Article

Prefiguring alternatives through the articulation of post- and anti-capitalistic politics: An introduction to three additional papers and a reflection

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Abstract

In this introduction to the second part of the special issue on alternative economies published in Organization in 2017, I first briefly chart key fora where the debate has continued in the last two years, and then present the three additional contributions included here. Moving the conversation forward, I argue that, in order to evaluate the prefigurative potential of alternative organizations, we need to address more thoroughly the relation between alternatives and their outside. A productive place to ground this reflection is in the debate between post-capitalism and anti-capitalism. The main lines of this debate are reconstructed based on the keynote speeches delivered by Jodi Dean and Stephen Healy at the last Rethinking Marxism conference held in Amherst, Massachusetts, in September 2013. I conclude by claiming that post-capitalist immanence should be articulated with an anti-capitalist communist horizon, and advance the Open Marxist notion of de-mediation of social relations as key to do this. Although capitalist institutions (e.g. the market, the state) mediate all social relations, mediation is never definitive, as it always contains the possibility for its own negation, de-mediation. So conceived, de-mediation redefines our understanding of class struggle beyond the capital-labor relation in the workplace, into society as a whole, broadening the ethical and political scope of the organizational research agenda on alternatives to capitalism.

Keywords

Alternative economies, post-capitalism, prefiguration, anti-capitalism, communism, de-mediation, Open Marxism, Social Reproduction Theory

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Almost 2.5 years have passed since the publication of the special issue of *Organization* on alternative economies, which I had the pleasure to guest edit with Alessia Contu, Stephen Healy and Raza Mir. The high number of submissions we received in February 2016 suggested that our project was timely, yet also overwhelmed us in our role of guest editorial team. The special issue appeared as planned in September 2017, 24(5), and included five original articles next to our introduction. Today, I would like to introduce three additional articles, originally submitted to the special issue but which were accepted a bit later, and which have since been pre-published online. Their publication in the first printed issue of volume 27 of *Organization* in 2020 provides me a welcome occasion to reflect on the theoretical and political challenges I see for the critically oriented scholarship on alternative organizations/organizing. Such a reflection is certainly not premature, as the interest in alternatives to capitalism – in their multifarious modalities – has only intensified with the raising awareness of the destructive effects of neoliberal capitalist institutions and practices, which render human beings, democratic institutions and the earth ever more vulnerable.

At the time of the launch of the call for papers at the beginning of 2015, six full years after the outburst of the global economic crisis, alternatives to capitalism had attracted increasing scholarly attention (e.g. the special issue on the commons in the *Review of Radical Political Economics* guest edited by Bechtold, Barkin, Gunn, Keaney, Pietrykowski and Wilson published in 2016, 48(1); Atzeni, 2012; Azzellini, 2018; Chatterton and Pursey, 2019; DuRand, 2016; Wright, 2019), including in organization studies (e.g. Parker et al., 2014; the special issue of *Organization* on cooperatives guest edited by Cheney et al., 2014, 21(5); Kokkinidis, 2015; Vieta, 2009). Earlier in 2017, a special issue on Organizing for the post-growth economy guest edited by Garmann Johnsen, Nelund, Olaison and Sørensen had appeared in *Ephemera* (17(1)), and, at a few months' distance from the special issue in *Organization*, two other ones on the topic of alternative economies were published: a first one guest edited by Barin-Cruz, Aquino Alves and Delbridge in *M@n@gment* (20(4)) and a second one guest edited by Misoczky et al. (2017) in *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* (12(4)).

In 2018, the special issue 'What are the alternatives? Organising for a socially and ecologically sustainable world' edited by Phillips and Jeanes followed in *Ephemera* (18(4)), and in 2019, Bailey and Moore guest edited another one in *Globalizations* on 'Extra-capitalist impulses in the midst of the crisis' (Bailey, 2019, 16(4)). A special issue of *Organization* on de-growth guest edited by Banerjee, Jermier, Peredo, Perey, and Reichel is currently under way, and single articles have recently been published in the journal (e.g. Barros and Michaud, 2019; Jaumier, 2017; Peredo and McLean, 2019). If our intent was, as we argued in 2017, to contribute to building the archive of the social imaginary, a political project of documenting, circulating, citing and legitimizing the heterogeneous nature of the economy (Zanoni et al., 2017), then we have clearly been in good company.

