Libertarian Municipalism:
Networked Cities as Resilient Platforms for Post-Capitalist Transition

Kevin Carson

C4SS

Center for a Stateless Society

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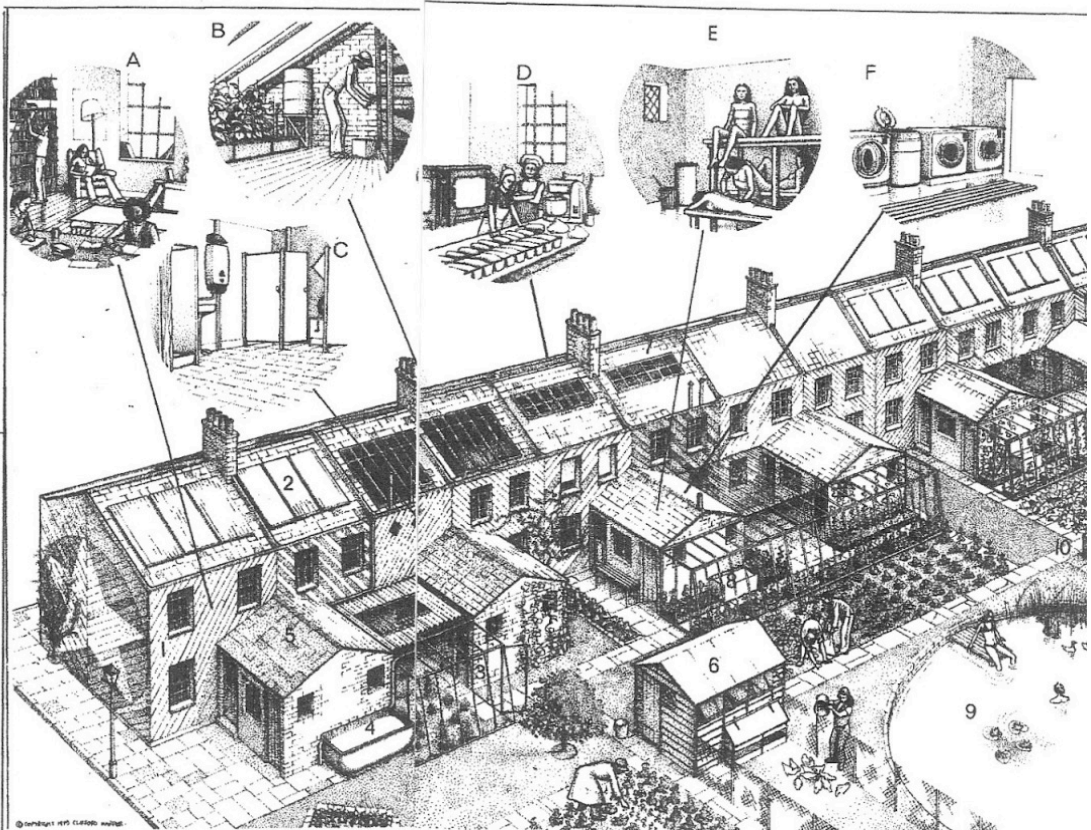

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We live in a time of terminal crisis for centralized institutions of all kinds, including the two most notable members of the genus: states and large corporations. Both a major cause and major symptom of this transition is the steady reduction in the amount of labor needed to produce a given level of output, and consequently in total aggregate demand for wage labor. This shows up in shrinking rates of workforce participation, and a shift of a growing part of the remaining workforce from full-time work to part-time and precarious employment (the latter including temporary and contract work). Another symptom is the retrenchment of the state in the face of fiscal crisis and a trend towards social austerity in most Western countries; this is paralleled by a disintegration of traditional employer-based safety nets, as part of the decline in full-time employment.

Peak Oil (and other fossil fuels) is creating pressure to shorten global supply and distribution chains. At the same time, the shift in advantage from military technologies for power projection to technologies for area denial means that the imperial costs of enforcing a globalized economic system of outsourced production under the legal control of Western capital are becoming prohibitive.

The same technological trends that are reducing the total need for labor also, in many cases, make direct production for use in the informal, social and household economies much more economically feasible. Cheap open-source CNC machine tools, networked information and digital platforms, Permaculture and community gardens, alternative currencies and mutual credit systems, all reduce the scale of feasible production for many goods to the household, multiple household and neighborhood levels, and similarly reduce the capital outlays required for directly producing consumption needs to a scale within the means of such groupings

Put all these trends together, and we see the old model of secure livelihood through wages collapsing at the same time new technology is destroying the material basis for dependence on corporations and the state.

But like all transitions, this is a transition not only from something, but *to* something. That something bears a more than passing resemblance to the libertarian communist future Pyotr Kropotkin described in *The Conquest of Bread* and *Fields, Factories and Workshops*: the relocalization of most economic functions into mixed agricultural/industrial villages, the control of production by those directly engaged in it, and a fading of the differences between town and country, work and leisure, and brain-work and muscle-work.

In particular, it is to a large extent a transition to a post-capitalist society centered on the commons. As Michel Bauwens puts it, the commons paradigm replaces the traditional Social Democratic paradigm in which value is created in the "private" (i.e. corporate) sector through commodity labor, and a portion of this value is redistributed by the state and by labor unions, to one in which value is co-created within the social commons outside the framework of wage labor and the cash nexus, and the process of value creation is governed by the co-creators themselves.[1] Because of the technological changes entailed in what Bauwens calls "cosmo-local" production (physical production that's primarily local, using relatively small-scale facilities, for local consumption, but using a global information commons freely available to all localities), the primary level of organization of this commons-based society will be local. Cosmo-local (DGML = Design Local, Manufacture Local) production is governed

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1   Bia Martins, "Michel Bauwens: our society and economy have to become 'commons-centric'," *Em Rede*, <http://www.em-rede.com/site/content/michel-bauwens-our-society-and-economy-have-become-commons-centric>.
2   Michel Bauwens, "The History and Evolution of the Commons," *P2P Foundation Blog*, Sept. 28, 2017

by the following principles:
- **Protocol cooperativism:** the underlying immaterial and algorithmic protocols are shared and open source, using copyfair principles (free sharing of knowledge, but commercialization conditioned by reciprocity)
- **Open cooperativism:** the commons-based coops are distinguished from 'collective capitalism' by their commitment to creating and expanding common goods for the whole of society; in Platform coops it is the platforms themselves that are the commons, needed to enable and manage the exchanges that may be needed, while protecting it from capture by extractive netarchical platforms
- **Open and contributive accounting:** fair distribution mechanisms that recognize all contributions
- **Open and shared supply chains** for mutual coordination
- **Non-dominium forms of ownership** (the means of production are held in common for the benefit of all participants in the eco-system.[2]

In this paper, we will examine the emerging distributed and commons-based economy, as a base for post-capitalist transition, at three levels: the micro-village and other forms of cohousing/co-production, the city or town as a unit, and regional and global federations of cities.

I. Cohousing, Microvillages, and Other Units for Organizing Co-Production and Pooling Costs, Risks, and Income

Throughout the history of capitalism, Immanuel Wallerstein observes, the working class has used the household as a unit for pooling risks, costs and income among laborers and non-laborers. Capital has encouraged this household economy insofar as it externalizes the reproduction of labor power on society at large, so that unpaid labor carries out reproduction functions and spares employers from including the cost in wages. At the same time, it has balanced this strategy against the need to prevent the household from getting so large that its risk and cost-pooling functions lead to an unacceptable increase in the bargaining power of labor. "The household as an income-pooling unit can be seen as a fortress both of accommodation to and resistance to the patterns of labor-force allocation favored by accumulators."[3]

Under 20th century capitalism, the ideal household from the employer's standpoint was a nuclear family severed from the local community and extended kin network. As labor force participation continues to decline, we can expect average household size to increase and for multiple households to aggregate into larger communities. In *The Desktop Regulatory State*, I predicted that economic trends would lead to a shift from the social model centered on the nuclear family household as the basic unit in a larger atomized society to one organized around larger primary social units, ranging from extended family compounds and cohousing projects of a few families to larger micro-villages.

> ...First, we will experience a period characterized by "hollowed-out states," in which the eroding tax base coupled with rising unemployment means states' obligations for public services (fire, police, schools, streets, utilities, etc.) and the social safety net will far outstrip their revenues. As a result, states will steadily retreat from the social field and take an increasingly minimalist approach

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2   Michel Bauwens, "The History and Evolution of the Commons," *P2P Foundation Blog*, Sept. 28, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/the-history-and-evolution-of-the-commons/2017/09/28>.

3   Immanuel Wallerstein, "Household Structures and Labor-Force Formation in the Capitalist World Economy," in Joan Smith, Immanuel Wallerstein, Hans-Dieter Evers, eds., *Creating and Transforming Households: The constraints of the world-economy* (Cambridge, New York, Oakleigh, Victoria, Paris: Cambridge University Press, 992), p. 16.

to public services. Second, total work hours per capita will gradually decline and rates of unemployment and underemployment will creep slowly upward. Third, as a matter of necessity, the unemployed and underemployed will shift a growing share of their needs from purchases with wages to self-provisioning, gifting and barter in the household and informal sectors. Fourth, as both the government and employer-based welfare states erode, the informal sector will of necessity evolve mechanisms for pooling income and risks and spreading costs.

This is likely to take the form, specifically, of people coalescing into primary social units at the residential level (extended family compounds or multi-family household income-pooling units, multi-household units at the neighborhood level, coordinated self-provisioning in micro-economies organized on residential blocks or cul-de-sacs, urban communes and other cohousing projects, squats, and stand-alone intentional communities), as a way of pooling income and reducing costs. As the state's social safety nets come apart, such primary social units and extended federations between them will fill the vacuum. A good fictional example is the Northwest Federation in Poul Anderson's Maurai stories, a comparatively decentralized and libertarian polity that stretched from British Columbia to northern California. In the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust, the new society coalesced around friendly societies and fraternal lodges as providers of public utilities and the social safety net.

At the end of the shift, the social norm would be for the individual to be "born into a framework in which they are guaranteed a share in possession of communal land [and/or access to the community workshops] and are offered social safety net protections in the event of illness or old age, in return for observance of communally defined social obligations."[4]

Economically, such primary units would function as integrated village economies of intensive horticulture and high-tech micro-manufacturing, much like—as I mentioned above—Kropotkin described in *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*.

William Irwin Thompson envisioned post-capitalist village economies—"metaindustrial villages"—as recapitulating the four stages of human economic history (paleolithic hunter-gatherer, horticultural, industrial and cybernetic) in a higher synthesis based on post-scarcity technology.

DECENTRALIZATION of cities and the miniaturization of technology will alter the center-periphery dialectic of traditional civilization and make a whole new cultural level possible. What will take place in the metaindustrial village will be that the four classical economies of human history, hunting and gathering, agriculture, industry, and cybernetics, will all be recapitulated within a single deme. We will look back to where we have been in history, gather up all the old economies, and then turn on the spiral in a new direction.

The hunting and gathering economy could focus on the gathering of wood, wind, and sun. In a way, the work of the New Alchemy Institute is to create a food and energy base for a small tribal band of people living in isolated circumstances.... New Alchemy is not a civilized strategy; it is not going to feed the huddled masses of New York and Calcutta; it either will be co-opted and absorbed by conglomerate NASA as the ecology of a space colony or will enable small groups to live in dispersed settlements—or both.

The agricultural economy of the metaindustrial village would focus on organic gardening and the replacing of fossil-fuel agribusiness with natural cycles in the food chain. Since the shift from gardening to field tillage with the plow originally displaced women from food production, the return

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4   Kevin Carson, *The Desktop Regulatory State: The Countervailing Power of Individuals and Networks* (Center for a Stateless Society, 2016), p. 320.

to ecologically sophisticated gardening enables women to return to take up significant roles in the economy of the village, and thus to overcome the sexual alienation characteristic of industrial society.

The third economy of the community would be industrial, and this is where I part company with many critics of contemporary culture. The metaindustrial village is not anti-industrial and Luddite; there will be industry and technology, but they will be brought down to scale as workshops in converted barns. A village could produce artistically beautiful glass bottles which could be kept as art objects or reused as containers in place of plastics. Or the village could produce bicycles, clothing, rotary tillers, or other well-crafted and durable instruments. In a return to the mystery of the craft guild, particular communities could focus on the revival of particular crafts and industries. Whatever the industry chosen, the scale of the operation would be small, in harmony with the ecosystem of the region, and devoted more to a local market than an international one.

The fourth economy of the community would be postindustrial, or cybernetic. The characteristic feature of a postindustrial economy is the emphasis on research and development and education. Since the entire village would be a contemplative educational community, after the manner of Lindisfarne and Findhorn, the adventure of consciousness would be more basic to the way of life than patterns of consumption. Everyone living in the community would be involved in an experiential approach to education, from contemplative birth, after the thought of Dr. Frederick LeBoyer, to contemplative death, after the thought of Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross. And at the various stages of life in between, the entire community would function as a college, in which children and adults would work together in gardening, construction, ecological research, crafts, and classes in all fields of knowledge.[5]

It's fortuitous that the same cheap, ephemeral small-scale production technologies that are helping to bring about the terminal crisis of capitalism from surplus capital, are also offering a safety net for those unemployed or underemployed by the dying capitalist system.

James O'Connor noted in *Accumulation Crisis* that labor, historically, has responded to cyclical periods of reduced employment by shifting the means by which it obtains its needs in part from wage labor to self-provisioning, or direct production for use in the household and social sector. "The living economy based on non- and anti-capitalist concepts of time and space went underground: in the reconstituted household; the commune; cooperatives; the single-issue organization; the self-help clinic; the solidarity group."[6] And the present ongoing decline in demand for labor is not cyclical—it's systemic. It follows that workers will, as a matter of necessity, permanently shift a growing share of production into the social or informal economy. And thanks to open-source tabletop CNC routers, milling machines, lathes, cutting tables, 3D printers and so on that can be built for tiny fractions of what their proprietary commercial counterparts cost, manufacturing consumption goods and household appliances in neighborhood workshops is more economically feasible than ever.

As far back as the 1920s and '30s, Ralph Borsodi was arguing that the growing proliferation of small-scale powered machinery was making it more economical to produce a major share of consumption goods directly in the household than to work for wages to buy them from factories. Colin Ward advocated community workshops as a means by which the employed and unemployed could pool

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5   William Irwin Thompson, *Darkness and Scattered Light*, quoted in "Meta-Industrial Villages: what happens after the miniaturisation of technology?" P2P Foundation Blog, April 18, 2015 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/meta-industrial-villages-what-happens-after-the-miniaturisation-of-technology/2015/04/18>.
6   James O'Connor, *Accumulation Crisis* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 185-186.

their individually owned tools, reduce idle capacity, and satisfy an increased share of consumption needs outside the wage system.

> Couldn't the workshop become the community factory, providing work or a place for work for anyone in the locality who wanted to work that ay, not as an optional extra to the economy of the affluent society which rejects an increasing proportion of its members, but as one of the prerequisites of the worker-controlled economy of the future?[7]

He quoted Keith Paton, writing in a pamphlet for the Claimants' Union, that "electrical power and 'affluence' have brought a spread of intermediate machines, some of them very sophisticated, to ordinary working class communities."

> Even if they do not own them... the possibility exists of borrowing them from neigbhours, relatives, ex-workmates. Knitting and sewing machines, power tools and other do-it-yourself equipment comes in this category. Garages can be converted into little workshops, home-brew kits are popular, parts and machinery can be taken from old cars and other gadgets. If they saw their opportunity, trained metallurgists and mechanics could get into advanced scrap technology, recycling the metal wastes of the consumer society for things which could be used again regardless of whether they would fetch anything in a shop. Many hobby enthusiasts could begin to see their interests in a new light.[8]

Karl Hess advocated a similar approach—"shared machine shops"—in *Community Technology*. It might be hosted in "some other public facility, used in its off hours," he wrote, or hosted in its own dedicated space. Besides pooling individual power tools, as Ward described, Hess also suggested stocking it with "cast-off industrial tools, with tools brought from government surplus through the local school system," etc. Such a machine shop in an inner city might be used "for the maintenance of appliances and other household goods whose replacement might represent a real economic burden in the neighborhood." Combined with a neighborhood storehouse for left-over construction materials, defunct appliances, and so on, the machine shop could:

> redesign cast-off items into useful ones. Discarded refrigerators, for instance, suggest an infinity of new uses, from fish tanks... to numerous parts as each discarded one is stripped for its components, which include small compressors, copper tubing, heat transfer arrays, and so on. The same goes for washing machines....[9]

Anyone who suspects Hess was exaggerating or ignorant of the technical problems should read the entire book. He was actively involved in exactly such creative cannibalization and repurposing of cast-off appliances and parts, for example, building basement trout farms with washing machine pumps to circulate the water. And anyone willing to dig through the archives of *Mother Earth News* can find stories of people (say) building cheap off-grid solar power systems by combining purchased solar panels with junked car alternators and batteries.

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7   Colin Ward, *Anarchy in Action* (London: Freedom Press, 1982), p. 108.
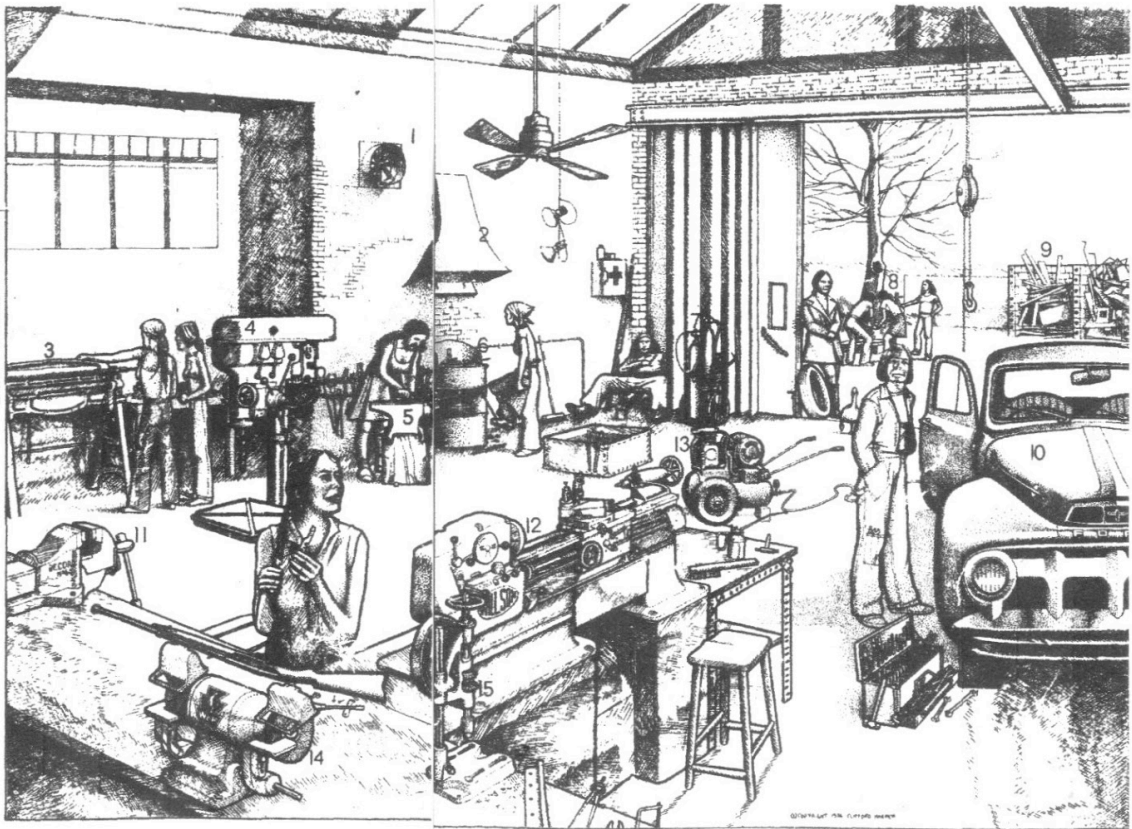8   Keith Paton, *The Right to Work or the Fight to Live?* (1972), quoted in *Ibid.* pp. 108-109.
9   Karl Hess, *Community Technology* (New York, Cambridge, Hagerstown, Philadelphia, San Francisco, London, Mexico City, Sao Paolo, Sydney: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), pp. 96-98.

VISION 5/COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

And remember, Ward and Hess were writing about the technological possibilities available forty years ago. Advances in micro-manufacturing technologies have made machine tools several orders of magnitude cheaper and more capable since then.

A good example is the Global Village Construction Set, a collection of open-source machine tools designed, prototyped and built at Open Source Ecology's Factor e Farm demonstration site. It's an entire modular ecosystem of machine tools with interchangeable modules used in multiple machine designs. Along with the micro-manufacturing machinery (3D printer, laser cutter, drill press and fourteen other machines), the GVCS includes construction machinery (sawmill, compressed earth block maker, etc.), farm machinery (tractor, etc.), and household production goods like a bread oven. Most of the components of the machines—many of which are modular and used throughout the entire machine ecology—can be produced with the Construction Set's own machine tools, and the inclusion of an induction hearth in the manufacturing collection means they can not only smelt metal from local scrap, but their own production is closed-loop.[10] You can find a table here of the price of the various machines, either materials alone or materials plus labor, compared to their proprietary commercial counterparts.[11] Most of the individual manufacturing machines can be made for anywhere from a

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10   <http://opensourceecology.org/gvcs/>; <http://opensourceecology.org/wiki/Global_Village_Construction_Set>.
11   <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Iu0jU98-

thousand (most common) to a few thousand dollars in materials; a few super expensive items (e.g. $50,000 for a machine to extract aluminum from clay) would obviously have to be a shared resource between a number of shops in a larger community. And the open-source car, truck and combine run a mid-range price of $8,000 or more.

Local industrial ecologies grow, as Jane Jacobs described it in *The Economy of Cities*, by discovering creative uses for locally generated waste and byproducts, and using such innovative technologies to replace imports.[12] Here's how she describes the process of import substitution:

> Cities that replace imports significantly replace not only finished goods but, concurrently, many, many items of producers' goods and services. They do it in swiftly emerging, logical chains. For example, first comes the local processing of fruit preserves that were formerly imported, then the production of jars or wrappings formerly imported for which there was no local market of producers until the first step had been taken. Or first comes the assembly of formerly imported pumps for which, once the assembly step has been taken, parts are imported; then the making of parts for which metal is imported; then possibly even the smelting of metal for these and other import replacements.[13]

Hess's earlier reference to appliance repair is the logical beginning of such a chain of import substitution. As the national transportation infrastructure and freight industry capacities both shrink under the impact of Peak Oil and fiscal exhaustion, small garage, backyard and neighborhood shops can take up the slack of the crumbling corporate logistic chains by custom machining replacement parts that are no longer available through regular channels, in order to keep aging appliances working. As the number of shops engaged in such production increases, and the variety of products produced, they can produce parts for an increasing share of entire appliances, and then proceed to producing original modular accessories for existing appliances, and then producing open-source appliance designs from scratch.

Karl Hess and David Morris, in *Neighborhood Power*, suggested a progression from retail to repair to manufacturing: "repair shops begin to transform themselves into basic manufacturing facilities...."[14] Retail outlets might rely on community-supported agriculture as their main source of supply, move on to a small cannery, and then to a glass recycling center to trade broken bottles and jars for usable ones on arrangement with the bottling companies.[15]

That's exactly the process by which the Japanese bicycle industry developed, according to Jane Jacobs (Hess and Morris—perhaps in an uncredited allusion to Jacobs—also suggested bike retail shops adding maintenance facilities and then producing the most vital parts, and finally entire bicycles). Jacobs writes:

> ...[S]hops to repair [imported bicycles] had sprung up in the big cities.... Imported spare parts were expensive and broken bicycles were too valuable to cannibalize the parts. Many repair shops thus found it worthwhile to make replacement parts themselves—not difficult if a man specialized in one kind of part, as many repairmen did. In this way, groups of bicycle repair shops were almost doing the work of manufacturing entire bicycles. That step was taken by bicycle assemblers, who

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12   Jane Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969, 1970).
13   Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).
14   Karl Hess and David Morris, *Neighborhood Power: The New Localism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 69.
15   *Ibid.*, p. 142.

bought parts, on contract, from repairmen: the repairmen had become "light manufacturers."[16]

As a contemporary example, today in India, according to Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams, villagers use fab labs "to make replacement gears for out-of-date copying machines...."[17]

We're not simply adopting more decentralized production technologies or organizational forms, but coalescing all these building blocks into a fundamentally different economic paradigm. As Vasilis Kostakis says, "Alternative technological systems could develop through the confluence of digital commons, peer-to-peer relations, and local manufacturing capacity—but we need the integration of a political ecology perspective to face and overcome the challenges this transition implies."[18] The problem to date is that technologies have been selected for or against based on the values of a larger system of control. Fortunately, for reasons already discussed, this system has become unsustainable and is in the process of disintegrating. In creating the successor system, we must select for the technologies and organizational forms that serve our needs for survival as the system we formerly depended on decays.

In many ways, all this is a recapitulation of the pre-capitalist past, on a higher post-capitalist technological level. William Morris and Pyotr Kropotkin, apostles of the decentralizing potential of electrical power, were both inspired by an idealized vision of the late medieval towns.

The separation of the household from the locus of economic production largely paralleled the separation of the producing classes from the means of production.

> In the medieval commune, the workshop was a home: it was the locus not only of highly individualized technical activities, but also... of complex personal and cultural responsibilities. With the emergence of the factory, home and work place are separated. The factory is a place to which the worker goes in order to expend his human powers—powers that are steadily degraded to the degree that they are abstracted and quantified as mere "work time"—in the service of increasingly anonymous owners and administrators....
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> ...The guild, which unites homes that are also workshops, imparts a distinctly domestic character to the commune: it turns the city into a home, into an authentic human community that graduates personal affiliations and responsibilities to a social level.
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> ...The factory requires the separation of the small, independent producer from the means of production....[19]

Compare this to the high-tech craft shops in Emilia-Romagna, which have once again become integrated with the home: the upper floors of the factory are living quarters.

And the reintegration of food production into urban life—cities and towns largely self-sufficient in fruits and vegetables and small livestock, owing to rooftop and empty lot gardening and a shift to edible landscaping, and supported by cereal grains and other staple field crops in an immediately surrounding belt—is very much a return to older and in many ways more efficient models. As Murray

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16   Jacobs, *Economy of Cities*, pp. 63-64.
17   Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York: Portfolio, 2006), p. 213.
18   Vasiliis Kotakis, "Are there alternative trajectories of technological development? A political ecology perspective," *Entitle Blog*, Oct. 6, 2017 <https://entitleblog.org/2017/10/06/are-there-alternative-trajectories-of-technological-development-a-political-ecology-perspective/>.
19   Murray Bookchin, *The Limits of the City* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 51-53.

Bookchin noted, "the immense development of industry over the past century has created a remarkable opportunity for bringing land and city into a rational and ecological synthesis. The two could be blended into an artistic unity that would open a new vision of the human and natural experience."20

Berkeley: ***Blueprint for a Communal Environment.*** The separation of town from country, and of factory from home, reached the full development of its logic in the car-centered monocultures of the post-WWII era. For urban planners in the tradition of Robert Moses, the ideal was for the average person to live in a cul de sac or suburban bedroom community widely separated from the places they lived and worked, and to commute on a daily basis by car to their job or to shop. In this model, there are two separate complete cities for each person: the city in which they sleep at night and park their stuff, and the city where they access the factory or office they work in and the stores they shop in. Each city has its own separate, enormously expensive utility, road and parking infrastructure, and travel between them renders ownership of at least one (or more likely two or more) automobiles a necessity.

The relocalization of most industrial production and reintegration of it with residential neighborhoods and food production implies the reverse of this model: a return to mixed-use communities and neighborhoods where people live within short walking or bicycle distance of the garage factories, shops, and gardens where they work.

