

## Anarchist economic practices in a 'capitalist' society: Some implications for organisation and the future of work

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Adopting an 'anarchist squint' (Scott, 2014: xii) this paper aims to expose, subvert, and undermine the dominant *prima facie* assumption that we live under a 'neoliberal capitalist' order. It achieves this primarily by drawing attention to the pervasive nature of alternative economic modes of human organisation within western society. Celebrating an ontology of economic difference, the paper argues that many of the existing 'alternative' modes of human organisation enacted through everyday material, social and emotional coping strategies are demonstrably and recognisably *anarchistic*. Far from being a residual and marginal realm, these anarchist forms of organisation – underpinned by mutual aid, reciprocity, co-operation, collaboration and inclusion – are found to be deeply woven into the fabric of everyday 'capitalist' life. Exploring the key implications for the organisation of everyday work, particularly at the household and community level, an economic future is envisaged in which anarchist modes of organisation flourish. The paper concludes by discussing why anarchist forms of organising and organisation should be harnessed, and how this might occur.

Political, economic and social institutions are crumbling; the social structure, having become uninhabitable, is hindering, even preventing the development of the seeds which are being propagated within its damaged walls and being brought forth around them.

The need for a new life becomes apparent. (Kropotkin, 2002b)

An anarchist society, which organises itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, relations differences and their superstitious separatism. (Ward, 1982: 14)

## Introduction

Throughout the 1990s and for much of the 2000s, an unshakable *belief* in neo-liberal capitalism as a giant totalising system, all-powerful and all-pervasive was widespread across mainstream academic, policy-making and media discourse.<sup>1</sup> The implications of such uncritical alignment to this capitalo-centric economic discourse can be seen by paying critical attention to the way in which capitalism has powerfully colonised, conditioned, bound and blinded the economic imagination to the diverse and more radical possibilities that political economy can offer contemporary society. As Shutt (2009:1) observes, ‘the belief that laissez-faire capitalism has so clearly demonstrated its superiority over all imaginable economic systems that any deviation from it is ultimately untenable and unsuitable’. Thus, whether framing, discussing, envisaging, organising or imagining ‘the economic’, capitalo-centrism privileges capitalism as the ‘quintessential economic form’ (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 7). At the same time, positioning capitalism as the ascendant or aspirational North Star, necessitates presenting non-capitalist or ‘alternative’ economic forms of organisation as ‘an homogenous insufficiency rather than as positive and differentiated others’ (*ibid.*). Moreover, this rampant capitalist propaganda, reinforced by the mantra that *there is no alternative*, ensures that any questions concerning (alternative) economic reality/ies are considered as secondary, incidental, indulgent, and ultimately redundant. In the eyes of its supporters, a neoliberal capitalist world order has always been ‘the greatest’ show in town. Significantly, at a time of global neoliberal economic, environmental and political crisis, capitalism is aggressively re-presented as society’s least worst option. Duncombe (1997:6) captures the powerful implications of such a threat:

The powers that be do not sustain their legitimacy by convincing people that the current system is The Answer. That fiction would be too difficult to sustain in the face of so much evidence to the contrary. What they must do, and what they have done very effectively, is convince the mass of people that there is no alternative.

Somewhat predictably therefore, the recent legitimisation crisis of neoliberal capitalism across western economies, triggered by the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, *appears* to have been sufficiently limited and temporary (Dale, 2012). The global financial crisis certainly did not lead to an imminent collapse or implosion that was widely predicted at the time. In a post-crisis United Kingdom for example, a ‘business-as-usual’ approach was quickly re-instated. As Cumbers (2012: 2) noted, once ‘the initial shock of the financial crisis wore off... it became clear that the grip of free market philosophy on the political mainstream was as

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strong as ever'. Indeed it becomes necessary to face a deeper truth: that the reoccurring crises of capitalism have consistently proved inherently productive, particularly for neoliberal forms of governance. This apparent paradox can be more properly conceptualised by moving away from representations of neoliberal capitalism as a monolithic entity, and instead recognising neoliberalism's hybridised and mutated organisational nature. As Peck (2010: 106) argues:

For all the ideological purity of free-market rhetoric, for all the machinic logic of neoclassical economics, this means that the practice of neoliberal statecraft is inescapably, and profoundly, marked by compromise, calculation, and contradiction. There is no blueprint. There is not even a map. Crises themselves need not be fatal for this mutable, mongrel model of governance, for to some degree or another neoliberalism has always been a creature of crisis.

So, does this mean that we are forever condemned to 'living in a global system of neoliberal state capitalism that is simultaneously bankrupt and not bankrupt but to which there is no alternative'? (Beck, 2012: 4) No, it does not. Any economic discourse that artificially privileges the centrality of capitalism in western society, and argues that there are no viable alternatives to capitalism, is woefully inadequate on two fronts. Not only does it reveal a worrying lack of awareness and understanding of the rich, pluralistic, heterodox ways in which the economies of the western world are already organised, but it betrays a poverty of imagination about what forms of economic organisation could be harnessed in the future.

Drawing particular attention to the alternative economic literature that has gained traction from the 1990s, the paper challenges a capitalo-centrist discourse by demonstrating that already existing non-capitalist modes of organising are still pervasive in the western world. Contributing to this literature, the paper asserts that many of these 'non-capitalist' forms of work and organisation are examples of anarchy in action. Having first discussed anarchism and anarchist praxis in the context of this paper, a Whole Life Economic framework is introduced in order to better recognise the multiple and fluid ways in which different economic taxonomies overlap in society. This, together with qualitative findings that have emerged from Household Work Practice Surveys in the UK, are used to underpin the argument that not only are anarchist modes of organisation central in western society, they are also extremely desirable. The final section of the paper, while problematising the immunity of 'the alternative' to capitalist valorisation, indicates how anarchist forms of organisation could be – and are being – harnessed and made more visible at this present time.