Three papers further expanding the post-capitalist archive

The three papers included here make their own contribution to the re-definition of the contours of possible economies. The first paper by Bénédicte Vidaillet and Youcef Bousalham investigates coworking spaces as potential 'syntopias'. Syntopias are defined as novel integrative spaces where the tensions surrounding the nature of activities, social relations, and exchange are engaged with, rather than resolved. Literally places 'with' or 'together', syntopias do not merely juxtapose the differences producing these tensions, as Foucault's heterotopias, but rather allow their articulation (see also Featherstone, 2011). They enable coworkers to perform themselves in ways that, while embedded within capitalism, transcend the categories imposed by capitalist mediation – for example, paid versus non-paid work, the economic, the civic and the political, commercial versus

community relations, market exchange versus gifts and barter – and can thus become prefigurative of alternative practices and ways of being.

The terms of individuals' entry and participation are negotiated and multiple dynamics allowed, a possibility that is often excluded in traditional organizations, where the terms of membership are generally more pre-codified and normed. Vidaillet and Bousalham emphasize that this heterogeneity opens up possibilities for individuals to reconfigure social practices and perform subjectivities that are meaningful to them. This is important as re-subjectification involving new social practices, desires, and identifications is a constitutive dimension of alternative praxis (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Healy, 2015). Furthermore, the porousness of co-working spaces as syntopias entails that ideas and practices can be disseminated beyond these spaces. At the same time, the authors caution that, in syntopias, prefiguration is a potentiality, rather than a guarantee. On which conditions these spaces can support the emergence of antagonistic political projects – for instance, what Gandini (2015) has called the 'coworking class' – is for future research to investigate (see De Coster and Zanoni, 2018).

In the second article, Mario Pansera and Francesco Rizzi draw from the empirical case of Cooperativa Insieme to address the organizational and ethical dilemmas market competition poses to alternative economic organizations. This Italian social cooperative with a long history of activities in secondhand goods, waste recycling and training, support and employment of vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged youth, ex-prisoners and mentally disabled individuals is an example of 'civil economy' (Bruni and Zamagni, 2007; Porta, 2004). In the Italian tradition of economic thought, the civil economy is an economy predicated on an understanding of human beings as inherently social and relational, rather than competitive: the civil economy 'frames transactions essentially in terms of reciprocity and solidarity' (Pansera and Rizzi, this issue). This organization has attempted to reconcile its mission of fostering social integration and the community's human welfare and its multi-stakeholder governance through the adoption of professional practices. More specifically, a clearer social branding for its products, the hiring of professionals next to cooperative members and the introduction of a hierarchy in its structure are deployed to face raising market competition across a range of its activities.

The insights drawn from the empirical case speak back to the broader debate on the dilemma often encountered by cooperatives and third-sector organizations, which might need to scale up to increase their impact, but by so doing run the risk to lose their original mission and degenerate into 'regular businesses' (see, for instance, Audebrand and Barros, 2018). Pansera and Rizzi argue that two important factors have not only prevented the degeneration of Cooperativa Insieme despite its professionalization, but even fostered its regeneration. On the one hand, the cooperative has retained a strong identity around its foundational values, which allows it to incorporate commercial activities as a means to achieve social ends, rather than to make profit. On the other hand, it is embedded in a network of institutional actors constituting an 'ecosystem' from which it recurrently draws support to face new challenges, such as regulation favouring firms, or the emergence of new competitors. Especially this last ecosystem is of particular importance, as alternative organizations' relations to existing institutional actors – e.g. the university (Esper et al., 2017), investors (Meyer and Hudon, 2017), the state, and civil society (Barin-Cruz et al., 2017), but also social movements, trade unions and political parties (De Coster and Zanoni, 2018; Husted and Plesner, 2017) – are key not only for their existence but also for their ability to challenge the capitalist economy (Miller, 2015). As critics have observed, the political antagonism of alternative economy organizations should not be assumed, but rather needs to be constructed (Böhm, 2014; Dean, 2015a, 2015b).