One particularly interesting and detailed proposal for such a model is *Blueprint for a Communal Environment* by a coalition of local groups (including People's Architecture, a Tenants Union, and members of the "Food Conspiracy" co-op) involved in creating and defending Berkeley's People's Park.[21]

It was heavily influenced by earlier models like the architecture of Pueblo villages, and gardens and plazas from late medieval and Renaissance towns. It emphasized, in particular, architectural proposals to integrate atomized nuclear family dwellings into larger functional neighborhood groupings. Floor plans in individual buildings would be reworked to create more communal work, dining and meeting spaces. Catwalks between neighboring roofs, or connecting upper floors of adjoining buildings, to form communicating links between houses in a neighborhood. Backyard and sideyard fences could be torn down to create interior courtyards, parks, and gardens shared by residents on a block. Half the streets in Berkeley could be closed and turned into shop-lined pedestrian walkways, with intersections becoming parks or plazas. Vacant lots would be reclaimed as gardens, naturally. And the common work and meeting space in the new multi-family neighborhood units would enable residents to "take care of business (from child care to education) on a local level and in an integrated way. Neighborhood "People's Markets" could make available local crafts, along with specialty foods grown by nearby truck farmers or market gardeners to supplement food from the neighborhood's own garden.

Global Ecovillage Network. GEN was based on, and in some cases went on to incorporate, a number of "apparently simultaneous ideas arising in different locations at about the same time." It seems to have been a direct outgrowth of the "planetary village" movement, centered on the Findhorn

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20   *Ibid.*, p. 3.
21   The document is reproduced in Theodore Roszak, ed., *Sources* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). The material below is based on Murray Bookchin's extended description and quotes in *The Limits of the City*, pp. 129-133.

community in Scotland, founded in 1962.[22]

In 1975 the magazine *Mother Earth News* began constructing experimental energy systems, novel buildings, and organic gardens near its business office in Hendersonville, North Carolina, and in 1979, began calling this educational center an "eco-village."

At about the same time in Germany, during the political resistance against disposal of nuclear waste in the town of Gorleben, anti-nuclear activists attempted to build a small, ecologically based village at the site, which they called an okodorf (literally ecovillage). In the largest police action seen in Germany since the Second World War, their camp was ultimately removed, but the concept lived on, and small okodorf experiments continued in both eastern and western Germany. The magazine *Okodorf Informationen* began publishing in 1985 and later evolved into *Eurotopia*. After the reunification of Germany, the movement coalesced and became part of the International ecovillage movement.

About the same time in Denmark, a number of intentional communities began looking beyond the social benefits of cohousing and other cooperative forms of housing towards the ecological potentials of a more thorough redesign of human habitats. In 1993 a small group of communities inaugurated the Danish ecovillage network, Landsforeningen for Okosamfund, the first network of its kind and a model for the larger ecovillage movement that was to follow....

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990, on Bainbridge Island near Seattle, Robert and Diane Gilman used their journal, In Context, to publish stories and interviews describing ecovillages as a strategy for creating a more sustainable culture. When Hildur Jackson, a Danish attorney and social activist, discovered In Context, the ecovillage movement suddenly got traction....

Ross [Hildur's husband] and Hildur Jackson created a charitable foundation, the Gaia Trust, and endowed it with 90 percent of their share of company profits....

In September 1991, Gaia Trust convened a meeting in Fjordvang to bring together people from eco-communities to discuss strategies for further developing the ecovillage concept. This led to a series of additional meetings to form national and international networks of ecovillages, and a decision, in 1994, to formalize networking and project development under the auspices of a new organization, the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN).

By 1994 the Internet had reached the point where access was becoming available outside the realm of university and government agencies and contractors.... Ross Jackson brought in a young Swedish web technician, Stephan Wik, who'd had a computer services business at Findhorn, and the Ecovillage Information Service was launched from Fjordvang at www.gaia.org....

In October 1995, Gaia Trust and the Findhorn Foundation co-sponsored the first international conference "Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities—Models for the 21st Century," held at Findhorn in Scotland. After the conference, GEN held a formative meeting and organized three worldwide administrative regions: Europe and Africa; Asia and Oceania; and the Americas. Each region was to be overseen by a secretariat office responsible for organizing local ecovillage networks and developing outreach programs to encourage growth of the movement. A fourth secretariat was established in Copenhagen to coordinate all the offices, seek additional funding, and oversee the website.[23]

According to Ross Jackson, the GEN was founded "to link the hundreds of small projects that had

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22   Ross Jackson, "The Ecovillage Movement," *Permaculture Magazine* No. 40 (Summer 2004), p. 25.
23   Albert Bates, "Ecovillage Roots (and Branches): When, where, and how we reinvented this ancient village concept," *Communities Magazine* No. 117 (2003).

sprung up around the world...."[24] The Gaia Trust website adds:

> The projects identified varied from well-established settlements like Solheimer in Iceland, Findhorn in Scotland, Crystal Waters in Australia, Lebensgarten in Germany to places like The Farm in Tennessee and the loosely knit inner-city Los Angeles Ecovillage project to places like the Folkecenter for Renewable Energy in Thy and many smaller groups that were barely started, not to mention the traditional villages of the South.[25]

Following the foundation of GEN, Albert Bates continues, "[w]ith generous funding from Gaia Trust for this new model, the ecovillage movement experienced rapid growth."

> Kibbutzim that re-vegetated the deserts of Palestine in the 20th century developed a new outlook with the formation of the Green Kibbutz Network. The Russian Ecovillage Network was inaugurated. Permaculture-based communities in Australia such as Crystal Waters and Jarlanbah pioneered easy paths to more environmentally sensitive lifestyles for the mainstream middle class. GEN-Europe hosted conferences attended by ecovillagers from dozens of countries, and national networks sprang up in many of them. In South and North America, nine representatives were designated to organize ecovillage regions by geography and language. By the turn of the 21st century, GEN had catalogued thousands of ecovillages, built "living and learning centers" in several of them, launched ecovillage experiments in universities, and sponsored university-based travel semesters to ecovillages on six continents....
>
> Ecovillages today are typically small communities with a tightly-knit social structure united by common ecological, social, or spiritual views. These communities may be urban or rural, high or low technologically, depending on circumstance and conviction. Okodorf Sieben Linden is a zero-energy cohousing settlement for 200 people in a rural area of eastern Germany. Los Angeles EcoVillage is a neighborhood around an intersection in inner Los Angeles. Sasardi Village is in the deep rainforest of Northern Colombia. What they share is a deep respect for nature, with humans as an integral part of natural cycles. Ecovillages address social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability in an integrated way, with human communities as part of, not apart from, balanced ecologies....[26]

The best concise description of an ecovillage that I've seen comes from what is apparently an older version of the Gaia Trust website, preserved on an article in *Permaculture Magazine*:

> Ecovillages are urban or rural communities that strive to combine a supportive social environment with a low-impact way of life. To achieve this, they integrate various aspects of ecological design, permaculture, ecological building, green production, alternative energy, community building practices, and much more.
>
> These are communities in which people feel supported by and responsible to those around them. They provide a deep sense of belonging to a group and are small enough for everyone to be seen and heard and to feel empowered. People are then able to participate in making decisions that affect their own lives and that of the community on a transparent basis.
>
> Ecovillages allow people to experience their spiritual connection to the living earth. People enjoy daily interaction with the soil, water, wind, plants, and animals. They provide for their daily needs—food, clothing, shelter—while respecting the cycles of nature.[27]

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24   Jackson, "The Ecovillage Movement."

25   "What is an Ecovillage?" Gaia Trust website <http://www.gaia.org/gaia/ecovillage/whatis/>.

26   Bates, "Ecovillage Roots."

27   "What is an Ecovillage?" (sidebar), Agnieszka Komoch, "Ecovillage Enterprise," *Permaculture Magazine* No. 32

The typical ecovillage has 50-400 people. Many ecovillages, particularly in Denmark, are linked to a cohousing project of some sort.[28] Such projects lower the material cost of housing (construction materials, heating, etc.) per person, and reduce energy costs by integrating the home with workplace and recreation.[29] Neighborhood-based ecovillages in some places have influenced the liberalization of local zoning laws and housing codes, and promoted the adoption of new building techniques by the construction industry. Ecovillage practices include peripheral parking, common open spaces and community facilities, passive solar design, vernacular materials, and composting toilets.[30]

The ecovillage movement is a loose and liberally defined network. According to Robert and Diane Giulman, in *Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities* (1991), an ecovillage is "A human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future." The GEN refuses to police member communities or to enforce any centralized standard of compliance. At a 1998 GEN board meeting in Denmark, the Network affirmed "that a community is an ecovillage if it specifies an ecovillage mission, such as in its organizational documents, community agreements, or membership guidelines, and makes progress in that direction. The Network promotes the Community Sustainability Assessment Tool, a self-administered auditing survey, as a way to measure progress toward the same general set of goals.[31] The Ecological portion of the checklist, for example, includes detailed survey questions on

1. Sense of Place—community location & scale; restoration & preservation of nature

2. Food Availability, Production & Distribution

3. Physical Infrastructure, Buildings & Transportation - materials, methods, designs

4. Consumption Patterns & Solid Waste Management

5. Water—sources, quality & use patterns

6. Waste Water & Water Pollution Management

7. Energy Sources & Uses[32]

Question 2, "Food Availability," includes questions on the percentage of food produced within the community, what is done with food scraps, and whether greenhouses and rooftop gardens are used for production year-round.[33]

Such liberality of standards is arguably necessary, given the diversity of starting points of affiliate communities. An ecovillage based in an inner city neighborhood, it stands to reason, will probably have much further to go in achieving sustainability than a rural-based intentional community. Urban neighborhoods, of necessity, must be "vertically oriented," and integrate the production of food and other inputs on an incremental basis, often starting from zero.[34]

(Summer 2002), p. 38.

28   Jackson, p. 26.

29   *Ibid.*, p. 28.

30   *Ibid.*, p. 29.

31   Linda Joseph and Albert Bates, "What Is an 'Ecovillage'?" *Communities Magazine* No. 117 (2003).

32   <http://gen.ecovillage.org/activities/csa/English/toc.html>.

33   <http://gen.ecovillage.org/activities/csa/English/eco/eco2.php>.

34   Joseph and Bates.

Dougald Hine and Nathan Cravens. Creating refuges for the unemployed and underemployed in times of recession has a venerable history as radical praxis. For example, Italian social centers originated in the 1970s as alternative social spaces. As Naomi Klein described them:

> Groups of young people would take over an abandoned building and create in it a place for themselves, a social center, often complete with collectively run bookstores, cafes, radio stations, spaces for lectures and concerts—everything they needed.[35]

Dougald Hine and Nathan Cravens, in this tradition, proposed self-organized institutions for providing subsistence and support through the counter-economy. In Hine's trial balloon in early 2009, "Social Media Against the Recession," he described the immediate needs facing the recently unemployed:

- practical/financial (e.g. how do I pay the rent/avoid my house being repossessed?)
- emotional/psychological (e.g. how do I face my friends? where do I get my identity from now I don't have a job?)
- directional (e.g. what do I do with my time? how do I find work?)

In response, Hine made several proposals (bear in mind that many of them, like his sharing economy suggestions, would probably look a lot different given the new possibilities eight years later):

> What follows is not a particularly structured list, though there are a few themes. The basic idea is that we're talking about **digital resource-maps for people who have lost access to the market as a source of resources**, with an aim to be an enablement tool for all levels of the participant community:
>
> - Information sharing for dealing with practical consequences of redundancy or job insecurity. You can see this happening already on a site like the Sheffield Forum.
> - Indexes of local resources of use to the newly-unemployed - including educational and training opportunities - built up in a user-generated style.
> - Tools for reducing the cost of living. These already exist—LiftShare, Freecycle, etc.—so it's a question of more effective access and whether there are quick ways to signpost people towards these, or link together existing services better.
> - An identification of skills, not just for potential employers but so people can find each other and organise, both around each other and emergent initiatives that grow in a fertile, socially-networked context.
>
> If the aim is to avoid this recession creating a new tranche of long-term unemployed (as happened in the 1980s), then **softening the distinction between the employed and unemployed** is vital. In social media, we've already seen considerable softening of the line between producer and consumer in all kinds of areas, and there must be lessons to draw from this in how we view any large-scale initiative.
>
> As I see it, such a softening would involve not only the kind of online tools and spaces suggested above, but the spread of **real-world spaces which reflect the collaborative values of social media**. Examples of such spaces already exist:
>
> - Media labs on the model of Access Space or the Brasilian Pontos de Cultura programme,

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35   From Naomi Klein, *Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate* (New York: Picador, 2002), quoted in Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Penguin, 2005), p. 265.

> which has applied this approach on a national scale
> - Fab Labs for manufacturing, as already exist from Iceland to Afghanistan
> - studio spaces like TenantSpin, the micro-TV station in Liverpool based in a flat in a towerblock—and like many other examples in the world of Community Media
>
> Again, if these spaces are to work, access to them should be open, not restricted to the unemployed. (If, as some are predicting, we see the return of the three day week, the value of spaces like this open to all becomes even more obvious!) In order for this to work, such spaces would need to be organised with the understanding that hanging out can be as valuable as more visibly productive activities—both because of the resilience that comes from building social connections, and because of the potential for information sharing and the sparking of new projects. There would also be a need for incubator spaces for projects that emerge from these spaces and are ready to move to the next level.[36]

Whatever the merits of Hine's specific bullet-pointed proposals, this was an early appearance of what has since been a recurrent theme: an alternative p2p economy, composed of a number of interlocking and mutually supporting common resources, as a cushion against the hard edges of the capitalist economy.

Michel Bauwens of the P2P Foundation Blog picked up Hine's proposal and asked readers for further suggestions. The most productive in my opinion came from Nathan Cravens, in the form of "The Open Cafe / Community Supported Agriculture / Fab Lab Alliance," a sort of three-legged stool composed of

1. **Open Cafes:** *The physical hub for activity. A place where meals are prepared by people for people to eat for zero money. Its hip and empowering to dine/work/have a chat here.*
2. **Community Supported Agriculture:** *Enough participants work in DIY gardens or community farms and donate the produce to the Cafe and or from government-issued food cards. (I play both sides for the same aim)*
3. **Open Source Fab Labs:** *Cafes align with OS Fab Labs to fill out the resource necessity gap to further save financial cost.[37]*

"Fab Labs" would refer, presumably, not only to institutionalized Fab Labs in the narrow sense, but would include hackerspaces and neighborhood/community workshops of all kinds where people could pool machine tools and other production machinery in shared spaces.

In the comments below Cravens's proposal I suggested a fourth leg, housing—seemingly a major gap in any would-be strategy for strengthening economic resilience in the face of a severe recession.

> It might be some kind of cheap, bare-bones cohousing project associated with the Cafe (water taps, cots, hotplates, etc) that would house people at minimal cost on the YMCA model. Squats in abandoned/public buildings, and building with scavenged materials on vacant lots, etc. (a la Colin Ward), might tie in with this as well.

One example of such a cohousing project was the resident-managed government camp for migrant workers in *The Grapes of Wrath*. A common camping space was provided for the migrants' own

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36   Dougald Hine, "Social Media Against the Recession," *Changing the World*, January 28, 2009
<http://otherexcuses.blogspot.com/2009/01/social-media-vs-recession.html>.
37   "P2P Answers the Meltdown: Nathan Cravens," *P2P Foundation Blog*, March 8, 2009
<https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/p2p-answers-the-meltdown-nathan-cravens/2009/03/08>.

portable housing (trucks, tents, etc.), as well as access to common restrooms, bathing and laundry facilities and electricity and running water. The closest modern equivalent is an RV park.

Another source of promising ideas for permanent or semi-permanent squats is Vinay Gupta's work on hexayurts and other life support technology for refugees like cheap LED lighting, solar cookers and rocket stoves, water purifiers, etc.

It's also possible to combine coworking spaces with minimalist cohousing on the model of a hostel. One such project is PodShare in Los Angeles, with five locations so far. The sleeping facilities are fairly Spartan—a barracks full of dozens of bunk beds—but the site also includes cooking facilities and common workspace with Wi-Fi. PodShare allows stays of up to 90 days, but there's no reason such a project couldn't allow for permanent residency. According to the video accompanying the article on the project, the beds are priced at $40-50 a night, which is obviously out of the question for the great majority of people and totally inappropriate for members of the precariat and underclass attempting to subsist outside the capitalist system. Presumably the reason is a combination of Los Angeles real estate values and the fact that it's a for-profit venture by the creator—and she said she furnished the site with material from Home Depot, suggesting she wasn't going out of her way to minimize costs—so there's no obvious barrier to something similar being done on a much more affordable basic with recycled building materials.[38]

Resilient Communities/Community as a Social Software Service. For some time, John Robb has written about Resilient Communities—generally along the same conceptual lines as Transition Towns or Global Villages—as an emergent form of social organization to fill the void left by the collapse of the centralized state and large corporation.[39]

> Not only are nearly all governments financially insolvent, they can't protect citizens from a global system that is running amok. As services and security begin to fade, local sources of order will emerge to fill the void. Hopefully, most people will opt to take control of this process by joining together with others to build resilient communities that can offer the independence, security, and prosperity that isn't offered by the nation-state anymore.[40]

Parallel with this line of thought, he has also been exploring the idea of networked platforms as a support base for his resilient communities. In his 2006 book *Brave New War*, he discussed the importance of platforms as a vehicle for decentralization.

> A platform is merely a collection of services and capabilities that are common to a wide variety of activities aggregated in a way that makes them exceedingly easy to access. The benefit of this approach is that it becomes easier for end users of this platform to build solutions because they don't need to re-create the wheel in order to build a new service, and it is easier for participants to coordinate and interconnect their activities.[41]

Platforms can include VOIP and teleconferencing services, collaborative tools like wikis, peer rating services, capital aggregating services like Kickstarter, digital currencies of various sorts, and encrypted

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38   Ruby Irene Pratka, "Dorms for Adults? Co-living 'Pods' Pop Up in Los Angeles," *Shareable*, Oct. 9, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/dorms-for-adults-coliving-pods-pop-up-in-los-angeles>.
39   <http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/resilient_community/>.
40   Chris Arkenberg, "Robb Interview: Open Source Warfare and Resilience," *BoingBoing*, June 15, 2010 <>.
41   John Robb, *Brave New War*, p. 172.

darknets, and a wide range of software, like CAD software for creating open-source industrial designs that can be shared between widely separated designers and micromanufacturers around the world.

In a couple of blog posts in December 2009-January 2010, he developed this theme, apparently under the primary influence of Daniel Suarez's "d-space" economy in *Freedom(TM)*.

> A **Darknet** is the system that runs an autonomous social network (a tribe, a constellation of resilient communities, a gang, etc.). It is composed of a software layer and hardware infrastructure that connects, organizes, allocates, and automates the functions of the synthetic social system it is built for. Some details:
>
>> ●Software can be built that automates the rules by which any social and economic system operate. Nearly any social construct imaginable can be automated (at least on a small scale). Whether it works efficiently or is appealing to recruits is another story entirely. Early experience in MMO games and social software development indicate that this is not only possible, but probable.
>>
>> ●The networks hardware and software infrastructure ensures that all *members* of the network are provided access to the system and the tools necessary to use it effectively. It is also constructed in a way that makes it opaque to outside observation and impervious to non-members or intrusion.
>>
>> ●This system, both economic and social, runs both in parallel and in conjunction with the global economy.... It is self-referencing, autonomous, and willing to defend its own interests. It can be parasitic or additive to the global environment (or more effectively: both). It is competitive with other entities that operate within the global environment, from nation-states to corporations.
>
> "Darknet" is a term used by Daniel Suarez, in his books Daemon and Freedom (TM)....[42]
>
> Which social, political and economic system can BOTH protect you from the excesses of an uncontrollable/turbulent global system AND advance your quality of life?
>
> One thing is increasingly clear: hollow nation-states aren't the answer....
>
> Here's an option: DIY your solution. Roll your own tribe or community. Build it from the ground up to be resilient, decentralized, fair, and meritocratic. If you are so inclined, cut the rules into software so you can be both local and global at the same time. Change those rules by popular consent when the environment changes (and it will, often). Attract members to your new tribe. If it becomes unfair, leave it and roll another one. Compete for members. Use this bootstrapped system to negotiate and connect with the global economic system on equal terms, rather than as supplicants.[43]

Robb continued to develop the idea, putting increasing stress on the inadequacy of isolated efforts at building Resilient Communities, and the consequent need for networked organization as a base of support.

> Resilient communities will:
>
>> ●Shield us from increasingly frequent shocks and breakdowns of an out of control global system.

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42   Robb, "A 'Darknet'," *Global Guerrillas*, December 17, 2009
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2009/ 12/a-darknet.html>.
43   Robb, "Central Question of 21st Century Governance," *Global Guerrillas*, January 4, 2010
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2010/01/journal-central-question-of-21st-century-governance.html>.
Interestingly, de Ugarte—in "Phyles"—cited Robb's post as a major source on phyles.

● Protect us from predatory and parasitical non-state actors—from globe-spanning banks/corporations to local/transnational militias/gangs.

● Provide us with a path that will allow us to thrive—economically, socially, individually, and spiritually.

Unfortunately, nobody is going to help us build them.

The nation-state can't and won't. It is losing power across the board as the global system strengthens. Organizationally, the nation-state has lost control of its finances, borders, media, economics, use of force, etc. Worse, moral and ideological moorings that served the nation-state well for hundreds of years have rotted away. The nation-state is now adrift, unable to orient its decision making cycles.

As a result, the nation-state has been largely co-opted by increasingly powerful non-state entities—from parasitical banks that sit astride core functions of the global system... to transnational gangs that puncture borders with drugs and other smuggled goods—and that corruption is spreading....

So, what can we do? Attempts to bootstrap resilient communities are definitely possible. However, isolated and small, I fear these efforts will either result in a reduction in the quality of life for its participants or quickly fall prey to parasites/predators (as in, you won't get far if bankruptcy, privatization, and gangs-disorder guts your community).

The dominant solution to all of these pitfalls, dangers, and threats is to team up. Create a virtual tribe that helps communities become resilient—by financing, protecting, and accelerating them. While it's possible to build a virtual tribe via a completely ad hoc process, the best way to build platforms in software that make the growth of tribal networks fast and easy. If we can build these software platforms, we can turn the transition to resilient communities from a process prone to high rates of failure, into a process that spreads virally and generates immediate improvements for its participants. A vibrant future awaits, all we need to do is build it.[44]

What emerged from Robb's rumination on network organization, later in the year, was the concept of "complete economies and social structures delivered as software service"—or "Economies as a Software Service."

These software based economies and social structures could allow:

● A plethora of new economic systems within which you can make a living (all you need to do is opt-in to the one that makes sense to you). The ability to build and experiment with new rules that both fix the increasingly dire problems with the current dominant economic system while providing new capabilities and avenues for success (new currencies, new incentive structures, new forms of status, etc.).

● Rapid rates of innovation/improvement. Since the rules of these systems are software based, they can evolve very quickly. Further, some of these new structures have the potential to generate rates of improvement/innovation/wealth creation at rates an order of magnitude greater than the current system.

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44   Robb, "Why a Resilient Community Network?" *Global Guerrillas,* January 12, 2010 <http://boingboing.net/2010/06/ 15/john-robb-interview.html>.

●Nearly costless scalability. The infrastructure of these systems scales at a nearly costless level and the platforms envisioned can support a huge amount ecosystem diversity without much strain.[45]

In an added comment under that post, Robb explained how such networked economies could enforce their rules entirely by endogenous means, even if the state was unwilling to enforce members' contractual obligations to obey by-laws.

If N-1 strategies (theft, cheating, fraud, etc.) only yield small amounts and continued association is very beneficial, the sanctions used to ensure people don't act badly are variations of expulsion. With opt-in systems, as opposed to geographically based systems, there's no requirement for membership by accident (and no need for coercion to join).

Later elaborating on the same concept under a slightly different name (Economies as a Service), Robb explained that his Resilient Communities would "often be the local instantiation of the values/rules" of the Economy as a Service; in other words, a module-platform architecture with the networked economy and its governing software as the platform and the local Resilient Community as a module.[46]

Robb is optimistic about the rate of adoption of networked platforms in the transition period. Based on a survey of the rates of adoption of new technologies over the past century, he notes that "the lag between discovery and deployment is dropping over time, [and] the rate of adoption has accelerated over time."

Now that nearly everyone has a computer (either on a desk or in a smartphone), the rate of adoption for new tech has dropped from years to quarters. There's almost no lag between development and deployment, and applications that represent major innovations can roll out to globally significant levels in months.

....Given how fast things move now, it's not hard to imagine that a new economic system (better design)... or P2P manufacturing system could sweep the world in months, drawing in tens of millions of people into ways of creating, trading, and sharing wealth. In short, new digital systems that make the transition to local production within networked resilient communities easier and faster since they can help generate the wealth required to do it without starving/freezing and the vision of the future that motivates people to persist despite setbacks.[47]

Resurrected Medieval Villages. The large number of abandoned but structurally intact medieval villages in Europe raises the possibility of refurbishing them as cohousing and production spaces, with off-grid power and Internet connections. Some people are taking advantage of the opportunity.

In Spain, *ecoaldeas* (eco-villages) have been built on the sites of dozens of medieval villages. One of the earliest was Lakabe, a village in the mountains of northern Navarra, rediscovered in 1980. The new inhabitants brought in construction materials to rebuild roofs and carry out other repairs, raised most of their own food, and used candles for light in the early days. They went on to rebuild the village

45   Robb, "Completely New Economies as a Software Service," *Global Guerrillas*, November 4, 2010
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2010/01/why-a-resilient-community-network.html>.
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2010/11/completely-new-economies-as-a-software-service.html>.
46   Robb, "EaaS (Economy as a Service)," *Global Guerrillas*, November 11, 2010
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/ globalguerrillas/2010/11/eaas-economy-as-a-service.html>.
47   John Robb, "The Digital Roll-Out of Resilient Communities," Global Guerrillas, December 22, 2011
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/12/why-a-focus-on-digital-change.html

bakery and sell their bread, eventually deriving enough income from this to eliminate the need for outside labor. Today their have electric power from a windmill, water turbine and solar panels. Considering Spain has thousands of such abandoned villages, they're a relevant possibility for a lot of people.[48]

In northwestern Italy, the 13th-century village of Torri Superiore has been through a similar transformation. The restoration began in the 1990s, with renovation using local materials and the addition of electric power. It uses solar panels for hot water and electricity, and composts its waste (including human and animal). Its permaculture gardens, orchards and livestock supply fresh produce, jams, honey, olive oil, bread and dairy products. It's a member of the Global Ecovillage Network.[49]

Torri Superiore's latest project is the Borderlands Company, a network of six companies under the umbrella of the Ture Nirvane cooperative (which also manages the eco-village itself). The Borderlands network is intended to operate in neighboring towns along with Torri Superiore itself, and revitalize the surrounding area and integrate it into a regional economy built on values of sustainability and social solidarity. The local communities and the region, under this vision, will serve as economic platforms to support an overlapping network of cooperatives and community enterprises, with a holistic approach to uniting work and civic life.[50]

ReGen Villages. ReGen Villages is the project of James Ehrlich, working with the Danish architecture studio EFFEKT. The first iteration, now under construction in Almere, a suburb of Amsterdam, is planned to include a hundred cohousing units

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48   Øyvind Holmstad, "Medieval Spanish ghost town now self-sufficient ecovillage," P2P Foundation Blog, Feb. 10, 2014 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/medieval-spanish-ghost-town-now-self-sufficient-ecovillage/2014/02/10>.

49   Helen Morgan, "Medieval Italian Village Transformed Into Self-Sufficient Eco-Community," *Inhabitat*, Sept. 1, 2011 <http://inhabitat.com/medieval-italian-village-restored-to-a-self-sufficient-eco-community/>.

50   Nathan Slater, "Project of the Day: Torri Superiore," P2P Foundation Blog, June 29, 2016 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/project-day-torri-superiore/2016/06/29>.

