

# Reintegrating economy, society, and environment for cooperative futures: Polanyi, Marx, and food sovereignty

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**Special Issue of the Journal of Rural Studies: *The More-than- Economic Dimensions of Co-operation in Food Production***

**Title of Paper:** Reintegrating Economy, Society, and Environment for Cooperative Futures: Polanyi, Marx, and Food Sovereignty

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to ‘put in their place’ (Sum and Jessop 2013) some key issues that frame the question of ‘the more-than-economic dimensions of co-operation’. In particular, it asks why capitalism deconstructs socio-natural reality into the ‘common-sense’ and discrete institutional spheres of ‘economy’, ‘society’ and ‘environment’, an institutional constellation in which the ‘economy’ is usually afforded pre-eminence. Building on this, the paper further asks: why does the organization of society around the commodity form, and specifically around the generalization of the commodity form to labour-power that is *the* defining feature of capitalism, have the tendential effect of fragmenting, atomizing, and marginalizing social collectivities and cooperative behaviour? This question is answered through examination of the work of Polanyi and Marx, arguing that it is the latter who is best able to explain the nature and dynamics of capitalism, and its relationship to cooperative activity. The paper elaborates the Marxian approach and suggests strong linkages with the ‘radical’ fraction of the food sovereignty movement. The latter, like Marx, appears to invoke unconstrained cooperation as ‘actual’ autonomy; the paper asks what the political and ecological prerequisites for the realization of this social imaginary might be.

Keywords: Cooperation; Polanyi; Marx; Food Sovereignty; Political Ecology

**1. Introduction: Situating Cooperation, the ‘Economic’, and the ‘More-than-Economic’ in Relation to Capitalism**

In this paper, we wish to suggest that, in attempting to address and secure cooperative behaviour in relation to the ‘extra-economic’ domain (that is, ‘society’ and ‘environment’), it is essential to problematize the premise of the desirability of competitive behaviour in the ‘economy’ itself. This is so because much cooperative behaviour in farming ‘communities’ appears to be delimited by, and designed to mitigate the environmental and social disbenefits of, competitive, capitalistic rationality in the ‘economy’<sup>1</sup>. We will contend here that

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<sup>1</sup> Cooperation within agriculture typically assumes two forms: production cooperatives, where production resources and labour are used jointly, symptomatically a rarity in the capitalist global North; and service cooperatives, where services are provided to *individual* farming members, again symptomatically almost exclusively the meaning of cooperative in the global North. Service cooperatives take the form of supply cooperatives, supplying their members with inputs for agricultural production, and marketing cooperatives, undertaking transportation, packaging,

it is capitalism itself, specifically on its Marxian definition (see below), that erodes and delimits cooperative behaviour, engenders the contradictions that cooperative organization attempts to mitigate, and generates the separate, institutional/conceptual domains of 'economy', 'society' and 'environment' that comprise the problematic of this special issue.

Anticipating our argument, we suggest that this is so because of capital's singular focus upon accumulation through the valorization of human labour power. This has the effect of de-collectivizing and atomizing society, both in terms of the creation of a workforce now 'free' to sell its labour power to the capitalist at a competitive rate, and in terms of capitalist or petty commodity enterprises themselves in their compulsion to secure survival through necessarily competitive, rather than cooperative, behaviour (Perelman 2000, Teschke 2003, Lacher 2006)<sup>2</sup>. As we shall see, this arises from the conferral on capitalists, by the state, of absolute property rights in the means of production, a feature unique to capitalist social relations. The obverse of this condition is the alienability of assets, including land, via the medium of the market. This has the following, vitally important implication: since not only is the surplus alienable, as in all class societies, *but also the means of production*, a surplus expropriator (the capitalist) must compete with other appropriators in order to reproduce his/her social position, since he/she has no extra-economic right to his/her property. It is this condition for survival, founded on these historically specific social property relations, which creates the drive to maximize profit, to accumulate, to compete with other capitalists and petty commodity producers, and to keep social and environmental costs to a minimum (that is, to 'externalize' these costs). The competitive individualism that arises from these circumstances is not merely an ideology (see Emery 2015), therefore, it is a key component of the material reproduction of capitalist social relations.

These social property relations have given rise to the historically specific appearance of society as existing 'outside' the economy or, indeed, as seeming to have no existence at all. This, at base, has generated the differentiated disciplines of 'economics' and 'sociology'. At the same time, capitalism's singular focus on accumulation through human labour valorization leads to the objectification of the environment as if it were a fungible commodity, entailing the conceptual

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distribution, and marketing of farm products. Such service cooperative activity within the 'economy' is, perhaps paradoxically, designed to enhance competitiveness or to insulate producers from the secular downward pressure on prices/incomes that competition induces. Cooperative activity in the 'more-than-economic' is designed typically to mitigate, but not to resolve, the social and ecological disbenefits flowing from the 'economic'. A classic case of this within a fully neoliberalized context is National Landcare in Australia (see Tilzey 2006).

