governance" paradigm, absorb some of the struggles with appealing deals to some sections of the struggling movement, and displace the cost of doing so onto other communities, sections of the working class, and the environment across the globe. Division of the social body has always been a strategy of capital development.¹²

Yet this time, things have become more economically complex. With no World War that would allow massive devaluation of capital; a mass of debt that prevents re-inflating the economy through further debt; levels of economic growth that are insufficient to repay existing debt; and a planet that is warming up dangerously; in facing *this* crisis of social stability, capital is actually facing an *impasse*. By "impasse" I mean a crucial moment in the growth of a social system. It is a moment in which vital support for this system is not forthcoming in sufficient amount, neither in terms of expectation of profit, nor in terms of social acceptance.

This support is not forthcoming in sufficient amount especially from the *environment* of the capitalist system. Capital, understood as social force organizing social cooperation for the purpose of accumulation, has a twofold environment. One, constituted by social systems that reproduce the various facets of life in a non-commodified way and in which access to money is, at most, only one of their contingent aims. This is the universe of social cooperation that is, at most, connected to capital circuits through what Marx describes as "selling in order to buy" and for which money is only a means through which needs are satisfied (and not an end in itself as it is for capital). When the purchased commodities exit the sphere of circulations into these non-capitalist spheres of social cooperation (households, associations, networks, etc.), they often enter the culturally and politically variegated sphere of the commons for which money is foremost a means, not an end. The cultural and physical reproduction of labour power, the value-creating commodity so critically important for capital, occurs in such a sphere, outside capital but, of course, strictly coupled to it.

¹¹ For a discussion of crisis of social stability as opposed to other forms of crisis, see De Angelis (2007).

¹² For an historical and theoretical discussion of how Keynesianism was founded on particular deals with sections of the working class, see De Angelis (2000). For a theoretical discussion of the relation between capitalist development and social stratification, see the interventions in *The Commoner N. 12*, Spring/Summer 2007. For a discussion of the current crisis along the lines proposed here, *Midnight Notes and Friends* (2009).

The other system that capital must seek support from is the ecological system upon which all forms of social organization depend on. This has its own mechanisms through which it absorbs and processes the externalities of capital. This impasse can be seen in the fact that on one hand, micro and macro systems of social reproduction, devastated and atomised, made flexible and precarious, by the reduction of wage and welfare of the last 30 years and strangled with debt, and with no prospect of betterment given the current course of the economic crisis and the recipes on the tables of the global elites that we will discuss in following sections, or shattered by the many resource enclosures that have devastated many communities in the global south, face an increasing difficulty to support capital with further absorption of its cost-shifting externalities since to do so would undermine their own reproduction. On the other hand, the ecosystem is showing increasing inability to support capital in its endless quest for more resource extraction and use of the atmosphere as bottomless greenhouse gas sink.

The imperative question becomes whether capital can renew itself as a social force of “creative destruction” and transformation and break its impasse on its own term (with all the “negative externalities” that any new phase of capitalist growth bring about), or whether another social force can emerge by fostering social cooperation in a direction that breaks the impasse and fight the chains of the old and constitute the new. If it is the latter, is this a social force that can be understood as communist? Before addressing these questions we need to enquire about the meaning of social force.

Social forces

I understand social forces to be *social systems* that seek their own expanded reproduction through their operations at whatever scale of social action, and by thus doing they influence, clash, contaminate, subsume, couple with, transform, or destroy other social systems, making them the means of their own development. They are coagulation of a plurality of social powers around particular types of values, practices and relations, in so far as their social reproduction is concerned, articulate social subjects and ecologies through value specific and coordinating operations. For example, capital has clearly been a social force in the last few hundred years, that is a social system based on sub-systemic circuits of accumulation that expand, connect, weave and reshape society to its images and priorities.¹³ Also the commons have been a social force, in the sense that pluralities that have formed communities of struggles (in the shape of trade unions, committees, networks, etc), have claimed different types of social wealth as common resources (education, health, social security, communication, etc.) and also struggled for inclusive and deep democratic practices for their access and co-governance (commoning).