(designed for passive solar heat) that will generate all of their energy off-grid, produce most of their own food, and either compost their waste or use it to generate power through biogas.[51]

If the pilot in Almere (slated for completion in 2017) works out, Ehrlich plans to replicate it first in Scandinavia and Germany, then the Middle East, and then expand into rural India and sub-Saharan Africa. Ehrlich reasons that the latter two areas are likely to have a growing middle class and large-scale migration of rural people moving to cities, and the ReGen Village model will offer a sustainable alternative to the existing model of suburbanization in the West.[52]

You may note that, as designed, the village's only commons-based functions are utility infrastructure and food production. That leaves a whole range of platforms for commons-based production and subsistence open for development. As Cat Johnson of *Shareable* notes, it would be an ideal setting for sharing capital assets (e.g. tool libraries, etc.), workspaces (coworking), and skills (time bank).[53] And I would add that it's also ideal for adding the kinds of neighborhood workshops described above, hackerspaces, etc.

Equally important, this is a proprietary corporate franchise from which Ehrlich obviously intends to extract rents. And for something geared for expansion in the Third World, its prices are well into the European and American middle class range (200,000 Euros per housing unit, plus 500 Euros a month for food and energy services).[54] But there's no reason it couldn't be horizontally replicated on an open-source basis, using the same basic design principles in conjunction with local, vernacular building materials and open-source versions of the same technology.

Solidarity Economy in Brazilian Favelas. This is one of the most relevant examples for our purpose, because rather than middle-class people in the Global North with the option to secede into intentional communities in a planned, comfortable manner, it involves some of the most impoverished people in the Global South, improvising housing and infrastructure and bootstrapping a subsistence economy with decentralized technologies out of material necessity. In this regard, they are a case study of how people in a variety of contexts will develop commons-based economies to support themselves, not as a lifestyle choice, but because the corporate and state support infrastructures they depended on have collapsed.

> When one stops to consider Rio's hundreds of favelas for their plurality, with a lens of recognizing assets instead of just highlighting problems, one common thread is clear: In the face of public neglect, favela residents are expert at doing things for themselves, many times coming together to do so collectively. There is even a word for this, *gambiarra*, a native Brazilian Tupi-

51   Cat Johnson, "RegenVillage Almere: A Self-sufficient Neighborhood to Generate its Own Food and Energy," *Shareable*, June 27, 2016 <http://www.shareable.net/blog/regenvillage-almere-a-self-sufficient-neighborhood-to-generate-its-own-food-and-energy>; Lorraine Chow, "World's First Off-Grid ReGen Village Will Be Completely Self-Sufficient Producing Its Own Power and Food," *EcoWatch*, June 7, 2016 <http://www.ecowatch.com/worlds-first-off-grid-regen-village-will-be-completely-self-sufficient-1891166358.html>.

52   Peter Dockrill, "This Dutch town will grow its own food, live off-grid, and handle its own waste," *Science Alert*, May 26, 2016 <http://www.sciencealert.com/this-dutch-town-will-grow-its-own-food-live-off-grid-and-handle-its-own-waste>.

53   Johnson, *op. cit*.

54   Senay Boztas, "Fancy life in an eco-village? Welcome to the hi-tech off-grid communities," *The Guardian*, July 12, 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/jul/12/eco-village-hi-tech-off-grid-communities-netherlands-circular-housing-regen-effekt>.

Guarani word meaning 'improvised solution.'

> There are many examples of this in both consumption and labor: favelas have been practicing collective consumerism since their inception (and well before the "sharing economy" was trendy); favelas come together in *mutirão* collective work sessions for infrastructure upgrades, such as building sewerage systems or cleaning up abandoned lots; and *favelados* (favela residents) have come together in work collectives, such as the baking and skills sharing collective Mangarfo featured in the short documentary, "Here Is My Place."

> These grassroots collective economic practices are all examples of the "solidarity economy" that exists in favelas and in other communities all over Brazil and the world. Solidarity economy has many definitions but, most broadly, is both an umbrella term and a movement that seeks to promote alternative economic structures based on collective ownership and horizontal management instead of private ownership and hierarchical management. Such structures include community banks, credit unions, family agriculture, cooperative housing, barter clubs, consumer cooperatives, and worker cooperatives or collectives, most well-known in Brazil in the industries of recycling and crafts. The goal is to decentralize wealth, root wealth in communities, and financially and politically empower stakeholders participating in these structures toward another, more just, economy....

> As Brazil's former National Secretary of Solidarity Economy, Paul Singer..., said in a public assembly in Porto Alegre last year: Solidarity economy is predominantly "spread by women, young people, the unemployed—by all of the victims of capitalism."[55]

If there's a test case for the argument that cheap, ephemeral production technologies (small-scale manufacturing with open-source tabletop CNC tools, DIY Bio, high-yield intensive horticulture, etc.) enable economic bootstrapping on small amounts of capital, and enable secession or "Exodus" from capitalism by reducing capital intensiveness of production, it will be in such communities.

II. The City as Commons/Platform

As right-wing authoritarian governments proliferate across the West, and even nominally leftist national governments fall victim to blackmail by global neoliberal forces, the municipal level offers the most hope for fundamental institutional change.

> The election of Trump has not occurred in a vacuum. Across the West, we are witnessing a wholesale breakdown of the existing political order; the neoliberal project is broken, the center-left is vanishing, and the old left is at a loss for what to do. In many countries, it is the far right that is most successful in harnessing people's desire to regain a sense of control over their lives. Where progressives have tried to beat the right at its own game by competing on the battleground of the nation-state, they have fared extremely poorly, as recent elections and referenda across Europe have shown. Even where a progressive force has managed to win national office, as happened in Greece in 2015, the limits of this strategy have become abundantly clear, with global markets and transnational institutions quickly bullying the Syriza government into compliance.[56]

Stacco Troncoso and Ann Marie Utratel start from Gramsci's epigram "The old world is dying, and

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55   Anna Cash, "Solidarity Economy Part I: Cooperative Development in Rio and Beyond," Shareable, Jan. 10, 2017 <http://www.shareable.net/blog/solidarity-economy-part-i-cooperative-development-in-rio-and-beyond>.

56   Kate Shea Baird and Steve Hughes, "America Needs A Network Of Rebel Cities To Stand Up To Trump," PopularResistance.org, December 17, 2016 <https://popularresistance.org/america-needs-a-network-of-rebel-cities-to-stand-up-to-trump/>.

the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters," arguing that it's the triumph of monsters like Trump and other authoritarian national leaders that seems to block the transition from a capitalist to a post-capitalist society. The answer, they say, is to bypass the national state and organize a commons-based, P2P successor society by building counter-institutions "one city at a time."

> So, where is the margin for action, if change from within is effectively blocked by the structural constraints of statist politics and the electoral arena?...

> Amid this increasingly bleak political landscape, affinity-based networks and communities using P2P dynamics and building commons have been taking action. Small-scale innovations in many fields are paving the way for true, sustainable resource management and grounded social cohesion. In governance, food growing, service provision, science, research and development, education, even finance and currency, these community-enabled developments demonstrate how differently our lives could be organized. Many of these place-based efforts are being documented and replicated worldwide through the Internet, in the process re-seeding the knowledge Commons from which they draw. This is done through commons enabling, aka P2P (peer-to-peer, person-to-person, people-to-people) technologies, which are gaining momentum as forces for constructive change. They enable small group dynamics at higher levels of complexity and enable the reclamation of power.

> With this power, people can create innovations in production, open book accounting, and the stewardship of natural, cultural or digitally derived commons — but also in governance. Together, all of this forms the building blocks of a truly bottom-up system.[57]

None of this is to say, they warn, that building prefigurative institutions at the municipal level is sufficient by itself, without recognizing the real danger of repression by reactionary forces at the nation-state level. Municipalism is not a substitute for political action at the national level, but a complement to it. Efforts like Syriza and Podemos have been failures to the extent that they were tried as venues for implementing post-capitalist transitional agendas; but they are indispensable for running interference on behalf of the local, prefigurative movements and giving them a safe space in which to grow.

Andreas Karitzis ascribes the failure of Syriza in Greece to its almost exclusive focus on popular mobilization and electoral politics. He "came to the conclusion that one major failure of the Left is that it lacks a form of governmentality which matches up with its own logic and values." He recommends, instead:

> A network of resilient, dynamic and interrelated circuits of co-operative productive units, alternative financial tools, local cells of self-governance, community control over infrastructure facilities, digital data, energy systems, distribution networks etc. These are ways of gaining a degree of autonomy necessary to defy the despotic control of the elites over society.[58]

Contrast the victory of reaction and the failure of left-wing challenges at the national level—e.g. Trump's election in the United States, Brexit in the UK, Wilders in the Netherlands, and the failure of Syriza's national government in Greece—with the accomplishments of the Spanish Left at the municipal level. Former M15 activists have formed local, citizen-based political parties and staged

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57   Stacco Troncoso and Ann Marie Utratel, "Commons in the time of monsters: How P2P Politics can change the world, one city at a time," *Commons Transition*, June 5 <http://commonstransition.org/commons-time-monsters/>.
58   David Bollier, "Andreas Karitzis on SYRIZA: We Need to Invent New Ways to Do Politics," P2P Foundation Blog, Feb. 6, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/andreas-karitzis-syriza-need-invent-new-ways-politics/2017/02/06>.

contest, Eurovision. The system allows citizen-voters to give differently weighted points to people running for different positions in the government. The party leader cannot automatically dictate the party's slate of candidates. This allows for a wider diversity of party leaders. Ahora Madrid's people in city government include ecologists, political independents, traditional party people, and others. Ahora Madrid's party program was similarly built through an open, collaborative process, said [Director of Citizen Participation Miguel] Arana. There were working groups and then Internet voting on the proposed agenda.

The city's open-source approach to government includes citizen initiatives (when online policy proposals are backed by 1% of voters, they go to a referendum and if approved become official policy), and participatory budgeting with control over 60 million euros.[62]

For that matter, people in Greece are responding to the failure of Syriza by turning increasingly to local counter-institutions. In Athens, informal local movements are reclaiming public spaces like parking lots and unused municipal office buildings. For example, a former parking lot on the edge of the Exarchia community was dug up to build Navarinou Park, a community garden now administered by a committee of neighborhood residents.

> "What we are witnessing is an explosion of social networks born of bottom-up initiatives," says [architecture professor Stavros] Stavrides, who was among the activists whose spontaneous efforts stopped the lot being turned into a parking space in late 2009. "Navarinou heralded this new culture, this new spirit of people taking their lives into their own hands. They know that they can no longer expect the state to support them and through this process, they are discovering how important it is to share."

> * * *

> Increasingly, local associations, resident committees, and solidarity groups are forging ties, exchanging know-how, giving shape to new concepts of co-existence, and in so doing, reshaping public space. [63]

Of course, this isn't all just a response to the disappointing performance of the Syriza government. Despite being eclipsed in visibility by the political activity of the Syriza party, commons-based economic counter-institutions were a major part of the Greek population's way of coping with the post-2008 economic crisis, and had close ties to the Syntagma insurgency.

> Hollowed out by the corrosive effects of austerity, large tracts of Athens' inner city have become a landscape of decay that has allowed others to move in. Public buildings—from abandoned municipal offices to theatres, market places, and cafes—have been squatted and taken over.

> An unofficial support network has evolved with self-managed health clinics, collective kitchens, neighborhood assemblies, community groups and language schools mushrooming. Backed by people from all walks of life, the initiatives have taken off on a wave of solidarity following the demise of the welfare state. At last count, there were over 400.

> "There are initiatives scattered throughout the city that show it is not paralysed by the crisis," Stavrides says. "And they are happening when most of us feel powerless in front of policies and

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62   David Bollier, "Reinventing Politics via Local Political Parties," P2P Foundation Blog, Jan. 5, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/reinventing-politics-via-local-political-parties/2017/01/05>.
63   Helena Smith, "Athens' unofficial community initiatives offer hope after government failures," *The Guardian*, Sept. 21, 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/sep/21/athens-unofficial-community-hope-government-failures>.

decisions taken in our name."[64]

The Social Cultural Centre of Vyronas, established in an abandoned municipal building by a public occupation to prevent it being "privatized," serves "workers, the unemployed, pensioners, migrants, and youth"; "gives lessons in foreign languages, history, philosophy, tai chi, traditional dance, guitar and photography. A collective kitchen operates twice a week alongside a library and cinema."[65]

These initiatives take place against the backdrop of a relatively commons-friendly city government.

> Giorgos Kaminis, Athens' progressive mayor, has created a municipal post that actively courts community initiatives in a bid to modernise local administration and improve the quality of life. Amalia Zepou, a former documentary-maker who holds the post as vice mayor for civil society and municipality decentralisation, has created a platform for community projects, SynAthina, where citizens exchange information, find partners, and get in touch with city hall and potential sponsors. The aim, she says, is to reinvigorate the democratic process.[66]

Such "Rebel City" projects are the most promising avenue for resistance to neoliberal capitalism and the rising neo-fascist movements, for implementing post-capitalist alternatives, and for weathering the post-capitalist transition. Those of us in the anarchist milieu and the rest of the Left, who are interested in models for building the institutions of a successor society, should devote a great deal of attention to the role of local community as a platform for change.

Partner State, Rebel Cities, Libertarian Municipalism and Other Theoretical Models. If there is any hope of government evolving into something less statelike, it lies at the municipal level. The Saint-Simonian idea of replacing legislation over human beings with the "administration of things" has since appeared in many iterations, starting with Proudhon's "dissolution of the state in society" in *General Idea of the Revolution*. The Partner State is very much in this tradition, as John Restakis describes it:

> The idea of the Partner State proceeds directly from the principle that civil society is the source of political legitimacy in a democracy. In this view, the state is in the service of civil society as a vehicle to advance and protect the common good.

> Thus, the Partner State is above all an enabling state. Its primary purpose is to maximize the capacity of civil society to create social value and to act as the primary agent in the formation of public policy. It is citizens, acting through civil institutions that they control, that ultimately decide and direct the implementation of public policy. The enabling role of the state is not confined to the promotion of social value. It also entails the promotion of open access to the economy. It provides space for the operation of many models of entrepreneurship, including collective and commons-based forms of enterprise such as cooperatives and peer-to-peer networks, and the promotion of participatory politics.

> The Partner State enlarges the scope of personal autonomy and liberty and guarantees personal economic security while reinforcing the social bonds that build healthy communities and a vibrant civil society. Central to this process is the democratization of the state itself. Ultimately, the Partner State acts primarily as an administrative support for the coordination of policies decided upon by

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64   *Ibid.*
65   *Ibid.*
66   *Ibid.*

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institutions of civil society on the basis of cooperative, direct democracy.[67]

The idea of the Partner State originated with Cosma Orsi, and was picked up by Michel Bauwens of the Foundation for Peer-to-Peer Alternatives. Bauwens, building on Orsi's work, sees the Partner State as a sort of "peer-to-peer state," organized on stigmergic rather than democratic principles.

> First of all, these communities are not democracies. Why is that so? Because democracy, the market, and hierarchies are all modes of allocation of scarce resources. In hierarchy, our superiors decide; in the market, prices decide; in a democracy, "we" decide.

> But where resources are abundant, as they are with knowledge, code, and design—which can be copied and shared at a marginal cost—they are truly unnecessary. These types of communities are truly poly-archies and the type of power that is held in them is meritocratic, distributed and ad hoc. Everyone can contribute without permission, but those with recognised expertise who are accepted by the community—the so-called "maintainers" and the "editors"—decide which software or design patches are acceptable.

> These decisions require expertise, not communal consensus. The tension between inclusive participation and selection for excellence is one that every social system faces, and that peer production has solved in a rather elegant way. The genius of the solution is not that it avoids conflict, but that it designs away unnecessary conflict by allowing for the maximum human freedom compatible with the goal of co-operation. Indeed, peer production is always an "object-oriented" co-operation, and it is the particular object that will drive the particular form chosen for its peer governance mechanisms.

> The main allocation mechanism in such projects is a "distribution of tasks". Unlike in the industrial model, there is no longer a division of labour between jobs and mutual coordination. Because the work environment is designed to be totally open and transparent, every participating individual can see what is needed, and decide accordingly whether to contribute. Remarkably, this new model allows for both global coordination and for small-group dynamics. And it does this without "command and control"![68]

Bauwens distinguishes the Partner State from the idea of the state under the 20th-century model of state socialism:

> Socialism has traditionally been focused on the state, and while the state has historically proven to be necessary to balance unbalanced market forces, it has not proven to be very successful as an autonomous mode of production. So any socialism that harks back to the failed statism of 20th century socialism, will also be a disaster in the waiting. P2P Theory offers a new expanded role for the state, not just as the arbiter of the market, or as paternalistic 'welfare' state, but as a Partner State, that directly empowers and enables civil society to be autonomously productive. This is indeed the strong claim of P2P Theory, i.e. that we now have a superior mode of commons-oriented peer production which surpasses both the statist and market modes. But peer production needs an infrastructure and support which needs to come from enlightened and democratic public authorities.[69]

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67   John Restakis, *Cooperative Commonwealth & the Partner State* (The Next System Project, 2017), p. 11.
68   Michel Bauwens, "The 'welfare state' is dead - long live the 'partner state'?" *Al Jazeera English*, March 15, 2012 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/20123111423139193.html>.
69   Bauwens, "The Argentinian Interview," *P2P Foundation Blog*, September 18, 2009 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/the-argentinian-interview/2009/09/18>.

So the Partner State, arguably, is not so much a "government" as a system of *governance*. It need not be a state at all, in the sense of an institution which claims the sole right to initiate force in a given territory. It is, essentially, a nonstate social association—or support platform—for managing the commons, extended to an entire geographical region.

> Peer production also rests on a sometimes costly infrastructure of cooperation. There would be no Wikipedia without the funding for its servers, no free software or open hardware without similar support mechanisms. This is why open source communities have created a new social institution: the for-benefit association.... [T]he new for-benefit associations have only an active role in enabling and empowering the community to cooperate, by provisioning its infrastructure, not by commanding its production processes. These associations exist for the sole purpose of 'benefitting' the community of which they are the expression....
>
> Now, here is the kicker, how would you call an institution that is responsible for the common good of all the participants, in this case, not the people involved in a similar project, but the inhabitants of a territory? I would argue that this type of for-benefit institution has a very similar function to what we commonly assign to the state....
>
> Can we then, imagine, a new type of state? Enter the concept of a Partner State! The Partner State... is a state form that enables and empowers the social creation of value by its citizens. It protects the infrastructure of cooperation that is the whole of society. The Partner State can exist at any territorial level, as a set of institutions that protect the common good and enable the citizens to create value. It does, on a territorial scale, what the for-benefit institutions do on a project-scale. While the for-benefit associations work for the commoners as to particular projects, the Partner State works for the citizens. [70]

Elsewhere he describes it as a sort of arbiter or venue for dialogue between stakeholders in a geographical area:

> Rather than seeing itself as sovereign master, the state must be seen as embedded in relationships, and as in need of respecting these multiple relationships. This is probably best translated by the concept of multistakeholdership. We can probably expect that the nation-state, along with the newly emerging sub- and supraregional structures will continue to exist, but that their policies will be set through a dialogue with stakeholders. The key will be to disembed the state from its primary reliance of the private sector, and to make it beholden to civil society, i.e. the commons, so that it can act as a center of arbitrage....[71]

Bauwens cites Ezio Manzini and Eduardo Staszowski as a vision of how public services would be organized under the Partner State:

> citizens become active and collaborative and can be considered partners in the design and delivery of public services (service co-design and co-production).
>
> This vision, in turn, raises two main questions: how do public services change if they are conceived as platforms to trigger, enable and support active and collaborative citizens? How can we promote the necessary mutual support between public and social innovations?[72]

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70   Michel Bauwens, "Evolving Towards a Partner State in an Ethical Economy," in Andrea Botero, Andrew Gryf Paterson and Joanna Saad-Sulonen , eds., *Towards Peer Production in Public Services: Cases from Finland* (Helsinki: Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture , Department of Media , 2012), pp. 57-58..

71   Michel Bauwens, "Peer Governance as a third mode of governance," *P2P Foundation Blog*, June 9, 2010 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/peer-governance-as-a-third-mode-of-governance/2010/06/09>.

72   Michel Bauwens, "Public Innovation is needed to jumpstart Partner State approaches," *P2P Foundation Blog*,

Tommaso Fattori, an activist in the Italian Water Commons movement, discussed the Partner State in the context of commonification of public services:

> The field of Commons can be for the most part identified with a public but not-state arena, in which the actions of the individuals who collectively take care of, produce and share the Commons are decisive and fundamental.
>
> In this sense, Commons and commoning can become a means for transforming public sector and public services (often bureaucracy-bound and used to pursue the private interests of lobby groups): a means for their commonification (or commonalization). Indeed, there are many possible virtuous crossovers between the traditional public realm and the realm of Commons.
>
> Commonification goes beyond the simple de-privatization of the public realm: Commonification basically consists of its democratization, bringing back elements of direct self-government and self-managing, by the residents themselves, of goods and services of general interest (or participatory management within revitalized public bodies). Commonification is a process in which the inhabitants of a territory regain capability and power to make decisions, to orientate choices, rules, and priorities, reappropriating themselves of the very possibility of governing and managing goods and services in a participatory manner: it is this first-person activity which changes citizens into commoners....
>
> But there are also other overlaps possible between the idea of public and that of Commons, apart from the necessary creation of legislative tools which can protect and encourage Commons and commoning.
>
> These are resources which do not belong to and which are not at the disposal of governments or the State-as-person, because they belong to the collectivity and above all, to future generations, who cannot be expropriated of their rights. Distributed participatory management and self-government, inclusion and collective enjoyment, no individual exclusive rights, prevalence of use value over exchange value, meeting of primary and diffuse needs: commons, in this understanding, means all these things. Several forms of Public-Commons partnership can be developed, where the role of state is realigned, from its current support and subsidising of private for-profit companies, towards supporting commoning and the creation of common value. This can be achieved through tax exemptions, subsidies and empowerment of sharing and commoning activities, but also, for example, by allocating public and state-owned goods to common and shared usage thanks to projects which see public institutions and commoners working together. This is a road which could be the beginning of a general transformation of the role of the state and of local authorities into partner state, "namely public authorities which create the right environment and support infrastructure so that citizens can peer produce value from which the whole of society benefits"....
>
> These primary commons must not allow discrimination in access to them according to individual wealth, reintroducing the element of equality and fairness, as well as a relationship of care —rather than one of domination or subjection— between humanity and the rest of nature of which it is a part. These are resources which do not belong to and which are not at the disposal of governments or the State-as-person, because they belong to the collectivity and

above all, to future generations, who cannot be expropriated of their rights. Distributed participatory management and self-government, inclusion and collective enjoyment, no individual exclusive rights, prevalence of use value over exchange value, meeting of primary and diffuse needs: commons, in this understanding, means all these things. Several forms of Public-Commons partnership can be developed, where the role of the state is realigned, from its current support and subsidising of private for-profit companies, towards supporting commoning and the creation of common value. This can be achieved through tax exemptions, subsidies, and empowerment of sharing and commoning activities, but also, for example, by allocating public and state-owned goods to common and shared usage thanks to projects which see public institutions and commoners working together. This is a road which could be the beginning of a general transformation of the role of the state and of local authorities into partner state, "namely public authorities which create the right environment and support infrastructure so that citizens can peer produce value from which the whole of society benefits"...[73]

Stacco Troncoso argues that the commons-based state is most prevalent, and most feasible, at the city level.

I think the city level is where the commons are most embedded at the moment. If you look at the experiences of Barcelona, at Seoul in Korea, at Frome in the UK or at Grenoble in France, at the Co-Bologna experiment in Italy (as well as Co-Mantova, Co-Palermo, Co-Battaglia)—these represent a poly-centric governance model where policy-making is actually done at the grassroots level. It empowers citizens' groups to make policy proposals. I think this is very radical, even though it's also very pragmatic. Policy-making is opened up to citizen collectives, while the city becomes an enabling mechanism to realise these projects. Cities cooperate in new ways through a new translocal urban level that didn't exist before. So, for example, 40 cities worldwide have coalesced to regulate Uber and I think it would be worthwhile to actually start mapping these initiatives. The same with fighting climate change and the coalitions of cities going much further than the state level. Another level is what I call 'neo-tribes'—mostly knowledge-workers travelling around the world, working from different places, and creating this whole infrastructure of global cooperation in physical places, like co-working and fabbing. So, give that another 10-15 years and we'll have different types of transnational structures, like guilds of the Middle Ages. There are a lot of forces on the ground doing urban gardening, using fab-labs co-working, alternative currencies, community support of agriculture… These people *are there,* but I don't think they are sufficiently mobilised for political projects.[74]

Bauwens *et al* suggest how the state might be gradually shifted towards a Partner State model, in the face of public pressure and a society increasingly organized on a commons model.

...Citizen-commoners and their social movements would drive the existing state form into partner state forms. These would recognize the individual and collective autonomy of citizens, just as the civil rights, suffrage, labor and women's movements forced the state to adapt to new social

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73   Excerpts from a text prepared by Tommaso Fattori as part of the book-project "Protecting Future Generations Through Commons", organized by Directorate General of Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe in collaboration with the International University College of Turin. Quoted in "Research Plan," FLOK Society Wiki <http://en.wiki.floksociety.org/ w/Research_Plan> Accessed August 9, 2014.

74   Stacco Troncoso, "Finding Common Ground 6: Constructive confrontation or constructive tension – The State and the Commons," *P2P Blog*, Jan. 2, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/finding-common-ground-6-constructive-confrontation-or-constructive-tension-the-state-and-the-commons/2017/01/02>.

demands.

> ...Social movements, in this case those emerging from the shift towards commons-based peer production, will exert pressure on the state. If these social movements become majoritarian, this could lead to a transformation from the present "market state" to a "partner state" form representing the interests of the commons sector. Ideally, as this state and commons-based civil society would create the conditions for a re-emergence of human equality, the state would gradually be "commonified" as opposed to privatized, and radically transformed.[75]

David Bollier, in a talk in the Netherlands, cited David Graeber's observation that the mainstream Left has no answer to bureaucracy. He suggested that the commons is such an alternative, to state bureaucracy as well as to the market. Instead of the bureaucratic state, we get a model of the state as facilitator or partner, collaborating with the public rather than issuing rules.[76]

The Partner State can be seen as a paradigm shift, from the state conceived as a managerial hierarchy to the state conceived as a stigmergically organized peer-network. To quote Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt:

> We might also understand the decision-making capacity of the multitude in analogy with the collaborative development of computer software and the innovations of the open-source movement. Traditional, proprietary software makes it impossible for users to see the source code that shows how a program works.... When the source code is open so that anyone can see it, more of its bugs are fixed, and better programs are produced: the more eyes that see it and the more people allowed to contribute to it, the better a program it becomes.... As we noted earlier with regard to "swarm intelligence," we are more intelligent together than any one of u is alone.... One approach to understanding the democracy of the multitude, then, is an open-source society, that is, a society whose source code is revealed so that we all can work collaboratively to solve its bugs and create new, better social programs.[77]

Regardless of the abstract nature of the state, on the concrete level it is made up of individual human beings—many of whom are amenable to working with prefigurative social movements, promoting them "within the belly of the beast" to the extent of their individual abilities. As David Graeber argues:

> ...I have been excited by the Corbyn phenomenon because I know the people involved, and I know they're actually serious about trying to create a synergy between people working in the system and those working outside. Syriza never was, really; they co-opted and destroyed everything they touched. Podemos seems very uneven and often very disappointing in this regard. The Corbyn and McDonnell people, by contrast, really want to see if they can do it right. And this is important because if anti-authoritarian movements actually are going to win, it can only be by creating that sort of synergy in the short to medium term—unless we're talking about some catastrophic collapse, which of course might happen, but is nothing we can in any way bank on.
>
> We have to figure out a way for those who want to preserve a prefigurative space where they can experiment with what a free society might actually be like—which necessarily means not having any systematic relation with political parties, funding bodies, anything like that—to actually

75 Michel Bauwens, Vasilis Kostakis, Stacco Troncoso, Ann Marie Utratel, Elena Martínez, *Commons Transition and P2P: a primer* (Transnational Institute and P2P Foundation, March 2017), p. 26.
76 "David Bollier and the City as a Commons," P2P Foundation Blog, September 13, 2016 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/david-bollier-city-commons/2016/09/13>.
77 Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Multitude*, pp. 339-340.