## Recognising alternative economic and social modes of organising and organisation in western 'neoliberal-capitalist' society

First world countries generally, and western societies in particular are perceived to occupy the heartlands of advanced capitalism. Yet capitalo-centric narratives of the triumphant ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism have long been fiercely contested and resisted by a wide range of critical and radical research (e.g. Burns et al, 2004; Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006a; 2006b; 2008; Fuller et al, 2010; Leyshon et al, 2003; Williams, 2003; 2004; 2005; 2011; White and Williams, 2010; 2012a; 2012b). Much of this research has evidenced the significant limits of capitalism by drawing attention to the pervasive geographies (extent, character, social embeddedness) of non-commodified or 'alternative' forms of monetary exchange. Evidence gained through Time Use Surveys have been particularly influential when assessing and measuring the relative importance of non-market work (see Gershuny and Jones, 1987; Murgatroyd and Neuburger, 1997; Dumontier and Pan Ke Shon, 1999; Williams 2010). Summarising the findings of this research in the UK, France and the USA between 1965-1995, Burns et al (2004: 52) found that, 'over half of all the time that people spend working is unpaid'. Moreover, work beyond employment has 'over the past 30 years... taken up a greater share of the total time that we spend working' (*ibid.*). One of the key implications emerging from these findings was that 'the tendency to give prominence to formal employment while placing all else in one catch-all "non-formal" category has to be seriously questioned'. (Burns et. al, 2004: 53)

Presented with a pluralistic reading of contemporary economic life, questions of how to better conceptualise, capture, frame, present, value and *organise* non-capitalist economies have been repeatedly asked. Here, the work of Gibson-Graham (1996; 2006a; 2006b; 2008) through their attempts to 'map' this diverse economy, and thereby prepare critical spaces for 'the alternative' has been of great influence. In highlighting potential exit points from capitalism, they encouraged individuals to *think* differently about (their) economic pasts, present and futures thus allow the possibility of *enacting* alternative economics, to enable ourselves and others to strengthen and build non-capitalist enterprises and spaces'. (Gibson-Graham, 2006a: ix) This economic ontology of difference and diversity has been represented through their "A Diverse Economy" (Figure 1) for example. Here a tripartite reading of *transactions* (market, alternative market, non-market); *labour* (wage, alternative paid, unpaid) and *enterprise* (capitalist; alternative capitalist; noncapitalist).

Transactions	Labour	Enterprise
<i>Market</i>	<i>Wage</i>	<i>Capitalist</i>
<i>Alternative market</i>	<i>Alternative wage</i>	<i>Alternative capitalist</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sale of public goods</li> <li>• Ethical 'fair-trade' markets</li> <li>• Local trading systems</li> <li>• Alternative currencies</li> <li>• Underground market</li> <li>• Co-op exchange</li> <li>• Barter</li> <li>• Informal market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-employed</li> <li>• Cooperative</li> <li>• Indentured</li> <li>• Reciprocal labour</li> <li>• In kind</li> <li>• Work for welfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State enterprise</li> <li>• Green capitalist</li> <li>• Socially responsible firm</li> <li>• Non-profit</li> </ul>
<i>Non-market</i>	<i>Unpaid</i>	<i>Non-capitalist</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household flows</li> <li>• Gift giving</li> <li>• Indigenous exchange</li> <li>• State allocations</li> <li>• State appropriations</li> <li>• Gleaning</li> <li>• Hunting, fishing, gathering</li> <li>• Theft, poaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housework</li> <li>• Family care</li> <li>• Neighbourhood work</li> <li>• Volunteer</li> <li>• Self-provisioning labour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communal</li> <li>• Independent</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Gibson-Graham A Diverse Economy. Source: adapted from Gibson-Graham (2008: 616, Figure 1). Note: The figure should be read down the columns, not across the rows.

Addressing these 'Diverse Economies' columns, with the multiplicity of non-market, unpaid and non-capitalist forms of organising at all levels of society brings firmly to mind the words of the anarchist geographer Colin Ward (1982: 14): 'anarchism... is a description of a mode of human organisation, rooted in the experience of everyday life, which operates side by side with, and in spite of the dominant authoritarian trends of our society'. But what did he mean by the use of anarchism in this context? It is to this – exploring what anarchism as a theory of organisation means – which the paper now turns its attention toward.

## Anarchism: A theory of organisation

Writing without any hint of hyperbole, the philosopher Simon Critchley argued that: 'Of all the political visions of another social order or another way of conceiving and practising social relations, anarchism has proved the most condemned, and yet the most resilient. Outlawed, repudiated, ridiculed by liberals, by neoliberals, but most of all, of course by Marxists... the anarchist idea simply will not die' (2013: 2). Unquestionably, anarchism has long been (ab)used as a synonym for violence, nihilism, chaos and dis-order. Elsewhere, more sympathetic interpretations have dismissed anarchist visions as romantic, unrealistic and utopian. Unfortunately, such is the strength of the propaganda, and its stranglehold on the popular imagination with regard to this political philosophy and its adherents, that any arguments in favour of advocating anarchism must first seek to transgress these polluted soils of prejudice and ignorance.