The third and last article by Amanda Peticca-Harris, Nadia deGama and M. N. Ravishankar investigates gig work through the case of Uber in Toronto. Based on extensive interviews with taxi drivers, their analysis is one of the first in the rapidly growing literature on platforms to focus on

crowdsourced workers' own perspectives. It reveals the heterogeneity of Uber drivers' motivations and the contradictory nature of their lived experience. The authors inductively distil three profiles of drivers: those for whom this activity is accessory, 'on top' of main activities; those for whom it is necessary out of lack of alternative income sources; and those for whom it is a strategy to stay in the rapidly evolving taxi market. The study documents how crowdsourcing enhances workers' sense of autonomy and flexibility and, crucially, how it substantially lowers the barriers to enter the labour market, offering new income-generating opportunities to groups that have historically been excluded along age, gender, education and ethnicity. At the same time, it shows how this is achieved precisely by leveraging individuals' vulnerability and lack of alternative sources of income, integrating them in structurally precarious conditions. This study stands out for its ability to relate individuals' experience of platform work as 'choice', fully aligned with a neoliberal subjectivity, and, on the other hand, the business model of the platform, which takes advantage of individuals' structural lack of alternatives to gig work, precisely the absence of 'choice'.

Given the diffuse protests and multiple cases of litigation in the last years across the globe, Uber and the like have arguably lost much of their initial shine as part of an emergent 'sharing economy'. If this article were submitted today, it would likely need to make a much more explicit and forceful argument as to how this highly contested multinational company fits the theoretical and political project of building an archive of economic alternatives. Still, the public controversy paradoxically signals that its inclusion is less misplaced than one could think at first sight. First, this study documents the neoliberal production of risk-taking entrepreneurial subjects simultaneously through material dispossession and the weakening of individuals' desire for the classical wage relation through an emphasis on its 'downsides' (e.g. inaccessibility due to discrimination, barriers at entry due to licensing regulation, inflexibility of working conditions). Yet this desire might also potentially be mobilized to destabilize the process of capital valorization, rather than facilitate it. The emergence of local cooperatives of taxi drivers operating through digital platforms similar to Uber, in a sector which was till recently highly regulated by local authorities and dominated by licensed taxi companies, points to this potential (Borowiak and Ji, 2019). Although there are obviously no guarantees, these novel organizations, which replicate Uber's digital coordinative infrastructure yet anchor it locally onto a group of workers, might come closer to what we consider alternative to capitalism.

Second, the study illustrates well the ideological attractiveness of the 'sharing economy' narrative, a narrative that claims that platforms are good because they increase at once efficiency and inclusion. On one hand, 'idle' commodities are turned into entrepreneurial assets: private cars become income-generating taxis. On the other hand, 'idle' human capital is 'activated', as income-generating opportunities are opened up to disadvantaged, unemployed or underemployed individuals (e.g. Drahokoupil and Fabo, 2016; Schor, 2014). As I have shown elsewhere, this type of rhetoric heavily informs policy documents on platforms produced by a variety of institutional actors ranging from the European Union (EU) to national governments and even trade unions (Zanoni, 2019). In this discursive and institutional context, analyses of how crowdsourcing firms recruit individuals, redefine the terms of work, and reconstitute workers' subjectivities, such as the one offered by Peticca-Harris et al. (2020), are of extreme importance. They precisely help discern, within the heterogeneous world of the so-called 'sharing economy', those organizations that re-enact the capitalist valorization process under a new guise, from those that redefine the very categories of production, distribution and consumption away from the principles of private property, commodities and market exchange (on the multiple, contradictory finalities digital platforms can be used for, see Kostakis, 2018; Ossewaarde and Reijers, 2017; Reijers and Ossewaarde, 2018).

Despite the different nature of their theoretical approaches and empirical cases, all three articles included here touch upon the relation between the organizations they study and the wider

economic, social and institutional context in which they are embedded. Barin-Cruz et al. (2017) correctly point to the importance of examining this relation more closely. Delineating a research agenda on alternative economies in organization studies, they identify four key stakeholders that deserve our attention: governments, civil society, investors and universities. At the same time, it should be emphasized that increased attention for the relation between alternative organizations and their 'outside' is more than an empirical question. It is a foundational theoretical, political and ethical one, as it invests the prefigurative potential of their praxis.