In situated and historical contexts however, social forces need *plans* that is, specific ways and selections to coagulate and channel social action in such a way as to force-out, outflank or co-opt other social forces and overcome the barriers they are facing. Since we are not talking about a rigid command structure in which these social forces

¹³ With this I mean circuits based on the M-C-M' formula (i.e. money-commodity-more money) that Marx discusses in Chapter 3 of Capital. For a discussion of contemporary capitalism following Marx's circuits analysis, see De Angelis (2007).

operate, this coagulation of social powers and cooperation is produced through moments of situated selection of what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad’ and of actual *actions upon these selections that is practices of social cooperation that produce value*. The repetition of these selections into clusters and patterns acts through a strengthening of bonds among different nodes of social cooperation. This strengthening of bonds corresponds to a clustering of a diverse range of value practices around a *shared* sense-horizon. Social forces are thus coagulations of productive, reproductive, affective social powers around a sense-horizon that orient action in a particular direction. It is when this shared sense-horizon is coupled with the materiality of the exercise of social powers that we have a social force capable of transforming reality. I call a “plan” the sense horizon that a social force must possess in order to be constitutive of the new.

Let us clarify what do we mean by sense-horizon. I use the term here to build on Niklas Luhmann’s concept of *Sense*. This shared sense is always a construction by a system, hence “it can also be defined as a selection within the horizon of what is possible” (Moeller: 2006 225), that is what is considered possible from within the perspective of system’s reproduction. Sense-horizon provides an orientation plane, a measure between the actual and the possible. Luhmann makes the example of a ship, which through its movements uses the horizon for orientation. The direction chosen by the ship (the actual), is just one selection within a range of possible direction provided by the horizons. So, the sense horizons of capital in general, i.e. independent of actual conditions, is very clear: accumulation. Every corporation in every epoch has this bottom line as ultimate objective which is not so much an ethical stand, but a drive, a conatus of self-preservation qua capital as social system (De Angelis 2007). All the same, at the macro level, this also implies “growth” as capital’s horizon.

Different school of thoughts, writers, interpreters, commentators, policy makers and economists may of course cluster in different paradigms and have differing views of how profit, or “growth” can be achieved, or of course may have distinct views about the socially or ethically acceptable costs for achieving it. But these opinions or paradigms are particular selections within a given commons sense-horizon, that of accumulation.

However, *sense-horizons* and actual *selections* within horizons can be contested. In social systems, not only the specific selections within horizons, but the *horizon* of what is possible can be *contested*. While the former case corresponds to a meaning of conflict that reproduces a social system, it is in the latter case that social systems are challenged by other social systems as social force. Let us take an example. Let us imagine for example that water provisions for some given urban neighbourhoods are delivered by communities of residents who pool together their resources and organize common labour to dig wells, build aqueducts and distribution systems to households, and manage maintenance of the water system. Let us say that people participation is the most effective and convenient way to bring safe and clean waters to homes, since the public water system does not have resources to deliver to the poorer districts and the private providers would deliver at very high prices. While providing for their own water, communities also talk about other problems, and possible ways to deal with them. They also constitute associations that bring together all the water associations, so as to manage resources across different areas and distribute them when they are most needed, but also to constitute a political front vis-à-vis state and corporations for claiming more resources or resisting pressures of subordination to capital. We have here a social system (the systems of water associations) whose sense-horizon is not accumulation, but reproduction of the community and of the resources needed to reproduce this community through commoning, the social cooperation of the

community which decide the what, the when, the how and the who of social reproduction. There is an expansive logic here as well, in that the communities working cooperatively seek to reach out to those sections of the poor population who are still paying huge prices for poorly delivered water by private providers. Until one day the government decides to privatise all water, not just public, but also community run water systems. That is, multinational corporations with their sense-horizon that seek accumulation, will now descend into the poor communities of Cochabamba — this is the real case we are talking about before the water wars of 2001 — and put up water meters on community build infrastructure in order to calculate payments due to them. A clear clash among social systems and correspondent sense horizons.

The general terms of the water example can be mapped into any struggles: in factories, in offices, in neighbourhoods, along rivers and mountains in which communities fight against their enclosures, against the construction of dams of High Speed trains, in land seized by landless movement, in cyberspace struggles against the enclosure of knowledge and so on. In all these cases, in different forms and through different means, we witness at clashing social forces, that is clashing social powers and sense horizons.

Plans

In a given situation, at the micro or macro scale, we can call “Plans” the strategic selections around which different social forces coalesce. At the macro scale, there are today two main “Plans” around which contemporary capitalist forces can hope to recover into a social force in order to deal with the impasse. I call these Plan A and Plan B which include the type and range of selections ↓ of policies, of social relations, of institutions, of procedures, and so on ↓ within the range of what is believed make accumulation — capital’s drive and sense- horizons — possible. These two plans are ‘Neoliberalism plus’ and ‘Keynesianism plus.’ In both cases, the strategic selections are like path towards the horizon coinciding with the dominance of capitalism, and hence with an “end of history” perspective typical of Fukuyama (1992).¹⁴

There are also two alternative plans, alternatives that may be seen compatible with capital in the short run in the sense that they take it as a starting point, but that in the long run see themselves as social forces of transformation beyond capital. These are Plans C&D and Plan E&F or ‘Communism plus,’ and ‘Fascism plus.’