> work with those who are trying to create more modest and immediate changes within the system, which is beneficial to both of them. So one piece of advice would be: think hard about how to do this.[78]

This is similar to the phenomenon Hillary Wainwright describes, where grass-roots citizens coalitions operating outside conventional political parties engage in electoral politics, but retain their quasi-official character even when elected, and retain as well their ties to movements outside the state.

> I think the key feature of the present political situation is the development of movements often associated with new political parties, or, in the case of Britain for example, within and without the traditional Labour party. These movements are not just about protest and demonstrations, they reflect the alienation of citizens from the political process, including parties and the state. They reflect a process that's gone on since 1968, which is citizens asserting themselves as knowledgeable, productive actors. The logic of alternatives created in the here and now and the refusal of existing relations, based on the presumption that things could be different, is continuing today through the environmental movement, energy cooperatives, community gardens, alternative care systems, and so on. What the commons captures is that notion of self-organisation and the creation of a material force, autonomous from the existing political sphere. And this is where the participation element comes in, based on the notion of people as knowing citizens. Citizens are alienated from the way the state treats them, as mere cogs; a statistic.[79]

Rob Hopkins said, in the specific context of Transition Town Monteveglio:

> What's really exciting is what it starts to look like when that bottom-up approach that is Transition meets an engaged, proactive local authority who are also thinking in terms of localisation and resilience. And that interface where those two things meet is really, really important and a fascinating area that's starting to emerge. How can a council best support the Transition process rather than drive it?[80]

In fact, it is arguably quite possible to sever the Partner State altogether from even residual forms of sovereign police power over all the individuals in a contiguous geographical area. It is possible to have an entire polycentric ecosystem of commons-based institutions with self-selected memberships or users of a particular common resource, with substantially overlapping memberships, and large minorities or even majorities of those in the same area being members of most of them. In that case adjudication or negotiation of the relationships between them will cause a body of "common law" to emerge for the system as a whole, with a substantial degree of de facto coordination over a common geographical area.

Neighborhoods and communities do not have to be subject to a single majority rule, as such, in order to have democratic governance. Neighborhood coordinating bodies as such, in an anarchist society, may not include every single resident as a participant, and therefore not exercise binding authority. Their governance processes may affect only a majority, or even a minority, of residents who choose to participate in the governance body and abide by its decisions. But the infrastructures and resources serving a majority of those who live in a neighborhood or community may well be cooperatives or commons subject to communal governance. It is likely that the various infrastructures serving a neighborhood or community will constitute an overlapping series of bodies within that

78   David Graeber, "Fancy Forms of Paperwork and the Logic of Financial Violence," *ROAR Magazine*, December 2016 <https://roarmag.org/magazine/david-graeber-interview-debt-occupy/>.
79   Troncoso, "Finding Common Ground 6."
80   Rob Hopkins. "In Transition 2.0: a story of resilience and hope in extraordinary times." YouTube, Nov. 25, 2013 [transcription mine] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFQFBmq7X84>.

geographical area. And those bodies—governed as cooperatives, or on Ostrom's common pool resource model—will coexist as parts of a polycentric framework, with a body of common law arising to adjudicate relations between them. This body of common law, worked out by local juries or arbitration bodies, or by agreement negotiated between the various commons and cooperatives, will be binding internally on the members of the associations which agree to them—thus effectively coordinating, directly or indirectly, the entire population of the area in one way or another.

David Harvey sees "Rebel Cities" as the primary base for struggle against capitalism, as well as the organizational core of the successor society. A model of radicalism centered on the city as a geographical base can be class-oriented, but will have to abandon the Old Left's workerist emphasis and focus on workplace-based struggles.

> When a city-wide struggle does acquire an iconic revolutionary status, as in the case of the Paris Commune of 1871, it is claimed (first by Marx, and even more emphatically by Lenin) as a "proletarian uprising" rather than as a much more complicated revolutionary movement -- animated as much by the desire to reclaim the city itself from its bourgeois appropriation as by the desired liberation of workers from the travails of class oppression in the workplace. I take it as symbolic that the first two acts of the Paris Commune were to abolish night-work in the bakeries (a labor question) and to impose a moratorium on rents (an urban question). Traditional left groups can therefore on occasion take up urban-based struggles, and when they do they can often be successful even as they seek to interpret their struggle from within their traditional workerist perspective.[81]

> The conception of worker control that has hitherto dominated alternative left political thinking is problematic. The focus of struggle has been on the workshop and the factory as a privileged site of production of surplus value. The industrial working class has traditionally been privileged as the vanguard of the proletariat, its main revolutionary agent. But it was not factory workers who produced the Paris Commune. There is, for this reason, a dissident and influential view of the Commune that says it was not a proletarian uprising or a class-based movement at all, but an urban social movement that was reclaiming citizenship rights and the right to the city. It was not, therefore, anti-capitalist.

> I see no reason why it should not be construed as both a class struggle and a struggle for citizenship rights in the place where working people lived. To begin with, the dynamics of class exploitation are not confined to the workplace. Whole economies of dispossession and of predatory practices... with respect to housing markets, are a case in point. These secondary forms of exploitation are primarily organized by merchants, landlords, and the financiers; and their effects are primarily felt in the living space, not in the factory. These forms of exploitation are and always have been vital to the overall dynamics of capital accumulation and the perpetuation of class power. Wage concessions to workers can, for example, be stolen back and recuperated for the capitalist class as a whole by merchant capitalists and landlords and, in contemporary conditions, even more viciously by the credit-mongers, the bankers, and the financiers. Practices of accumulation by dispossession, rental appropriations, by money- and profit-gouging, lie at the heart of many of the discontents that attach to the qualities of daily life for the mass of the population. Urban social movements typically mobilize around such questions, and they derive from the way in which the perpetuation of class power is organized around living as well as around working. Urban social movements therefore always have a class content even when they are primarily articulated in terms of rights, citizenship, and the travails of social reproduction.

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81   David Harvey. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to Urban Revolution* (Verso Books, 2012), pp. 120-121.

The fact that these discontents relate to the commodity and monetary rather than the production circuit of capital matters not one wit: indeed, it is a big theoretical advantage to reconceptualize matters thus, because it focuses attention on those aspects of capital circulation that so frequently play the nemesis to attempts at worker control in production. Since it is capital circulation as a whole that matters (rather than merely what happens in the productive circuit), what does it matter to the capitalist class as a whole whether value is extracted from the commodity and money circuits rather than from the productive circuit directly? The gap between where surplus value is produced and where it is realized is as crucial theoretically as it is practically. Value created in production may be recaptured for the capitalist class from the workers by landlords charging high rents on housing.[82]

The city itself is "produced," and the workers who produced it organized at the urban level are a potential post-capitalist coalition. This is particularly true of the construction workers involved in urban expansion and real estate development, the industries behind construction, transit workers, utility workers, building maintenance and janitors, etc. Construction workers tend to be politically supportive of the growth machines that employ them, but this is not inevitable; e.g. the "Green Ban" among New South Wales construction workers in the 70s who refused to work on environmentally destructive projects.[83]

Traditional workerist Marxist analysis plays up the vanguard role of the industrial proletariat at the expense of community institutions.

Most struggles waged by factory-based workers turn out, on inspection, to have had a much broader base. Margaret Kahn complains, for example, how left historians of labor laud the Turin Factory Councils of the early twentieth century while totally ignoring the "Houses of the People" in the community where much of the politics was shaped, and from which strong currents of logistical support flowed. E. P. Thompson depicts how the making of the English working class depended as much upon what happened in chapels and in neighborhoods as in the workplace. The local city trades councils have played a much-underestimated role in British political organization, and often anchored the militant base of a nascent Labour Party and other left organizations in particular towns and cities in ways that the national union movement often ignored. How successful would the Flint sit-down strike of 1937 have been in the United States had it not been for the masses of the unemployed and the neighborhood organizations outside the gates that unfailingly delivered their support, moral and material?

Organizing the neighborhoods has been just as important in prosecuting labor struggles, as has organizing the workplace. One of the strengths of the factory occupations in Argentina that followed on the collapse of 2001 is that the cooperatively managed factories also turned themselves into neighborhood cultural and educational centers. They built bridges between the community and the workplace. When past owners try to evict the workers or seize back the machinery, the whole populace typically turns out in solidarity with the workers to prevent such action. When UNITE HERE sought to mobilize rank-and-file hotel workers around LAX airport in Los Angeles, they relied heavily "on extensive outreach to political, religious and other community allies, building a coalition" that could counter the employers' repressive strategies. But there is, in this, also a cautionary tale: in the British miners' strikes of the 1970s and 1980s, the miners who lived in diffuse urbanized areas such as Nottingham were the first to cave in, while those in Northumbria, where

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82   *Ibid.* pp. 128-129.
83   *Ibid.* pp. 129-130.

workplace and living-place politics converged, maintained their solidarity to the end. The problem posed by circumstances of this sort will be taken up later.

To the degree that conventional workplaces are disappearing in many parts of the so-called advanced capitalist world (though not, of course, in China or Bangladesh), organizing around not only work but also around conditions in the living space, while building bridges between the two, becomes even more crucial. But it has often been so in the past. Worker-controlled consumer cooperatives offered critical support during the Seattle general strike of 1919, and when the strike collapsed militancy shifted very markedly towards the development of an elaborate and interwoven system of mainly worker-controlled consumer cooperatives.

As the lens is widened on the social milieu in which struggle is occurring, the sense of who the proletariat might be and what their aspirations and organizational strategies might be is transformed. The gender composition of oppositional politics looks very different when relations outside of the conventional factory (in both workplaces and living spaces) are brought firmly into the picture. The social dynamics of the workplace are not the same as those in the living space. On the latter terrain, distinctions based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture are frequently more deeply etched into the social fabric, while issues of social reproduction play a more prominent, even dominant role in the shaping of political subjectivities and consciousness.[84]

Harvey points to Fletcher and Gapasin's recommendation, in *Solidarity Divided*, that the US labor movement should organize cities as well as workplaces, and empower cross-sector urban councils. Unions must build alliances with metropolitan social blocs.[85] Among the examples of city-based radicalization Harvey notes are "Red Bologna" in the 1970s[86], and the Water Wars of Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2000. The latter forced out Bechtel and Suez corporations. Uprisings in El Alto, a city overlooking La Paz, subsequently forced out two neoliberal presidents in 2003 and 2005, and paved the way for the Evo Morales administration. Another uprising and occupation in Cochabamba, which forced out the conservative city administration, thwarted a right-wing attempt to oust Morales in 2007.[87] The political environment out of which these uprisings occurred in El Alto included a number of overlapping radical traditions: the neighborhood assemblies and their federal organization for the city as a whole; associations of vendors, transport workers and precarious/informal workers of all sorts; more conventional trade unions (the most important of which was the teachers' union which, like that in Oaxaca, was quite militant).[88]

He goes on to speculate on how the same Rebel City model of struggle might be duplicated elsewhere.

Imagine in New York City, for example, the revival of the now largely somnolent community boards as neighborhood assemblies with budget-allocation powers, along with a merged Right to the City Alliance and Excluded Workers Congress agitating for greater equality in incomes and access to health care and housing provision, all coupled with a revitalized local Labor Council to try to rebuild the city and the sense of citizenship and social and environmental justice out of the wreckage being wrought by neoliberal corporatist urbanization. What the story of El Alto suggests is that such a coalition will work only if the forces of culture and of a politically radical tradition

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84   *Ibid.* pp. 132-133.
85   *Ibid.* p. 134.
86   *Ibid.* p. 135.
87   *Ibid.* p. 141.
88   *Ibid.* pp. 147-148.

(which most certainly exists in New York, as it also does in Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles) can be mobilized in such a way as to animate citizen-subjects (however fractious, as indeed is always the case in New York) behind a radically different project of urbanization to that dominated by the class interests of developers and financiers....[89]

Paul Mason, likewise, sees cities as the nuclei around which a post-capitalist system will coalesce:

I have a strong hunch that the city is going to be the primary venue of change in this process. Cities have stopped eviscerating their centres; young, networked people want to live right in the centre—sometimes two or three to a room—because they understand the city is the closest the analog world comes to a network. The city is where the networked individual wants to live—at least for some of their life, and for some of their working year or week.[90]

Policies for a postcapitalist transition that can be adopted at the local level include a local basic income, replacing the "privatization" of public assets with commons governance, promoting collaborative forms of organization and production, and in particular promoting the data commons. In the case of Barcelona, Mason has an extensive laundry list:

Suppose Barcelona did these things:

- Brand itself as a city of commons and collaborative production
- End privatisation
- Massively reduce the cost of basic services like housing, transport, education, and health so that being in the precariat became more survivable
- Build an agent-based, complex model of the economy, with real inputs, so that participatory democracy could model complex decisions
- Prefer and promote collaborative organisations over both the centralised state and the market solutions
- Institute a citizens basic income, conditional on some participation on non-profit activities
- Decree that the networked data of the population as it uses public services is non-ownable.

Would capitalism collapse?

No. The desperate, frantic "survival capitalists" would go away—the rip-off consultancies; the low-wage businesses; the rent-extractors.

But you would attract the most innovative capitalists on earth, and you would make the city vastly more livable for the million-plus people who call it home.[91]

David Bollier discusses at length the potential of the city reconceived as a commons:

One of the most promising places to start building a new polity is in cities. In Barcelona, Bologna, Seoul, and many other cities, citizen movements based on the ideas of "the city as a commons" and of "sharing cities" are taking root. Both approaches assert the shared interests of ordinary residents over those of the usual overlords of city government—real estate developers, economic elites, "starchitects," and urban planners. They recognize the city and its public spaces, communities and opportunities as products of commoning. A commons framing is deliberately invoked to make new moral and political claims on common resources in urban settings—and so

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89   *Ibid.* p. 151.
90   Paul Mason, "Postcapitalism and the City," P2P Foundation Blog, October 12, 2016 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/postcapitalism-and-the-city/2016/10/12>.
91   *Ibid.*

inaugurate a self-feeding spiral of social practice and a new discourse. Citizens acting as commoners can insist on greater citizen participation not just in policymaking but in directly developing innovative projects and solutions. Network platforms can foster all of these goals.

In Bologna, for example, the city government is undertaking a landmark reconceptualization of how government might work in cooperation with citizens. Ordinary people acting as commoners are invited to enter into a "co-design process" with the city to manage public spaces, urban green zones, abandoned buildings and other urban resources. The formal legal authority for this innovation, the Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons, is now being emulated by other Italian cities.

City governments could augment this general approach by building new tech infrastructures that enable greater citizen engagement. For example, instead of ceding the software infrastructure for taxi service or apartment rentals to Uber, Lyft, Airbnb and other well-financed "gig economy" corporations, city governments could require the use of shared open platforms for such market activity. This could enable multiple players to compete while improving regulatory oversight of basic labor and consumer protections, and privacy protection for personal data.

City governments could also take advantage of the new "Top Level Domains"—better known as TLDs—that are now available on the Internet for city names. TLDs are the regions of the Internet denoted by .com, .org and .edu. Over the past few years, the little-known Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)—which manages TLDs—has been pushing the idea of TLDs for cities. The idea is that cities could use their unique TLDs like .rome or .paris to improve access to various aspects of city life. For instance, if you were new to Brooklyn Heights, you could go to brooklynheights.nyc and find all sorts of civic, community and commercial website listings for that neighborhood—the library, recycling resources, parking rules, links to relevant city officials. And yes, the businesses.

City TLDs are a potentially transformative civil infrastructure that could be as consequential as the "street grid" layout of Manhattan adopted in the 1800s.Why should this enormous planning authority, which has such far-reaching implications for the life of a city, be auctioned off to private domain-name vendors, who would then re-sell "Brooklyn.nyc" and "hotels.nyc" to the highest bidder with minimal city oversight? It essentially cedes the future of a city to short-term commercial imperatives. TLDs should be treated as commons infrastructure and used to enhance neighborhood identities and bottom-up participation.

Network platforms are an especially attractive way to actualize the idea of "the city as commons" because they can enact all sorts of open source principles: low barriers to participation, transparency of process, bottom-up innovation, social pressure for fair dealing and resistance to concentrated power and insider deals.

One powerful way to advance commoning in cities is through the skillful use of open data. The ubiquity of computing devices in modern life is generating vast floods of data that, if managed cooperatively, could improve city life in many creative ways. Open data systems could be used to host participatory crowdsourcing, interactive collaborations among citizens and government, and improvements in municipal services (street repairs, trash removal, transportation).

The City of San Francisco recently used an open source model to explore how best to transform its busy Market Street thoroughfare into a more pedestrian-friendly, traffic-free promenade. To help ascertain what might appeal to ordinary city residents, the city issued an open call to artists for proposed street installations along a two-mile stretch of the boulevard. This elicited dozens of clever ideas—performance spaces, relaxation zones, even a six-sided ping pong table. City planners chose

fifty of the projects for a real-world experiment over the course of three days in 2015 to see how people would actually engage with the artworks. The Market Street prototyping helped enlist a large and diverse group of the public to generate ideas that might otherwise seem too daring or unusual.

The City of Los Angeles has been another pioneer in using open networks, open data, and crowdsourcing of information to improve city life. The city's open data portal, DataLA, offers data for everything from the city budget and the regional economy to crime locations, building inspections, property foreclosures, parking citations and even checks written by the city government. The data portal has helped people measure the effectiveness of government and build public trust in government. It has also been used in creative ways to solicit people's knowledge in providing "geo-references" to historic photos. The HistoricPlacesLA project has been described as an "open-source, web-based, geospatial information system for cultural heritage inventory and management." The City has also created a special smartphone app, PulsePoint, which can help deal with medical emergencies anywhere in the city. It identifies a patient's location and any CPR-trained individuals who may be nearby, while providing CPR guidance. The app suggests a way that cities could use smartphones to coordinate needs with responses instantly: a versatile model for the future.

Using smartphones to crowdsource real-time data is another way that a city could use commoning to reinvent the role of government. The City of Los Angeles' fascinating (non-financial, non-exclusive) collaboration with Waze, a Google-owned traffic and navigation smartphone app offers several lessons. The system is used by an estimated 30 percent of Los Angeles drivers to learn about traffic accidents and other road situations, and its massive usage has made it a de facto infrastructure tool for city transportation and data managers. The City gives Waze timely data about active road construction projects in order to alert drivers about potential or actual traffic delays–and Waze, for its part, collects crowdsourced reports about traffic and sends them to city transportation officials every two minutes. (There is no collection of any personally identifiable information.) Even though this is a public/private partnership—not a true commons—it suggests the great power of bottom-up sharing on network platforms. Of course, such data aggregation is no substitute for real investment in the physical commons of transport infrastructure and public space, but used wisely it could facilitate more citizen-focused improvements.

City governments (or state or federal governments, for that matter) could leverage bottom-up, interactive collaborations such as these by developing their own open APIs [application programming interfaces] on electronic networks—similar to those used by the iPhone and other platforms. This would enable governments to collect real-time data and make more dynamic, responsive choices "in cooperation" with its citizens. City governments could also perform automatic oversight of regulated entities without the complexities of conventional regulation. Sensors for water or air quality, for example, could provide real-time data portraits of an airshed or watershed. By using tamper-proof data-flows from remote devices, some of the expense of in-person inspections could be avoided and the quality of enforcement improved.

The huge potential of open data networks raises important questions about governance structures, however. How should crowdsourced information be managed and governed—by proprietary companies? City governments? Citizens as commoners? As the controversial growth of Uber and Airbnb has shown, there are great risks in such power being held by a few large tech companies answerable primarily to investors. Yet very few city governments have shown leadership in using networked systems to advance public designs for public purposes. There is a need to set forth some commons-based governance alternatives because they are the most likely to align civic

needs and realities with the ultimate policies and decisions.

Fortunately, there are a number of pacesetter projects experimenting along these lines. In addition to the Bologna Regulation mentioned above, the European Cultural Foundation is actively exploring the role that artistic and cultural commons can play in improving cities. The Ubiquitous Commons project is developing a prototype legal/technological toolkit to empower people to control the personal data they generate from countless devices, especially in urban contexts. The Open Referral Initiatives is developing a common technical language so that information systems can "speak" to each other and share community resource directory data. The beauty of these and other initiatives is that they invite broad participation and address immediate, practical needs while contributing to a very different paradigm of governance—one that fosters commons and commoning.[92]

For both the municipality as a platform and—as we shall see later—the transnational networks of municipal platforms, the primary function of the one-time state as governance institution is to legally define and enforce rights to the common. Along with this goes the infrastructural function of actively supporting and encouraging a wide variety of commons-based institutions, and promoting their coalescence into a coherent whole. The primary actors in building the new system are "ordinary people acting as householders, makers, hackers, permaculturists, citizen-scientists, cooperativists, community foresters, subsistence collectives, social mutualists, and commoners"; the municipal and federal "governments" are merely supportive.[93]

Through network-based cooperation and localized grassroots projects, millions of people around the world are managing all sorts of bottom-up, self-provisioning systems. There are also many new types of citizen-actors and mobilizations seeking system change, ranging from cultural surges such as Occupy, the Arab Spring and the Las Indignadas to more durable long-term movements focused on cooperatives, degrowth, the solidarity economy, Transition Towns, relocalized economies, peer production, and the commons. These movements are developing new visions of "development" and "progress," as seen in the *buen vivir* ethic in Latin America, for example, or in "go local"movements in the US and Europe, and the FabLabs and makerspaces. The new models also include alternative currencies, co-operative finance and crowdequity investments to reclaim local control, transition and indigenous peoples' initiatives to develop sustainable post-growth economies, the movement to reclaim the city as a commons, and movements to integrate social justice and inclusive ethical commitments into economic life. These movements are not only pioneering new types of collective action and provisioning, but also new legal and organizational forms. The idea of "generative ownership" as a collective enterprise is being explored by leaders of co-operative finance, community land trusts, relocalized food systems and commons-based peer production. Each is attempting to demonstrate the feasibility of various commons-based ownership structures and self-governance – and then to expand the use of such models to show that there are attractive alternatives that can mature into a new economic ecosystem.

The general approach here is to change the old by building the new. The demonstration of feasible alternatives (renewable energy, cooperativism, relocalization, etc.) is a way to shift political momentum, constitute new constituencies for system change, and assert a new moral center of gravity. To work, however, the alternatives incubated *outside* the existing system must achieve a

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92   David Bollier, Transnational Republics of Commoning: Reinventing Governance Through Emergent Networking (Friends of the Earth, 2016) <https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/transnational-republics-commoning-reinventing-governance-through-emergent.pdf>, pp. 22-25.
93   *Ibid.* pp. 26-27.

sufficient coherence, intelligibility, scale, and functionality.

> The commons can act as a shared meta-language among these highly diverse groups because the commons expresses many of the core values and priorities of many "system-change" movements. Like DNA, which is under-specified so that it can adapt to local circumstances, the commons discourse is general enough to accommodate myriad manifestations of basic values and principles. More than an intellectual framework, the commons helps make culturally legible the many social practices ("commoning") that are often taken to be too small and inconsequential to matter – but which, taken together, constitute a different type of economy. In this fashion, the commons discourse itself has an integrative and catalytic potential to build a new type of networked polity.[94]

(Here Bollier mentions Bauwens's concept of the Partner State as an entity promoting and supporting the commons).

According to Bauwens and Kostakis, in a commons-based economy, an ecology of enterprises (ideally mostly cooperative or peer-to-peer) grows up as a value-added layer on top of information and natural resource commons. The small-scale institutions for managing and supporting the commons—e.g. the Mozilla Foundation, Wikimedia Foundation, etc.—are mini-Partner States. To turn that around, the Partner State is a sort of commons-administering foundation writ large, a meta-organization supporting the commons and civil society.

> In our vision, a commons-centric society would ideally have:
> - a productive civil society that would contribute to the commons,
> - a generative market that would create added value around the commons,
> - a partner state, which is emerging prefiguratively in some urban practices, such as the Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons or some policies of the Barcelona En Comú citizen platform.
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> In this vision, the partner state would be the guarantor of civic rights, but also of the equal contributory potential of all citizens. Without this function, communities could have unequal access to resources and capabilities, perpetuating inequality. In our vision, the state form would gradually lose its separateness from civil society, by implementing radically democratic procedures and practices.[95]

Another good description comes from Stacco Troncoso and Ann Marie Utratel:

> Imagine a radically reconfigured and democratically accountable structure. One that, while preserving the more desirable characteristics of the Welfare State—social and public health provision and large infrastructure management and upkeep—radically democratizes them. It would do away with the State's cozy symbiosis with market entities, while deconstructing its pernicious monopolies over money creation and exchange, and property and judicial rights. A second radical set of measures would prohibit the structural enforcement of inequality and the often violent repression of emancipatory alternatives. This structure would function in much the same way as foundations do in the Open Source software economy: providing the infrastructure for cooperation and the creation and upkeep of commons but not directing the process of social value creation and distribution. In other words, it would empower and protect the practice of commoning.
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> This enabling metastructure—often referred to as "The Partner State"—would also take on new

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94   *Ibid.*, p. 27.
95   Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Kostakis, "Peer-to-peer production and the partner state," Red Pepper, Aug. 27, 2017 <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/peer-to-peer-production-and-the-partner-state/>.

functions derived from already existing P2P/Commons practices. Among these, we would see a promotion of real, needs-oriented entrepreneurship, bolstered by explicit recognition and support of bottom-up productive infrastructures, such as Open Coops, mesh wireless networks or community renewables through public-*Commons* partnerships. It would allow commoners to repurpose or take over unused or underutilised public buildings for social ends while giving legal recognition to the act of commoning, whether through copyleft-inspired property-law hacks or through a longer process of gradually institutionalizing commons practices. Its grassroots democratizing ethos would create new financing mechanisms and debt-free public money creation, which, alongside social currencies, could fund environmentally regenerative work and the creation of new, distributed Open-source infrastructure. These would be supported by taxation schemes favouring the types of labor described above, while penalizing speculation, parasitic rents and negative social and environmental externalities. The overall system has to be kept in check through a pervasive culture of participatory politics—made feasible through its attendant pedagogy—to involve a newly enfranchised citizenry in the deliberation and real-time consultation of political and legislative issues and budgeting. In issues of power, the Partner State shifts to being a fluid facilitator to assist and emancipate the bottom-up counter-power that keeps it in check.[96]

Professor Christian Iaione (who heads the Laboratory for the Governance of Commons, or LabGov, at LUISS University) has been active in promoting the Partner State model at the municipal level. He was a primary figure in drafting Bologna's Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons, adopted in 2014, which came out of LabGov's "City as a Commons" project. "This regulation allows citizen coalitions to propose improvements to their neighborhoods, and the city to contract with citizens for key assistance. In other words, the municipality functions as an enabler giving citizens individual and collective autonomy."[97] Sounding remarkably like Elinor Ostrom, he continues:

> The Bologna regulation is a 30-page regulatory framework outlining how local authorities, citizens and the community at large can manage public and private spaces and assets together.... As such, it's a sort of handbook for civic and public collaboration, and also a new vision for government. It reflects the strong belief that we need a cultural shift in terms of how we think about government, moving away from the Leviathan State or Welfare State toward collaborative or polycentric governance.[98]

Since then dozens of Italian cities have adopted similar regulations, including the CO-Mantova project in Mantua—which Iaione was also involved in developing – "set up for citizen-based social innovation using a multi-stakeholder approach...."