As a sweeping generalisation, anarchism stands *against* violence, oppression, exploitation and all unjustified forms of 'archy', and thus stands *for* freedom, autonomy, mutuality, peace, solidarity and organisation. Indeed, as Springer (forthcoming) argues:

anarchism refuses chaos by creating new forms of organisation that break with hierarchy and embrace egalitarianism. In fact, the symbol for anarchism (A), is meant to suggest that anarchy is the mother of order, an idea advanced by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first person to ever to identify as an anarchist.

It is important to note that, while also 'supporting a variety of utopian visions' (Kinna, 2012: 7), anarchist praxis is very much focused on the present. In this respect Graeber (2004: 7), for example, notes that anarchism has traditionally had little concern for High Theory, owing to the fact, that

it is primarily concerned with forms of practice; it insists, before anything else, that one's means must be consonant with one's ends; one cannot create freedom through authoritarian means; in fact, as much as possible, one must oneself, in one's relations with one's friends and allies, embody the society one wishes to create. (Graeber, 2004: 7)

Thus when exploring *anarchist* modes of organising and organisation it is those organic, multiple cultures of self-organisation which are given particular importance and status. Indeed when setting out to explore anarchist forms of organisation perhaps necessitates what Scott (2012: xii) refers to as seeing like an anarchist, or adopting an anarchist squint:

if you put on anarchist glasses and look at the history of popular movements, revolutions, ordinary politics, and the state from that angle, certain insights will

appear that are obscured from almost any other angle. It will also become apparent that anarchist principles are active in the aspirations and political action of people who have never heard of anarchism or anarchist philosophy.

Adopting an anarchist squint, will also in turn point toward *anarchist solutions* which – focusing on the household and the community in particular – will be considered toward the end of this paper. Ultimately, a guiding spirit of anarchism in this context of organisation is one which is 'premised upon co-operative and egalitarian forms of social, political, and economic organization, where ever-evolving and autonomous spatialities may flourish' (Springer, 2012: 1606).

In many ways, anarchists are committed to finding (new) creative solutions for contemporary problems. In an age of 'no alternatives' (to capitalism) drawing attention toward the presence of ordinary anarchist (non-hierarchical, voluntary) forms of organising within society, which are known and familiar to most people, is incredibly powerful when agitating for change. As Ward (1982: 5) notes:

Many years of attempting to be an anarchist propagandist have convinced me that we win over our fellow citizens to anarchist ideas, precisely through drawing upon the common experience of the informal, transient, self-organising networks of relationships that in fact make the human community possible, rather than through the rejection of existing society as a whole in favour of some future society where some different kind of humanity will live in perfect harmony.

Thus, rather than a fearful leap into the unknown, in advocating a mode of human organisation that is central within society, anarchism at once presents tangible, recognisable and desirable exits with which to further 'escape' a capitalist society.

## In search of anarchist modes of organisation and practice

Kropotkin, writing in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* found that:

Although the destruction of mutual-aid institutions has been going on in practice and theory for full three or four hundred years, hundreds of millions of men [sic] continue to live under such institutions; they piously maintain them and endeavour to reconstitute them where they have ceased to exist. (1901 [1998]: 184)

Anarchists have long identified a diversity range of anarchist praxis within human society, past and present. Particular spaces of attention have focused on the provision of (alternative) forms of housing, education, work and employment, leisure, and community gardening (e.g. Ward, 1976). Viewed collectively, these findings have been of inestimable value in bringing to light the pervasive nature of forms of self-help and mutual-aid that are evident in everyday life economies

of the western world. They exist despite being hidden, neglected, overlooked, and marginalised in a world that tells itself it is 'capitalist'. Such a wonderful range of anarchist modes of organising – which are underpinned by mutuality, autonomy, solidarity, self-management and self-organisation – forms an impressive rebuttal to orthodox economic accounts as what motivates economic organisation in society. Mainstream economics (with its monstrous chimera of Rational Economic Man) being after all, 'the science of self-interest, of how to best accommodate individual behavior by means of markets and the commodification of human relations' (Lutz, 1999: ix).

In search of the presence of anarchist modes of organisation and practice, the paper will shortly turn attention to the empirical data presented by the UK Household Work Practice Survey. Before then, a more nuanced organisational economic framework than the Gibson-Graham representation highlighted in (Figure 1) is considered. The example drawn on in Figure 2 is adapted from Williams and Nadin's (2010: 57) "Whole Life Economies" perspective, which itself is a framework that expanded upon a Total Social Organisation of Labour schema put forward by Williams (2009; 2011). When interpreting this Whole Life Economic framework, it is important to recognise that anarchist praxis can *potentially* be present within any economic taxonomy, not least those where it may be least expected (e.g. informal support and guidance given to another colleague in a formal capitalist firm). Equally, anarchist praxis can potentially be absent within any economic taxonomy and within any given space, including those where it is most often anticipated. For example, when focusing on the household and community, it is imperative that false differences, essentialist traps or misguided assumptions are avoided. These are complex spaces with the potential to empower and subjugate. Feminists have long problematised the idea that anything that occurs in 'the household' or 'the community' is necessarily anti-capitalist, progressive, or emancipatory. Indeed, the women's liberation movement sought to free women from the constraints of patriarchal household relations (e.g. Berhmann, 1973); and the 'wages for housework' campaign was a radical (though unmet) demand of women in the second wave feminist movement (see Federici, 1975; Lutz, 2007). Indeed, a great deal of attention continues to be made on the uneven gendered division of domestic labour and care work in contemporary society (e.g. Aassve et al, 2014; Kilkey et al, 2013; Weir, 2005; Windebank, 2012).