In a phase of impasse, a range of operational options that become contingent to a particular political economic situation constitutes each of the following “Plans”.

Plan A(Neoliberalism plus): Plan A seek to coalesce social cooperation around the need of capital accumulation closely through the attractors of markets, livelihoods threatening competition, a system of minimization of social protection and public investments, and, the strong hand of disciplinary finance and debt. In this plan, the

¹⁴ Incidentally, when in the past the possible was also perceived as a system of different nature, as non-capitalist ↓ like in the era of the XIX century revolutions ↓ the nuclear arsenal of the cold war contributed to make sure it was kept at a distance. The thesis of the end of history was first proposed by Fukuyama (1992).

state is not dissolving, but acquires the function of *supporting* markets with reforms that either promote markets, or replace markets in some specific cases *with the view* of promoting social cooperation through the market. In some versions, civil society also plays a complementary role to absorb shocks. In others, government is heavily downsized to its policing and military functions.

Plan B (Keynesianism plus): Plan B seeks to coalesce social cooperation around the need of capital accumulation closely through the triple attractors of markets, states, and, in different degrees, civil society. The state is seen as an active agent not only promoting a “right” environment for economic growth (accumulation) but in some cases also to direct the type of growth and industries, to counter the concentration of wealth produced by the markets through redistribution, and to implement countercyclical policies in the hope of reducing unemployment. An active role of organised labour and civil society ↓ like unions, NGOs ↓ is fundamental to mediate between different interests in society, although this requires these interests to share the horizon of capitalist development.

Plan C&D (Communism plus): Plan C&D (commons and democracy) seeks to coalesce social cooperation around the expansion and rhizomatic integration of alternative modes of social cooperation based on shared resources and their horizontal government by communities, with the goals of social justice, freedom and emancipation. This plan is centered on the commons, not only through the making of new social practices, but also, through democratization of market and state functions that is, through their communalization. Capital accumulation and the existing state apparatuses and functions at the different scales are here only a given condition of departure, the disastrous social effects of which are now visible *ad hominem*, not a goal to be pursued in the long run.

Plan E&F (Fascism plus): For plan E&F (exclusion/emergency and fascism) seeks to coalesce social cooperation not around the expansion of capitalist accumulation (which may become an instrument, not a goal), but the greatness of a nation, an ethnic group or a community, purified against what are perceived contaminants whether social (foreigners, migrants) or value cultural (gays and lesbians, particular religions). As in plan C&D – and disturbingly so ↓ this plan requires the active participation of the “community”, but in close organic connection to a hierarchical state that does not hesitate to use force against any form of “otherness”.

The four Plans are not mutually exclusive. The Bush years have seen a remarkable realignment between Plan A and Plan E&F, especially around the so-called “war on terror”. The same can be said of the management of borders in the neoliberal period in Europe, the USA and many other parts of the world. It is equally visible in the increasing securitization of our lives. In the Keynesian period (old Keynesianism) elements of plan A (including a functional use of welfare to return to market work) were heavily used in the middle of a fully fledged Plan B orthodoxy. So were the early experiments of Plan A, as in New York Fiscal crisis in the mid 1970s. Plan C&D was unhappily married with Plan E&F and elements of Plan B during Stalinism. The Plan A of the neoliberal period since the late 1970s were often coupled with elements of Plan B, as in the Reagan expansionary military Keynesianism of the early 1980s, and the mild fiscal stimulus of the post 2008 crisis in the US accompanied with the nationalization of banks “too big to fail”.

State of the Plans after 2008

What is the state of these Plans after the crisis of 2008? For the purpose of this analysis, I only deal with the first three of these Plans, leaving the discussion of Plan E&F to another occasion. But this should not be taken as implying that this plan is unimportant. Conditions of deep crisis and hopelessness do create a fertile ground for fascism to arise, for modes of exclusion to emerge and prosper. The growing neo-Nazi influence in poor neighborhoods in Greece is a clear example. Also, I am only looking at these emerging plans only as global in reach, that is in so far as they could be adopted by social forces that aspires to mobilize and order social cooperation at the global level.

