A Capitalist world? Imagining, Envisioning and Enacting Futures of Work and Organization Centered around Informal and Diverse Economies

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Chapter 4 - A capitalist world? Imagining, envisioning and enacting futures of work and organisation centred around informal and diverse economies

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A dominant story told by mainstream political and economic elites about the nature and trajectory of our global economies argues that not only is capitalism - the formal economy - becoming more hegemonic, but that its continued expansion is inevitable. Responding directly to this narrative, the aim of the chapter is to problematize - and ultimately reject - such a capitalocentric reading of the economy. It does this by critically focusing on two core assumptions in this dominant meta-narrative: the *modernization thesis,* which suggests that 'developing' countries' economies are becoming increasingly formalized over time, and the *marginalization* thesis, which argues that the work undertaken in the informal economy is marginal and disappearing: only engaged in as a last resort by desperate individuals. Drawing on evidence drawn from both the Household Work Practice Studies in the UK, and the International Labour Organisation surveys of informal employment across 41 'developing' economies, it is shown that far from witnessing a shift from informal to formal economic spheres, informal economies are pervasive and growing. Such a finding carries with it many significant implications, and the chapter emphasizes particularly on how we might frame and re-think the future possibilities of work and organisation focused on non-capitalist practices.

Keywords: capitalism, informal economy, undeclared work, decent work

Introduction

A meta-narrative that dominates discussions of the character and trajectory of global economies is that varieties of capitalism (see Peck and Theodore, 2007) increasingly dominate the way societies organise, produce, distribute and allocate their goods and services (e.g. Streeck and Thelen, 2009). Indeed, not only has this shift towards a formal market economy seen as largely completed, its ascendancy is also assumed to be inevitable (see Williams, 2005). Crucially, such mainstream economic ideology has been internalised by a political elite, politicians for whom "neoliberalism has become a hegemonic signature for 'best-practice' governance" (Leitner, et. al. 2007, p. 1). This powerful framing of capitalism, which views the 'formal' or market-based economy as both totalizing and inevitable, has been reified in four short but powerful words: *there is no alternative.* Such a view has been captured by the continuous appeal for 'capitalist realism', which refers to "the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that is it now impossible to imagine a coherent alternative to it" (Fisher, 2009, p. 2) (see also Shonkeiler and Berge, 2014).

Two long-standing approaches, namely the *modernisation* thesis and *the marginalisation* thesis underpin and animate this capitalist realism. The modernisation thesis suggests those 'developing' countries' economies are becoming increasingly formalised (i.e. more 'advanced' or 'developed') over time. Conversely, work undertaken in the informal

economy is both marginal and disappearing. The ‘marginalisation thesis’, meanwhile, focuses upon the individuals who engage in the ‘leftover’ informal economy, with the vision that this sector is composed of the ‘marginalised’ excluded from capitalism (Williams and Horodnic, 2014, p. 225).

However, a large and rapidly growing body of critical economic scholarship has begun to contest and refute these theses, and the capitalo-centric readings of 'the economic' which they animate. Most prominent are those contributions within ‘heterodox’, ‘alternative’ and ‘diverse’ economics research that have been intent not only on identifying the uneven limits to capitalism, but also on making visible and re-valorising non-capitalist forms of work and organisation (see Gritzas and Kavoulakos, 2016; Fickey, 2011; Fickey and Hanrahan, 2014). One of the most influential writers here - J. K. Gibson-Graham - captures a statement of ongoing intent and vision, which many involved in the diverse economies would subscribe to:

> …this project of deconstructing the hegemony of capitalism and elaborating multiple axes of economic diversity is an emancipatory project of repoliticizing the economy. It refuses to pose economic power as already distributed to capitalist interests and opens up the possibility for non-capitalist practices to be the focus for an invigorated economic politics. (Gibson-Graham, 2003, pp. 126-127)

This chapter seeks to further advance the theoretical, methodological and epistemological bases of the modernisation and marginalization theses. To achieve this, the chapter reviews evidence from rich mixed methodological research undertaken in both 'developing' and 'developing' economies, particularly drawing on evidence from the Household Work Practice

Survey undertaken in the UK, and the International Labour Organisation surveys of informal employment (see Williams, 2015). This empirical data indicates that, far from seeing a shift from informal to formal economic spheres, what is revealed instead is pervasive - and growing - informal economic geographies. Such a significant finding provokes three important questions insofar as the futures of informal work and organisation are concerned:

1. How should economies be more properly represented and classified, in ways that recognise the dominant - and the ascendant trajectory of their informal sector?