Advancing the conversation on alternative economies: Post-capitalism and the communist horizon

Addressing the relation between alternative organizations and their outside is central to our commitment, as critical organizational scholars, to taking seriously the prefigurative power of alternative praxis, and appreciate the 'possibilities offered by "the community" or "the local" as sites of transformation' and 'the capacity of radical and innovative projects to instigate change' (Phillips and Jeanes, 2018: 699), without however falling into political naivety or romantic idealization. In our discipline, this reflection needs to be more explicitly embedded in the current debate on what political vocabulary, grammar and modalities are conceivable and viable at this specific time in history (Douzinas and Žižek, 2010). As observed by Bailey (2019), the Left is still – theoretically, politically, affectively – recovering from the de facto integration into global capitalism of those societies and economies that had historically positioned themselves as an alternative to it. Despite the ever rising consensus on the destructive effects of capitalism and awareness of the vibrant non- and anti-capitalist life around us, the historical failure of 'actually existing socialism' (Habermas, 1990) to perform institutionally (already prior to the fall of the Berlin wall) has left us with a lasting hangover. We are today largely 'unable to agree upon, or commit to, a particular political path' (Bailey, 2019: 372; see also Dean, 2015b). The current political landscape is characterized by the polarized coexistence of a pervasive capitalism and the global multiplication of 'extra-capitalistic impulses', against the background of a Left which has been, after 1989, unable to elicit sufficient consensus on and commitment for a broader political project.

A productive entry point into this broader politico-philosophical debate are the key-note speeches Stephen Healy and Jodi Dean delivered at the Rethinking Marxism conference in Amherst in September 2013, the last one of a series inaugurated in the highly symbolic year 1989 (Dean, 2015a, 2015b; Healy 2015a, 2015b; and the commentaries to their articles by others published in *Rethinking Marxism*, 27(3)). In a large auditorium whose vintage architectural décor suggested we were still in full Cold War, Dean (2015b) held a resolute plea to reclaim the party, understood as a 'solidary, militant, international organization', as opposed to 'an outmoded or 'fully saturated' political form' (p. 332). She argued for the need to 'rethink and renew that form of political organization through which communists think collectively about political power, act together to generate it, and inspire one another to use it for the collective determination of the world we produce in common' (Dean, 2015b: 332). In her analysis, it is the Left's 'realism' – or the conviction that there is no alternative to capitalism – that has led to the abandonment of the party as a modality of radical politics in favour of immanent, 'momentary acts of resistance or small reforms that leave the capitalist system intact' (Dean, 2015b: 332). These experiences, she argues, lose oppositional power when they are disconnected from organized militant politics. The emphasis, since the 1990s, on alternative economic (micro-)practices represents a depoliticization of the struggle as 'lifestyle choices for small groups' and even risks to 'fetishize the local' by highlighting differences and repressing commonality.

Highly critical of the effects of 'humanist, culturalist and poststructuralist post-Marxism' on the understanding of the revolutionary subject, Dean (2015b) deplored identity politics, through which in her evaluation the Left has been mimicking neoliberal communicative capitalism's fragmentation, localization and pluralization (p. 333). Differentiation, she held, is key to sustain capitalistic competition, which produces losers as 'a multitude of singularities', rather than a mass, and underpins the political project of dismantling the welfare state. A focus on the 'micropolitics of self-transformation' drives attention away from 'building and occupying institutions with duration', 'ced[ing] society and the state to a capitalist class that acts as a global political class intent on extending its reach into and strengthening its hold over our lives and futures' (Dean, 2015a: 396). Caught into individuation and singularities, the Left becomes unable to think commonality to oppose neoliberal governmental policies, which in turn, in this reading, explains the rise of the extreme Right since the 2008 crisis. As no 'class simply relinquishes power', and 'no assortment of disconnected enterprises – no matter how communal – converges automatically into communism' (Dean, 2015a: 397), to avoid co-optation, absorption or repression, Dean argues, we need to strategize and organize ourselves to win.