Similarly, questions which problematise the meaning of 'community' are also vital. For example, how does community aggregate people: who is included, and who excluded (Vishmidt, 2006)? How are authentic representations of the community created and contested (Ince, 2011)? What about communities which may be simultaneously highly communal, but also highly exclusionary and

unequal. Such a framework of communal organisation could be consistent with certain religious communities like the Mormons, the Mafia, urban street gangs and far right political groups such as the British National Party (see Ince, 2011; Schimmenti et al. 2014; Tita et al., 2005). Ultimately, it is important to be sensitive to the reality that multiple forms of alienation can be found *anywhere*. As Shukaitis and Graeber (2007: 31-32) argue:

Alienation in this sense is not just something that exists from a lack of control in one's workplace, or a process that divorces one from being able to control one's labor. Rather, as all of society and our social relations are creatively and mutually co-produced processes, alienation is lacking the ability to affect change within the social forms we live under and through. It is the subjective experience of living within structures of imagination warped and fractured by structural violence.

Acknowledging those tensions is important, and necessary, but it does not detract from the overall argument of the paper that the proliferation of experiments in more communal, self-organised, and thus overtly or potentially anarchist forms of activity should be recognised and celebrated. It is to the former – that of recognition – that the paper now considers.

Rejecting the rarely contested dichotomies that are conventionally used to divide types of economic organisation (either formal or informal, either paid or unpaid) and recognising the complex range of identities and relationships that underpin western economic modes of organisation, a Whole Life Economies approach holds several advantages over previous approaches to capturing economic diversity (Figure 2). Compared to Gibson-Graham's typology (Figure 1) for example, the work practices within the Whole Life Economic framework are more properly depicted along spectrums of relative, not absolute, difference. The horizontal axis differentiates between more formal and more informal types of work. The vertical axis between more monetised and less monetised forms of exchange. This framework also deliberately introduces incorporates hatched lines to depict each economic practice,

in order to show display how they are a borderless continuum, rather than separate practices, which overlap and merge into one another. The outcome is a vivid portrait of the seamless fluidity of economic practices and how they are not discrete but seamlessly entwined together. (Williams and Nadin, 2010: 57)

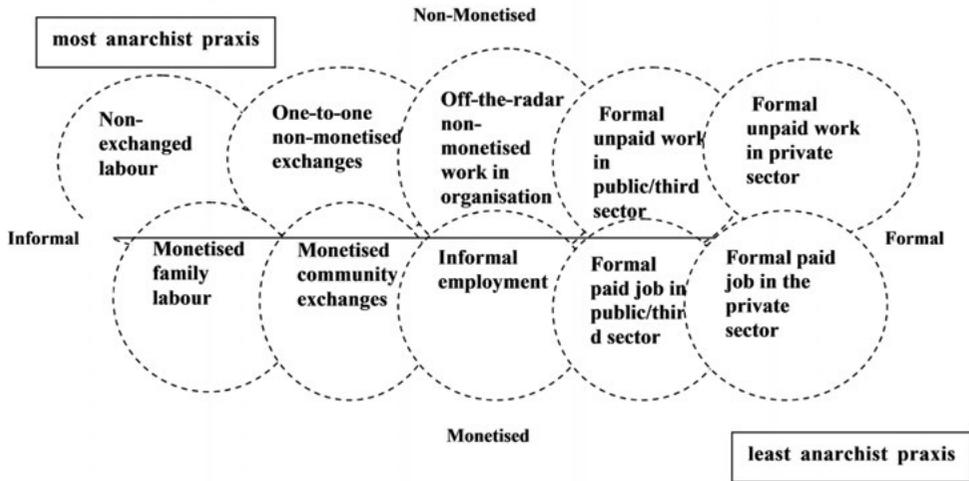


Figure 2: *Whole Life Economies: anarchist praxis and the diverse economies in with western world.* Source: Adapted from Williams and Nadin (2010: 57, Figure 1 A: taxonomy of the diverse economic practices in everyday economies).

The main adaptation made to previous Whole Life Economies frameworks, is the deliberate positioning of non-exchanged labour at the top-left hand side, and work considered within the ‘formal paid job in the private sector’ at the bottom-right. While still recognising the contextual and temporal natures of economic practices – systems of ‘archy’ and ‘anarchy’ could theoretically found within any taxonomy – a general interpretation of anarchist modes of organisation in this taxonomy would also capture these as a continuum. All things being equal, anarchist economic praxis will be most present toward the top-left hand side, and be more absent the further right the work practices appear along the spectrum. In this context two important caveats need to be made. First, though anarchist praxis can potentially be found even in the most unexpected of (formal work) practices and environments, anarchism remains deeply anticapitalist. In this way the paper actively rejects the perverse spectre of ‘anarcho-capitalism’, and refutes claims that individualist anarchism is capitalistic (Rothbard, 1973). Indeed McKay (2012: 574) makes an important point that:

In this context, the creation of “anarcho”-capitalism may be regarded as yet another tactic by capitalists to reinforce the public’s perception that there are no viable alternatives to capitalism, i.e. by claiming that “even anarchism implies capitalism”.