Capitalist plans: Plan A and B

In summer 2008, when the full blow of the subprime crisis hit the news, many critics thought that neoliberalism was finished, that it was clear that the regime of globalised markets and financialisation had come to an end, that it had imploded under the weight of its own contradictions. Even some of the dominant figures responsible for the management of global Plan A began to voice doubt. The most remarkable admission coming from Alan Greenspan who in Congressional testimony on October 23, 2008, acknowledged that he was "partially" wrong in opposing regulation of derivatives and, referring to his free-market ideology, said he "found a flaw and was partially wrong to oppose regulation of derivatives."¹⁵

This of course did not happen. What happened was a concerted effort to save the "too big to fail" banks and the continuation of the regime of neoliberal capital. As the public purse took over the responsibility to inject public money into failing banks thus tactically modifying Plan A, and the effect of the financial crisis began to result in terms of recession and unemployment, many governments around the world began to implement heavy austerity policies for the rest of us. In a move that bits the hands that has saved it, financial capital started to attack sovereign debt, the debt hold by sovereign states. Bonds issued by governments to raise finance to cover the holes of state administration (including the payment of previous debt), were sold at increasing cost to the states and in return of clear commitment to debt reduction (including cuts in public services, pensions, health care and education). In the Eurozone, EU, IMF and ECB – the now infamous troika – were at the forefront of the management of this imposition of austerity with the Greek government. In Italy, the "technical" government of Mario Monti found support across the parliament to implement the austerity cuts that not even the much-ridiculed Berlusconi's government could have dreamed to be able to implement. In the autumn 2011, the "spread" ↓ the deviation between interest rates paid by Southern European government bonds and German's bonds, began to increase to a point that interest rates in the periphery of Europe become unsustainable, forcing governments into a vicious cycle of austerity cuts to "please" financial markets and liberate resources to pay debt, which in turn reduced growth, which in turn increased the need for external borrowing, which in turn necessitated austerity cuts to "please" financial markets. In this mechanism, "financial markets" are never "pleased", they have never enough. What is appearing in this crisis

¹⁵ See for example the report on the New York Times by Andrews (2008)

is the most basic function of financial markets, the one underpinning the logic of their liberalization in the 1980s and seldom spelled out with clarity in finance textbooks: their *disciplinary* role. In the realm of currencies and government bonds, the function is disciplinary in the sense that they govern what is considered socially necessary in terms of the general conditions of reproduction of a country. They perform the great equalizing game of public expenditures in social services and the cost of bureaucracies, not in relation to an evaluation of the actual needs of a country, but in relation to the productive capacities of those countries as measured by its international competitiveness. In other words, social reproduction is subservient to production for profit, not the other way around.

There are actually two broad Plans As. Plan A1 is pretty much patching up the contradictions of the crisis and continue with the policy trend of the last 30 years of neoliberalism. Plan A2 is to be very serious about downsizing governments and free markets. In Europe for example, Plan A1 can be summarized in the current range of policy attempts to “save the euro”, that is the sharing of the cost of debt across the eurozone, but in view of some form of heavy structural adjustment in the countries under attack. The basics of Plan A1 is the continuation of austerity policies in the hope to restore growth at some point. What are the sources of this growth are not clear since all emergent economies are slowing down. In Europe, Plan A1 takes a range of *ad hoc* policies and proposals from issuing eurobonds (the most contested proposal) to ECB instituting Outright Monetary Transaction schemes, in which ECB would offer to purchase eurozone short-term bonds in exchange for fiscal and structural reforms. This reduction of national state authority will reduce even more the already much eroded scope of political representation at the national level and govern austerity from distant Brussels.

The European Plan A1 is much the mirror of global Plan A1, essentially continuing things as if the 2008 crisis has not happened. The plan here is to link any aspects of social reproduction to the capacity of people and institutions to borrow money hence to repay debt. From this follows the engineering of a commitment to a life of work (often precarious and with little social security entitlements) at the service of capital accumulation. But the limits of plan A1 are clear. The system has reached a point that it may not be able to deliver the growth necessary to recover debt, and invest in new rounds. Recession and austerity can drag for years with its accumulating string of social and environmental problems and contestations, while global capitalism approaches a “steady state” that was the nightmare of classic political economists.