2. 'Why' are levels of informal employment so much higher than capitalist realists have assumed?

3. How might future informal employment be 'transformative' with regard to capitalistic practices?

In response to the first question, and in a conscious attempt to both move away from 'capitalo-centric' readings of economic exchange, and embrace new informal economic imaginaries based on non-capitalism, this chapter looks toward reclassifying economies based on a 'degrees of informalisation' approach. This will be achieved principally by focusing attention toward ways in which 'the economic' is classified and structured according to the prevalence and character of their informal economy.

Responding to the second question, and offering a direct rebuttal to the marginality thesis, this chapter identifies a range of positive motivations for individuals' participation in

the informal economy. The findings here illustrate the complex engagement with the economic, in the sense that, "the geographies of our economic lives are at once deeply saturated with capitalist relations and full of values and practices that go beyond and beneath capitalist exchange" (Wright, 2010, p. 298). This in turn opens up new transformative possibilities of work and organisation in the future, which will be the focus of discussion in the final section of the chapter.

Addressing the third question, on the 'transformative' potential of informal work practices, a reflective recognition of the complexity of such a proposal is made. Here, the chapter argues that not only is critical reading of both informal and formal work practices necessary, so as not to essentialise or romanticise them, but so too is the rejection of all blueprints or over-determined determined maps to point to the 'economic' futures ahead. Instead a transformative shift in policy and top-down thinking is necessary to embrace economic experimentation and encourage more context-based bottom-up initiatives to come to the fore. The chapter will focus on the importance of exploring hitherto 'hidden' economic spaces: the household and the community, and re-appraising 'informality' as an engine of economic change and growth in its own right. Before doing so, however, it is important to draw attention to some key definitions of the terms that will be used. It is to this task that the chapter now turns its attention.

Why informal employment can be considered to be 'non-capitalist'.

The research underpinning the diverse economies literature has comprehensively demonstrated how 'the economic' is composed of a rich variety and diversity of work

practices (e.g. Gibson-Graham, et.al., 2013; Krueger et al., 2018). Such approaches typically adopt a 'thicker' reading of economic exchange (White and Williams, 2005), in which capitalism is decentred from an assumed economic 'core', and - more properly - framed and contextualised as *one* form of economic practice among many others.

Importantly, this re-thinking of the economic has also led to a critical reappraisal of the relationships between ostensibly different types of economic practices. It is argued that 'the economic' is composed of economies that differ in degree, not in kind. As Healy (2009, p. 339) and others have argued, it is necessary to, "replace the binary opposition of mainstream and alternative with a conception of the economy as a space of difference".

One of the most meaningful ways to illustrate these economic practices, and their relations to each other, has emerged through adopting Total Organisation of Labour (TSOL) approach (see Williams, 2010), as illustrated in Figure 1. This representation interprets the economy as a "…'multiplex' combination of modes, rather than as a dualism between market and non-market forms" (Glucksmann, 2005, p.8) Rejecting false economic binaries and unjustified hierarchies, Williams (2014) has adapted this approach and illustrated the TSOL to draw attention toward ten broad and overlapping work practices; each practice existing on a spectrum of difference, with market to non-market oriented practices crosscut by another spectrum from monetised to non-monetised practices. Though the TSOL represents more effectively the already-existing diverse repertoire of labour practices, it should also be acknowledged that a broad spectrum of difference and diversity *within* each of the labour practices exist. Moreover, it is the surrounding nature of how particular tasks are organised and undertaken - rather than the task itself - that defines which typology they are rooted in.

For example a teenager washing the family car to earn extra pocket money from his parents would be considered as 'monetised-exchanged labour'; the same teenager also washing his elderly neighbours' car, and refusing to accept any money from them, would be 'one-to-one non-monetised exchange; (if the money was accepted, then this would most likely constitute monetised community exchange). If the teenager went from this to washing cars at a local car wash dealer, well this might conceivably be a tax-declared formal job or a way of earning some off-the-books informal cash-in-hand work.