Secondly, it should also be remembered that anarchism has never just been limited to its critique of capitalism. Rather, anarchists have sought to emphasise forms of economic oppression that form part of a wider intersectional reading of domination and hierarchy (see Shannon et al, 2012; Socha, 2012). In this context,

how economic forms of practice intersect with other aspects of social domination (and vice versa) are also important sites to deconstruct, challenge and overcome

Drawing attention to the first two types of work practices in the Whole Life Economies framework (Figure 2), 'non-exchanged labour' and 'monetised family labour' are both forms of self-provisioning. They refer work conducted by household members for themselves or other members of the household. The vast majority of self-provisioning has been traditionally interpreted as non-exchanged labour. However there are important shades of grey between non-exchanged labour and more monetised forms of family labour (where the work is reimbursed in some way, perhaps through money, a gift-in-lieu of money, of in-kind reciprocal labour). For example there is often an explicit or tacit agreement within the household about how domestic jobs will be shared ('I'll do these jobs, you'll do those'). Examples can also be recollected where children have been encouraged to complete tasks (wash the car, tidy their room) to earn extra pocket money. Here, understanding the use, purpose, and value of money necessitates going well beyond accounts that focus on impersonal instrumental market calculations. With respect to the varieties of labour practices: money is not indicative of 'capitalist' relations between 'the buyer' and 'the seller'. In this context, it is worthwhile reflecting on Simmel's emphasis of 'the sociological character of money' (2004: 174) or Zelizer's research on the social differentiation of money. Here Zelizer (1997: 2) rejects the commonly held belief that money corrupts cultural meanings with materialist concerns by demonstrating:

how at each step in money's advance, people have reshaped their commercial transactions, introduced new distinctions, invented their own special forms of currency, earmarked money in ways that baffle market theorists, incorporated money into personalized webs of friendship, family relations, interactions with authorities, and forays through shops and businesses.

One to one non-monetised exchange – either one-way giving or two-way reciprocity (mutual aid) – concerns work 'exchanged on an unpaid basis within the extended family and social or neighbourhoods networks' (Williams and Windebank, 2003: 138). Monetised exchange with the community has long been appraised through a narrow economists' lens, drawing solely on profit-maximisation rationales, and thus considered as paid informal work. However, as Burns et al. (2004: 32) argue: 'although some paid informal exchange is very much akin to market-like exchange, a good deal is based on non-market motivations and social relations'. Therefore, understood more properly, monetised community exchanges are different from informal employment (though again they fade into/out of this work sphere), and have been also been referred to as paid favours, or "autonomous" paid informal work, where people engage in paid work mostly for friends, relatives and neighbours' (*ibid.*).

Informal employment refers mainly to ‘paid labour unregistered by or hidden from, the state for tax, social security and labour law purposes’ (Williams 2014: 109). Here, as Williams and Nadin (2010: 58) point out:

Two varieties exist: work wholly undeclared for tax, social, security and/or labor law purposes, which might be conducted either of a self-employed or waged basis, and under-declared formal employment where formal employees receive an undeclared “cash in an envelope” wage in addition to their declared wage. This latter category is fascinating because it directly challenges the standard notion that a job is either formal or informal, but cannot be both. Under-declared formal employment shows that a job can be both at the same time.

This overlaps with monetised community exchanges, as mentioned, in addition to ‘off-the-radar non monetised work in organisation’, as well as paid and unpaid jobs in the private, public and third sectors. Non-monetised work in these sectors could include unpaid internships, or unpaid work experiences.

At the furthest right-hand side of the taxonomy, there are two remaining labour practices, including ‘formal paid labour in the public and third sectors’. This further blurring of ‘public’ and ‘private’ realms reflects the 21<sup>st</sup>-century reality that many private sector organisations are not just ‘for-profit’ but are actively pursuing a sustainability agenda that promotes a triple bottom line: pursuing economic and environmental and social indicators (see Savitz, 2014). Similarly, public and third sector organisations are increasingly seen to incorporate a ‘for profit’ philosophy (as a means to reinvest into social and environmental aims) thus encroaching on economic space that was traditionally seen to be the domain of explicitly ‘for profit’ firms. Finally, located in the bottom right hand corner there are ‘formal paid jobs in the private sector’. This is defined as remunerated (paid) work in the private sector which is formally registered by the state. Conventionally this type of work practice has been depicted as ‘capitalist’, ‘waged’ and ‘market based’ (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 2008; see Figure 1).

As highlighted earlier, the Time Bank Survey’s focusing on the ‘capitalist economies’ of the western world have indicated that not only half of all the time that people spend working is undertaken on an unpaid basis, but that more time is being spent engaging in work outside of the ‘formal’ sector. In this context, focusing briefly on the empirical research undertaken in the UK through Household Work Practice Surveys helps generate more detailed evidence for the persistence of “anarchist” praxis in the everyday organisation of work. One key methodological advantage of this approach – unlike the Time Study – is that it encourages a richer, more complex *qualitative* understanding of economic participation at the household and community level to take place. In terms of examining household work practices, a wide range of household-based tasks were considered focused on property maintenance (e.g. painting, decorating,

plumbing, electrical work), property improvement (e.g. DIY, house insulation, building an extension), routine housework (e.g. washing dishes, ironing, cooking, shopping), gardening activities (e.g. sweeping paths, planting seeds, mowing the lawn), caring activities (child-minding, animal care, looking after property, giving lifts) vehicle maintenance (e.g. repairing and maintenance) and miscellaneous (e.g. borrowing tools or equipment).