> CO-Mantova is a prototype of a process to run the city as a collaborative commons, i.e. a "co-city." A co-city should be based on collaborative governance of the commons whereby urban, environmental, cultural, knowledge and digital commons are co-managed by the five actors of the collaborative/polycentric governance—social innovators (i.e. active citizens, makers, digital innovators, urban regenerators, rurban innovators, etc.), public authorities, businesses, civil society organizations, knowledge institutions (i.e. schools, universities, cultural academies, etc.)—through an institutionalized public-private-citizen partnership. This partnership will give birth to a local

96   Troncoso and Utratel, *op. cit.*
97   "'The City as Commons' with Professor Christian Iaione," *Commons Transition*, March 2, 2016 <http://commonstransition.org/the-city-as-commons-with-professor-christian-iaione/>.
98   *Ibid.*

peer-to-peer physical, digital and institutional platform with three main aims: living together (collaborative services), growing together (co-ventures), making together (co-production).

The project is supported by the local Chamber of Commerce, the City, the Province, local NGOs, young entrepreneurs, SMEs [small and medium-sized enterprises], and knowledge institutions, such as the Mantua University Foundation, and some very forward-looking local schools.

The first step was "seeding social innovation" through a collaborative call for "Culture as a Commons" to bring forth social innovators in Mantua. The second step was the co-design laboratory "Enterprises for the Commons," an ideas camp where the seven projects from the call were cultivated and synergies created between projects and with the city. The third phase was the Governance camp, a collaborative governance prototyping stage which led to the drafting of the Collaborative Governance Pact..., the Collaboration Toolkit and the Sustainability Plan, which was presented to the public during the Festival of Cooperation on November 27th last year.

The next step is the fourth and final phase: the governance testing and modeling through the launch of a public consultation in the city on the text of the Pact and a roadshow generating interest in CO-Mantova among possible signatories belonging to the five categories of collaborative governance actors. We are also [sic] may have CO-Mantova opening up a Commons School.[99]

Applying the Partner State concept at the local level, we get something resembling, in some ways, Murray Bookchin's Libertarian Municipalism. But there are also major differences.

Bookchin proposes a fairly uniform model of "municipalized economies," in which "land and enterprises [are] placed increasingly in the custody of the community more precisely, the custody of citizens in free assemblies and their deputies in confederal councils."[100] Communalism

seeks to integrate the means of production into the existential life of the municipality such that every productive enterprise falls under the purview of the local assembly, which decides how it will function to meet the interests of the community as a whole.[101]

Bookchin's model is, in my opinion, far too monolithic—a monoculture of municipal enterprises, controlled by popular assemblies with monopolies on power in their respective neighborhoods, rather than a diverse ecosystem of commons-based projects. In contrast to the emergent, stigmergic evolutionary models celebrated by most advocates of commons-based institutions, Bookchin argues for "One Big Movement" to promote a uniform model of municipal ownership and make sure all its local iterations are on the same page.

In fact Bookchin comes across as actively hostile to stigmergic, permissionless, or polycentric governance—the variety of what he patronizingly dismisses as "communitarian" counter-institutions like "so-called alternative economic and living situations such as food cooperatives, health centers, schools, printing workshops, community centers, neighborhood farms, 'squats,' unconventional lifestyles, and the like." In their place he fetishizes politics and majoritarianism as such even when agreement and permission are unnecessary, using "popular power center" and "collective power" as god terms, and envisions local economic institutions uniformly subject to popular assemblies which

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99   *Ibid.*
100   Murray Bookchin, "Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview" (April 3, 1991). The Anarchist Library. Accessed Jan. 17, 2016 <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-libertarian-municipalism-an-overview>.
101   Bookchin, "The Communalist Project" (2002), in Debbie Bookchin and Blair Taylor, eds., *The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies & the Promise of Direct Democracy* (London and New York: Verso, 2015), p. 19.

democratically work out a common political vision governing everything subordinate to them.[102]

In this regard, despite all his criticism of the Old Left for its emphasis on centralization and hierarchy, Bookchin himself is very much in the tradition of the Old Left insofar as he lionizes organizational mass and coordination, and envisions a future society organized around a schematically imposed template rather than an organic mixture of diverse institutions. For Bookchin, the city, rather than being an emergent ecosystem made up of many different types of horizontally linked institutions, is simply a set of institutions all owned and managed by the popular assemblies. By requiring deliberation and majority votes even when agreement on common policy is unnecessary, his model effectively destroys the very basis of networked institutions' superior agility over the dinosaur hierarchies they're replacing.

Bookchin strawmans anarchism as somehow ignoring the middle realm between "a workaday world of everyday life that is properly social" including the home and workplace, and all the individual counter-institutions like the cooperatives and such that he lists above, on the one hand, and the state on the other. At the same time, he accuses anarchists of conflating the political realm—which amounts to what most people would call "governance" and involves the coordination of social life—with the state. But he himself conflates the middle realm of civil society, and the governance function, with the particular organizational form of the municipal assembly, and pretends that the only choice is between his Rosetta Stone model of popular assemblies and the atomism he attributes to the anarchists.[103] Municipal assemblies are the one, true, only possible form that coordination and governance can take; either they do it, or it doesn't get done. "Either municipalized enterprises controlled by citizens' assemblies will try to take over the economy, or capitalism will prevail in this sphere of life with a forcefulness that no mere rhetoric can diminish."[104]

Contrast Bookchin's monoculture of "municipalized enterprises controlled by popular assemblies" with a polycentric governance model characterized a wide variety of overlapping commons-based institutions, cooperative enterprises, community-owned enterprises and so forth, with partially interlocking memberships and a loose "common law" of governance rules worked out horizontally between them.

A good example of this can be found in the fictional northern New England society of the 22nd century, which has emerged from the 20th century "Time of Troubles," in Roy Morrison's *Eco Civilization 2140*. Some, but nowhere near all, local economic functions in Warner, N.H. are carried out by community stakeholder cooperatives; some are socially owned rather than being municipal government property (community-based), while others are actually municipal property (town-based). The people of Warner meet as owners of Warner Community Enterprises to make business decisions for the cooperatives on the same week the annual Town Meeting is held. The dividing line between community-based and town-based is really not very sharp; some community-based cooperatives are fairly closely intertwined with town governance, while some town-based cooperatives have charters that grant them a high degree of autonomy in their operations.

And the community-based and town-based cooperatives coexist with a wide variety of other local consumer or worker cooperatives. In some cases, the municipal cooperatives or socially-owned

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102   Bookchin, "Thoughts on Libertarian Municipalism." Keynote speech for conference "The Politics of Social Ecology," Plainfield, Vt., Aug. 26-29, 1999 <http://social-ecology.org/wp/1999/08/thoughts-on-libertarian-municipalism/>.
103   Bookchin, "A Politics for the Twenty-First Century" (1998), in *The Next Revolution*, p. 47.
104   *Ibid*., p. 59.

stakeholder cooperatives have partial ownership stakes in private cooperatives.[105]

> The Nano Tech Enterprises Co-op... has a town equity stake, but is owned by a combination of the farmers who grow organic foodstocks, the customers who contract for production, the owner-workers, and the town. Nano Tech itself is part of a larger service cooperative that provides material and high-technology support for its members. This sort of second-degree, multimember cooperative that achieves economies of scale... effectively replaced over time the destructive industrial corporate giants of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[106]

Beyond institutions for pooling costs and risks and providing common access to productive resources on the retail level—like the multi-family cohousing arrangements, micro-villages and sharing institutions we looked at in the previous section—cities as a whole can provide commons infrastructures and platforms at the municipal level to support the variety of smaller projects within their bounds.

And this does not by any means have to be done under the auspices of official municipal government—even one domesticated as a Partner State. Urban-based resistance movements have a long history of providing alternative infrastructures for social support. Consider, for example, the school lunch programs, daycare centers and community patrols organized by the Black Panthers Party. Or—as David Harvey notes—the construction by Hamas and Hezbollah "of alternative urban governance structures, incorporating everything from garbage removal to social support payments and neighborhood administrations."[107]

Commons-based institutions—platform cooperatives for sharing spare capacity of assets like cars and housing, community gardens, Fab Labs, community land trusts, information commons, and community currencies—can integrate horizontally to form an interlocking, mutually supporting post-capitalist ecosystem for the city as a whole.

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105   Roy Morrison, *Eco Civilization 2140: A Twenty-Second-Century History and Survivor's Journal* (Writer's Publishing Cooperative, Inc., 2006), pp. 15-21.
106   *Ibid.* p. 20.
107   Harvey, p. 117.

David Bollier envisions commons-based urban economies with components like

- Creative Commons Licensing, which enables people to share and freely use creative works
- FabLabs and Makerspaces, which are new social forms for creating valuable stuff through a commons-based collaboration
- Platform Cooperatives, which create shared platforms "as an antidote to the so-called death stars" of the sharing economy
- Alternative Currencies as a way to retain some of the value created regionally as opposed to having it siphoned away
- Non-digital commons projects, including land trusts, urban agriculture and community gardens, and participatory budgeting projects which empower citizens to work with city leaders to create budget priorities.[108]

Local Case Studies: Cleveland's Evergreen Initiative. The Evergreen Cooperative Initiative, according to Guy Alperovitz, is heavily influenced by the example of Mondragon.

The Evergreen model draws heavily on the experience of the Mondragon Cooperative

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108 Cat Johnson, "How Can We Redesign Cities as Shared Spaces?" *Shareable*, Jan. 9, 2017 <http://www.shareable.net/blog/how-can-we-redesign-cities-as-shared-spaces>.

Corporation in the Basque Country of Spain, the world's most successful large-scale cooperative effort (now employing 100,000 workers in an integrated network of more than 120 high-tech, industrial, service, construction, financial and other largely cooperatively owned businesses).[109]

The project had its origins in a study trip to Mondragon sponsored by the Cleveland Foundation,[110] and is described by Andrew MacLeod as "the first example of a major city trying to reproduce Mondragon."[111] Besides the cooperative development fund, its umbrella of support organizations includes Evergreen Business services, which provides "back-office services, management expertise and turn-around skills should a co-op get into trouble down the road." Member enterprises are expected to plow ten percent of pre-tax profits back into the development fund to finance investment in new cooperatives.

The Evergreen Cooperative Laundry—which opened in late 2009—was the flagship enterprise, first of some twenty initially projected cooperatives (most of which, as it turned out, didn't materialize). The second, Ohio Cooperative Solar, installs solar power equipment on the roofs of local government and non-profit buildings). The laundry intended to market its services primarily to Cleveland-area hospitals and other healthcare institutions. A third and fourth enterprise, a cooperative greenhouse and the *Neighborhood Voice* newspaper were (as of early 2010) scheduled to open in the near future. The greenhouse was projected to produce "more than 3 million heads of fresh lettuce and nearly a million pounds of (highly profitable) basil and other herbs a year, and will almost certainly become the largest urban food-producing greenhouse in the country."[112] The greenhouse did, in fact, open in early 2012.[113]

Evergreen is backed by "stakeholders in the local economy, local government and universities," and the new enterprises, "besides marketing to individuals in the local community, is on serving local 'anchor institutions'—the large hospitals and universities—that will provide a guaranteed market for a portion of their services." The Evergreen initiative gets financing from the Cleveland Foundation and "other local foundations, banks, and the municipal government." As of early 2010, the Evergreen Cooperative Development Fund was capitalized at $5 million and is expected to raise $10-12 million more.[114]

> Besides the Cleveland Foundation, other important stakeholders are the Cleveland Roundtable and the Democracy Collaborative. The Roundtable is a project of Community-Wealth.org; Community-Wealth, in turn, is a project of the Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland, College Park. All three organizations are cooperating intensively to promote the Evergreen Cooperative Initiative.[115]

Apparently, the planned rollout of twenty enterprises was too ambitious; the initiative suffered some setbacks at the outset, trying to expand too quickly into too many areas at once before its core laundry business was operating at full capacity. It regrouped under a new CEO in 2014, and in mid-

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109   Guy Alperovitz, Thad Williamson and Ted Howard, "The Cleveland Model," *The Nation*, February 11, 2010 <https://www.thenation.com/article/cleveland-model/>.

110   "Cleveland Goes to Mondragon," *Owners at Work* (Winter 2008-2009), pp. 10-12 <http://www.oeockent.org/download/cooperatives/clevelandgoesmondragonwinter0809oaw.pdf.pdf>.

111   "Mondragon, Cleveland, Sacramento," *Cooperate and No One Gets Hurt*, October 10, 2009 <https://coopgeek.wordpress.com/2009/10/10/mondragon-cleveland-sacramento/>.

112   Alperovitz *et al.*

113   "Greenhouse," *Evergreen Cooperatives* <http://www.evgoh.com/gcg/greenhouse/>. Captured November 10, 2017.

114   Alperovitz *et al.*

115   *Ibid.*

2016 a business writer described it as "emerging from its startup phase." It still consisted of the original three core enterprises, the laundry, solar installation enterprise, and greenhouse, employing about 120 people with revenues of $6 million.[116]

Evergreen Business Services is an incubator organization within the Evergreen umbrella that provides advice and support (including business plan reviews, feasibility studies, shared services consulting and business consulting) for new cooperative enterprises built on the model of the original three Evergreen enterprises.[117]

Alperovitz described it as "one of the largest and most promising experiments in cooperative economics ever attempted in the United States, with an unprecedented number of local stakeholders at the table."[118]

Local Case Studies: Jackson Plan. The Jackson Plan was a community development initiative sponsored by the late Mayor Chokwe Lumumba and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. Here is a brief description by the latter movement:

> A major progressive initiative is underway in Jackson, Mississippi. This initiative demonstrates tremendous promise and potential in making a major contribution towards improving the overall quality of life of the people of Jackson, Mississippi, particularly people of African descent. This initiative is the *Jackson Plan* and it is being spearheaded by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM) and the Jackson People's Assembly.

> The Jackson Plan is an initiative to apply many of the best practices in the promotion of participatory democracy, solidarity economy, and sustainable development and combine them with progressive community organizing and electoral politics. The objectives of the Jackson Plan are to deepen democracy in Mississippi and to build a vibrant, people-centered solidarity economy in Jackson and throughout the state of Mississippi that empowers Black and other oppressed peoples in the state.

> The Jackson Plan has many local, national and international antecedents, but it is fundamentally the brain child of the Jackson People's Assembly. The Jackson People's Assembly is the product of the Mississippi Disaster Relief Coalition (MSDRC) that was spearheaded by MXGM in 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina's devastation of Gulf Coast communities in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Texas. Between 2006 and 2008, this coalition expanded and transformed itself into the Jackson People's Assembly. In 2009, MXGM and the People's Assembly were able to elect human rights lawyer and MXGM co-founder Chokwe Lumumba to the Jackson City Council representing Ward 2.[119]

The Three Pillars of the Plan include direct democratic People's Assemblies and the support for progressive political candidates. But most interesting for our purposes is the third pillar, promoting solidarity economics.

116 David Brodwin, "Evergreen Cooperative is a Cleveland Jobs Success Story," *US News*, July 21, 2016 <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2016-07-21/evergreen-cooperative-is-a-cleveland-jobs-success-story>.
117 "Evergreen Business Services," *Evergreen Cooperatives* <http://www.evgoh.com/business-services/>. Captured November 10, 2017.
118 Alperovitz *et al.*
119 "The Jackson Plan: A Struggle for Self-Determination, Participatory Democracy, and Economic Justice," *Malcolm X Grassroots Movement*, July 7, 2012 <https://mxgm.org/the-jackson-plan-a-struggle-for-self-determination-participatory-democracy-and-economic-justice/>.

The critical third pillar of the Jackson Plan is the long-term commitment to build a local Solidarity Economy that links with regional and national Solidarity Economy networks to advance the struggle for economic democracy.

Solidarity Economy as a concept describes a process of promoting cooperative economics that promote social solidarity, mutual aid, reciprocity, and generosity. It also describes the horizontal and autonomously driven networking of a range of cooperative institutions that support and promote the aforementioned values ranging from worker cooperatives to informal affinity based neighborhood bartering networks.

Our conception of Solidarity Economy is inspired by the Mondragon Federation of Cooperative Enterprises based in the Basque region of Spain but also draws from the best practices and experiences of the Solidarity Economy and other alternative economic initiatives already in motion in Latin America and the United States. We are working to make these practices and experiences relevant in Jackson and to make greater links with existing cooperative institutions in the state and the region that help broaden their reach and impact on the local and regional economy. The Solidarity Economy practices and institutions that MXGM is working to build in Jackson include:

- Building a network of cooperative and mutually reinforcing enterprises and institutions, specifically worker, consumer, and housing cooperatives, and community development credit unions as the foundation of our local Solidarity Economy

- Building sustainable, Green (re)development and Green economy networks and enterprises, starting with a Green housing initiative

- Building a network of local urban farms, regional agricultural cooperatives, and farmers markets. Drawing heavily from recent experiences in Detroit, we hope to achieve food sovereignty and combat obesity and chronic health issues in the state associated with limited access to healthy foods and unhealthy food environments

- Developing local community and conservation land trusts as a primary means to begin the process of reconstructing the "Commons" in the city and region by decommodifying land and housing i, Louisiana, Alabama and Texas.

- Organizing to reconstruct and extend the Public Sector, particularly public finance of community development, to be pursued as a means of rebuilding the Public Sector to ensure there is adequate infrastructure to provide quality health care, accessible mass transportation, and decent, affordable public housing, etc.[120]

One of the most promising efforts under the cooperative economy heading is Cooperation Jackson, which treats Mondragon and Emilia-Romagna as models for building an integrated cooperative economy on an urban and regional scale. Founded in 2013, it now has around 100 members. It aims to become the nucleus of a worker-owned and -controlled local economy for the black population, outside the capitalist system. It currently operates an "urban farming collaborative" called Freedom Farms, and the Chokwe Lumumba Center for Economic Democracy and Development, "a community center and small-businesses incubator." It's currently in process of building a cafe that includes a catering business. It's buying up land—twenty-five lots so far, with the intention of buying fifty more—in order to create a community land trust. In addition, it's crowdfunding "a production and fabrication center— essentially a flexibly configured factory that can be used for small-time manufacturing." Cofounder Kali Akuno

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120   *Ibid.*

Akuno envisions an entire economy of co-ops working together, and running independently from the dominant economy—co-op farms selling to co-op restaurants, co-op dry cleaners taking out loans from co-op banks. His dream is to create a "sister network" of co-ops across the globe, all working with one another to create an economy parallel to the one we live in but governed by different rules.

"It's not just about surviving," he emphasizes. "We want to build a new economy, a new society. In order to do that, you have to survive, but you have to also grow and reach out and change people's minds in the process."[121]

Following the death of Chokwe Lumumba his son, also named Chokwe, was elected mayor on June 7, 2017 with 93% of the vote.[122]

Local Case Studies: Barcelona. In Spain, the M15 movement has remained vibrant at the local level, both in building economic counter-institutions and in municipal politics, despite the abandonment of its occupation camps in 2011. Despite the triumph of right-wing parties at a national level, towns and cities all over Spain have elected local political movements derived from M15, and pursuing a variety of post-capitalist agendas based on cooperatives and the commons. Most prominent among them is Barcelona.

The mayor of Barcelona, elected in 2015, is Ada Colau. Colau is a former M15 activist and founder of the anti-eviction organization Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH). She was elected as the candidate of the *Barcelona En Comú* (Barcelona in Common) party. News of her election was widely accompanied by a photo from 2013 of her being hauled away by police during the occupation of a Barcelona bank that was foreclosing on homes.

Barcelona En Comú's first order of business was to fight the gentrification that was driving up rents and destroying old neighborhoods. As part of an attempt to stop outside investors and speculators from buying up local real estate for development and evicting tenants, Colau put a freeze on further construction of hotels and other tourist accommodations.

Barcelona En Comú is limited internally by the fact that it controls only 11 of 44 city council seats. At the same time, it is the political arm of a large social economy movement outside the government, and is involved not only in conventional policy initiatives but also a wide variety of quasi-official initiatives in collaboration with activists in civil society.

Besides fostering greater participation in governance, Barcelona En Comú hopes to fortify and expand what it calls the "commons collaborative economy" – the cooperatives, commons and neighborhood projects that comprise a remarkable 10% of the city economy through 1,300 ventures.

For example, there is the impressive Guifi.net, a broadband telecommunications network that is managed as a commons for the benefit of ordinary Internet users and small businesses. The system provides welcome competition to the giant Telefónica by providing affordable Internet access through more than 32,000 active wifi nodes.

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121   Peter Moskowitz, "Meet the Radical Workers' Cooperative Growing in the Heart of the Deep South," *The Nation*, April 24, 2017 <https://www.thenation.com/article/meet-the-radical-workers-cooperative-growing-in-the-heart-of-the-deep-south/>.

122   Jamiles Lartey, "A revolutionary, not a liberal: can a radical black mayor bring change to Mississippi?" *The Guardian*, Sept. 11, 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/11/revolutionary-not-a-liberal-radical-black-mayor-mississippi-chokwe-lumumba>.

The city is also home to Som Energia Coop, the first renewable energy coop in Catalunya. It both resells energy bought from the market and is developing its own renewable energy projects – wind turbines, solar panels, biogas plants – to produce energy for its members.

Barcelona En Comú realizes that boosting that commons collaborative economy is an act of co-creation with commoners, not a government project alone. So the city has established new systems to open and expand new dialogues. There is a group council called BarCola, for example, which convenes leading players in the collaborative economy and commons-based peer production to assess the progress of this sector and recommend helpful policies. There is also an open meetup called Procomuns.net, and Decim.Barcelona (Decide Barcelona), a web platform for public deliberation and decision-making.

It remains to be seen how these bodies will evolve, but their clear purpose is to strengthen the commons collaborative economy as a self-aware, active sector of the city's life. The administration is exploring such ideas as how existing coops might migrate to open platforms, and what types of businesses might be good allies or supporters of the commons collaborative economy.[123]

In March 2016 Barcelona hosted the Commons Collaborative Economies (or Procomuns) event, which was "focused on commons-oriented peer production and the collaborative economy. This event centered on producing public policy proposals and technical guidelines for building software platforms for collaborative communities...." It issued a series of 122 policy recommendations addressed both to the Barcelona municipal government and to the European Commission. It also focused on guidelines for building software platforms to support the collaborative economy.[124]

Barcelona has taken a small step towards the Partner State model with decidim.barcelona, a public collaborative platform for making policy proposals.[125] Decidim ("we decide" in Catalan)

allows the public to participate directly in government as they would a form of social media, and they have had early success. The city council hosted several organizing events to decide on a strategic plan, and nearly 40,000 people and 1,500 organizations contributed 10,000 suggestions.

According to Xabier Barandiaran, one of the project leaders, one of the functions Decidim supports is participatory budgeting, but

there are many others. Decidim makes possible almost all of them. It is only limited because we are still developing the software and developing new features. We have learned a lot. We have gathered collective intelligence from different expert citizens. All hackers, people interested in their government. We run workshops and open citizen meetings. We came out with a wider spectrum of possibilities for participatory democracy, other than participatory budgeting. There are budgeting pilots in Barcelona. But we did not put all our eggs in that basket. We felt it was more important to identify the problems to bring people together to speak about public services.[126]

The city also actively encourages "sharing economy" ventures on a platform cooperativist model,

123   David Bollier, "Barcelona's Brave Struggle to Advance the Commons," P2P Foundation Blog, Nov. 29, 2016 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/barcelonas-brave-struggle-to-advance-the-commons/2016/11/29>.
124   Ann Marie Utratel, Stacco Troncoso, "The Commons Collaborative Economy Explodes in Barcelona," Commons Transition, April 18, 2016 <http://commonstransition.org/commons-collaborative-economy-explodes-barcelona>.
125   *Ibid.*
126   Kevin Stark, "Barcelona's Decidim Offers Open-Source Platform for Participatory Democracy Projects," *Shareable*, Sept. 4, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/barcelonas-decidim-offers-open-source-platform-for-participatory-democracy-projects>.

and is designing a collaborative economy incubator.[127]

Local Case Studies: Ghent. Over the past decade, the commons economy has mushroomed in Ghent, growing to comprise some 500-odd commons-based projects. The projects include a community land trust promoted by the local government, numerous co-housing projects, and a thriving local food sector.[128]

Michel Bauwens and Yurek Onzia of the P2P Foundations conducted a mapping project commissioned by the city government, systematically cataloging commons assets in a shared wiki[129] "organized by major 'provisioning' systems, i.e. food, mobility, housing, etc." At the same time, they held meetings to promote more interconnections between the main actors in different local economic sectors.

> The Flanders region has known a tenfold increase in commons-connected citizen initiatives in the last ten years, but as in many other places, there is still too much fragmentation. We are using the commons narrative to catalyze more convergence across projects, so that they can have a systemic effect on the city ecosystem and even influence policymaking.

Among the possibilities they envision moving forward are organizing a coherent, interconnected local food system, and leveraging the collective purchasing power of local anchor institutions to promote sustainability and the commons-based economy.[130]

Bauwens also proposed new municipal institutions to promote the commons economy on a coherent, comprehensive basis. One of the most important is a City Lab "that helps people develop their proposals and prepares Commons Agreements between the city and the new initiatives, modeled after the existing Bologna Regulation on Commons." Another is a system of support for startups, including an incubator for commons-based cooperative enterprises and a public bank.[131]

Local Case Studies: Seattle. The Neighborhood Action Coalition (NAC) was set up following Trump's election, with a focus on protecting marginalized groups against hate crimes. Unlike the Occupy movement with its city-wide general assemblies, NAC has chapters in each city district.

> Each neighborhood chapter is empowered to select its own activities and many groups have evolved through door-to-door listening campaigns. The NAC is creating new forms of encounter between citizens and city officials.

The NAC's Nikkita Oliver, a Black Lives Matters activist, ran for mayor this year (unsuccessfully)

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127   Anna Bergren Miller, "Barcelona Crowdsourced its Sharing Economy Policies. Can Other Cities Do the Same?" *Shareable*, January 18, 2017 <http://www.shareable.net/blog/barcelona-crowdsourced-its-sharing-economy-policies-can-other-cities-do-the-same>.

128   Mai Sutton, "9 Awesome Urban Commons Projects in Ghent," *P2P Foundation Blog*, Aug. 28, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/9-awesome-urban-commons-projects-in-ghent/2017/08/28>.

129   <http://wiki.commons.gent/>.

130   Vasilis Niaros, "First Impressions on the Commons Transition in Ghent: An Interview with Michel Bauwens," *P2P Foundation Blog*, May 22, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/first-impressions-commons-transition-ghent-interview-michel-bauwens/2017/05/22>.

131   Dirk Holemans, "How New Institutions Can Bolster Ghent's Commons Initiatives," *Shareable*, Oct. 2, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/how-new-institutions-can-make-ghent-a-commons-city>.

on a platform of radical government accountability.[132]

Local Case Studies: Portland. Portland Assembly enrolls new members in existing neighborhood associations. "They are currently working to create a citywide, pro-homeless coalition; they advocate for radical reformation of the police." PA was in the news recently when members in Black Bloc attire obtained asphalt and fixed neglected potholes themselves.[133]

Local Case Studies: Frome. The local government of Frome, a town of 25,000 people in the western English county of Somerset, was taken over by the "Independents" in 2011. Although the group (named for its refusal to run under national party labels) eschews platform as a matter of principle, it's politics is largely greenish and oriented towards economic relocalization—as could be guessed from the fact that it was galvanized by Peter Mcfadyen, former leader of Transition Town Frome. Mcfadyen questioned local officials about the green policies they had in place—policies regarding Peak Oil, energy descent, resilience in the face of climate change, etc.—and was told "the park." A group of equally dissatisfied locals who frequently complained about the quality of the town's government in the pub decided to run for office on a set of principles that Mcfadyen later popularized as "Flatpack Politics" (based on Ikea's self-assembled furniture). They won ten of seventeen seats on the town council, as well as the mayor's office (which went to Mel Usher). In 2015 they took all seventeen seats, following Mcfadyen's replacement of Usher as mayor the previous year. While their agenda in office—consciously inspired to a large extent by the example of Podemos in Spain—has been constrained by policies at higher echelons of government, their accomplishments have nevertheless been significant. They strengthened the local credit union, and a renewable energy cooperative and a tool library/library of things (the Share Shop). The Share Shop was the first facility of its kind in the UK, although the idea has since spread to communities all over the world and been popularized by publications like Shareable. Kate Bielby, also of the Independents, replaced Mcfadyen as mayor in 2015; he now serves as chair of the town council and head of the energy cooperative.