There is an alternative to Plan A1 however, one that shares basic tenets of neoliberal philosophy, but changes the scope and impetus through which it may be applied. This, Plan A2, is one that paradoxically can take onboard some of the slogans from the streets against the use of public money to rescue banks such as ‘end the bail out now.’ Cut against a horizon of fairness, it says: let the big banks fail.¹⁶ Let them pay the price of their own bad decisions. And since the conditions of business and social reproduction are so strictly tied to financial systems, their failure will also imply a chain of bankrupted businesses and the collapse of social security (for example,

¹⁶ In the US this view was taken by a milieu comprising diverse people like Senator Richard Shelby, top Republican on the banking committee, House Representative Ron Paul, multimillionaire commodity trader like Jim Rogers, and the bulk of Austrian economists who would also favour the replacement of the fiat system with a stable dollar backed by precious metals or commodities, thus limiting overall debt creation.

pensions). The supporters of this approach have no doubt that the recession will be shorter (3 to 5 years!) and very, very painful, but the result will be to avoid 20 or 30 years of stagnation and will create the conditions for heavy restructuring in such a way to recover growth. Of course, the recession will also be an opportunity for deeper cuts in government spending and to downsize government. Plan A ↓ in all its variants ↓ is not really appealing from the perspective of social reproduction. The horizon is further marketisation of life-activities, further erosion of publicly funded services, entitlements and rights, further precarization of jobs, further dependence of people on debt, and further concentration of social wealth in fewer and fewer hands.

Let us move to Plan B. Plan B share with Plan A the horizon of the end of history, of capitalism as the horizon within which selections are made. However, Plan B wishes for an interventionist state to deal with what is essentially seen as a problem of effective demand demonstrated by the stagnation of employment in most sectors across the world. If only governments were to inject massive amount of money into the economy through public spending, unemployment would fall and a recovery triggered. The deficits ensued would be cleared out by the increased tax revenues. Obviously, there are plenty of sectors that would benefit from such an injection of demand, from infrastructure investment to green technology, from military expenditures to health and education. In this sense, Plan B, like plan A, does not have a particular political colour, it is not necessarily right or left, it is not necessarily a “green new deal”, or a “socialist new deal” like in Venezuela. It could also be a “fascist new deal” since it is only *a* sense-horizon within capitalism. Such a programme, however, would need to meet some preconditions. In the first place, it requires some strong degree of coordination among the major economies around the world, especially in view of productive capital’s ability to fly to places with lower wages, lower costs, and lower taxes for the rich. Second, in conditions of financial capital mobility, the effect of such policies would be offset by capital flying out from countries with high deficits, which would imply that higher ↓ hence depressing ↓ interest rates had to follow in order to keep capital. Point one would require accompanying Keynesian policies to some sort of productivity deals that make it profitable for capital to produce domestically. But the current class compositions of most countries lack the degree of homogeneity and structured representations that would allow for a period as precarity is now pervasive and union membership has generally been declining in the last 30 years.

In conditions of global competition and wage downward stickiness, proponents of Plan B evoke the need for competitive devaluations. So for example, the Greek crisis could be dealt by some, through Greece exiting the Euro and the managing of exchange rates to maintain an exchange rate favorable to Greek export (such as tourism and some agricultural products, and not much else).¹⁷ Paul Krugman, for example, urges countries in Southern Europe to follow the path of Argentina who, after the crisis in 2001, defaulted on debt and renegotiated its burden, decided to break the parity of the peso with the US dollar, embark in interventionist policies to manage competitive exchange rates and sustain wages, and create schemes for channeling income to poor.¹⁸ The result, using the standard measure of capitalist accumulation horizon, seems impressive as real GDP picked up from -14% in 2002 to about 8% in between 2003 and 2008 on average. GDP then collapsed to +0.9 in 2009 as effect of

¹⁷ See for example Lapavistas (2011).

¹⁸ See Krugman (2012).

the global crisis in 2008, to recover to 7.5 in 2010. But when one digs a bit further, we discover that inflation statistics with which to calculate real GDP have been tricked by the government who has to pay interest for its debt linked to inflation, to the point that even *the Economist* noticed.¹⁹ With inflation rates of 24.4% three times higher than the official current one of 9.7%, real GDP growth may have dissipated. Another side of the story involves the countries record on poverty reduction during the “success” years after 2001. The high poverty rate of 2002 which reached 57.5% after the hit of the crisis has declined, but to a level that is similar to the infamous 1990s (around 30%). This is not a real solution. The reduction has concentrated in areas like the South where the incidence of poverty was lower. Boosted real wages also recovered to the level of the 1990s average (\$3135), but only for employment in the formal sector and the cooperative sectors (there are about 10,000 cooperative in Argentina). The informal sector in Argentina is massive. With no access to social security, excluding unemployed,

informal workers represents 39% of the economically active population in Argentina. The great majority of these workers (52%) are employed in a small microenterprise of no more than 3 workers. In these microenterprises the “owner” is a worker that undertakes a job similar to that of the other workers, but exercises some leadership over the others. The capital of these microenterprises are workers tools and instruments, but there is no specific return to capital as in a traditional enterprise. These are not enterprises that operate under the logic of “capital plus work”, but on a relation of “work plus work”²⁰.