Typically, against each of the tasks the interviewee was asked whether the task had been undertaken during the previous five years/year/month/week/day (depending on the activity). If conducted, first, they were asked in an open-ended manner who conducted the task (a household member, a relative living outside the household, a friend, neighbour, firm, landlord, etc.) and the last time that it had been undertaken. Second, to understand their motives to get the work done, they were asked why they chose that particular individual(s) to carry out the work, whether they were the household's first or preferred choice, and if money was not an issue would they have preferred to engage a (formal) professional individual, firm or company to carry out the task? Third, they were asked whether the person had been unpaid, paid or given a gift; and if paid whether it was 'cash-in-hand' or not and how a price had been agreed. Finally, they were asked why they had decided to get the work done using that source of labour so as to enable their motives to be understood. Table 1 draws on the findings of the household Work Practices Surveys carried in the UK towns of Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire; Chalford, Gloucestershire; Grimethorpe, South Yorkshire; Wigston, Cumbria; St. Blazey and Cornwall; and in the suburbs of Fulwood, Manor and Pitsmoor in Sheffield; and Basset/Chilworth, St. Mary's and Hightown, Southampton. A breakdown of the tasks completed by locality-type can be seen in Table 1.

% tasks last conducted using:	Deprived	Affluent	Deprived	Affluent	All areas
	urban	urban	rural	rural	
Non-Monetised labour					
Non-exchanged labour	76	72	67	63	70
One-to-one non monetised exchanges	4	2	8	7	6
Off the radar/non-monetised work in organisations	<1	0	<1	0	0

Formal unpaid work in public & third sector	<1	0	<1	0	<1
Formal unpaid work in private sector	<1	0	<1	<1	<1
Monetised labour					
Monetised family labour	1	<1	1	1	1
Monetised community exchange	3	1	4	1	3
Informal employment	2	8	<1	4	2
Formal paid job in public and third sector	2	2	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100
$\div^2$	102.89	29.87	89.76	28.88	-

*Table 1: Household Work Practice Survey: type of work practices used to conduct 44 domestic tasks: by locality-type. Note:  $|z| > 12.838$  in all cases, leading us to reject  $H_0$  within a 99.5 per cent confidence interval that there are no spatial variations in the sources of labour used to complete the 44 household services. Source: Adapted from White and Williams (2012) Table 5: Type of labour practices used to conduct 44 domestic tasks: by locality-type.*

That the household (non-exchange labour) was engaged to complete the majority of tasks considered, cannot be accounted for by appeal to ‘economic rationales’ (i.e. to save money). Indeed when asked ‘why’ that was the preferred source of labour, other non-economic rationales including ‘pleasure’, ‘choice’ and ‘ease’ were particularly prominent in both affluent and deprived neighbourhoods (see Williams, 2010). Though the research undertaken through the Household Work Practice survey has highlighted a distinct preference from respondents to undertake unpaid work for other family members, rather than wider social relations, this does not detract from the general and ordinary acts of support and solidarity that define and nurture meaningful relations between people. For example:

There are things people do in the contexts of certain kinds of friendship that are done without calculation. They are done because they are called for, or because they are unexpected, or because they would be useful to the friend. We all know of actions like these, and of the contexts in which they occur. They are compliments paid to a friend because they are momentarily vulnerable, the rides given because the friends' car is in the repair shop of the friend is drunk or because you are going that way anyway and it would be just as easy. They are the hospital visits, the childcare, the expertise shared, or the spontaneous gifts.

These activities cut against the figures of neoliberalism. (May, 2013: 67)

Cutting further against the figures of neoliberalism, by seeking ways to further enable the development and growth of anarchistic forms of work and organisation in 'capitalist' society, is the focus of the last section. In many respects this is about re-valuing and recognising those activities and relations that give meaning and purpose to the society around us. For, as Springer (2013: 14) argues, 'a new society in the shell of the old already exists; we only need to embrace it'.

### **Toward an anarchist society: Enabling the development and growth of anarchistic forms of work and organisation in a 'capitalist' society**

You may think in describing anarchism as a theory of organisation I am propounding a deliberate paradox: "anarchy" you may consider to be, by definition, the *opposite* of organisation. In fact, however, "anarchy" means the absence of government, the *absence* of authority. Can there be social organisation without authority, without government? The anarchists claim that there can be, and they also claim that it is desirable that there should be. (Ward, 2011 [1966]: 47)

At this point, it is worthwhile to pause and summarise the key arguments so far. The dominant capitulo-centric framing and imagining of the economic landscapes of the western world overlooks and underplays the central roles that 'non-capitalist' forms of economic organisation perform in everyday life. The central role that these 'non-capitalist' work practices play has been seen through research undertaken via Time Bank Surveys, and Households Work Practice Surveys. At the household and community level in particular the prominence of non-economic rationales (love, pleasure, enjoyment) that motivate individuals to engage in the domestic activities explored, can be seen interpreted – through an *anarchist squint* – as examples of anarchy in action.

Trying to imagine what this world will look like, by better recognising, valuing and enabling anarchist forms of organisation to flourish will be the focus of the

remaining part of the paper. Before that a more immediate question presents itself: ‘why should we harness anarchist activities?’

## Why we should actively harness anarchist activities

Anarchism, in all its forms, asserts and champions human freedom, common responsibility, voluntary cooperation, reciprocal altruism, and mutual aid. Reflecting the *social* nature of humans, these values forming a necessary moral base upon which individuals, communities and ultimately society itself can survive, prosper and evolve (see Burns et al., 2004; Chatterton, 2010; McKay, 2008). Importantly, as this paper has sought to demonstrate, rather than capitalism being all encompassing within modern life in western society, the prevalence of non-capitalist exchanges means that actually existing anarchism already exists for many. In other words,

once you begin to look at human society from an anarchist point of view you discover that the alternatives are already there, in the interstices of the dominant power structure. If you want to build a free society, the parts are all at hand. (Ward, 1982: 16)