The Frome example, along with Mcfadyen's book, has inspired other local efforts—mainly in Somerset, but some elsewhere in the UK.

> The booklet has so far sold close to 1,000 copies, and Macfadyen is regularly in touch with similar groups of independents in such towns as Liskeard in Cornwall, Newbury in Berkshire, Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire, and Wells, Wedmore and Shepton Mallet, all in Somerset. Most notably, on 7 May, people who had directly followed the example set out in his text took control of two councils in very different parts of the country.

> One was in Arlesey, a settlement of 5,000 people in Bedfordshire – just under 40 minutes by train from London – whose town council is now run by the Independents for Arlsey group, after they won 14 of its 15 seats. Its founders were alerted to the flatpack democracy idea via Facebook and resolved to shake up the politics of a town that had got used to uncontested elections and a council run by old-school independents. One of the prime movers was 64-year-old Chris Gravett, who says that whereas the town's ancien régime was "dysfunctional", he and his colleagues are now set on starting everything from scratch. "We've followed the core principles in the Flatpack

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132   Eleanor Finley, "The New Municipal Movements," *P2P Foundation Blog*, Sept. 26, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/the-new-municipal-movements/2017/09/26>.
133   *Ibid.*

Democracy book pretty closely," he says. "We took a lot of advice from it. And I must say: the results were beyond our wildest expectations."

In Buckfastleigh in Devon (population: 3,326), the Buckfastleigh Independents group have followed a similar path. "This isn't an affluent community," says the town's new deputy mayor, Pam Barrett. "It's a working-class town that's been suffering from a real loss of services." Fired up by the possibilities of localism and their experience of fighting – successfully – to keep open a library and swimming pool, she and other residents resolved to stand for town council seats that had not been contested for "20 or more years". One of the catalysts, she says, was a box of 10 copies of the Flatpack Democracy booklet, which was brought in by one of her colleagues. "It was articulating what we were already thinking," she says, "and it helped us take a lot of shortcuts." On 7 May, they took nine of long termrunning the show.[134]

Local Case Studies: Open Works (London). The Open Works project in the neighborhood of West Norwood, Lambeth, London, was a prototype system built in 2014-2015 "to discover if a high density of... micro participation activity, built into the fabric of everyday life, has the potential to aggregate and combine to achieve lasting long-term change, both for individuals and for neighbourhoods."[135] A joint venture between the Lambeth Council and Civic Systems Lab, the Open Works team co-created

> a network of 20 practical projects with 1000 local residents. These projects were inspired by ideas from across the world that offered the potential to support a new and more sustainable way to live our everyday lives.... These 20 projects created new and engaging opportunities for sharing knowledge, spaces and equipment; for families to work and play together; for bulk cooking, food growing and tree planting; for trading, making and repairing and for suppers, workshops, incubators and festivals.[136]

For such projects to achieve long-term sustainability, "participation levels need to reach a threshold where sufficient direct, collective and networked effects can accumulate over time to create compound outcomes." Preliminary estimates were that "around 10%-15% of local residents would need to be participating regularly at any one time (c. 3 times a week) for multiplier effects to be achieved."[137]

The experience of Stage One, or the first year of the project, suggested

> that a fully developed participation ecology should consist of two levels of activity. The first level is a highly accessible and inclusive network of commons-based co-production activity built into everyday life. Building on this foundational level of mass participation in micro activities, the second level would see the development of community businesses, co-operatives and hybrid ventures through platform incubation programmes.[138]

At the time the report on the project was written, it was entering Stage 2 ("Build complete system"), which was to be a two-year phase of evaluating the feasibility of putting the prototype into widespread

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134   John Harris, "How Flatpack Democracy beat the old parties in the People' Republic of Frome," *The Guardian*, May 22, 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/may/22/flatpack-democracy-peoples-republic-of-frome>; "About Peter Mcfadyen and Independents from Frome (IfF) <http://www.flatpackdemocracy.co.uk/about/>.

135   T. Britton et al. *Designed to Scale: Mass Participation to Build Resilient Neighbourhoods* (London: Civic Systems Lab, September 2015) <http://www.participatorycity.org/report-the-research>

136   *Ibid.*, p. 20.

137   *Ibid.*, p. 21

138   *Ibid.*, p. 21.

operation. Stage 3 would entail "sustaining investment long term."[139]

From the first meetings to discuss proposals, the project was coordinated from a heaquarters located in an empty shop on the high street in West Norwood. "Citizens were able to come in, propose project ideas or be inspired by ideas already put forward, and began putting them into practice on the same day with no complicated bureaucratic approval process."[140] The platform model of supporting projects from the Headquarters "shifted the centre of gravity" and enabled a "new mutual space" to emerge for community governance.[141] Open Works projects are open-source, and are available for reference in the Project Directory.[142] The complete list includes:

1) Trade School (a knowledge exchange with barter-based payment for teaching skills)
2) Great Cook (a project for batch-cooking meals in common)
3) Potluck Suppers
4) Start Here (an incubator for young people' projects, ventures, and businesses)
5) BeamBlock (a fitness enterprise)
6) Bzz Garage (bee-friendly neighborhood gardens and landscaping)
7) Library of Things
8) The Joinery (a platform to connect people's under-utilized skills with work opportunities)
9) Festival of Ideas (basically a fair to promote public awareness of existing projects and to discuss projects being developed in other communities)
10) Open Orchard (edible landscaping in public places)
11) Rock Paper Scissors (collective retail space)
12) The Stitch (a sewing group and skills exchange, with shared tools and equipment)
13) Out in the Open Season (a community calendar for increasing awareness of participation opportunities in the other projects)
14) Civic Incubator (practical training for leaders of existing projects to promote further organizational growth and coordination between projects, as well as for people interested in starting new projects)
15) Play Works (an ecosystem of connected projects involving children)
16) Play Streets (one of the Play Works projects—temporarily stops traffic on residential streets so children can play)
17) Department of Tinkerers (another Play Works project—allows children, with adult supervision, to dismantle electrical appliances to see how they fit together, practice working with tools, etc.)
18) Collaborative Childcare (still another Play Works project)
19) Public Office (co-working spaces for freelancers in public cafes)
20) West Norwood Soup (crowdfunded dinner to raise money for community projects)[143]

Components: Transparency and Participatory Governance. If anything is central to the Partner State goal of becoming less statelike, it is transparency of the government apparatus and direct citizen

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139   *Ibid.*, p. 22.
140   *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.
141   *Ibid.*, p. 21
142   *Ibid.*, p. 226
143   *Ibid.*, pp. 260-393.

participation in the process of formulating policy.

In Taiwan, a large open government movement has made significant accomplishments in opening up policy to citizen participation and critique. At the heart of the movement is g0v, which got its name from setting up alternative versions of government websites with .gov domains changed to .g0v. These digital activists have, among other things, forced the Taiwanese government to revise a treaty with the People's Republic of China and schedule the decommissioning of all nuclear power plants by 2025. Last year Tsai Ing-wen, who ran on a platform of government transparency, appointed a member of g0v—Audrey Tang—as Digital Minister. Under pressure from the citizens' movements, the government has responded by adopting digital tools for crowdsourcing feedback on government policies.[144]

The participatory budgeting projects discussed in various places above are also an integral part of participatory government.

Components: Information Commons. Cities and universities are not in a position to alter or replace national and international copyright law. But it is entirely within their capacity to promote information freedom by such means as adopting free and open-source software for official use in preference to proprietary software, and mandating that all research and writing supported by public funds will be in the public domain.

Universities have a great potential in their own right for being reorganized along libertarian lines, based on principles like stakeholder governance and self-management. Regarding the information commons in particular, they can encourage faculty to assign readings that are freely available online or published under open licenses, discourage the assignment of overpriced textbooks, use their bargaining power as a purchaser to sanction price-gouging academic journals and textbook publishers, and encourage faculty to publish in cooperatively governed and non-paywalled publications, or even organize coordinated boycotts of shakedown operations like Elsevier altogether. Instead of slavishly acting as adjuncts of the content industries in enforcing music and movie copyright, they can refuse to provide student information or otherwise cooperate without legally binding orders, and inform students on their rights regarding fair use.

Components: Land Platforms. In general, Community Land Trusts and related institutions are a way of using land titles under capitalist property law to recreate the state of affairs before communal land tenures were nullified and land was commodified on the basis of alienable fee simple ownership. Land can be removed from the capitalist land market, particularly when it is still cheap and can be bought in quantity, and then be governed internally by possession and transfer rights closer to a commons-based model. Because they are permanent, they can function as a growing non-capitalist island within the capitalist economy, much as the Church's wealth grew in medieval times when land was inalienably donated to an immortal corporation.

In this regard, it is somewhat analogous to Creative Commons and other open licenses, which use capitalist "intellectual property" law to create a state of affairs such as would prevail if copyrights did

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144   Nithin Coca, "Meet g0v, the Open-source, Digital Community Transforming Democracy in Taiwan," *Shareable*, May 16, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/meet-g0v-the-open-source-digital-community-transforming-democracy-in-taiwan>.

not exist at all. And like land trusts, open licenses are characterized by irrevocable, one-way growth in which anything "contaminated" by them becomes permanently free, thanks to share-alike provisions.

Another function of community land trusts is to acquire cheap tax foreclosed homes, in which their current owners can continue to live. The Right to the City Alliance worked with local organizations to build community land trusts in ten cities in 2015 alone. One of these cities was Detroit, where the community land trust has organized crowdfunding campaigns to buy up cheap foreclosed properties one at a time and protect residents from eviction. Much more could be done if the project was actively supported at the municipal level; unfortunately the Detroit city government, under an appointed Emergency Manager, isn't exactly warm on the idea. The city government's land bank holds title to abandoned property, which it is supposed to return to productive use. Local activists have pressured the government to transfer land bank properties to a land trust, but so far to no avail.[145]

The largest community land trust in the United States is the Champlain Housing Trust in Burlington, Vt. In a city of 40,000, it owns 2,000 housing units.[146]

Closely related is the Permanent Real Estate Cooperative. Those who purchase homes in a PERC have full possession and transfer rights, but their equity—the "resale" price—is limited to purchase price and improvements adjusted for inflation. They can potentially grow quickly to include hundreds or thousands of members.[147]

The basic principle of the land trust—to acquire land when it's cheap so that the community benefits collectively from its appreciation in value rather than private rentier classes—is quite similar to that of Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities. In the case of Garden City Letchworth,

> In 1903, founders Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker purchased 2,057 hectares of land near London at a reasonable price and then made it available to the members of the community for building. In this way, people came to own the roofs over their heads but co-owned the land on which their houses had been built. Despite low wages for many people, the community-oriented form of ownership made it possible to avoid high rents.

> The collective ownership of the land also generated revenues through housing rentals and business leases. This in turn made it possible for the community to finance schools and hospitals. Everyone, not just investors, could benefit.... For decades the economic value generated by Letchworth's infrastructures—water, sewerage, gas, electricity, roads, schools, hospitals—were mutualized to benefit all of its inhabitants.[148]

Some activist groups engage in intensive data-mapping to systematically catalog all municipal land, in order to pursue a coordinated agenda for commons-based development. For example, the 596 Acres project in Brooklyn identified 596 acres (hence the name) of unused publicly owned land in that borough. That's a significant amount of land—almost a square mile. The political goal is to

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145   Abigail Savitch-Lew, "How Community Land Trusts Can Fix Detroit's Foreclosure Mess," *YES! Magazine*, Dec. 23, 2016 <http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/how-community-land-trusts-can-fix-detroits-foreclosure-mess-20161223>.
146   Pat Conaty and Michael Lewis, "Affordability Locked In" (November 2011) <http://communityrenewal.ca/sites/all/files/resource/i42011NOV11_Affordability.pdf>.
147   Janelle Orsi, "Homeownership is Dead. Long Live the Permanent Real Estate Cooperative," P2P Foundation Blog, Oct. 16, 2016 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/homeownership-is-dead-long-live-the-permanent-real-estate-cooperative/2016/10>.
148   Jannis Kühne, "Patterns of Commoning: Notable Urban Commons Around the World," P2P Foundation Blog, Feb. 21, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/patterns-commoning-notable-urban-commons-around-world/2017/02/21>.

permanently reserve as much as possible under various forms of common ownership like community gardens, neighborhood parks, and community land trusts, often encouraging the people of a neighborhood to occupy and transform the vacant land in order to create a *fait accompli*.[149]

In cities like Detroit where abandonment has approached catastrophic levels, land trusts have the potential to grow on an exceptionally large scale. In the Dudley Street neighborhood in Boston, for example, white flight resulted in some 1300 lots—over 20% of the total in the neighborhood—being vacant. Because of the implosion of real estate prices, the Dudley Street neighborhood initiative was able to incorporate 225 of them.[150] In Buffalo, where 23,000 properties were vacant, the PUSH citizen's movement challenged the state housing agency's practice of using the vacant housing to speculate on Wall Street as a source of revenue, and pressured it to turn them over to the community instead.[151]

One of the most important potential functions of community land trusts is to secure current possession by marginalized populations that has not been formalized under existing conventional law. Both claims under indigenous land tenure, and plots of land occupied in favelas, can be regularized within the community land trust framework. For example, a community land trust was created in San Juan, Puerto Rico to regularize holdings in eight informal communities along the Peña Canal.[152]

Components: Neighborhood and Community Industry. Economic relocalization, import substitution and community control of production machinery are all intersecting ways in which local communities can build independence from corporate power and resilience against unemployment, and secure individual subsistence.

Fab Cities[153] is a joint project of Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC), MIT's Centre for Bits and Atoms (CBA), the Barcelona City Council and the Fab Foundation. It works in cooperation with the global Fab Lab network.[154] It "challenges cities and regions to start building the infrastructure to be locally productive and globally connected by 2054." The first Fab Lab in the network opened in Barcelona in 2014; since then it has been joined by "12 cities, 2 regions, 2 states and 2 countries."

> Today there are over one thousand fab labs across the world, that together function as a distributed production system on a small scale. I can design something in Barcelona, and without using fossil fuel, create the identical product in Cape Town, Wellington or Tokyo.
>
> Our approach is closely linked to the notion of circular economy, in the sense that we aim to shorten and localize production loops. With the right infrastructure and knowledge we could reduce

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149   David Bollier, "Using Data Mapping to Help Reclaim Urban Commons," *P2P Foundation Blog*, May 2, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/using-data-mapping-to-help-reclaim-urban-commons/2017/05/02>.

150   Penn Lah, "How One Boston Neighborhood Stopped Gentrification in Its Tracks," *Yes! Magazine*, Jan. 15, 2015 <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/cities-are-now/how-one-boston-neighborhood-stopped-gentrification-in-its-tracks>.

151   Taj James and Rosa Gonzalez, "How to turn neighborhoods into nubs of resilience," *Nation of Change*, April 17, 2017 <https://www.nationofchange.org/2017/04/17/turn-neighborhoods-nubs-resilience/>.

152   RioOnWatch, "An Informal Settlement in Puerto Rico Has Become the World's First Favela Community Land Trust," *Shareable*, June 1, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/an-informal-settlement-in-puerto-rico-has-become-the-worlds-first-favela-community-land-trust>.

153   <fab.cities>

154   Christel van de Craats and Tomas Diez, "The Fab City movement Creating locally productive and globally connected self-sufficient cities," P2P Foundation Blog, Feb. 15, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/fab-city-movement-creating-locally-productive-globally-connected-self-sufficient-cities/2017/02/15>.

the amount of material that a city imports and rescale globalization. It also allows companies to create social value and not only profit.[155]

Among participating cities are Amsterdam, Shenzhen, Copenhagen, Detroit, Paris and Boston.[156]

According to the Fab Cities website, "The FAB City is a global project to develop locally productive and globally connected self-sufficient cities."

> FAB City is a new urban model of transforming and shaping cities that shifts how they source and use materials from 'Products In Trash Out' (PITO) to 'Data In Data Out' (DIDO). This means that more production occurs inside the city, along with recycling materials and meeting local needs through local inventiveness. A city's imports and exports would mostly be found in the form of data (information, knowledge, design, code).

The project aims to develop prototype industrial districts in all participating cities, with Fab Labs as the nucleus, and circular economies relocalizing as many functions as possible.

> To select a series of experimentation areas (pilots) in partner cities in order to pilot interventions and deployments together with citizens (users, producers, co-producers), using Fab Labs as innovation and cultural hubs at the local scale. Local consortiums will be established in the pilot cities in order to bring together stakeholders: ideally SMEs, startups, makers, communities, policymakers and companies—carefully considering gender balance and inclusion.... So far there are confirmed:
>
> - **Fashion and textiles**, partner: Nike (confirmed as a third party for the next stage);
> - **Furniture and household products**, partner: IKEA (Corporation, third party);
> - **Electronics**, partner: Fairphone (SME, consortium partner);
> - **Food**, partners: local restaurants and food supply businesses (SMEs);
> - **Mobility**, partner: Open Source Vehicle (third party).

The project will entail identifying and mapping

> local source materials, manufacturers, producers, artisans and other activities connected to circular economy and local production at neighbourhoods, and scalable to cities. The goal is to bridge with larger scale supply chains, in order to connect supply and demand for local production.[157]

In terms of economic relocalization, its goals are relatively modest: to relocalize some 50% of manufacturing by 2054.[158]

The Open Source Circular City model, developed by Lars Zimmermann, focuses on local economies that keep value within the community by designing goods for repair, reuse and recycling, and creating the capability for those functions at the local level. The latter capability—which he calls "Reversibility Facilities"—are "something between a *second hand market*, a *repair shop*, a *factory*, a *research facility* and a *Fab-lab*."[159]

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155   Benjamin Tincq, "The Fab City: It's More Than Just a City Full of Fab Labs," *Shareable*, Feb. 6, 2017 <http://www.shareable.net/blog/the-fab-city-its-more-than-just-a-city-full-of-fab-labs>.
156   Sharon Ede, *The Real Circular Economy: How Relocalising Production With Not-For-Profit Business Models Helps Build Resilient and Prosperous Societies* (Fab City Global Initiative, Post-Growth Institute, 2016), p. 9.
157   Tom Dietz, "Fab City Prototypes – Designing and making for the real world," *P2P Foundation Blog*, July 6, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/fab-city-prototypes%e2%80%8a-%e2%80%8adesigning-making-real-world/2017/07/06>.
158   Ede, p. 9.
159   Lars Zimmerman, "The Open Source Circular City—a SCENARIO for City Hackers," *P2P Foundation Blog*, Sept. 8, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/open-source-circular-city-scenario-city-hackers/2017/09/08>.

The Poblenou neighborhood of Barcelona is a good illustration of two of Jane Jacobs' central principles: import substitution, and conversion of waste byproducts into new inputs. Poblenou, once considered a *former* industrial district which had fallen victim to deindustrialization, "has become a poster child for urban renewal through a bottom-up approach, creating an epicentre of technology and creativity—leading the Catalan paper Publico and other media to describe it as a mini Silicon Valley for sustainable industry."

> The neighbourhood is spearheading a new urban model of resiliency and local innovation, where citizens are perceived not just as consumers but as producers, empowered through access to digital fabrication tools, and knowledge. Poblenou is today an experimentation playground to build the vision of how we might step away from importing most things into the city and export our waste, and instead introduce a circular model, where all resources flow in a closed-loop system within the city itself.
>
> In fact, Poblenou is already building the infrastructure to be locally productive and globally connected, in order to produce at least half of what it consumes by 2054, using materials that are sourced locally or reclaimed from waste creating a partly circular model, where waste is remade into new products.

Poblenou is also a major participant in the FAB Cities network. During a special five-day event, the Made Again Challenge,

> local workshops, research centers, design agencies and local producers in the neighbourhood was [sic] connected into an ecosystem. Biologists, tech professionals, local makers, craftsmen, IKEA designers, and other trailblazers gathered in Barcelona for the project and collected wasted products from the streets of Poblenou in order to breath new life into materials that were heading to landfill.

Following the success of the Made Again Challenge, Mayor Ada Colau of Barcelona and the city council successfully proposed turning a square kilometer of Poblenou into a Maker District.[160] The objective of the Maker District is "prototyping a fractal of a Fab City, focusing on..."

> • Fabrication & materials: with complementary production ecosystems happening inside the local network of Fab Labs, citizens have the possibility to produce what they consume, recirculating materials inside the neighbourhood and the city to reduce waste and carbon emissions associated with long-distance mass production and distribution chains.
> • Food production: growing food on the rooftops of Barcelona. Through urban agriculture practices, citizens can grow part of what they eat turning production of local clean food in a regular part of their lives.
> • Energy: Renewable energy production. With the arrival of domestic batteries and the cost drop of solar technologies, citizens have the tools to produce part of their domestic energy consumption.[161]

Following the devastation of Hurricane Sandy in the Sunset Park neighborhood in Brooklyn, the UPROSE environmental group mobilized the community to rebuild using an economic model centered on environmentally friendly, community controlled industry.

> ...UPROSE has joined forces with labor unions, the Working Families Organization, and business owners to transform Sunset Park's industrial space into a manufacturing hub that produces

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160   Tomas Dietz, "Made Again Documentary—The 'Silicon Valley of sustainability' in Barcelona," *P2P Foundation Blog*, July 17, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/made-documentary%e2%80%8a-%e2%80%8athe-silicon-valley-sustainability-barcelona/2017/07/17>; Ede, p. 10.
161   Ede, p. 10.

environmentally friendly building and construction materials, powered by renewable energy. And they are encouraging these industries to hire locally....

The process of developing the plan was as transformational as the plan itself. UPROSE consults with residents on the future they want, then arms them with the tools they need to make that vision a reality. Some residents take on the role of block captains and gather input and educate their neighbors on city planning processes. Through partnerships with researchers, residents conduct participatory action research on issues of concern. It's a deeply democratic, holistic approach that builds local power and increases community control over resources – key elements of community resilience.[162]

Components: Alternative Currencies and Credit. Alternative currency systems differ widely in how much actual value they offer to the people of a community. At their worst, LETS systems which entail simply trading dollars earned outside the system for alternative currency notes on a one-to-one basis, in order to use those notes for purchases at participating merchants, are nothing but glorified green stamps systems that (aside from modest discounts) are actually more trouble to use. The proper function of a currency system is to create liquidity where it did not exist before and create purchasing power for those who lack conventional money. It provides liquidity and primes the pump in an environment where members have useful skills and unmet needs, by advancing credit so that members can trade against future services to obtain present consumption.[163]

The idea of currency as a "store of value," something saved up from past production, or of credit as the lending of past savings, is a capitalist myth that obscures the real nature of money and credit.

Apologists for the profits of capital argue that labor would not be productive without the contributions of capital. A trucker would not be very productive without a truck, for example. But the truck itself is produced by workers. And the factory that makes trucks is built by workers. And the food and other necessities of life consumed by workers while the factory and truck are being built are also produced by other workers. The "wage fund doctrine" is a lie. It was effectively demolished by Thomas Hodgskin, a radical political economist who was simultaneously a free market liberal and a socialist who wrote in the time before political economists became hired prize-fighters for capitalism. According to Hodgskin, the material subsistence goods advanced to workers aren't really saved from past production at all, but are produced near-simultaneously with their consumption. All capital goods and all subsistence goods consumed during the production process are created by other workers. Absent the capitalists, workers could carry out this function of continuously advancing their products to each other through some form of mutual credit. All capitalists do is—thanks to their having appropriated most wealth through enclosures and other large-scale robberies in past centuries, and having been given a state monopoly on the right to issue credit—preempt the horizontal channels by which workers might otherwise have mutually advanced their labor products to each other. To quote Hodgskin,

Betwixt him who produces food and him who produces clothing, betwixt him who makes instruments and him who uses them, in steps the capitalist, who neither makes nor uses them, and appropriates to himself the produce of both. With as niggard a hand as possible he transfers to each

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162   Taj James and Rosa Gonzalez, *op. cit.*
163   I discussed this in the Introduction to Chapter Six in *The Desktop Regulatory State: The Countervailing Power of Individuals and Networks* (Center for a Stateless Society, 2016), pp. 177-181.

a part of the produce of the other, keeping to himself the large share. Gradually and successively has he insinuated himself betwixt them, expanding in bulk as he has been nourished by their increasingly productive labours, and separating them so widely from each other that neither can see whence that supply is drawn which each receives through the capitalist. While he despoils both, so completely does he exclude one from the view of the other that both believe they are indebted him for subsistence…. Not only do they appropriate the produce of the labourer; but they have succeeded in persuading him that they are his benefactors and employers.[164]

So the most valuable alternative currencies are those that are primarily a form of credit and a measure of value—a channel for the mutual advance of credit between producers, even when no one has stored wealth from past production. This is especially true of mutual credit clearing systems on Tom Greco's model, as well as of time-based barter networks where people put their skills to work performing services for others in the system and obtain purchasing power in return.

As recounted by David Graeber in *Debt*, mutual credit clearing systems were the primary source of liquidity for exchange in medieval villages, before the imposition of specie currency. In their modern incarnation, they vary in how large a deficit they permit members to run; ideally, once trust has been established over time they will allow deficits of up to six month's of the member's average account turnover, which amounts to a significant form of micro-credit which can be used for setting up or expanding a small enterprise. Greco has described such systems functioning all over the world.[165]

One particularly successful recent example is the Sardex system in Sardinia.[166] It has around 3000 members and a financial turnover of around 1.5 million Euros per month. Perhaps most important of its qualities is "[e]mphasis on monetizing the unused capacity of members. Connecting unused supplies with unmet needs is a primary benefit of credit clearing services." It functions primarily as a business-to-business clearinghouse for enterprises located in, or which maintain branches in, Sardinia.

Components: Sharing Economy and Platform Cooperativism. Sharing the idle capacity of capital goods—power tools, cars, etc—that individual owners seldom utilize to full capacity, in order to spread the overhead burden of ownership out among a larger community, is an important way of lowering individual subsistence costs through access to the commons.

Unfortunately, a major part of the so-called "sharing economy," as it's called in the mainstream press, is nothing of the sort. When most people hear the term "sharing economy," they think of what commons advocates sometimes call "Death Stars"[167] like Uber or Airbnb. Such platforms are proprietary walled gardens that interpose themselves between the owners of assets like cars or spare bedrooms and people who would like to use them, and extract hefty tolls from their interactions. "Ride-sharing" services like Uber and Lyft pretend that drivers are independent contractors, but they are in

164   Thomas Hodgskin, *Labour Defended Against the Claims of Capital* (1825) Online text at Marxist Internet Archive, accessed November 12, 2017 <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/hodgskin/labour-defended.htm>.
165   *Ibid.*, pp.
166   Thomas Greco, "Sardex, an emerging model for credit clearing exchanges?" *Beyond Money*, August 20, 2015 <https://beyondmoney.net/2015/08/20/sardex-an-emerging-model-for-credit-clearing-exchanges/>.
167   Neal Gorenflo, "How Platform Coops Can Beat Death Stars Like Uber to Create a Real Sharing Economy," *Shareable*, Nov. 3, 2015 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/how-platform-coops-can-beat-death-stars-like-uber-to-create-a-real-sharing-economy>; Rebecca Harvey, "Platform co-ops: How can workers defeat the 'Death Stars'?" *Coop News*, June 30, 2016 <https://www.thenews.coop/106064/topic/democracy/platform-coops-death-star/>.

fact precarious employees who can be hired or fired by the corporations that own the apps.