Plan B in Argentina, therefore, does not offer much in terms of an horizon of emancipation from poverty. The gains that have been made with respect to 2001 crisis, are gains that are concentrated in some areas and sectors (waged sectors) and in any case are only comparable to conditions before the crisis – these being dark years of development. Finally, government intervention and deals with unions only involve about half of the working population. Perhaps the only success story in Argentina during the crisis was the wave of factory occupations and self-management in 2001. But this, of course, is part of Plan C&D, not Plan B.

Plan C&D

If there is one thing that characterizes plan C&D it is thought and practice from below. The demands of structural reforms that may come from it do not have the pretense to govern the capitalist economy, only to refuse to accept cuts in the social wage, to extend the realms of commons and the deepening of democracy. Plan C&D’s primary ground for development is to refuse the intensifying crisis of social reproduction that Plan A and B will promote and/or attempt to govern. As with the other plans, also some of its elements will be meshed with and intersected to other plans. In Venezuela for example, a redistributive and transfer to the poor policy (Plan B) is associated to strong involvement of grassroots in communalizing aspects of social reproduction. At times, this is done to guarantee the survival of life-systems through *deals*, and the quality of these deals depends on power relations. At other times, it is a matter of

¹⁹ See *The Economist* (2012).

²⁰ See Millan-Smitmans (2010:12).

resistance to cuts that preserve elements of Plan B inside a Plan A (as for example some rights and entitlements of the welfare state that were set up while Plan B was the orthodoxy in during the 1970s in many countries in the West).

At the micro level, there are two sources to Plan C&D. First, Plan C&D find its roots in the fertile soil of communities engaged in different forms of daily life reproduction. In city neighborhoods, shanty towns, and villages across the world, there are a variety of patterns of participation where, to various degrees, resources are shared and communities are engaged in forms of participatory democracy to decide the what, the how, the when, the why and the who of social reproduction. The organization of an event such as a fiesta or sagra in a Spanish or Italian rural province, a street party in a English town, the maintenance of a community vegetable garden in a neighborhood in New York, of water systems by a community water associations in a Bolivian town, the creation of alternative economies to distribute potatoes or the guaranteeing a self managed health service in an occupied hospital in crisis ridden Greece, in the day to day governance of a volunteer run ambulance service in a mountain community in Italy are all modulations of the same thing. In these interactions, communities are formed and sustained through the sharing of some resources and the participation in the governance of the commons, governance that often also involves direct social labour, which I call *commoning*²¹. The furthering of the crisis and the deepening of austerity and reduction in social spending, in spite of social resistance to it, will push communities to come together and be reshaped through sharing projects such as community gardens, care of children and the elderly, greater participation in schools educational projects, solidarity networks, labour cooperatives, time banks networks, barter systems, and even self management of companies left by their bankrupted owners. *The commons, in other words, will increasingly become a necessity of social reproduction.*

These fertile soils for Plan C&D indicate that in these occasions of community engagement in daily-life activities the social substance for the creation of a new world resides. To be more precise, within the often-limited boundaries of these social systems, we have alternative *modes* of production highly distinct from those promoted by capital. Unlike the reproduction of capital systems which is only based on endless accumulation, here resources and communities are brought together by a *commoning* activity that allows the reproduction and sustainability of both communities and shared resources.

The second source of Plan C&D is struggle that pushes the boundaries of capital and the state. In this sense, social movements that have been developing since the mid 1990s (i.e. in the late neoliberal era) have not only been opposing various instances of Plan A, but have also developed organizational forms that seek to re-invent people's participation in movements, focusing on the commons. These movements have been quite distinct ↓ from indigenous people in Chiapas, to community struggles against dams in India, from the indignatos in Spain, to the Occupy movements in the USA, from the reclaim the street in the UK in the late 1990s, to the democracy movement in Northern Africa in 2011. Notwithstanding fundamental differences in contexts, social composition and political language, all these movements are organized upon a 24 hours 'round-the-clock' bodily presence, that seek "to put an end to the separation between the personal and the political, and political activism and the reproduction of

²¹ Peter Linebough (2008) rediscovered the use of this verb among the XIIIth Century English commoners describing their activities in the forest commons.