Todd May (2010: 5) observed that ‘History is contingent; it leads necessarily neither to anarchism nor to anything else’. This claim simultaneously acts as a threat, a challenge, and an opportunity. Taken as a threat, calls to mind Hakin Bey’s question ‘HOW IS IT THAT “the world turned upside-down” always manages to Right itself? Why does reaction always follow revolution, like seasons in Hell?’ (2003: 97) Thus, the need to actively harness anarchist praxis in the here and now, becomes critical, particularly as the ‘post-crisis’ governance of state and market continues to wreak havoc on society. Certainly across the western world, the on-going ability of individuals working in local communities to secure their own sources of well-being: food, shelter, and clothing without recourse to ‘the market’ is constantly under attack. In the UK, and Europe more generally the vacuous appeal to Big Society and the roll-back of the state and market while implementing the ‘dangerous idea’ of austerity (see Blyth, 2013) have formed a toxic presence which continues to rip out the very (economic and social) support structures that currently hold together some of the most deprived and vulnerable communities in society. In this way – recognising the disproportionate impacts on communities and their ability to cope – focuses attention on recognising the important difference that come to light by problematising space. As de Acosta, argues:

Mutual aid, direct action, etc., may be happening all the time, but not in every place. Attention to differences in location – where, not when, anarchy manifests in all intensity – underlines the importance of space, geo-historical space, the

archipelago of territories that make us as we make them. For every practice implies and involves a territory... (considering territory as land and body... both as components as self). (2010: 31-32)

The active nature of resistance to these measurements and economic 'adjustments' – exemplified by, but not limited to Occupy!, the Spanish *indignados* and the Greek *aganaktismenoi* – and the brutal acts of state-sponsored violence and recrimination that were enacted against those (citizens) brave enough have spoken out, stands as another testament to the powerful mutual integration of political and economic elites through 'neoliberal governance'. Yet, these very acts of rebellion, and a call for new creative ways of *being*, evidenced by the the commitment new spaces of political and economic experimentation are so important in informing future possibilities.

Suggestions of how to help enable the development and growth of anarchistic forms of work and organisation will be put forward, before moving to the paper toward its conclusion.

### **Enabling the development and growth of anarchistic forms of work and organisation at the household and community level**

New ideas germinate everywhere, seeking to force their way into the light, to find an application in life; everywhere they are opposed by the inertia of those whose interest it is to maintain the old order; they suffocate in the stifling atmosphere of prejudice and traditions. (Kropotkin, 2002b: 35)

When considering how to develop existing and harness new informal, self-organising networks of relationships that take place within the household and within the community it is important to be aware of a range of uneven barriers to participation that previous research has drawn attention to (Burns et al, 2004; White, 2010). Focused on UK households for example these barriers include: a lack of money to be able to buy the necessary tools or equipment to complete the work at hand; a limited social networks with which to help/ ask help for completing work; a lack of relevant skills and experiences (in the household/ in the community) to successfully undertake non-routine tasks; lack of confidence to help others/ ask for help. When thinking about one-to-one non-monetised exchanges outside of the family, other social taboos including 'being a burden to others', 'false expectations/inappropriate gestures', 'being taken advantage of' and 'being unable to say no' have also been identified. While being sensitive to how these, and other barriers, may present themselves in complex and unpredictable ways it is fundamental to try to help empower communities to

come up with the solutions (or adapt good practice from elsewhere) wherever possible.

On a global level, there much cause for genuine optimism and belief when appreciating on the wonderfully vibrant and creative, the forms of organisation that are emerging from within communities across the world. When attention is paid to see and understand these “alternatives”, the dominant propaganda that we live under a “neoliberal capitalist” order becomes ever more hollow and shallow. As Gibson-Graham et al (2013: xxii) observed:

Something else that gives us hope is the extraordinary proliferation of economic experiments that are being conducted all around us. From local community gardens all over the world to Argentina’s factory takeovers, to the vibrant social economy in Europe, to African indigenous medicine markets, and to community currencies in Asia, economic experimentation abounds. There is no shortage of examples of alternative economic organizations and practices that are creating social and environmentally sustainable community economics.

Important attempts to begin to map out how the local and community framework of work and organisation and how these come together at wider scales (e.g. at the city level) have also been attempted, and should be encouraged. One of the most influential of these includes the Solidarity Economy in New York City (also see Figure 3):

The solidarity economy includes a wide array of economic practices and initiatives but they all share common values that stand in stark contrast to the values of the dominant economy.

Instead of enforcing a culture of cut-throat competition, they build cultures and communities of cooperation. Rather than isolating us from one another, they foster relationships of mutual support and solidarity. In place of centralized structures of control, they move us towards shared responsibility and democratic decision-making. Instead of imposing a single global monoculture, they strengthen the diversity of local cultures and environments. Instead of prioritizing profit over all else, they encourage a commitment to shared humanity best expressed in social, economic, and environmental justice. (SolidarityNYC, n.d.)