Advocates of platform cooperativism—that is, of organizing the so-called "sharing economy" on a p2p or commons basis rather than through Death Stars—see the municipal level as a primary venue for action. Trebor Scholz defines it as "a way of joining the peer-to-peer and co-op movements with online labor markets while insisting on communal ownership and democratic governance."[168]

The platform cooperative "is organized as a cooperative and owned by its employees, customers, users, or other key stakeholders."[169] But Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Kostakis take it a step further, arguing that the cooperative principle should be combined with the principles of information freedom and peer-production, with the platform cooperative being reconstituted on a higher level as an "open cooperative." Platform cooperatives must be built on top of the global data commons, as parts of a networked global digital economy. This would be a further development of the traditional Rochedale Seventh Cooperative Principle of community, in this case explicitly directing resources towards building the information commons that an entire cooperative sector depends on. In addition, the incorporation of peer-to-peer culture where appropriate would involve distribution of tasks and stigmergic organization, and perhaps in some cases the replacement of wage- or salary-based compensation with the transparent distribution of revenues via open value accounting.[170]

The city of Barcelona officially promotes platform cooperatives as an organizational model, as part of its general orientation towards encouraging a local ecosystem of economic counter-institutions. Platform cooperativism advocates have begun to organize locally in Berlin, Valencia, Oakland, Bologna and other major cities as well.[171]

As Scholz suggests, the development of a local ecosystem of platform cooperatives, on the basis of economies of scope, can be actively encouraged through enterprise incubators at the municipal level, and the use of municipal property like libraries and museums to host organizational activity.[172]

Vancouver has achieved an enormous shift in transportation use from private automobiles to travel by foot, bicycle and public transit. It set the goal in 2012 of half of all trips being by the latter means by 2020 – and achieved it in 2015. Besides its high-capacity light rail system and its rejection of some of the more common subsidies to car culture (Vancouver residents have consistently rejected freeway construction projects inside the city), the community has also promoted projects that fall under the umbrella of the sharing economy or platform cooperativism. It actively encourages ride-sharing systems created on a p2p or cooperative model, as well as seeding a large-scale bike-sharing program with stations all over the city.[173]

A good example of a genuinely user-controlled ride-sharing service, with the user community pooling the costs of ownership, is a program set up in Cantua Creek, a rural community of several

168   "Bringing the Platform Co-op 'Rebel Cities' Together: An Interview with Trebor Scholz," P2P Foundation Blog, Oct. 2, 2016 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/bringing-the-platform-co-op-rebel-cities-together-an-interview-with-trebor-scholz/2016/10/02>.

169   Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Kostakis, "Cooperativism in the digital era, or how to form a global counter-economy," *P2P Foundation Blog*, March 13, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/cooperativism-in-the-digital-era-or-how-to-form-a-global-counter-economy/2017/03/13>.

170   *Ibid.*

171   "Bringing the Platform Co-op 'Rebel Cities' Together."

172   *Ibid.*

173   Cat Johnson, "10 Ways Vancouver Created a Greener, More Efficient Transportation System," *Shareable*, Jan. 28, 2017 <http://www.shareable.net/blog/10-ways-vancouver-created-a-greener-more-efficient-transportation-system>.

hundred people an hour's drive from Fresno. It's an impoverished community with many carless people, in a virtual food desert at least 20 minutes from the nearest store, and similarly far from doctors and other necessities. Ridership fees will be set high enough to cover the operating costs of the community's seven-passenger van. The dispatcher's office is accessible by landline, avoiding the barriers an app-based system present to those who can't afford a smart-phone.[174]

Besides high-profile examples like ride-sharing and sharing extra space in one's home with visitors, the sharing economy includes smaller-scale projects like tool libraries and other libraries of things. One of the things I liked best in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* was the way in which her low-impact future society, rather than shaming people for "consumerism" for desiring access to a variety of useful tools and beautiful things, met this need in an environmentally friendly way by allowing a large number of people to take turns (for example) wearing luxury items like the latest fashion in clothing. A real-life pioneer in such efforts is the Toronto Tool Library, which has four locations. In 2016 it opened a Sharing Depot where members can borrow "sporting goods, board games, camping equipment, children's toys, and party supplies" for a subscription fee of $50-100 a year. The project was successful enough to adopt a second branch.[175] Libraries for lending tools, musical instruments, kitchen appliances and many other things have spring up in cities around the world.[176]

Platform cooperatives aren't limited to capital assets people own. They're also ideally suited to labor-intensive industries where the main source of value is "human capital," and outlays for physical capital and other overhead are minimal. These include temp work of all kinds (especially nursing and other healthcare jobs), cleaning services, and the like. The only real overhead that's actually necessary is someone to coordinate openings with workers, some computer scheduling and payroll software, a dedicated fax and phone account, and a post office box (assuming it isn't run out of a spare room in someone's home). And yet for-profit agencies collect a huge share of what clients pay for performing these functions. A cooperative temp agency could drastically reduce the price to clients or raise the pay of workers, or split the middleman rent between clients and workers.

For example in New York six cleaning workers formed their own cooperative, Brightly Cleaning.[177]

The idea in all such cases where workers provide their own capital, whether physical or human is—to paraphrase Yochai Benkler—to "use technology to reduce or entirely eliminate those who play a primarily 'extractive' role in markets, the players whose main or sometimes only function is to come between the producers or providers of goods and services and consumers."[178]

174   Natalie Delgadillo, "How an Eco-Friendly Rideshare Is Changing Life in a Tiny Rural Town," *Governing*, June 7, 2017 <http://www.governing.com/news/headlines/gov-eco-friendly-rideshare-cantua-creek-rural-california-unincoporated.html>.

175   Johnson, "New Sharing Depot Opening Reflects Success of Toronto's Library of Things Movement," *Shareable*, April 10, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/new-sharing-depot-opening-reflects-success-of-torontos-library-of-things-movement>.

176   Cat Johnson, "These 5 Lending Libraries Are Redefining the Meaning of Ownership," *Shareable*, April 19, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/these-5-lending-libraries-are-redefining-the-meaning-of-ownership>.

177   Nithin Coca, "How Innovative Funding Models Could Usher in a New Era of Worker-Owned Platform Cooperatives," *Shareable*, Aug. 28, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/how-innovative-funding-models-could-usher-in-a-new-era-of-worker-owned-platform-cooperatives>.

178   Hal Plotkin, "Two Big Reasons for Hope: The Platform Cooperative Consortium Lights Up The Commons," *Medium*, Jan. 26, 2017 <https://medium.com/@hplotkin/two-big-reasons-for-hope-the-platform-cooperative-consortium-lights-up-the-commons-8d8fd1ccc6bc>.

At its highest level, the concept of platform cooperativism applies to the city itself as a platform. Municipal governance, when reorganized in accordance with the principles of platform cooperativism, gives us something like the Partner State.

But far more mainstream attention is devoted to concepts like "Smart Cities" being promoted by capital, that amount to nothing more than Death Star platforms at the municipal level. The term "smart cities" itself dates back to IBM's coinage "Smarter Cities," which was a marketing gimmick "to boost sales of enterprise software to city governments as tools for urban planning and administration."[179] But even major figures in IBM itself have misgivings about the original vision. For example Steven Adler, IBM's chief information strategist:

> ...when IBM created the idea of smart cities, "our definition was a city that is self-aware." In the beginning, this was a matter of making a city administration more instrumented and intelligent from the point of view of top-down control. "But increasingly," said Adler, "we have seen that we need to help citizens participate in the self-awareness of a city. In New York City, there are about eight million residents and 300,000 city employees, and there is no possible way that 300,000 people can know as much about the law, architecture, design, sanitation and other facets of the city as eight million citizens. So how do we get the eight million experts in our city to participate in governing decisions?"[180]

Of course, that's not to say that Adler's got the platform cooperative gospel or wants to open-source local government. He's just a more perceptive and reasonable person than average in the belly of the Beast. But plenty of others are explicitly working in that direction. And people like Adler may be the ones we can actually bargain with if sufficient pressure is brought to bear from the outside.

Among others pushing towards a more participatory decision-making process is Jennifer Pahlka of Code For America. She suggests, specifically, "prioritizing users and their needs" over the needs of the institution, and not distinguishing between service delivery and citizen engagement as if they are two different things." Much of what she suggests is quite modest: streamlining citizen paperwork requirements for various functions, putting forms online, and sending out smartphone notifications notifying citizens in a particular issue of public hearings or policy debates.[181]

Stefaan Verhulst of GovLab takes it a step further, turning citizens into "'co-designers, co-producers and co-learners,' with government in developing better city services and processes..." And Chief Technology Officer Peter Marx of the City of Los Angeles strongly hints at something like the commons model as an alternative to both state and "private" sector.

> "Private is held up as the panacea of wonderfulness and innovation, and government is cast as an old, gray, stodgy, never-changing bureaucracy. That's the running vernacular. I think the reality, like all such stereotypes, is rather different. We all know that private [sector] is not a panacea and that government is changing continuously." We need to get beyond this simplistic narrative, he asserted, and recognize that self-organized citizen engagement as a third force—neither public nor private—holds great promise.[182]

And the end goal, David Bollier argues, "is for city governments to regard their resources as

179   David Bollier, *The City as Platform: How Digital Networks Are Changing Urban Life and Governance* (Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute, 2016), p. 2.
180   *Ibid.*, p. 4.
181   *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
182   *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

flexible, open platforms that welcome citizen-led innovation, rather than government clinging to brittle systems of centralized, rule-driven control."[183] City government must be seen, not as something that does things, but as a platform that enables citizens to do things in cooperation with one another. Policy-making must become an open source activity carried out collaboratively by citizens, and facilitated by city government as a platform.

Components: Municipal Facilities as Commons. Using city government buildings, including public school buildings, along with buildings owned by other community institutions like churches and universities, as hubs for community organizations and activities, is a common theme among decentralist writers like Paul Goodman. Not only can vacant and unused buildings be transformed into community hubs or incorporated into community land trusts for use as housing, but the idle capacity of buildings in use (like public school buildings in off hours and during summer) can serve as community centers.

Sandrina Burkhardt mentions repurposing libraries as common spaces.

> Establish the library as an access center that encourages a resource based, shared economy. Think of 3D printing, (wood/sewing/workshops), a library of things and even a library of people (where people meet and share and help each other who would usually not engage with one another)...;

> A city needs physical spaces to meet and engage with one another on their own agenda, outside of event-based settings that target only specific subgroups of the cities population....[184]

In Montreal, the post-1960s secularization and associated drop in church attendance has resulted in roughly one-sixth of churches being desacralized and sold. Some of these have been transformed into community hubs or cultural centers.[185] In Naples, the municipal government

> recognised seven public properties occupied by citizens and associations as "emerging commons and environments of civic development" through a Council Resolution in 2016. All these buildings were public properties, which had for years been in a terrible state of neglect and decay. Citizens and social movements transformed these spaces into places "that create social capital in terms of collective uses with a commons value."[186]

This was a radical departure from the normal practice of selling unused city buildings to the highest bidder to maximize revenue, and was censured by conservative elements in the government for condoning irregular and illegal public occupation of the buildings.

The Church of England has had similar recent experience with repurposing under-utilized buildings. A number of functions, including sub-post offices and community banks, are housed within church buildings. Some church spires house routers for free community wireless.[187]

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183   *Ibid.*, p. 12.
184   Sandrina Burkhardt, "Repurposing Public Spaces in a City as a Commons: the Library," in *The City as Commons: A Policy Reader*. Edited by Jose Maria Ramos (Melbourne: Commons Transition Coalition, 2016), p. 25.
185   Ruby Irene Pratka, "Quebec's Vacant Church Buildings Resurrected as Community Spaces," Shareable, March 14, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/quebecs-vacant-church-buildings-resurrected-as-community-spaces>.
186   Marta Cillero, "What Makes an Empty Building in Naples a Commons?" P2P Foundation Blog, May 8, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/what-makes-an-empty-building-in-naples-a-commons/2017/05/08>.
187   Stir to Action, "What Does it Mean to Unlock the Next Economy?" *Shareable*, June 7, 2017 <https://www.shareable.net/blog/what-does-it-mean-to-unlock-the-next-economy>.

Components: Community Broadband. Municipal broadband is an especially important example of how municipal property can contribute to a commons-based city ecology. In many places the city's fiber-optic infrastructure for supporting public utilities or communications by government bodies has sufficient excess capacity to provide Internet service superior to that provided by telecommunications companies (which isn't saying a lot). A good example of where this has actually been done is the municipal broadband in Chattanooga, affectionately known by locals as "The Gig." Telecom corporations have fought efforts like the Gig tooth and nail, and in many states have successfully lobbied for legislation to prevent entities like cities, public utilities, and school systems from using the spare capacity of their fiber-optic networks to provide cheap, high-quality broadband service.

But the potential for providing such service, even with only existing infrastructure, is enormous. As it is, many communities have followed Chattanooga's model—Longmont and Santa Monica in California, just to name a couple. Although Colorado law prohibits municipal broadband, localities are allowed to opt out by referendum; as a result, some 26 cities and counties have decided to permit municipal Internet service.[188] Absent industry-written regulatory prohibitions, most large and medium-sized cities in the United States could probably provide high-quality Internet service.

There are many examples of direct, cooperative action by citizens themselves to create Internet service with acceptable levels of quality where none is currently provided.

In rural southern Minnesota over two dozen small towns in four counties, faced with lousy service and slow connections from the corporate service providers, pooled their resources in the RS Fiber project, which is expected to provide Internet service to 6,000 households.[189] All across the country, rural electric cooperatives are deciding to provide high-speed Internet service to their members as well.[190]

And of course, this isn't limited to the United States. For example, the Exarchia neighborhood in Athens is organizing Internet service for refugee communities in the surrounding area.[191]

Tying it All Together. In this section we've seen a wide variety of municipal initiatives illustrating bits and pieces of a full-blown, commons-based municipal economy. But the different parts are seldom all seen together in the same place. What's needed is to integrate them into a fully fleshed-out ecosystem of information and land commons, cohousing, community gardens, worker and consumer cooperatives, makerspaces and community workshops, coworking spaces, sharing infrastructures to maximize capacity utilization of capital goods and reduce the need for ownership, infrastructures for sharing or bartering skills like child care, local barter currencies and mutual credit, and so forth.

Imagine a municipal government making a concerted effort to pursue these major commons-

188　Nathan Schneider, "A people-owned internet exists. Here is what it looks like," *P2P Foundation Blog*, August 8, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/a-people-owned-internet-exists-here-is-what-it-looks-like/2017/08/08>.
189　Ben DeJarnette, "Tired of Waiting for Corporate High-Speed Internet, Minnesota Farm Towns Build Their Own," *Yes! Magazine*, Aug. 3, 2016 <http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/tired-of-waiting-for-corporate-high-speed-internet-minnesota-farm-towns-build-their-own-20160803>.
190　Nathan Schneider, *op. cit.*
191　Dan Bateyko, "Athens' community wifi project Exarcheia Net brings internet to refugee housing projects," *P2P Foundation Blog*, June 8, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/athens-community-wifi-project-exarcheia-net-brings-internet-refugee-housing-projects/2017/06/08>.

oriented policies in a serious manner:

- Inalienable community land trusts incorporating all city- & county-owned land (including tax seizures)[192]
- Municipal wireless piggybacked on spare capacity of city- and utility-owned fiber optic infrastructure (e.g. Chattanooga's GIG)
- Opening the idle capacity of all municipal buildings for use as community hubs
- Open sourcing of all city, county- and public university/community college-funded research, and use of only FOSS office software

Together they would form the kernel of a significant commons-based local economy.

III. Federation

Post-capitalist cities can't make it alone. For one thing, they're often surrounded by hostile national governments like Trump's. And we have all too many historical examples of isolated radical urban regimes like the Paris Commune being crushed by reactionary governments. The accession to power of reactionary political movements at the level of the nation-state has created a political vacuum. A federation of commons-based municipal movements can occupy the political space at the level of the nation-state, as a challenge to the forces in control of the national government. "We must create a political space so that we can work with others to challenge, with greater strength and from more areas, the democratic deficit imposed by states and markets.... Given that we face adversaries who cross borders, our response must also be transnational."193 To quote Michel Bauwens et al, we must create

> translocal and transnational structures that would aim to have global effects and change the power balance on the planet. The only way to achieve systemic change at the planetary level is to build counter-power, i.e. alternative global governance. The transnational capitalist class must feel that its power is curtailed, not just by nation-states that organize themselves internationally, but by transnational forces representing the global commoners and their livelihood organizations.194

We confront problems that are global in scale and seek to supplant a global system. Horizontal ties create institutional depth and resilience. And by engaging in mutual support, radical municipalities provide political cover for one another and force hostile governments to deal with them as a cohesive global force. Federated cities are not only the ideal organizational platform for supporting a commons-based society on a global scale, but also serve as a political vehicle through global civil society – the "Second Superpower" – can speak with a united voice against hostile states. [Ronfeldt on difference of EZLN, Mexico confronted by global public opinion]

Bollier regards legal recognition of commons rights as one of the most central principles of any federal network of municipal platforms. His main analogy is the Charter of the Forest and the Magna Carta under King John, which recognized rights of common access to what had previously been regarded as royal property.[195] In my opinion, this would mean today, at the very least, reorganizing all

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192   Of course indigent people whose homes were seized for property tax arrears should have first right of refusal for staying in their homes under CLT jurisdiction.
193   Baird and Hughes, *op. cit.*
194   Bauwens *et al*., *Commons Transition and P2P*.
195   Bollier, *Transnational Republics of Commoning*, pp. 25-26.

municipal property, all publicly owned natural resources, and all publicly owned information as self-managed commons with universal access rights.

Theory. Both Vincent and Elinor Ostrom, in working out their theory of polycentricity, develop concepts that are relevant to cities and federations of cities with commons-based economic models, and do so in language that is quite evocative for our purposes (e.g. Vincent on "overlapping jurisdictions" and Elinor on nested governance bodies). But their specific application of the ideas, and the context in which they develop them, is of little relevance. Vincent Ostrom and Charles Tiebout write completely in the context of traditional American civics book federalism at the municipal level, while Elinor's conception of nested institutions involves different scale institutions all of a kind (namely natural resource governance bodies coordinating smaller commons within a larger bio-region). Their concepts are developed in far more relevant terms for our purposes—as we shall see below—by other thinkers.

Murray Bookchin contrasts his municipalism with the mainstream of anarchist communism, which has "regarded the Federation of communes as an ideal to be achieved after an insurrection...." He, on the other hand, regards such confederal bodies as a means by which to "create a revolutionary culture" and prepare for confrontation with the state, as well as coordinating that struggle.[196] The confederations of municipal assemblies "by their very existence... challenge the legitimacy of the state and statist forms of power."[197]

In Bookchin's model the confederal bodies created by cities, much like Bauwens's Partner State, are hardly statelike at all. He describes the regional councils' functions as solely "to adjudicate differences and undertake strictly administrative tasks."[198]

> The members of these confederal councils are strictly mandated, recallable, and responsible to the assemblies that choose them for the purpose of coordinating and administering the policies formulated by the assemblies themselves. Their function is thus a purely administrative and practical one, not a policymaking one like the function of representatives in republican systems of government.
>
> A confederalist view involves a clear distinction between policymaking and the coordination and execution of adopted policies. Policymaking is exclusively the right of popular community assemblies based on the practices of participatory democracy.[199]

The example of the Continental Congress in the American Revolution is instructive. Although conventional history books treat it as a kind of national proto-government, its closest resemblance was to the political councils of an alliance like the North Atlantic Council. Like the latter body, it had no powers of legislation or taxation over the member states; its resolutions were only recommendations to be passed into law by the state legislatures on their own authority, and its budget (including funding for the Continental Army) disbursed only revenues contributed by the state governments, which they had collected on their own authority.

David Harvey positions himself against Bookchin as offering a more centralized and hierarchical form of networked or federal coordination between a large number of cities, although the specific ways in which his model would be more centralized and hierarchical seem rather unclear.

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196   Bookchin, "A Politics for the Twenty-First Century," in *The Next Revolution*, p. 64.
197   Bookchin, "The Communalist Project" (2002), in *The Next Revolution*, p. 18.
198   Bookchin, "The Ecological Crisis" (1992), in *The Next Revolution*, p. 40.
199   Bookchin, "The Meaning of Confederalism" (1990), in *The Next Revolution*, pp. 74-75.

Now, however, principles are frequently advanced—such as "horizontality " and "non-hierarchy"—or visions of radical democracy and the governance of the commons, that can work for small groups but are impossible to operationalize at the scale of a metropolitan region, let alone for the 7 billion people who now inhabit planet earth. Programmatic priorities are dogmatically articulated, such as the abolition of the state, as if no alternative form of territorial governance would ever be necessary or valuable. Even the venerable social anarchist and anti-statist Murray Bookchin, with his theory of confederalism, vigorously advocates the need for some territorial governance, without which the Zapatistas, just to take one recent example, would also certainly have met with death and defeat: though often falsely represented as being totally non-hierarchical and "horizontalist" in their organizational structure, the Zapatistas do make decisions through democratically selected delegates and officers.[200]

He gives Ostrom's and Bookchin's proposals for coordination mechanisms a respectful reading and acknowledges some value to them, but in the end, rejects them as inadequate. But underlying his critique are a number of apparently unexamined—and faulty—assumptions on his part.

He fails to adequately take into account economic and technological trends that are making for terminal crises of capitalism, and a phase transition to some kind of post-capitalist successor society. For example, he sees the alternative economy, solidarity economy or counter-institutions as unable to survive and grow as a viable alternative so long as they exist within a larger capitalist economy. Rather, they will be forced into a larger capitalist division of labor and engage in self-exploitation. This makes some sort of concerted policy necessary for achieving political control of the larger system.

> The main reason for the long-run failure of such initiatives to aggregate into some global alternative to capitalism is simple enough. All enterprises operating in a capitalist economy are subject to "the coercive laws of competition" that undergird the capitalist laws of value production and realization. If somebody makes a similar product to me at a lower cost, then I either go out of business, or adapt my production practices to increase my productivity, or lower my costs of labor, intermediate goods and raw materials. While small and localized enterprises can work under the radar and beyond the reach of the laws of competition (acquiring the status of local monopolies, for example), most cannot. So worker-controlled or cooperative enterprises tend at some point to mimic their capitalistic competitors, and the more they do so the less distinctive their practices become. Indeed, it can all too easily happen that workers end up in a condition of collective self-exploitation that is every bit as repressive as that which capital imposes.[201]

This ignores the likelihood that the larger capitalist economy itself is a system in its end phase, and the emergence of alternatives to supplant it is part of that process. Large-scale capital is losing its capability of extracting value, and of co-opting and incorporating alternatives into its structure.

Likewise, Harvey argues, commons-based institutions work well on an individual level but cannot be scaled into a meta-system by simply extrapolating into a larger version of the local commons. He acknowledges Elinor Ostrom's attempt to address this problem with a series of nested institutions for dealing with matters beyond the capability of a local commons.

> ...[M]ost of her [Ostrom's] examples involved as few as a hundred or so appropriators. Anything much larger (her largest example was 15,000 people), she found, required a "nested" structure of decision-making, because direct negotiation between all individuals was impossible. This implies

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200   Harvey, p. 125.
201   *Ibid.*, p. 122.

that nested, and therefore in some sense "hierarchical" forms of organization are needed to address large-scale problems such as global warming. Unfortunately, the term "hierarchy" is anathema in conventional thinking (Ostrom avoids it), and virulently unpopular with much of the left these days. The only politically correct form of organization in many radical circles is non-state, non-hierarchical, and horizontal. To avoid the implication that some sorts of nested hierarchical arrangements might be necessary, the question of how to manage the commons at large as opposed to small and local scales (for example, the global population problem that was Hardin's concern) tends to be evaded.

There is, dearly, an analytically difficult "scale problem" at work here that needs (but does not receive) careful evaluation. The possibilities for sensible management of common property resources that exist at one scale (such as shared water rights between one hundred farmers in a small river basin) do not and cannot carry over to problems such as global warming, or even to the regional diffusion of acid deposition from power stations. As we "jump scales" (as geographers like to put it), so the whole nature of the commons problem and the prospects of finding a solution change dramatically. What looks like a good way to resolve problems at one scale does not hold at another scale. Even worse, patently good solutions at one scale (the "local," say) do not necessarily aggregate up (or cascade down) to make for good solutions at another scale (the global, for example)...

This is also, incidentally, why the valuable lessons gained from the collective organization of small-scale solidarity economies along common-property lines cannot translate into global solutions without resort to "nested" and therefore hierarchical organizational forms. Unfortunately, as already noted, the idea of hierarchy is anathema to many segments of the oppositional left these days. A fetishism of organizational preference (pure horizontality, for example) all too often stands in the way of exploring appropriate and effective solutions. Just to be clear, I am not saying horizontality is bad—indeed, I think it an excellent objective—but that we should acknowledge its limits as a hegemonic organizational principle, and be prepared to go far beyond it when necessary.[202]

He mentions, as well, her work with her husband Vincent on polycentric governance models.

We can here learn something of the recent history of commons thinking in more conventional circles. Ostrom, for example, while dwelling in her Nobel Prize lecture on small-scale cases, takes refuge in her subtitle of "Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems" to suggest she has some solution to commons issues across a variety of scales. In fact, all she does is gesture hopefully to the idea that "when a common-pool resource is closely connected to a larger social-ecological system, governance activities are organized in multiple nested layers," but without resort, she insists, to any monocentric hierarchical structure.

The crucial problem here is to figure out how a polycentric governance system (or something analogous, such as Murray Bookchin's confederation of libertarian municipalities) might actually work, and to make sure that it does not mask something very different. This question is one that bedevils not only Ostrom's arguments, but a very wide range of radical left communalist proposals to address the problem of the commons. For this reason, it is very important to get the critique right.

In a paper prepared for a conference on Global Climate Change, Ostrom elaborated further on the nature of the argument which rests, conveniently for us, on results from a long-term study of the delivery of public goods in municipal regions. The assumption had long been that the consolidation of public service provision into large-scale metropolitan forms of government, as opposed to their

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202   *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

organization into numerous seemingly chaotic local administrations, would improve efficiency and effectiveness. But the studies convincingly showed this not to be so. The reasons all boiled down to how much easier it was to organize and enforce collective and cooperative action with strong participation of local inhabitants in smaller jurisdictions, and to the fact that the capacity for participation diminished rapidly with larger sizes of administrative units....

"While large-scale units were part of effective governance of metropolitan regions," Ostrom concludes, "small and medium-scale units were also necessary components." The constructive role of these smaller units, she argued, "needs to be seriously rethought." The question then arises of how relations between the smaller units might be structured. The answer, says Vincent Ostrom, is as a "polycentric order" in which "many elements are capable of making mutual adjustments ordering their relationships with one another within a general system of rules where each element acts with independence of other elements."

So what is wrong with this picture? This whole argument has its roots in the so-called "Tiebout hypothesis:" What Tiebout proposed was a fragmented metropolis in which many jurisdictions would each offer a particular local tax regime and a particular bundle of public goods to prospective residents, who would "vote with their feet" and chose that particular mix of taxes and services that suited their own needs and preferences. At first glance, the proposal seems very attractive. The problem is that the richer you are the more easily you can vote with your feet and pay the entry price of property and land costs. Superior public education may be provided at the cost of high property prices and taxes, but the poor are deprived of access to the superior public education and are condemned to live in a poor jurisdiction with poor public education. The resultant reproduction of class privilege and power through polycentric governance fits neatly into neoliberal class strategies of social reproduction.[203]

...From a critical perspective it is possible to see precisely why Ostrom's preference for "polycentric government" must fail, along with Bookchin's "confederal" municipal libertarianism. "If the whole society were to be organized as a confederation of autonomous municipalities," writes Iris Young, "then what would prevent the development of large-scale inequality and injustice among communities and thereby the oppression of individuals who do not live in the more privileged and more powerful communities? " The only way to avoid such outcomes is for some higher authority both to mandate and enforce those cross-municipality transfers that would roughly equalize at least opportunities, and perhaps outcomes as well. This is what Murray Bookchin's confederal system of autonomous municipalities would almost certainly be unable to achieve, to the degree that this level of governance is barred from making policy and firmly restricted to the administration and governance of things, and effectively barred from the governance of people. The only way that general rules of, say, redistribution of wealth between municipalities can be established is either by democratic consensus (which, we know from historical experience, is unlikely to be voluntarily and informally arrived at) or by citizens as democratic subjects with powers of decision at different levels with in a structure of hierarchical governance. To be sure, there is no reason why all power should flow downwards in such a hierarchy, and mechanisms can surely be devised to prevent dictatorship or authoritarianism. But the plain fact is that certain problems of, for example, the common wealth, only become visible at particular scales, and it is only appropriate that democratic decisions be made at those scales.[204]

First, a caveat. As I understand them, the Ostroms' proposals for polycentric governance involve

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203   *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.
204   *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

more than simply competing local jurisdictions. They also involve a whole ecosystem of partially overlapping and interlocking institutions.