<sup>2</sup> We should note here that, in transitions to capitalism, small farms might lose their ability to reproduce themselves outside commodity relations and markets without necessarily being dispossessed of their land and other means of production. Indeed, this dynamic of the *commodification of subsistence* as Brenner (2001) terms it, may provide a more generic basis of the subsumption of labour by capital than the outright dispossession usually suggested by notions of 'proletarianization'. In fact the vast majority of small and family farms fall into this category even when they have supposedly secured a level of 'autonomy' within 'embedded markets', rather giving the lie to van der Ploeg's (2008) assertion that these constitute 'new peasantries'.

reduction and material degradation of its multiple use values in the drive to maximize surplus value, in the guise of exchange value, through processes of capitalization, intensification and specialization (the 'externalization' of environmental 'costs'). Within this institutional constellation, accumulation (economics) tendentially determines the subordinate place of, and contradictory relations with, the other domains of 'society' and 'environment'<sup>3</sup>.

These introductory remarks delineate some essential features of capitalism in relation to cooperative behaviour and the 'ecological dominance' (Jessop 2002) of the economy in relation to the 'extra-economic'. These essential characteristics, while 'real abstractions', exist nonetheless within the 'concrete' realities of 'variegated neoliberalism' (see below) in which, empirically, there is a spectrum of differing cooperative behaviours and organizational structures. Recent work in this area, addressing cooperation, neoliberalism, and nature (see, for example, Stock et al. 2014), has sought to examine such varieties of cooperation along a spectrum from neoliberal autonomy (competitive individualism) at one extremity, to 'actual' autonomy at the other. The latter is defined, perhaps symptomatically, as collective freedom for farmers as a (sic) social class, such that individual freedoms are integrally connected to the ongoing reproduction of the (sic) farming sector, a definition deriving, as we shall see, from van der Ploeg (2008). Stock et al. (2014) examine four examples of cooperative organization along this spectrum: from New Zealand at one extreme (which we term hegemonic neoliberalism) to the *Movimento do Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra* (MST) in Brazil at the other (which we term counter-hegemonic anti-capitalism).

While this work, valuably, 'creates an opening' towards post-neoliberal alterity and more cooperative futures as 'actual' autonomy, as the example of MST implies, we suggest, however, that the attainment of this goal, together with explanation of the variegated cooperative forms presented, are somewhat constrained. This seems to be because of the authors' reliance on a binary (autonomy versus 'actual' autonomy) that appears to derive, via van der Ploeg (2008), from Polanyi's concept of the 'double' or 'counter movement' (Polanyi 1957). As we explain below, we argue that Polanyi fails both to uncover fully the real logic propelling capital's dynamic, and, in the concept of 'double movement', the complexities of political 'accommodation', 'compromise' and 'resistance' that accompany it. This is a failure that, we suggest, is reproduced in the work of van der Ploeg (2008, 2013) and other prominent theorists such as McMichael (2013). Indeed, the latter's notion of the 'corporate food regime', and associated

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<sup>3</sup> Typically, the modern state, within which capitalism emerged and without which it could not survive, steps in to mitigate this 'dis-integrated' and contradictory relationship, selectively ameliorating the costs of social alienation and environmental degradation for both capital and wider 'civil society' but, in so doing, prolonging the 'relational sustainability' of this contradictory nexus (Drummond and Marsden 1999). Part of this mitigatory impulse, guided and/or funded by the state, involves 'more-than-economic' cooperative activities designed to bolster social or environmental 'capital'. Symptomatically, however, the state eschews interference in the sacrosanct economic domain itself, the principal perpetrator of the contradictions, its involvement confined to 'correcting' so-called 'market failure' in the arena of 'public goods'.

assertions concerning the full trans-nationalization of capitalism and the state under neoliberalism, have become virtually axiomatic amongst the considerable number of scholars (and activists), including McMichael himself, who have construed or constructed the concept of food sovereignty as a generalized counter-narrative to this putatively undifferentiated process of neoliberalization (see, for example, Claeys 2015, Fairbairn 2011, Wittman, Desmarais, Wiebe 2011). Indeed, the justification for change towards food sovereignty, whatever that might entail, seems often to be couched in a relatively abstract, 'rights'-based master frame (see Claeys 2015 and below) that, while necessary up to a point, nonetheless evades the need for a more substantive analysis of the social relations that require subversion if 'actual' autonomy is to be realized (see Patel 2011)<sup>4</sup>.

If these authors, following Polanyi, van der Ploeg, and McMichael, have failed to uncover the essence of capitalism/neoliberalism, then the implication is that their definitions 'post-neoliberal alterity' and cooperative potentialities are likely to be similarly constrained. We argue that a more incisive and critical understanding of capitalism and the modern state – and their nemesis – needs to be founded centrally on a theory of social property relations, class, and exploitation – a theory that derives from Marx. Consequently, we will argue that there is a need to construct the notions of 'actual' autonomy, cooperative potentialities, and food sovereignty in Marxian, rather than Polanyian, terms. Here we suggest strong parallels between a Marxian approach and the 'radical' definition of food sovereignty (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck 2011) where this implicates a direct challenge to market dependence through a *reversal*<sup>5</sup> of the process primitive accumulation and subsistence commodification.