<INSERT FIGURE 4.1 HERE>

A typology of the diverse repertoire of labour practices in contemporary societies

In depicting formal paid labour as one work practice among many, the rejection of capitalocentric framings of the economic is obvious, and their implications striking. For example, when viewing the economic through this TSOL lens:

> …capitalism became slightly less formidable. Without its systemic embodiment, it appeared more like its less well-known siblings, as a set of practices scattered over a landscape – in families, neighborhoods, households, organizations, states, and private, public and social enterprises. Its dominance in any time or place became an open question rather than an initial presumption." Gibson-Graham, (2008, p. 615)

Market-oriented formal labour is far from hegemonic in this reading and neither is it separate from other economic practices. Ring-fenced through dotted demarcations, each economic sphere becomes semi-open, fluid and dynamic, and also interlocked and overlapping with the orbits of similar labour practices around it. Indeed, such a sense of mutual dependency calls into question not only the very nature of what 'the market' and its 'alternatives' are, but also the very grounds upon which it stands on: where it begins, and where it ends. Similarly, how well do readings of 'alternative' carry across different economic sites? For example, as White and Williams (2016, p. 325) argue, our interrogation of 'the alternative' needs to go much deeper than is often the case, and we must:

> question the validity and usefulness of continuing to frame (these) non-capitalist practices as 'alternatives'. Positioning non-capitalist economic practices as 'alternatives' fails to capture not only the ubiquity of such practices in everyday life, but also how those engaging in them do not see them as 'alternatives' in the sense of a second choice, or less desirable option, to capitalist practices.

It is certainly important to reflect on the implications – and scenarios – that such a re-reading of 'the economic' suggests in terms of the future organisation of work. For example, with the rejection of any absolute or pure 'alternative' economic spaces, how is it possible to seek a meaningful future 'outside the capitalist framework' (Turner and Schoenberger, 2012, p. 1027)?

While always conscious that economic spheres can and do overlap and intertwine, there are still meaningful ways in which 'capitalist' formal economics can be defined in

contrast to non-capitalist informal economies. Here it is important to understand the broader contexts which determine why a good, for example, is produced; how is it valued; how is that good is exchanged; and how this is consumed. North (2016, p. 441) for example argues, that 'capitalist' values' "would involve the production of goods and service for *exchange for profit"*, and in doing so underpin the "…multiple nature of flows of energy, resources, labour, locational dynamics, and forms of economic organization, control and rights such that economies are based on" (2016). The implication is that non-capitalist goods and services are *not* produced for the primary purpose of being exchanged for profit. Elsewhere, Samers (2005, p. 876) also notes how non-capitalist work practices have been concerned with "…economic activity where the surplus is distributed in ways which are not capitalist."

Another key task is to unpack the complex and heterogeneous range of economic practices that define 'the informal economy'. Here, the International Labour Organisation's definition of informal employment is also instructive, not least in the way it encourages a more nuanced reading of economic sectors: i.e. the informal employment can be found in the so-called 'formal sector':

> Informal employment, which encompasses all of the jobs included in the concept of employment in the informal sector except those which are classified as formal jobs in informal sector enterprises, refers to those jobs that generally lack basic social or legal protections or employment benefits and may be found in the formal sector, informal sector or households. (ILO, 2011, p. 12)

Reviewing the extensive wider literature around the 'informal economy' or 'informal sector', Williams (2014, p. 736) recorded "at least 45 different adjectives… including 'a-typical', 'cash-in-hand', 'hidden', irregular', 'nonvisible, 'shadow', 'underground' and unregulated". While respecting and absorbing such variations, the informal sector broadly concerns all economic activity, "which is not declared to the state for tax, social security and labour law purposes when it should be declared, but is legal in all other respects." (2014).

Finally, when used, the popular references to developed and developing countries are problematised through the use of inverted commas. It would be preferable instead to refer to the so-called 'developed' Global North countries as the Minority World, and 'developing/ the Global South' countries as the Majority World. There are many reasons for arguing for this change, some of which are noted by Punch and Tisdall (2012, p. 241):

> We use the terms ‘Majority World’ and ‘Minority World’ (see also Panelli et al. 2007) to refer to what has traditionally been known as ‘the third world’ and ‘the first world’ or more recently as ‘the Global South’ and ‘the Global North’. This acknowledges that the ‘majority’ of population, poverty, land mass and lifestyles is located in the former, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and thus seeks to shift the balance of our world views that frequently privilege ‘western’ and ‘northern’ populations and issues…

As will be argued later, the obvious linear economic trajectory that has informed this demarcation and spectrum of difference between ‘developing/developed’ countries, where the former should seek to develop (to formalise) in ways that are inspired by the latter which are

seen as formalised is intensely problematic. Language is so important here if a new 'post-capitalist' form of identification, representation and valuing of diverse economies is to be ushered into the world. Here, we would be advised to reflect on the arguments that McKinnon et al (2018, p. 337) draw attention towards:

> Even those discourses that seek to challenge global capitalism… come to speak the same language - representing capitalism in a monstrous form, the supremely dominant system of global industrial capitalism that has displaced and/ or diminished all alternatives. These representations effectively work to disempower resistance movements.