everyday life,” (Federici 2010: 8). This often follows the occupation of a public space and its turning into a commons, as in the case of Occupy or Tahrir.²² Other times it follows the defence of an existing commons, and the opening up of opportunities for the development through cross contamination during political struggle, as in the case of the struggle of Zapatistas communities in Chiapas since the mid 1990s, or the water wars in Bolivia in 2001. Other times it involve the reclaiming of a private space as commons, as in the case of the factories in Argentina in 2001. As waves in an ocean of subjectivities turning desires into situated needs, these movements pull back from visibility, and consolidate into new institutions or dissipate through the social systems of daily life. It seems that no victory is achieved, and to a large extent, this is so. But if from the perspective of the present the glass seems half empty, from that of historical possibility it may well be half-full, and the future new world may well be accounting these outbursts as the historical movement of its own actualisation. Some times the institutions created by these struggles must find ways to engage with markets to survive, and enter its competitive circuits, as it is for Argentinian cooperatives. Some other times they dissipate into new spaces of protest, as in the case of the Occupy movement that is now occupying the front gardens of residences to prevent repossessions from bailiffs. For some others, their energies are directed towards the construction of new institution of self-governance, as in the case of the Zapatistas.

These two sources, life reproduction through commons, and commons through social movements, are by and large quite separate today. That is to say that there are vast areas of social life that is governed through commons, yet it is not *politicised*, is not connected to a critical understanding of capital *and* to a politics of emancipation from it. On the other hand, there are vast amounts of political energies that are still wasted in struggles *for* power without an organic connection to commons, that is the very *source* of social power. There is much thinking and organisational practice that need to be done in order to articulate these two sources effectively into Plan C&D that is able to contrast capital and acquire hegemony at the global and coordinated level. The novelty of current movements however, is to have brought these two dimensions (commons and struggle) together for the current time. Bringing together these two dimensions, not only in the sense that the form of the movement ↓ say that of an occupation ↓ requires to establish some life in common to sustain it (and therefore to experiment with form of direct democracy and governance of the occupied common space) but also because the movement has coalesced social forces around a sense-horizon in which commoners ↓ the famous 99% of the Occupy movements ↓ are an

²² As noted by Caffenzis (2012: 10) “A public space is ultimately a space owned and opened/closed by the state, it is a *res-publica*, a public thing. A common space, in contrast, is opened by those who occupy it, i.e., those who live on it and share it according to their own rules. The worldwide movement of occupiers (through their practice) is demanding common spaces where they can live on in order to give body to their political thoughts. That is why the first acts of the Occupations involve housework: where are we to sleep, eat, urinate, defecate, clean up, etc.? This is not trivial, for in discovering the power of bodies that present themselves instead of being re-presented by others, their continued presence multiplies that power and momentum. This is what the government and Wall Street especially hate about the occupations and why there has been so much violence unleashed against them: they prefigure another way to organize society and to create a new commons. The parliaments and council chambers are temples of absence, while the Tahrir Squares of the world are places where a general will is embodied and in action.”

active force in the constitution of social systems (whether a political system or economic system). For example, the massive students struggles in Canada against fees (and in the UK and US) are pointing at a different education system. The Occupy movement in the US and of the Indignatos in Spain, are pointing to a different economic system; the struggle in Tahiri square, to a different political system. In all cases, the struggles point at a different notion of democracy, one in which people have the power to veto (or in the language of grassroots assemblies based on consensus) to block some government decisions (like the increase in education fees in Quebec) or practice (like the one of a lax systems of regulatory practices that facilitates banks frauds at the expenses of pensions and savings). These struggles are struggles of a plurality that see the “state” as a distorted commons that need to be communalise and fight the corruption of money through deep democratic means.

Conclusion: what has to be done?

The “D” in Plan C&D is thus not only an adjunct to the C of commons. The commons that emerge in the squares and streets of contemporary struggles ↓ are often democratic, in the deep, participatory sense. By deep democracy I mean not a particular model of democracy ↓ like representative vs direct democracy ↓ but a sense horizon that urge us to select direct democratic means whenever it is possible.

The “D” stands for democracy as a weapon for communalization of property ↓ whether in the hands of the state or in the hands of individual capitalists ↓ that is especially to seize under user communities control the right to manage and redefine and enlarge the boundaries of inclusions of productive and reproductive systems. In this sense, in the eyes of the 1% democracy becomes “too much” when it infringes its right to rule over our lives. From a C&D perspective, the first act of democracy occurs when a plurality far greater than the 1% claims ownership to a resource in that it claims the rights of exclusion and management, two rights within that “bundle of rights” called “property”, and that are the necessary condition to actualize a resource as a commons.²³