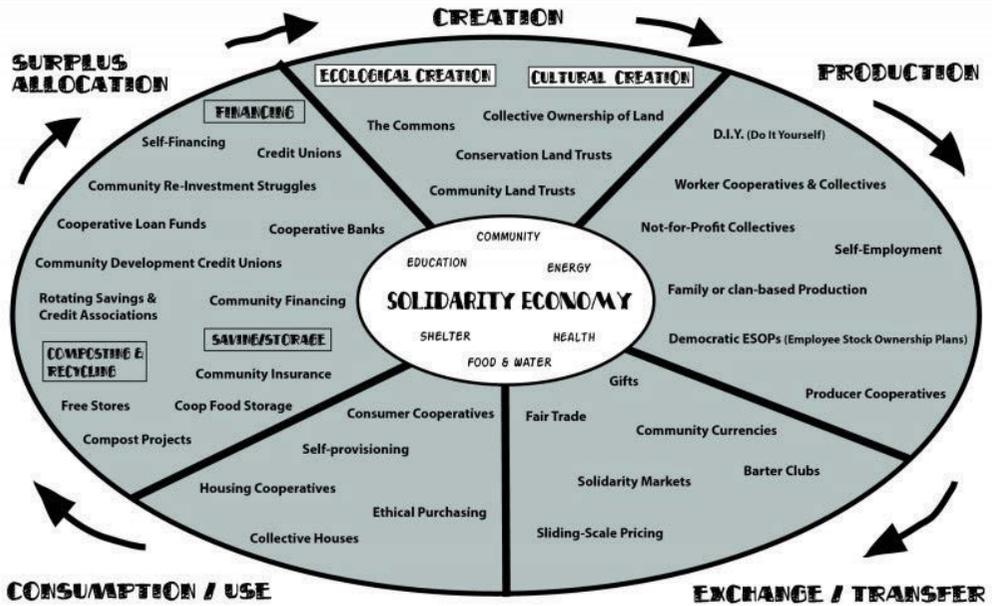


Figure 3: with caption *The Solidarity Economy NYC*. Source: Ethan Miller (n.d.).

Within the UK, a number of innovative alternative forms of community-based 'post-capitalist' economic spaces have emerged: including Local Exchange Trading Schemes (Williams, 1996; Pacione, 1997; North, 1999; Granger et al., 2010), time currencies and Time Banks (Seyfang, 2004) have risen to the challenge of re-localising social and economic identity; alleviating problems of social exclusion; restoring democratic participation (Hughes, 2005; Leyshon et al., 2003).

As a cautionary note, where these alternative modes of work and organisation (experiments of community currencies, barter clubs, D.I.Y. and so on) are present it is so important that appropriate forms and strategies of resistance are in place to ensure that the radical anarchist lines of flight moving society further away from 'capitalist' modes of organising are not compromised or blunted. This is a great challenge, as Bottici (2013: 29) points out:

If it is true that an anarchist turn has already begun, it is still far from going in the right direction. A freedom of equals has more chances today than ever, but it is still far from being realised. Capitalism's omnivorous capacity to overcome every challenge by incorporating its inner logic is the main threat.

Thus, these forms of alternative organisation represent both affirmative 'anarchist' spaces of hope *and* at the same time potential new grounds for capitalism appropriation. Hughes (2005: 502) for example, draws attention to research focused on alternative monetary forms which suggest that 'the

conventional [market mechanism of exchange] is both symbolically and materially always already in the alternative'. A diversity of social and economic experimentation are becomes incredibly relevant as a 'rational' and appropriate response when read against the 'varieties of capitalism' school of thought in heterodox political economy (e.g. Peck and Theodore, 2007). As Springer (2010: 1029) argues: it is 'imperative to contest the neoliberalism-as-monolithic argument for failing to recognise space and time as open and always becoming'. Thus responding to a time of economic crisis, flux and uncertainty, an anarchist radical commitment to organic possibilities, radical democracy and decentralisation is critical. In this sense anarchism works toward rousing, 'the spirit of initiative in individuals and in groups... [to]... create in their mutual relations a movement and a life based on the principles of free understanding – those that will understand that variety, conflict even, is life and that uniformity is death – they will work, not for future centuries, but in good earnest for the next revolution, for our own times' (Kropotkin, 2002a: 143).

Any support and encouragement that empowers (local) communities to decide on the most appropriate courses of action to challenge and confront the intersectional natures of (economic) oppression should be attempted. As Ward argues

*the theory that, given a common need, a collection of people will, by trial and error, by improvisation and experiment, evolve order out of the situation - this order being more durable and more closely related to their needs than any kind of externally imposed order. (1982: 28)*

Anarchist praxis actively rejects the desire to produce ready-made, ready-to-hand solutions through blueprints, maps and other essentialist commentary that prescribe how anarchistic forms of work and organisation must be developed and grown.

*...any anarchist social theory would have to reject self-consciously any trace of vanguardism. The role of intellectuals is most definitively not to form an elite that can arrive at the correct strategic analyses and then lead the masses to follow. (Graeber, 2004: 11)*

The opportunities that present themselves by recognising the complex array of economic realities in the everyday though is liberating. Society never has been, and never will be straitjacketed into a neoliberal capitalist future. In this 'open' ended reading of economics, the emphasis and respect that anarchism gives to experimentation, of diversity and difference becomes a key strength. These spaces are seen as having intrinsic value, worth and merit, irrespective of what, if anything, may follow from them. This approach also speaks to the successful

strategies of resistance, and forces for change in history: the quiet, faceless, anonymous everyday activism. As Scott notes:

the great emancipatory gains for human freedom have not been the result of orderly, institutional procedures but of disorderly, unpredictable, spontaneous action cracking open the social order from below. (2012: 141)

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Élisée Reclus (1894 [2013: 120]) wrote: 'But if anarchy is as old as humanity, those who represent it nevertheless bring something new to the world'. In so many ways, the pervasive nature of alternative economic modes of organising in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are testament to this living anarchist spirit; a spirit which is always in a process of unfurling and becoming; open to experimentation; embracing complexity; and finding unique inspiration in seemingly every-day, mundane and ordinary spaces and relations. Indeed, if this paper can encourage greater reflection on our own attitudes, actions and values in the first instance, and how we can better express solidarity, and support with those around us – in our homes, our communities, our places of work and all those rich anarchist spaces in-between – then it will have more than served its purpose.

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