Today, Dean continues, we need the party to conduct a political project of creating a collective subject analogous to Marx's revolutionary subject of communism, the proletariat. This subject should be organized across 'workplace, sector, region, and nation' (Dean, 2015b: 338) in commonality and solidarity, across differences, and this communism should be antiracist and climate activist, or it shall not be (Dean, 2015a: 300). Importantly to our purpose, she stressed that the proletariat is fundamentally different from the working class, which is a subject of capitalism, as it is defined by its relation to capital, and which struggles with the bourgeoisie for economic gains within the capitalist field. The party is assertive, namely, it offers a new 'field of possibility' which is *other* than the matrix of our desire established by capitalism, opening up a terrain for the desire of another subject that is collective and political. The party does not know the truth but rather 'provides a form for the knowledge we gain through experience and that we analyse from the perspective of the communist horizon' (Dean, 2015b: 340), a notion she borrows from Bruno Bosteels (2011).

Dean (2012) understands this horizon as:

> designat[ing] a dimension of experience that we can never lose, even if, lost in a fog or focused on our feet, we fail to see it. The horizon is Real in the sense of *impossible* – we can never reach it – and in the sense of actual (Jacques Lacan's notion of the Real includes both these senses). The horizon shapes our setting. We can lose our bearings, but the horizon is a necessary dimension of our actuality. Whether the effect of a singularity or the meeting of earth and sky, the horizon is the fundamental division establishing where we are. With respect to politics, the horizon that conditions our experience is communism. (pp. 1–2)

In sum, her argument is that, to take political power, we need a viable political form beyond self-assertion, and the party is that form.

Speaking from the scholarly tradition of the Community Economies Collective (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 1996a, 1996b, 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013), Healy's speech delineated the contours of a post-capitalistic politics revolving around an understanding of the economy as a heterogeneous space. This space includes multiple, coexisting 'class relations' – arrangements for producing, appropriating and distributing surplus – some of which might be more desirable than others and thus deserve our attention. In this sense, conducting research is a form of activism, as it thoroughly engages with alternative practice. He took issue of Dean's dismissal of an understanding of communism as immanent, depoliticized 'living in common' and reaffirmed that class should be conceptualized as a process, one that is not only constituted through ideas but also, more mundanely,

by our daily 'habits, practices, desires, and self-conceptions' (Healy, 2015: 344), which define our mode of existence and are therefore key to changing it.

Healy's contribution stressed the uncertainty and unknowability of the communist horizon amid economic and ecological precarity. In light of the inescapability of our being-in-common, this double precarity urges us to be more cooperative, privilege sufficiency over excess, and be less arrogant, relinquishing the pretence to '*know* how things are' (Healy, 2015a: 345, emphasis in original). He challenged Dean's critique of post-capitalism as abandoning the communist horizon and 'a settling for a compensatory project focused on economic diversity', which 'ignore[s] that difference and dominance can happily coexist' (Healy, 2015: 345–46). He affirmed that capitalism 'coheres in part by enrolling our desires, habits, and practices (even those of the anticapitalistic Left), and that it [the capitalist class process] is made possible when we live life by its measures and values' (Healy, 2015: 346). Undermining capitalism thus involves refusing to do so, and living differently. Difference is not a goal itself, but rather a strategy to unveil the heterogeneity within the economy and discern post-capitalism in order to move forward.

Healy sees here a partial reconciliation with Dean's analysis of Occupy as a movement of recognition, different desire and capacity for action. Relying on Lacan, he emphasized that the coherence and durability of capitalism is crucially rooted not only in material and symbolic practices but also in our imaginary, fantasy and enjoyment (Healy, 2015: 347). Capitalism thrives by appeasing our intrinsic lack of coherence as human beings 'providing cohesion through a compensatory fantasy narrative' (Healy, 2015: 346) made of well-functioning markets, preferences, meritocracy and so on. Communism should accordingly be understood, according to Healy, as the overlap between the lack of the Other, capitalism, its incompatibility with the people, and our own lack, our precarity and inability to know the form of an egalitarian society. Despite our own lack, this works in so far we become aware that capitalism is ridden with contradictions that the coherence of the capitalist system is a fantasy, which in turn gives us a reason not to cede our desire for communism.