This is particularly the case when a richer, deeper, and more nuanced reading of economic exchange within and between 'developed' and 'developing' countries is hoped for; a point which will be re-emphasised later in this chapter.

Refuting the modernization and marginality theses

In recent decades, empirical evidence has pointed toward a pervasive, persistent and expanding informal sector, relative to the formal sector in many economies across the globe (OECD, 2002; Schneider et al., 2010; Williams, 2014). As Jutting and Laiglesia, (2009, pp. 11-12) note:

> It was assumed that… informal employment - would disappear in the course of economic development. The reality today looks different. Informality is increasingly becoming normal, not least in middle and even high-income countries. In some cases, the share of jobs performed outside a country's formal structures may be more than half- of all non-agricultural jobs, and up to 90 per cent if agricultural jobs are included.

Elsewhere Samman and Hunt (2018, p. 10) argue that the 'informal is the new normal': noting that:

> Contrary to longstanding predictions that the traditional informal sector would shrink as petty trade, small-scale production and casual jobs become absorbed into the modern, formal economy, informality has not only persisted but continued to emerge in new, unexpected areas….

Over time, the emergence of more context-bound readings of the economic has allowed richer understanding of the uneven geographies (regarding the extent, trajectory, character, social embeddedness, barriers to participation) of formal/ informal economies to come to light. Here, some of the most striking research - in terms of resisting the idea that we live in a capitalist world - has emerged from western 'advanced economies', the so-called heartlands of capitalism. In the UK for example, Household Work Practice Surveys have been undertaken since the early 2000s, both in urban and rural communities and higher-and-lower income households. At the heart of these surveys are questions of how (and why) different economic practices are used to undertake a range of domestic tasks, including household maintenance;

household improvement; housework and DIY activities; caring activities, gardening and vehicle maintenance. For example, the respondent would be asked if the task in question had been undertaken within the previous five years/year/month/week/day (depending on the activity). If 'yes' then 'who conducted the task' (e.g. family member, friend, neighbour, firm etc.); 'were they paid: (if so, how much)'; 'why were they chosen'. The respondent was also asked for each of the tasks whether they (or members of their household) had undertaken any domestic tasks for other people (and a similar line of questioning would be pursued). For example, a respondent might have said: *"Yes we had our car washed on Saturday. My son did it: we trust he'd do a good job. Yes, we gave him some extra pocket money - £10 - he's been saving up for a new bike. If he hasn't had been able to do it, then I'd have probably done it myself, or failing that taken it to the car wash"*. This would be an example of monetised family labour. Collectively the HWPS results (see Table 1) have provided a rich source of mixed methodological data that have demonstrated: an ongoing persistence of a diversity of work practices beyond the formal economy; as well as the social embeddedness of this work, and the non-economic rationales that underpin many of them (see Burns et. al, 2004; Williams, 2005; White and Williams, 2012).

Table 1: Household Work Practice Survey: Evidencing the Diverse Labour Practices used to complete a range of Domestic Tasks:

% tasks last conducted using:	Deprived urban	Affluent urban	Deprived rural	Affluent rural	All areas
Monetised labour					
Formal paid job in private sector	12	15	18	22	16
Formal paid job in public and third sector	2	2	2	2	2
Informal employment	2	8	<1	4	2
Monetised community exchange	3	1	4	1	3

Monetised family labour	1	<1	1	1	1
Non-monetised labour					
Formal unpaid work in private sector	<1	0	<1	<1	<1
Formal unpaid work in public & third sector	<1	0	<1	0	<1
Off the radar/ non-monetised work in organisations	<1	0	<1	0	0
One-to-one non-monetised exchanges	4	2	8	7	6
Non-exchanged labour	76	72	67	63	70
Total	100	100	100	100	100
χ^2	102.89	29.87	89.76	28.88	-