Thus, to turn into a commons (communalize) a factory, a university, a water system, a park, a public administration or whatever, a plurality must claim back the “right to manage”. This “explosion of management” corresponds to a sudden increase in the volume of social cooperation and correspondent release of playful energies that follows a breakdown of management systems and the scattering ↓ to different degrees ↓ of management functions into the social body. These energies can be channeled into the cyclical time of system sustainability (reproduction) through deep democratic forms of governments, that is, institutions of the commons. Democracy and the commons are two sides of the same coin. The extent of communalisation is not possible because of power relations and insufficient organizational reach, but a plurality of commoners can start to claim a resource (or an institution) as a commons from which they are

²³ “Groups of individuals are considered to share communal property rights when they have formed an organization that exercises at least the collective-choice rights of management and exclusion in relationship to some defined resource system and the resource units produced by that system. In other words, all communal groups have established some means of governing themselves in relationship to a resource.” (Ostrom, Bouckaert, & De Geest 2000: 342) See Also Ostrom (1990).

excluded and cannot manage. The very act of claiming is the first step of an organisational journey that is necessary to undertake to actually turn the resources that are claimed as commons into an actual commons system. ²⁴One thing that is certain is that Plan C&D requires the enthusiastic participation and intelligence of everybody.

References

- Andrews, E. L. (2008) Greenspan Concedes Error on Regulation. In *The New York Times*, October 23, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/business/economy/24panel.html>
- Bonefeld, W. (2002) History and Social Constitution: Primitive Accumulation is not Primitive. *The Commoner*. <http://www.commoner.org.uk/debbonefeld.pdf>
- Caffentzis, G. (2012) In the Desert of Cities: Notes on the Occupy Movement in the US. *Reclamations Blog*. January 27. <http://www.reclamationsjournal.org/blog/?p=505>
- Crozier S., P. Huntington, and J. Watanuki, M. (1975) *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission*. New York: New York University Press.
- De Angelis, M. (2000). *Keynesianism, Social Conflict and Political Economy*. London: Macmillan.
- De Angelis, M. (2001) Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital's "Enclosures". *The Commoner*, (2). <http://www.commoner.org.uk/02deangelis.pdf>
- De Angelis, M. (2004) Separating the Doing and the Deed: Capital and the Continuous Character of Enclosures, *Historical Materialism* 12(2), 57-87.
- De Angelis (2007) *The Beginning of History*. London: Pluto.
- Dooley, M.P., Folkes-Landau, D. and Garber, P., (2003) "An Essay on the Revised Bretton Woods System," Working Paper 9971, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Cambridge, MA, September 2003.
- Federici, S. (2010) Feminism and the Politics of the Commons. In *The Commoner*, Other articles in Common. <http://www.commoner.org.uk/?p=113>
- Fukuyama, F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Harvey, D. (2003). *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁴ This is for example the campaign for water as a commons in Italy that ended with a victorious referendum against privatisation in 2011, but also was unable to stop corporate management of water systems.

Krugman, P. (2012) Down Argentina Way. The Conscience of a Liberal Blog. New York Times Opinion Page. <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/03/down-argentina-way/>

IMF (2012) Global House Prices Still Showing Down Trend
IMFSurvey Magazine: IMF Research September,
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2012/RES091712A.htm>

Lapavistas, K. (2011) Greece must default and quit the euro. The real debate is how. The Guardian. Comment is Free. 19 September,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/sep/19/greece-must-default-and-quit-euro>

Linebaugh, P. (2008). *The Magna Carta Manifesto: liberties and commons for all*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marx, K. (1845) The German Ideology. Part I. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm>

Marx, K. (1867) Capital, Vol 1. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm>

Midnight Notes Collective (1985) A Conceptualization of the Law in the Manifold of Work. *Midnight Notes*, (5). <http://www.midnightnotes.org/outlawnotes.html>

Midnight Notes Collective. (1990) New Enclosures. *Midnight Notes* (10). <http://www.midnightnotes.org/newenclos.html>

Midnight Notes Collective and Friends (2009) From Crisis to Commons, www.midnightnotes.org/Promissory%20Notes.pdf

Millan-Smitmans, P. (2010) Poverty and informal Employment in Argentina. Catholic University of Argentina, www.bu.edu/econ/files/2010/05/dp208.pdf

Moeller, H.G. (2006) *Luhmann explained: from Souls to Systems*. Chicago: Open Court.

Ostrom, E., Bouckaert, B., & De Geest, G. (2000) Private and Common Property Rights (Vol. 1, p. 1094). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2000.

Ostrom, E. (1990) *Governing the commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action* (p. 0). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Economist (2012) The price of cooking the books. February 25th, <http://www.economist.com/node/21548229>

Walton, John and David Seddon (1994) *Free Markets and Food Riots*. Oxford: Blackwell.