Along these same lines, Özselçuk and Madra (2005) argue that:

> we should refrain from defining communism as a social utopia that promises to deliver what the bourgeois program of equality has failed to achieve. [. . .] In contrast, [. . .] communism [should be] explicitly [defined] as a starting point, a principle, an axiom that asserts that *no one can have exclusive rights over the dispatching of the surplus*. An important condition of possibility of this social *reclaiming* of surplus is precisely its psychic *letting go* [. . .] of the idea that the right to enjoy surplus can be exclusive. This is what we mean by traversing the fantasy in the context of class transformation. (p. 93, emphasis in original)

Clearly, from this perspective, what counts as surplus and how it should be redistributed is an ethico-political decision that will vary depending on the specific context and the wider society and is likely the object of contestation. Our task is to ask the right questions (e.g. How do we organize work equitably? How do we exchange in markets and other spaces in ways that support each other's well-being? How do we invest our wealth sot that future generations can live well?) and to produce tools that allow to measure, valuate and account for differently (e.g. Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

Healy concluded his speech against the background of the massive, psychedelic image of Saint Francis of Assisi. It blew me away: I had not expected such 'cattocommunist' imagery, to use an Italian term, nearly proselytic, at a Marxist conference in the United States in 2013. His reference was to the Franciscan order's message of poverty as a form of life, rather than a norm. Agamben's (2013) interpretation of Franciscan life, a life not given as property but only for common use, could not have been more theoretically appropriated to support his plea.

The juxtaposition of these perspectives on 'what needs to be done' evidences their respective strengths and weaknesses, also foregrounded in the various commentaries to the written versions of the speeches published in issue 27(3) of *Rethinking Marxism*. Dean's championing of the party as the subject of revolutionary transformation, while exposing with force the potential weaknesses of a communism built through multiple, dispersed praxis, does not indicate what kind of concrete practice the party entails, and how it fundamentally distinguishes it from most parties we have historically known. On this point, Ramsey (2015) proposes to think the communist party as a verb rather than a noun: 'communist partying'. Crucially, it is not very clear how the identification of the individualized, isolated and precarized neoliberal subject with a communist horizon can in practice be achieved. The problem might not be so much one of depoliticization, as Dean holds, or, conversely, that her plea might boil down to 'reverting to a utopian notion of communism' (Özselçuk and Madra, 2005). It might more mundanely be the *viability* of the modalities of repoliticization she offers. As we know, post-1989 (Bosteels, 2010), post-Foucault, post-Laclau and Mouffe (cf. Chakrabarti and Dhar, 2015) and post-Open Marxism (Böhm et al., 2010; Dinerstein et al., 2019; Pitts and Zanoni, 2018), it has become particularly difficult to conceive of resistance outside neoliberal capitalist subjection (Fleming, 2014; Moisander et al., 2018; Mumby et al., 2017). As Vidaillet and Bousalham's (2020) study clearly shows, the question of identity and difference is at the very core of alternative praxis, not at its margin (see also De Coster and Zanoni, 2018).

Healy's championing of post-capitalistic alternatives, on the other hand, provides a solid theory of re-subjectivation through praxis and 'immanent' communism, yet leaves far too open the question of how multiple context-bound praxis should be articulated to redefine the framework of power, or those norms that produce the conditions of (im)possibility for such praxis to occur, expand and indeed be transformative of both the economy and life as a whole. Although the role of 'post-capitalistic governance' is included in the analyses of specific experiences to build alternative economies, it remains underemphasised in the theoretical narrative that privileges the symbolic (language, cultural norms) and the affective (desire, libidinal dynamics). Yet, for its valorization, capital crucially relies on coercion – more or less authorized and legitimized by the law – and most often so to dispossess the most vulnerable among us (Federici, 2016; Lazzarato, 2006). An emphasis on the symbolic and the affective might unwittingly reflect our own (relatively privileged) specific position, in processes of valorization of capital. As Peticca-Harris et al. (2020) show, Uber taxi drivers' fantasy of entrepreneurial autonomy is predicated on the precarity of their existence, the absence of *material* alternatives to make a decent living, to socially reproduce themselves (see also Zanoni, 2019). As Esper et al. (2017) tell us, decisive moments in the struggle for the survival of workers' recuperated factories in Argentina took place in the courtroom, when judges had the formal authority, in the name of the bourgeois state, to make the decision whether workers could keep the factory or should be expelled by the police, and later, when the recuperated factories had to be turned into cooperatives to become legally legible within the Argentinian context. Tellingly, the ability of Cooperativa Insieme (Pansera and Rizzi, 2020) to retain its civic economic mission is predicated on its extensive and successful politico-institutional work to sustain a broader 'ecosystem' allowing it to flourish.