Note: χ^2>12.838 in all cases, leading us to reject H_o 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: White and Williams (2012: 1636) Type of labour practices used to conduct 44 domestic tasks: by locality-type

There are two particularly important findings to take from Table 1. The first is the pervasiveness of non-monetised labour and non-commodified labour (i.e. one-to-one non-monetised exchanges and - particularly - non-exchanged labour). These are precisely the 'domestic' and 'subsistence' types of exchanges and labour that - according to a capitalist realist - have all but disappeared. The second is that the thesis of marginality would indicate that the majority of participants in these diverse forms of informal labour would be from marginal, deprived and otherwise excluded backgrounds. Yet, such a reading, when taking into account the lack of penetration of the formal monetised labour across 'affluent households' is most certainly not supported here.

In a wider European context, Williams and Martinez-Perez (2013) explore the motivations of consumers purchasing goods and services in the informal economy, based on

the findings of the 2007 Eurobarometer survey (which involved 26,658 face-to-face interviews across 27 European Union member states). Importantly, these authors found that non-economic, in particularly social and redistributive rationales drive consumers to engage here: not economic ones (i.e. to save money):

> Achieving a lower price is the sole motive for just 44% of informal economy purchases, one of several rationales in 28% of transactions, and not a rationale in 28% of acquisitions. Consumers also use the informal economy to circumvent the shortcomings of the formal economy in terms of the availability, speed, and quality of goods and services provision, as well as for social and redistributive reasons. (Williams and Martinez-Perez, 2013, p. 802)

Such insights reinforcing the findings from the Household Work Practice Studies insofar as they place greater emphasis on the importance of other-than-economic rationales for participating in the informal economy. While not seeking to underplay the realities of people who engage in informal economies because they do not have access to formal work, and the highly exploitative scenarios that can result from this (Leonard, 1999), positive aspects that can motivate engagement, in the informal sector, whether as a worker or as a consumer, must be taken seriously, particularly by policy makers.

Discussion

1. How should economies be more properly classified, in ways that recognise the dominant - and ascendant trajectory of the informal sector?

In recognition of the evidence base, one that indicates the majority of the global workforce is located in the informal sector, there is a strong justification to reclassify economies by adopting a 'degrees of informalisation' approach (see Williams, 2014). A spectrum could be used to indicate the size of the informal sector, operating on a continuum of difference, with 'wholly formal' at one end and 'wholly informal' at the other. A similar scale could be put in place to capture the nature of the informal sector (for example, as a percentage of work which is undertaken as waged work). Note the need to interpret this as a horizontal depiction of difference, rather than a hierarchical depiction. Problematically, capitalocentric representations of the economy have adopted such a hierarchical narrative: where 'formalisation' is the desired end goal, through which all other 'informal' economies are assumed as being marginal to, and inspiring towards.

<INSERT FIGURE 4.2 HERE>

What happens when economies in particular regions are read - mapped - against this classificatory system? Taking the ILO censuses conducted in forty-seven 'developing' countries for example, Table 2 shows the different degrees of informalisation of employment relations in 41 of these countries:

Table 4.2. Degree of informalisation of employment relations in 15 'developing' countries. Source: Williams, (2015, 21, Table 1).

Country	Year	% of jobs in informal employment	% of informal employment in informal sector enterprises	Type of economy
India	2009	83.6	80.0	Dominantly formal
Mali	2004	81.8	86.2	Dominantly formal
Pakistan	2009	78.4	89.4	Largely formal
Bolivia	2006	75.1	68.8	Largely formal
Philippines	2008	70.1	83.6	Largely formal
Peru	2009	69.9	69.0	Mostly informal
Uganda	2010	69.4	80.3	Mostly informal
Colombia	2010	59.6	84.4	Semi informal
Mexico	2009	53.7	62.4	Semi informal
Egypt	2009	51.2	-	Semi informal
Argentina	2009	49.7	64.0	Semi-formal
Brazil	2009	42.2	57.3	Semi-formal
Uruguay	2009	39.8	75.4	Mostly formal
South Africa	2010	32.7	54.5	Mostly formal
China	2010	32.6	61.7	Mostly formal

What becomes clear from this continuum is the degree of variation in the magnitude and heterogeneous character of informal employment relations. This in turn begs the next question: 'Why' is it that levels of informal employment are so much higher than capital realists have assumed?

2. 'Why' are levels of informal employment so much higher than capital realists have assumed?