Nevertheless, their polycentric model is admittedly too close to liberal civics book liberalism. As I argued above, an ecology of nested and overlapping bodies would likely be closer to the fictional model of Roy Morrison's *Eco Civilization 2140*.

A truly polycentric order, arguably, can achieve coordination by overlapping memberships—the equivalent of "interlocking directorates" in the corporate world. As for standing federal bodies or platforms, the only thing distinguishing them from "hierarchy" is the power of command. It is still possible to coordinate policies through such bodies, functionally oriented and established on an ad hoc basis.

Such federal platforms amount to Bauwens's Partner State—which we already considered at the municipal level in Part Two—on a regional or global scale. He describes how a federated global platform might support participating cities by providing a support infrastructure, along with the ecology of other layers superimposed on it.

- The first layer is the cosmo-local institutional layer. Imagine global for-benefit associations which support the provisioning of infrastructures for urban and territorial commoning. These are structured as global public-commons partnerships, sustained by leagues of cities which are co-dependent and co-motivated to support these new infrastructures and overcome the fragmentation of effort that benefits the most extractive and centralized 'netarchical' firms. Instead, these infrastructural commons organizations co-support MuniRide, MuniBnB, and other applications necessary to commonify urban provisioning systems. These are the global "protocol cooperative" governance organizations.

- The second layer consists of the actual global depositories of the commons applications themselves, a global technical infrastructure for open sourcing provisioning systems. They consists of what is globally common, but allow contextualized local adaptations, which in turn can serve as innovations and examples for other locales. These are the actual 'protocol cooperatives', in their concrete manifestation as usable infrastructure.

- The third layer are the actual local (urban, territorial, bioregional) platform cooperatives, i.e. the local commons-based mechanisms that deliver access to services and exchange platforms, for the mutualized used of these provisioning systems. This is the layer where the Amsterdam FairBnb and the MuniRide application of the city of Ghent, organize the services for the local population and their visitors. It is where houses and cars are effectively shared.

- The potential fourth layer is the actual production-based open cooperatives, where distributed manufacturing of goods and services produces the actual material services that can be shared and mutualized on the platform cooperatives.[205]

Second, Harvey ignores the technological basis for Negri's and Hardt's autonomist model of Exodus: The growing share of value creation and wealth that come from social and human capital and networked inter-relationships, rather than the plant and equipment owned by capitalists, and the radical ephemeralization and cheapening of physical production technology itself and its increasing diffusion into the social sphere, means that accumulated capital becomes less and less relevant, and economic

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205   Michel Bauwens, "Towards a global infrastructure for commons-based provisioning," *P2P Foundation Blog*, Oct. 12, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/towards-a-global-infrastructure-for-commons-based-provisioning/2017/10/12>.

bootstrapping on limited resources becomes correspondingly more feasible.

Third, in considering the problem of inequality, Harvey underestimates the degree to which *existing* inequality results from the *upward* transfer of wealth from poor to rich areas through imperialist extraction of resources and enforcement of assorted rents on "intellectual property," absentee-owned arable land, and so forth. A shift to relocalized production and to circular economies with cradle-to-cradle use of existing resources will reduce the importance of inter-community resource flows altogether.

Also, a platform with no police power or command authority of its own may still have the ability to collect significant contributions from member/participants, even if not as large as Harvey would like. Harvey, in my opinion, underestimates the degree to which solidaritarian culture would prevail in a post-capitalist order.

Harvey also suggests that successful post-capitalist development at the urban level will ultimately be defeated or derailed by neoliberal reformism if it is not part of a larger, coordinated struggle.

> ...[W]hat the Bolivian case... demonstrates..., is that any anti-capitalist drive mobilized through successive urban rebellions has to be consolidated at some point at a far higher scale of generality, lest it all lapse back at the state level into parliamentary and constitutional reformism that can do little more than reconstitute neoliberalism within the interstices of continuing imperial domination. This poses more general questions not only of the state and state institutional arrangements of law, policing, and administration, but of the state system within which all states are embedded. Much of the contemporary left, unfortunately, is reluctant to pose these questions even as it struggles from time to time to come up with some form of macro-organization, such as Murray Bookchin's radical "confederalism" or Elinor Ostrom's mildly reformist "polycentric governance; which looks suspiciously like a state system, sounds like a state system, and will almost surely act like a state system no matter what the intent of its proponents might be....[206]

The problem here, again, is that Harvey assumes global capitalism and the state system exist on a more or less stable basis, with radical alternatives existing within them only on an unstable basis absent concerted action to undermine the capitalist state system. The possibility that the existing system is in terminal decline, and that the rise of federated post-capitalist cities to supplant it is part of an ongoing phase transition process in which capitalism becomes progressively less capable of co-opting or defeating its challengers—that the process of Exodus is in fact *driven by* the structural failure of neoliberalism and its inability to preserve itself through reform—fundamentally alters the strategic picture.

> Even the venerable social anarchist and anti-statist Murray Bookchin, with his theory of confederalism, vigorously advocates the need for some territorial governance, without which the Zapatistas, just to take one recent example, would also certainly have met with death and defeat: though often falsely represented as being totally non-hierarchical and "horizontalist" in their organizational structure, the Zapatistas do make decisions through democratically selected delegates and officers. Other groups focus their efforts on the recuperation of ancient and indigenous notions of the rights of nature, or insist that issues of gender, racism, anti-colonialism, or indigeneity must be prioritized above, if not preclude, the pursuit of an anti-capitalist politics. All of this conflicts with the dominant self-perception within these social movements, which tends to believe that there is no guiding or overarching organizational theory, but simply a set of intuitive and flexible

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206   Harvey, pp. 152-152.

practices that arise "naturally" out of given situations.[207]

Others have raised similar critiques of horizontalist or confederalist approaches to relations between libertarian socialist communities. For example, Jeremy Brecher, in a critique of Bookchin's *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* for the left-communist periodical *Root and Branch*, raised the question of how Bookchin's confederalist society would prevent Troy, New York from dumping untreated wastes in the Hudson and contaminating the drinking water of downstream cities like Perth Amboy.[208]

Bookchin argued in response that most of the complexities involved in economic coordination above the local level are artificial, and would drastically shrink in scale absent the systemic pressures towards unnecessary complexity. Pollution exists, for the most part, because of an artificially high level of geographic division of labor and a reliance on virgin raw materials. This can be solved

> by reducing or eliminating commercial bureaucracies, needless reliance on goods from abroad that can be produced by recycling at home, and the underutilization of local resources that are now ignored because they are not "competitively" priced: in short, eliminating the vast paraphernalia of goods and services that may be indispensable to profit-making and competition but not to the rational distribution of goods in a cooperative society. It would take no great wisdom or array of computers to show with even a grain of imagination how the present "global" system of production and distribution can be simplified and still provide a decent standard of living for everybody.[209]

> ...Not only does an excessive division of labor make for overorganization in the form of huge bureaucracies and tremendous expenditures of resources in transporting materials over great distances, it reduces the possibilities of effectively recycling wastes, avoiding pollution that may have its source in highly concentrated industrial and population centers, and making sound use of local or regional raw materials.

> It is not very difficult to show, item by item, how the international division of labor can be greatly attenuated by using local and regional resources, implementing ecotechnologies, rescaling human consumption along rational... lines, and emphasizing quality production that provides lasting (instead of throwaway) means of life.

In short, Brecher's objections (and Harvey's, I would argue) "rest on an unconscious acceptance of the economic status quo."[210]

Despite all his misgivings, Harvey ultimately leaves open eirenic possibilities for conciliation with other, more horizontal theorists, suggesting their areas of commonality are greater than their differences.

> But what matters here is not the particular mix of institutional arrangements—the enclosures here, the extensions of a variety of collective and common-property arrangements there—but that the unified effect of political action address the spiraling degradation of labor and land resources (including the resources embedded in the "second nature" of the built environment) at the hands of capital. In this effort, the "rich mix of instrumentalities" that Elinor Ostrom begins to identify—not only public and private, but collective and associational, nested, hierarchical and horizontal, exclusionary and open—will all have a key role to play in finding ways to organize production, distribution, exchange, and consumption in order to meet human wants and needs on an anti-

207   *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.
208   Bookchin, "The Meaning of Confederalism" (1990), in *The Next Revolution*, p. 68.
209 Bookchin, "The Ecological Crisis and the Need to Remake Society" (1992), in *The Next Revolution*, pp. 37-38.
210   Bookchin, "The Meaning of Confederalism," pp. 68-69, 71.

capitalist basis. This rich mix is not given, but has to be constructed.[211]

> Progressive anti-capitalist forces can more easily mobilize to leap forward into global coordinations via urban networks that may be hierarchical but not monocentric, corporatist but nevertheless democratic, egalitarian and horizontal, systemically nested and federated (imagine a league of socialist cities much as the Hanseatic League of old became the network that nourished the powers of merchant capitalism), internally discordant and contested, but solidarious against capitalist class power—and, above all, deeply engaged in the struggle to undermine and eventually overthrow the power of the capitalist laws of value on the world market to dictate the social relations under which we work and live.[212]

Real-World Steps. There are already nascent movements to creating federal networks of cities, both within individual nation-states and across national borders, without the intermediation of national governments.

> developments around inter-municipalism and transnational municipalism are already taking place— and even accelerating. Organizations within many cities are already banding together through coalitions such as the Right to the City Alliance (RTTC), which has put together a progressive platform around issues as wide-ranging as the commons, economic, indigenous and environmental justice, police harassment and migrant rights.
>
> Under the banner of "Democracy and Participation," the RTTC proposes "the right of community control and decision-making over the planning and governance of the cities where we live and work, with full transparency and accountability, including the right to public information without interrogation." Another core component of the RTTC strategy is internationalism, described in their mission statement as "the right to support and build solidarity between cities across national boundaries, without station intervention."
>
> A semblance of such internationalism can be found in programs such as Sister Cities International (Rome actually declared Kobane a sister city) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), which is effectively an international league of municipalities. Relatedly, there are also state-level municipal leagues, and a National League of Cities (NLC). Issue targeted inter-city organizations include 100 Resilient Cities, the Creative Cities Network, International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN), and a number of others. In effect, municipalism, municipalization and regionalism is already being mainstreamed.[213]

In Europe, cities controlled by citizen-based parties and undertaking commons initiatives (particularly in Spain) are setting up collaborative platforms to coordinate their agendas and promote the commons-based political and economic model in other European cities (particularly in France).

> CommonsPolis — a civil society initiative to create dialogue between progressive municipalist movements, city governments, and European citizens — held an encounter described as "a common space for exchange; cities in transition and citizen struggles" in Paris on November 24, 2016, at the offices of the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation (FPH) and with the collaboration of the Utopia Movement. Spanish activists from a variety of regions were invited to share with their French counterparts their recent experiences of entering the municipal public administrations, and their

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211   Harvey, p. 87.
212   Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, p. 153.
213   Alexander Kolokotronis, "Is America ready for a municipalist movement?" *ROAR Magazine*, November 27, 2016 <https://roarmag.org/essays/us-anti-fascism-municipalism/>.

efforts to make the political process more participatory and inclusive for citizens. The event was held in Spanish (Castellano) and French, with simultaneous interpretation.[214]

The Barcelona en Comú movement, in particular, has been quite active in urban federations at the Spanish, European and worldwide levels.

> *BComú* is not a 'local' arm of a bigger political party, and does not exist merely as a branch of a broader strategy to control the central political institutions of the nation-state. Rather, *BComú* is one in a series of independent citizen platforms that have looked to occupy municipal institutions in an effort to bring about progressive social change.

> From A Coruña to Valencia, Madrid and Zaragoza, these municipal movements are the direct effort of citizens rejecting the old mode of doing politics, and starting to effect change where they live. Instead of a national party structure, they coordinate through a "network of rebel cities" across Spain. Most immediately, this means coordinating press releases and actively learning from how one another engage with urban problems.

> ...*BComú* has established an international committee tasked with promoting and sharing its experiences abroad, whilst learning from other 'rebel' cities such as Naples and Messina. Barcelona has been active in international forums, promoting the "right to the city" at the recent UN Habitat III conference, and taking a leadership role in the Global Network of Cities, Local and Regional Governments.

> These moves look to bypass the national scale where possible, prefiguring *post-national* networks of urban solidarity and cooperation. Recent visits of the First Deputy Mayor to the Colombian cities of Medellín and Bogotá also suggest that links are being made on a supranational scale.

> One of the most tangible outcomes of this level of supranational urban organizing was the strong role played by cities in the rejection of the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP). As hosts of a meeting entitled 'Local Authorities and the New Generation of Free Trade Agreements' in April 2016, *BComú* led on the agreement of the 'Barcelona Declaration', with more than 40 cities committing to the rejection of TTIP.[215]

Right to the City began in 2007 as a response to urban gentrification and mass evictions of marginalized communities from their historic neighborhoods. It was heavily influenced by

> "Le Droite à la Ville" (*Right to the City*) a book published in 1968 by French intellectual and philosopher Henri Lefebvre. In the sphere of human rights, this powerful idea was adopted by the World Urban Forum and elaborated into the World Charter of the Right to the City in 2004. Building from this powerful idea, international principles, and forward looking grassroots organizing, the Right to the City Alliance was established in January 2007.[216]

Its political platform centers largely on social justice and economic equity:

> **Land for People vs. Land for Speculation.** The right to land and housing that is free from market speculation and that serves the interests of community building, sustainable economies, and cultural and political space.

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214   Ana Marie Utratel, "Lessons on Creating Collaborative Political Platforms from Spanish Activists," *Shareable*, Jan. 3, 2017 <http://www.shareable.net/blog/lessons-on-creating-collaborative-political-platforms-from-spanish-activists>.
215   Stacco Troncoso, "Eight lessons from Barcelona en Comú on how to Take Back Control," *P2P Foundation Blog*, April 17 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/eight-lessons-from-barcelona-en-comu-on-how-to-take-back-control/2017/04/17>.
216   "Mission and History," Right to the City website <http://righttothecity.org/about/mission-history/>.

Land Ownership. The right to permanent ownership of urban territories for public use.

Economic Justice. The right of working class communities of color, women, queer and transgender people to an economy that serves their interests

Indigenous Justice. The right of First Nation indigenous people to their ancestral lands that have historical or spiritual significance, regardless of state borders and urban or rural settings.

Environmental Justice. The right to sustainable and healthy neighborhoods & workplaces, healing, quality health care, and reparations for the legacy of toxic abuses such as brown fields, cancer clusters, and superfund sites.

Freedom from Police & State Harassment. The right to safe neighborhoods and protection from police, INS/ICE, and vigilante repression, which has historically targeted communities of color, women, queer and transgender people.

Immigrant Justice. The right of equal access to housing, employment, and public services regardless of race, ethnicity, and immigration status and without the threat of deportation by landlords, ICE, or employers.

Services and Community Institutions. The right of working class communities of color to transportation, infrastructure, and services that reflect and support their cultural and social integrity.

Democracy and Participation. The right of community control and decision making over the planning and governance of the cities where we live and work, with full transparency and accountability, including the right to public information without interrogation.

Reparations. The right of working class communities of color to economic reciprocity and restoration from all local, national, and transnational institutions that have exploited and/or displaced the local economy.

Internationalism. The right to support and build solidarity between cities across national boundaries, without state intervention.

Rural Justice. The right of rural people to economically healthy and stable communities that are protected from environmental degradation and economic pressures that force migration to urban areas.[217]

Right to the City holds urban congresses in different cities, as well as engaging in local activism that includes building united fronts with a variety of social justice organizations, labor movements, etc., at the local level.[218]

The Transition Towns movement has been around for some time as an attempt to coordinate municipal policies for energy transition. This movement, which began with the town of Totnes in the UK, is described by John Robb (a specialist on networked/open-source resistance movements) as an "open-source insurgency": a virally replicable, open-source model for resilient communities capable of surviving the Peak Oil transition. As of April 2008, some six hundred towns around the world had implemented Transition Town projects.[219]

The Transition Towns Wiki[220] includes, among many other things, a Transition Initiatives Primer (a

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217   *Ibid.*
218   "Our Work," Right to the City website <http://righttothecity.org/about/our-work/>.
219   John Robb, "Resilient Communities: Transition Towns," *Global Guerrillas*, April 7, 2008
         <http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2008/04/transition-town.html>.
220   <http://transitiontowns.org/>.

51 pp. pdf file), a guide to starting a Transition Town initiative in a local community.[221] It has also published a print book, *The Transition Handbook*.[222]

Totnes is the site of Rob Hopkins' original Transition Town initiative, and a model for the subsequent global movement.

> The thinking behind [Transition Town Totnes] is simply that a town using much less energy and resources than currently consumed could, if properly planned for and designed, be more resilient, more abundant and more pleasurable than the present.
>
> Given the likely disruptions ahead resulting from Peak Oil and Climate Change, a resilient community— a community that is self-reliant for the greatest possible number of its needs—will be infinitely better prepared than existing communities with their total dependence on heavily globalised systems for food, energy, transportation, health, and housing.
>
> Through 2007, the project will continue to develop an Energy Descent Action Plan for Totnes, designing a positive timetabled way down from the oil peak.[223]

The most complete Energy Descent Action Plan is that of Kinsale. It assumes a scenario in which Kinsale in 2021 has half the energy inputs as in 2005. It includes detailed targets and step-by-step programs, for a wide range of areas of local economic life, by which energy consumption per unit of output may be reduced and local inputs substituted for outside imports on a sustainable basis. In the area of food, for example, it envisions a shift to local market gardening as the primary source of vegetables and a large expansion in the amount of land dedicated to community-supported agriculture. By 2021, the plan says, most ornamental landscaping will likely be replaced with fruit trees and other edible plants, and the lawnmower will be as obsolete as the buggy whip. In housing, the plan calls for a shift to local materials, vernacular building techniques, and passive solar design. The plan also recommends the use of local currency systems, skill exchange networks, volunteer time banks, and barter and freecycling networks as a way to put local producers and consumers in contact with one another.[224]

As major parts of the West are experiencing the rise of reactionary national governments, it becomes more important to bypass the nation-state altogether and build counter-institutions at the local level that are federated globally. This is the argument of Baird and Hughes above, as we saw.

> There are a number of reasons why city governments are particularly well-placed to lead resistance to Trumpism. Most obviously, much of the popular opposition to Trump is physically located in cities. With their younger, more ethnically diverse demographics, urban voters swung heavily against Trump and, in fact, played a large role in handing Hillary Clinton the majority of the national popular vote.
>
> Not only did Clinton win 31 of the nation's 35 largest cities, but she beat Trump by 59% to 35% in all cities with populations of over 50,000. In most of urban America, then, there are progressive

221   Ben Brangwyn and Rob Hopkins, *Transition Initiatives Primer: becoming a Transition Town, City, District, Village, Community or even Island* (Version 26—August 12, 2008) <http://transitionnetwork.org/Primer/TransitionInitiativesPrimer.pdf>.
222   Rob Hopkins, *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience* (Green Books) <http://transitiontowns.org/TransitionNetwork/TransitionHandbook>.
223   *Ibid.*, p. 10.
224   *Kinsale 2021: An Energy Descent Action Plan*. Version.1. 2005. By Students of Kinsale Further Education College. Edited by Rob Hopkins <http://transitionculture.org/wpcontent/uploads/members/KinsaleEnergyDescentActionPlan.pdf>

majorities that can be harnessed to challenge Trump's toxic discourse and policy agenda.[225]

We've seen largely uncoordinated instances of resistance at the state and municipal level since Trump's election as president. A number of U.S. cities have announced their intentions not only to maintain "sanctuary city" status, but to destroy databases that might be used to identify undocumented immigrants for sanction.

> *With Trump in the White House and GOP majorities in the House and Senate, we must look to cities to protect civil liberties and build progressive alternatives from the bottom up.*

> "I want New Yorkers to know: we have a lot of tools at our disposal; we're going to use them. And we're not going to take anything lying down." On the morning after Donald Trump was declared the victor in the US presidential election, Mayor of New York, Bill de Blasio, wasted no time in signaling his intention to use the city government as a bulwark against the policy agenda of the President-Elect. The move made one thing very clear; with the Republican Party holding the House and Senate, and at least one Supreme Court nomination in the pipeline, it will fall to America's cities and local leaders to act as the institutional frontline of resistance against the Trump administration....

> Bringing the political conversation back to the local level also has a particular advantage in the current context; the city provides a frame with which to challenge the rise of xenophobic nationalism. Cities are spaces in which we can talk about reclaiming popular sovereignty for a demos other than the nation, where we can reimagine identity and belonging based on participation in civic life rather than the passport we hold.

> By working as a network, cities can turn what would have been isolated acts of resistance into a national movement with a multiplier effect. Networks like Local Progress, a network of progressive local elected officials, allow local leaders to exchange policy ideas, develop joint strategies, and speak with a united voice on the national stage.

> On the issue of racial equity, an essential question given the racist nature of Trump's campaign and policy platform, cities across the US have already started to mobilize to combat Islamophobia, as part of the American Leaders Against Hate and Anti-Muslim Bigotry Campaign, a joint project of Local Progress and the Young Elected Officials Action Network. The campaign pushes for local policies to tackle hate crimes against Muslims, including the monitoring of religious bullying in schools, intercultural education programmes, and council resolutions condemning Islamophobia and declaring support for Muslim communities.[226]

Following Trump's election, the number of sanctuary churches in the United States doubled from an estimated 400 to 800. However, it's doubtful that ICE under a Trump administration will continue the Obama policy of largely avoiding invasions of sensitive locations like churches. That raises the issue of direct action as another line of defense.

Sanctuary in the Streets was organized under Obama, in response to the rising number of deportations of Central American refugees—which was overwhelming the physical resources of sanctuary churches.

> It mobilizes volunteers to interrupt immigration raids in progress, based on the idea that the members of a church—not just its physical structure—can create sanctuary for vulnerable members of their congregation. To facilitate the campaign, the New Sanctuary Movement set up two hotlines

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225   Baird and Hughes, *op. cit.*
226   *Ibid.*

to report ICE activity—one in Spanish and one in Indonesian. At first, the lines received few calls.

Then, the day after the election, there was a huge surge of interest, says Peter Pedemonti, director of the New Sanctuary Movement. "Amidst the despair and disbelief, it was a really concrete campaign that was ready on day one."

As of April, 1,800 people have signed up to participate in Sanctuary in the Streets, up from 65 people last year. With those numbers, the group hopes to be able to deploy volunteers to immigrant-heavy neighborhoods within five minutes of a distress call. Since Trump took office, the hotline has received dozens of calls. In order to be involved in direct action, volunteers must go through a nonviolence training. "We want people not only to know what to do when they get there, but the spirit and tone of what we're doing—that discipline of nonviolence," explains Pedemonti.

Early one morning in March, Turcios got a call from a woman whose neighbor's home was being raided by ICE. Turcios, a small group of volunteers and several other neighbors hurried over and surrounded the home, taking photos and asking agents why they were detaining the man. The crowd grew until the ICE agents said the young man wasn't the person they were looking for and left. Turcios counts this as an encouraging victory.[227]

On both an American national level and a global level, cities including a major part of the world population have committed to continued pursuit of COP21 carbon emissions-reduction targets.

Climate change will be another contentious issue over the coming years. While much has been made of the policy implications of Trump's claim that global warming was invented by the Chinese, it has been local administrations, rather than the federal government, that have led on the environmental agenda over recent years. Sixty two cities are already committed to meet or exceed the emissions targets announced by the federal government and many of the largest cities in the country, including New York, Chicago and Atlanta have set emissions reductions goals of 80 percent or higher by 2050.[228]

In the last couple of years, the proliferation of commons-based municipal movements in Europe has been followed by the rise of transnational commons bodies.

In the market sphere, generative, transnational ethical entrepreneurial coalitions can work together to strengthen the commons while establishing a viable economy for their contributory communities. As there is chamber of commerce for orthodox enterprises, the new commons-oriented coalitions could be locally represented by territorial Chambers of the Commons. The chamber would advocate on commons issues, congregate interested actors and help shape the sector by giving voice and lobbying power to those who are co-creating commons and livelihoods for commoners.

These would not work alone, though, as the burgeoning commons-oriented political movements described above can also self-organize in analogous Assemblies of the Commons. These assemblies would bring together all those who contribute and maintain common goods and serve as a forum to exchange experiences and bring commonality into diversity, organize events, support the social and political forces who uphold the commons and engage in public-commons partnerships. They would

227   Yana Kunichoff, "A revitalized sanctuary movement is spreading to unexpected places, resisting the threats posed by Trump's presidency," *In These Times*, June 2017 <http://inthesetimes.com/features/sanctuary_cities_movement_trump.html>.
228   Kate Shea Baird, Enric Bárcena, Xavi Ferrer and Laura Roth, "Why the municipalist movement must be internationalist," Medium, Dec. 21, 2016 <https://medium.com/@BComuGlobal/why-the-municipal-movement-must-be-internationalist-fc290bf779f3#.1xyt2ewty>.

be connected to the Chamber of the Commons, as well as to other assemblies, allowing operations at a larger scale and form regional, national, transnational federations. The European Commons Assembly is an early example of this....

In November 2016, a group of 150 commoners from all over Europe gathered in Brussels to lay the foundations for a united and strong European commons movement. The European Commons Assembly was born. Building on collective work on policy proposals in the preceding weeks, the Assembly took over the European Parliament for a 3.5 hour session exploring the ECA as a platform and the commons as a powerful paradigm for policy making.[229]

Another European Commons Assembly is scheduled in Madrid for November 2017. It is intended to take the accomplishments of the 2016 Brussels Assembly to a higher level.

ECA Madrid and the collaboration with Transeuropa 2017 provides the energy to move the process further along. It is becoming clear that the ECA needs to offer an added value beyond ideational affiliation. Assembly members will have to co-create the resources and practices that will strengthen the movement. That is why the idea of "production" figures so prominently in the discourse around this Assembly. The focus of the assembly this time will be on urban commons, taking advantage of ECAs presence in Madrid and Spain to examine strategies, failed and successful, to promote the commons politically and in public policy, including citizens in this process.

In Madrid working groups will focus on specific themes of the commons in the city, to create shareable outputs that bring these local experiences to a broader audience. This creation will nourish the toolbox of the ECA, in turn helping other efforts to support and scale commoning. This opportunity will allow initiatives to learn from and share with each other, attaining a level of technical depth and understanding that is necessary for change, deepening the European political agenda for the commons. At the same time, what is at stake goes beyond the specific themes and issues that color the commons movement.[230]

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Cover. Clifford Harper, Vision 4/Autonomous Terrace, in Peter Harper et al., *Radical Technology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), p. 168.

Clifford Harper, Vision 5/Community Workshop, in *Ibid.* p. 200.

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Jeff Warren and Caroline Woolard, Solidarity Economy (2016).

229   Bauwens et al, *Commons Transition and P2P: a primer*, pp. 39-41.
230   Sophie Bloemen and Nicole Leonard, "The European Commons Assembly in Madrid for a Renewed Political Force in Europe," *P2P Foundation Blog*, Oct. 16, 2017 <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/european-commons-assembly-madrid-renewed-political-force-europe/2017/10/16>