In his commentary to Dean's and Healy's speeches, Miller (2015) goes back to the original work of Gibson-Graham (1996a) to argue that post-capitalism and anti-capitalism should be combined: 'A thousand possibilities exist between the dangerously liberal image of proliferating points and the dangerously authoritarian image of the party' (Miller, 2015: 365). He points to the necessity to chart alternative livelihoods and work at establishing linkages and synergies between them, while at once reconstructing a radical critique. On this point, Daskalaki and Kokkinidis (2017) state that:

> the potential of SIs [solidarity initiatives] to resist capitalist socio-spatial arrangements (such as hierarchical organizational structures, neoliberal urbanism, privatization of public services and land) is critically based

on their capacity to (dis)connect from/to other activist spaces and co-produce translocal organizing practices. (p. 1316)

Reflecting on the modalities of political activism in spatial, relational and processual terms, Featherstone (2011) proposes to use the notion of articulation to infuse into assemblages a more 'directly political edge that they generally lack' (p. 141). De Angelis (2019) has recently argued for understanding the commons as 'holons', or 'multilayered systems of parts and whole, dynamically striving to balance centrifugal forces of individual self-assertiveness and centripetal forces of integration' (p. 750).

Articulating post- and anti-capitalism? An expansive understanding of class struggle as the de-mediation of social relations

Post-capitalist struggles need to be articulated with anti-capitalist ones not only because 'capitalism can exist quite happily with a plethora of local alternatives, even explicitly anti-capitalist economic relations' (Böhm, 2014: 1056; see also Bhattacharya, 2017a; Bonefeld, 1987), but also because capitalism proactively fragments, individualizes and makes us compete to integrate us into the process of capital valorization on different terms (Lazzarato, 2006; Zanoni, 2019), distributing vulnerability unequally among us (Butler et al., 2016). As today's struggles for recognition and redistribution well show, if we lose a shared communist horizon from sight, we will likely end up standing against each other: dispossessed workers in the north against dispossessed workers in the global south, those who fight climate change against those who cannot afford green energy, those protected by the welfare system and those who do not meet its eligibility criteria. So, the articulation is not only between spatial levels of organization, the local and translocal, but also across categories through which we are inscribed and the social order is maintained.

Ana Cecilia Dinerstein's work has been productive for my own understanding of how the articulation of post- and anti-capitalism could be theorized without dismissing such complexity. She builds on John Holloway's (2002a, 2002b) Open Marxism grounded in the Zapatista experience to reject a dichotomous understanding of social change as either autonomy located outside capitalism or revolution to take over the state. Reclaiming the political function of hope, she conceptualizes autonomy as 'a hypothesis of resistance that encompasses the delineation of new horizons beyond the given truth' (Dinerstein, 2015: 2). Central to this delineation is the struggle for the de-mediation of social relations. All social relations – not only relations in the workplace – are 'mediated' in the sense that they assume objective 'modes of existence' (Gunn, 1992; Pitts, 2014) in thought and practice in capitalist society through value, money, the wage and the state (Dinerstein and Pitts, 2018). This key insight is rooted in Marx's critique of political economy as a critique of capitalist society *as a whole*, rather than solely or even primarily as a critique of capitalism as a historically specific mode of organizing the economy (Bellofiore and Riva, 2015; Bonefeld, 2014; Pitts, 2017).