In trying to understand why levels of informal employment are so high, it is important to focus attention on the wide range of rationales that motivate individuals to engage. In contrast to the marginality thesis, and its view that informal work is only a last resort, researchers have uncovered a wide range of motivations underpinning paid or unpaid informal labour. Informal employment may be 'a conscious and preferred choice' or, alternatively, a 'last resort'. While there are significant variations in motivations between the households studied, the majority of unpaid non-exchanged informal work undertaken at the household and community level was undertaken because of "ease, choice and pleasure" (Williams, 2005, p. 119).

Focusing critical attention toward the under-explored non-economic rationales also has the transformative benefit of allowing for a radical break from capitalocentric narratives of economic exchange. This is echoed repeatedly across other research focused around diverse economies. This broad summary - and the implications that come with it - made by North (2016, p. 437) is very instructive here:

> …Taking a feminist-inspired poststructural position, JK Gibson-Graham (2006a, 2006b, 2008; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013) argue that totalizing conceptualizations of 'capitalism' divert analysis away from an understanding of the wide range of motivations on the part of economic actors for engaging in economic activity beneath metanarratives of utilitarian profit maximization. Inspired by substantivist economic anthropology (Gibson-Graham, 2014), they argue for an 'ontological reframing' of economic motivations and performance away from a formal assumption of utility maximization and individualistic economic rationality. *All*

> *these accounts see economic actors as people, with human flaws, not heroic, calculating, optimizing machines identifying optimal economic outcomes through some magic process that the rest of us do not possess.*" (italics added)

Recognising the interlocking nature of seemingly 'different' economic spheres also helps to understand how these influence and open up or close down possibilities for engaging in either 'formal' or 'informal' employment. For example, when exploring labour markets, neo-liberalisation and diverse economies in two post-socialist cities (Bratislava, Slovakia and Krakow, Poland), Smith et.al (2008, p. 297) found that "The precariousness of the formal labour market forces poorer households to engage with a number of other economic practices to attempt to sustain household livelihoods." It is important to note here that a key incentive to participate in informal economic activities is one of necessity; a supplement for livelihood, forced on people by lack of paid formal work. This illustration speaks of the complexity of undesirable and/ desirable pathways that inform informal work, and hence the importance of qualitative research that seeks to understand rationales that inform engagement.

3. On the transformative possibilities for work and organisation

> The search for an alternative to capitalism is fruitless in a world where capitalism has become utterly dominant. (Fulcher, 2004, p. 127)

> Therefore, let us continue with whatever we can - no illusions, but even more, no defeatism. (Marcuse, 2005, p. 86)

Envisioning and enacting new transformative possibilities for work and organisation that emerge from the understanding that informal employment is the norm, rather than the exception, is particularly vital at a time of multiple, prolonged crises and increasing precarity that societies across the world face in the here and now. However, it should also be remembered that crises can also be used to inspire and animate new opportunities and visions. As Zanoni et al. (2017, p. 576) argue:

> Crisis is often considered a negative term: multiple conflicts and antagonisms come in full sight; anger and fears abound. What we know is changing and giving way to something new; what shape that new formation may take is not apparent yet. It is emergent, contested, and contingent to the struggle of forces at hand… As a moment of dislocation, … crisis also bears potentiality for new social imaginaries and new subjectivities to emerge.

Recognising the pervasiveness of informal economic practices, and the range of motivations that animate them, is potentially liberating insofar as it dethrones the hegemonic position of capitalism and opens up new futures. As North (2016, p. 451) observes:

> 'Capitalism' is a discourse that can limit our ability to envisage and, crucially, enact alternatives – if we let it. Through diverse economy stories and practices, we can explore and develop alternative futures.

In this future-orientated context, it is necessary to pause and carefully consider three key points. First, essentialising or romanticising 'alternative' economic typologies must be avoided at all times. As it is important to remember "Business owners are not just for-profit capitalist exploiters" (North, 2016, p. 451), equally we should also be mindful to the fact that "some informal economies are not as ''progressive'' as might be imagined." (Samers, 2005, p. 876). The overlapping nature of economic practices also encourages us to recognise that informal work is not necessarily non-capitalist. Where individuals engage primarily to ruthlessly maximise profit (i.e. to make money or to save money), then informal employment is most obviously embedded on capitalist principles. Non-monetised informal work may also be geared toward securing the necessary conditions for production of a profit/income? We can think here about organised form of volunteering (e.g. supporting a local youth group). Volunteering has *intrinsic* value: helping others in that space/ time because you want to help, but it can also extract an instrumental value. We can think of how this experience might be included on a *Curriculum Vitae*, something which is calculated as a *competitive advantage* over other applicants. The volunteer work here will be cited to impress potential employers as evidence of the candidate's extra-curricular activities, experience and leadership. Recognising these points, and the implications that come with them, at once illustrates both the contradictions and possibilities for mobilization focused on the more non-monetised and non-capitalist repertoires of labour practices across contemporary societies.

Second, on the question of future directions, the attraction of providing a blueprint or overly dogmatic pre-determined set of rules to follow must also be resist. Instead, there is a great deal to be gained by exploring ways to recognise and embrace economic experimentation and diversity; and seek to empower economic change by rooting these in spatial and temporal specificities. As Fritaz and Kavoulakos (2016, 216) argue:

> Moreover, categories of alterity have to be seen as dynamic and not fixed in time and space… Alterity is contingent and related to material, social, political and strategic circumstances.

Responding in ways that recognises an individual's 'real world' socio-economic contexts is crucial. While there is much to be potentially gained by looking to harness 'post-capitalist' visions of work and organisation, there is a danger that, under neoliberalism, any celebration of more informal livelihoods can be used to legitimise austerity and attacks on workers' pay and conditions. One can also appreciate this by recalling the UK's Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government's call to 'mend Broken Britain' through implementing a 'Big Society' Programme:

> You can call it liberalism. You can call it empowerment. You can call it freedom. You can call it responsibility. I call it the Big Society…We need to create communities with oomph – neighbourhoods who are in charge of their own destiny, who feel if they club together and get involved they can shape the world around them. (Cameron, 2010)

The darker truth though was that appealing to 'civic society' in this way was used as an excuse to continue aggressively rolling back the state, ruthlessly cutting public spending, and further initiating 'austerity localism'. This, unsurprisingly, further weakened the ability of many marginalised and vulnerable communities least able to cope, let alone thrive (see Dawson, 2013; Featherstone et.al. 2012; Davis and Pill, 2012; Ishkanian, 2014).

Third, one of the ongoing successes of neoliberal capitalism has been its ability not only to commodify and appropriate 'the alternative' for its own ends, but the way in which its propaganda - its values, and its imaginaries – have been absorbed in the public domain. As Parker et al (2014, p. 9) reflect, capitalism:

> signals a great transformation…in individuals' subjectivity: the way people understand themselves, and relate to each other. Capitalism requires and produces certain types of human beings: 'free' autonomous agents maximising their own utility through both work and consumption, or *homo economicus*.

How can the social embeddedness, solidarity and mutuality repeatedly emphasised within non-market practices, and the motivations that underpin them, including "trust, care, sharing, reciprocity, cooperation, coercion, bondage, thrift, guilt, love, equity" (Gibson-Graham, 2014, p. 147), be harnessed in ways to further encroach, and transform market-based relations *from the inside-out* (so to speak). These questions underpin a critical focus of enquiry. As Calvário and Kallis (2017, p. 598) note:

> For anarchist, autonomist and diverse economies theories alike the challenge is how to expand and connect different 'cracks' within the capitalist system, with logic of affinity and not of hegemony.

Another challenge to the 'non-capitalist' economic imaginary is to *recognise* the transformative power and vitality that these forms of activity potentially - and do - possess. As Gibson-Graham, (2008, pp. 616-617) argues:

> While people have little trouble accepting that all these activities and organizations exist, it is harder to believe they have any real or potential consequence. They are seldom seen as a source of dynamism, or as the so-called driver or motor of change (except as fuel for capitalist development).

Sketching-out possibilities for work and organisation that celebrate an economic ontology of difference and diversity needs to pay close attention to the spaces and places which frame the economic. Radically re-thinking informal economies as sources of dynamism and motors of change, in many ways also encourages a transformative re-thinking about how economies are rooted, nurtured and sustained. At a time when the emphasis on economic development is still highly skewed toward the international and global community, it is a rather radical question to explore what 'transformative' possibilities can be opened up when attention is paid toward the neglected economic spaces of the household and community, and the multifarious way *all* of us engage in economic activity at this scale. As Dale (2014, p. 120) suggests:

> unless we address the relations of the home, we will not be able to find alternative ways of living and organizing. [My research] explore[s] how the home is far from a non- organized backstage, and argue that the way the home is managed contributes to *the reproduction of class and gender relations,* and of capitalism itself as the dominant 'mode of organizing' in contemporary society. (*italics added*)

Question of gender relations and different economic typologies is another important dimension that must to be recognised: as Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2003, 145) point out "Feminist have long seen 'the economy as a gendered site" (e.g. Barhardt, 2014; Salleh, 2003; Mies, 2014). Maria Mies (2014) has a particularly useful idea of 'housewifization', which is understood as the subordination of women into informal roles by capitalist development. Like Gibson-Graham, Mies has consistently emphasised the need to need to construct representations of the economy 'from below', starting with the perspective of women. This reveals the existence of

> a different conception of 'economy', which is both older and younger than the capitalist patriarchal one which is based on the ongoing colonisation of women, of other peoples and nature. This 'other' economy puts life and everything necessary to produce and maintain life on this planet at the centre of economic and social activity and not the never-ending accumulation of dead money. (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen 2000, 5)

The question of how to promote diverse economies becomes more valid than the very same question that which is almost exclusively asked in relation to the formal economy. This is particularly critical when seeking to promote a society of full and meaningful *engagement* compared to one of full formal employment, which is by definition a form of limitation and subordination (See White, 2017).

Asking such a question is even more valuable at a time of entrenched austerity in the context of an ongoing economic crisis rooted in capitalism (See Blyth, 2013; Davies et.al,

2017; Shannon, 2014), and is strategically valuable whether seen as a potential form of resistance and or indeed transformation. What is absolutely clear though is that many existing dominant policy approaches toward informal economy - particularly those punitive measures used to disincentivise or penalise informality (Renooy and Williams, 2009), and criminalise participants - need to be radically re-thought.

Indeed, perhaps the transformative moment would be to insist that informal work should be just as privileged as formal work. Thinking about how this could be achieved, one suggestion would be by firstly, recognising and valuing it, and then rewarding it with money. At present, money is inextricably tied to formal employment. Yet, there are many ways in which the money could be inserted (as is being inserted) to get jobs done and help facilitate the building of relationships, particularly so where people don't know each other very well. In addition to rolling out ongoing local community currency experiments such as Local Exchange and Trading Schemes (see Seyfang and Smith, 2007), this might be achieved by providing active citizens credits for caring (elderly and young children), and for volunteering. The other more passive way of rewarding it with money and equalising it is to introduce a basic income scheme so that people can choose whether to engage in formal employment and earn more money to purchase market goods and services, or whether to choose to self-provision and do things themselves (see Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017).

Final Reflections

While a ‘capitalocentric’ reading of the economy might be justified if the formal economy accounted for the majority of work undertaken in most countries, when evaluating the economies of the Minority and Majority worlds, it becomes absolutely clear that there is no robust evidence to support either the central tenants of the marginality or modernisation thesis. The informal sector is both an extensive and a growing feature of the global economy, exerting a significant and pervasive influence across so-called 'advanced' as well as 'developing' societies. And it is not only marginalised populations who engage in such work. This of course helps support the logical conclusion that a diverse economic approach is fundamental, not least in terms of opening up future possibilities for economic self-determination. As Williams (2014, p. 738) argues:

> If any lesson is to be learned from the past few decades, it is that different economies are moving in different directions…Privileging formalization as a universal process not only denies the lived practices of economic development but also excludes the possibilities of alternative present and future trajectories.

Classifying economies by the size and character of their informal sector is just one way of creating new visibilities and consciousness around the tremendous value and relevance that this form of work has in the present and will continue to have in the future.

Thinking more consciously around the intrinsic value and power of informal economies potentially opens up important new visions and opportunities for producing a "performative rethinking of economy centred on the well-being of people and the planet" (Gibson-Graham, 2014, p. 147). For these informal economies to be successfully nurtured

and harnessed, a radical re-appraisal of the agency of household and community-based informal economies is necessary. Similarly, creative ways need to be found to support and encourage economic diversity and difference, thereby further uncoupling 'the economic' from capitalocentricism. This, of course is an ongoing challenge and, in so many ways, now more than ever "…the project of examining, documenting, and enacting economic diversity and alterity remains vital…" (Fickey and Hanrahan, 2014, p. 395) If this chapter has helped provoke new informal economic imaginaries into being, and intimated constructive ways to *critically* approach and enact diverse economies in future, then it will have served its purpose.

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