A focus on mediation as the locus of struggle is grounded in the idea that mediation is never definitive, but rather always contains the possibility for its own negation, de-mediation: mediations are inherently contradictory and prone to crisis because of 'the organisational existence of labour within capital, the mediation of the capital-labour relation is permanently driven into crisis-contradiction-de-mediation and further transcendence' (Bonefeld, 1987: 70). This entails that mediations can be transformed through class struggle that de-fetizes them. In Gunn's (1987) reading, 'mediation and remediation are *at issue in* class struggle, inasmuch as mediations are *forms of* class struggle' (p. 60, emphasis in original). Dinerstein (2015) builds on this idea to argue that resistance entails the organization of hope in order to produce 'excess, that is, practices that are beyond

demarcation' (p. 224), or mediation. Talking directly to the issue of the articulation of extra-capitalistic and anti-capitalistic politics, she states:

> the analysis of the process of prefiguring alternative realities must include an exploration into the processes of struggle with, against and beyond the state, the law and capital as well as the contradictions within existing forms of insubordination. This multi-faceted struggle is an essential component of prefiguration [. . .]. Autonomous practices are embedded in, and shaped by, their past and contemporary backgrounds and context of production so that the state, money and the law mediate autonomy. It follows that prefiguration is not only about the rejection (negation) of the given reality and the creation of new realities. Prefiguration is also about steering through the predicaments produced by capitalist, patriarchal and colonial social relations, and about navigating the challenges of the struggle over the meanings of autonomy – for the state would attempt to integrate, accommodate and subordinate autonomy to the logic of power. (Dinerstein 2015: 41)

Open Marxism's emphasis on how capitalism constitutes social relations beyond waged labour is analogous to Marxist feminism's attempt to bring into light capitalism's relation with processes of social reproduction located outside it as essential to its reproduction (Bhattacharya, 2017a, 2017b; Federici, 2012; Ferguson, 1999; Vogel, 2013 [1983]). Also in this tradition of thought, the understanding of capitalism is expanded beyond the moments of commodity production and commodity exchange through money on the market, into society as a whole. Starting from the key role women have historically played in ensuring the availability of labour for exploitation by capital, the relations in the (extended) household as well as in schools, hospitals and civil society are conceptualized as mediated by capital, the state and money. For instance, the relations between parents and children are fundamentally shaped by the necessity, imposed by capital, to cultivate competencies (knowledge, attitudes, practices) which will allow individuals to enter wage labour to make a living. Relations between partners in the home are mediated by capital because they 'mend' individuals, to reproduce them as labour willing and able to enter and stay in the wage relationship. In this perspective, these mediated relations also constitute locations of struggle for de-mediation. Class is thus redefinied as a collective political subject reaching beyond the workplace.

A conceptual and political focus on social relations as loci of struggle for mediation/de-mediation independent on where such relations occur – in the labour-capital relation, in the commons, in the family, or in the institutions of the welfare state – is politically of great importance. It namely offers a shared vocabulary and grammar that can help cultivate the desire for a collective political subjectivity, a 'we' operating within an antagonistic communist horizon (Bosteels, 2010, 2011; Dean, 2012; Ramsey, 2013). At the same time, it does not posit one truth about the strategy for de-mediation or its desired outcome, retaining the full spectrum of prefigurative possibilities, from the post-capitalist 'commoning' to the anti-capitalist 'partying'. Clearly, which combination of partying and commoning struggles is more economically and politically effective in de-mediating social relations and deflecting attempts of recuperation by capital and the state is a historically specific question (for examples, see Bezanson and Luxton, 2006; Dowling and Harvie, 2014; van Dyk, 2018). However, as Federici (2016) has argued, overall, simultaneous struggles are warranted: '[y]ou need commons to give power to the struggle over the wage and you need the wage to give some resource to the commons'. I interpret her statement as an invitation to organizational scholars to retain an ample, non-dogmatic, courageous and inclusive view of what a communist praxis might be, one that does not a priori dismiss anti-capitalism in favour of post-capitalism, or vice versa post-capitalism in favour of anti-capitalism, but rather considers what each can bring into specific struggles, and attempts to articulate them strategically to foster social transformation through the de-mediation of social relations.

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