With these opening comments in mind, the overall structure of the paper is based on the following logic of argument:

We have, in this introductory section, delineated some of the key relationships between capitalist competition, cooperation, and the separation of institutional spheres into the 'economic' and the 'more-than-economic'. We have also pointed to some of the variability in cooperative organization around this 'ecological dominance' of capital. There is contention, however, over what constitutes 'actual' autonomy – whether this should be understood in Polanyian or Marxian terms. This then requires an examination of the respective merits of these two

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<sup>4</sup> Patel does not take the final plunge and advocate an explicitly Marxian approach, but he is there in all but name. 'This base inequality in power is one that food sovereignty, sometimes explicitly, seeks to address. And it is here, in challenging deep inequalities in power, that I argue we see the core of food sovereignty. There is, at the heart of food sovereignty, a radical egalitarianism in the call for a multi-faceted series of 'democratic attachments'. Claims around food sovereignty address the need for social change such that the capacity to shape food policy can be exercised at all appropriate levels. To make these rights substantive requires more than a sophisticated series of juridical sovereignties. To make the right to shape food policy meaningful is to require that *everyone* be able substantively to engage in those policies. But the prerequisites for this are a society in which equality-distorting effects of sexism, patriarchy, racism, and class power have been eradicated. Activities that instantiate this radical kind of 'moral universalism' are the necessary precursor to the 'cosmopolitan federalism' that the language of rights summons. And it is by these activities that we shall know food sovereignty.' (Patel 2011, 194)

<sup>5</sup> Or, perhaps more accurately, a dialectical negation of this process.

thinkers in terms of their understanding of capitalism, its dynamics, and its relation to cooperation. This is undertaken in the next section, in which we assert the need for a Marxian-based definition of 'actual' autonomy as 'strong' cooperation. In the section following, we suggest that the Marxian position has strong affinities with the 'radical' fraction of the food sovereignty movement, whilst arguing that theorists of an undifferentiated 'peasant way', or 'progressives', amongst whom van der Ploeg is an exemplar, deploy a more Polanyian than Marxian understanding of autonomy, eliding key areas of contention within agrarian classes and their relations with the state.

Having made the case for a Marxian-based approach, we then elaborate this to examine further the relationship between 'variegated cooperation' and capitalism, with particular reference to the nature and emergence of the 'radical' positionality within food sovereignty. We do this because the radical positionality appears to be a prerequisite for the achievement of 'strong' cooperation as 'actual' autonomy. We then proceed to explore the reasons for the emergence, together with the dynamics, of the radical positionality in Latin America. We examine the case of Bolivia, where the ruling MAS party appears to be employing a Polanyian interpretation of socialism and cooperation to legitimate a particularly destructive form of capitalism denoted as 'neo-extractivism'. In the final section, we explore what a radical vision of 'actual' autonomy might entail, its relation to Marx's observations on communism, and whether, by looking again at the Bolivian case study, it is possible to discern a coalescence of class forces propelling change towards a post-capitalist cooperative future.

## **2. Polanyi and Marx**

In attempting both to understand and critique the reified 'trichotomy' of 'economy', 'society' and 'environment', and the way in which cooperative activity is defined and constrained by it, we firstly wish to undertake a comparative assessment of the work of Karl Polanyi and Karl Marx. As the neoliberal contradictions of 'economy', 'society' and 'environment' have deepened appreciably since the turn of the millennium, and most evidently since the 2007/8 financial and food crises, there has been a discernable increase in the attention directed to Polanyian concepts such 'embeddedness' and 'double-movement' (Dale 2016). Indeed, within rural studies the demise of 'political productivism' (Tilzey 2000) has proven fertile ground for the growth of thinking around 'endogenous development', 're-localization', 'ecological citizenship', and 're-embedding' of the economy. All these approaches have, as their common denominator, a desire to reconfigure the 'market as means rather than master' through *instituting* market relations in order to achieve favourable human development and more sustainable use of the environment.

While Polanyi was influenced by Marx, and was likewise an advocate of socialism, he was nonetheless ambivalent concerning the conceptual status of class and, consequently, role of class struggle (Dale 2016). While Marx espoused historical materialism as a mode of analysis, Polanyi favoured Institutionalism

(Selwyn and Miyamura 2014). The two figures thus differed quite significantly in their respective conceptualizations of the way capitalism structures society and subverts its cooperative and collective institutions (ibid.). While the historical materialism of Marx is based in the concept of 'mode of production', in a theory of exploitation, and in a view of socialism – 'actual' autonomy? – as emerging from 'workers' resistance to exploitation, Polanyi's institutionalism represents an ideal-type conception of different economic systems, emphasizing commodification under capitalism and the 're-embedding' the market through a rather unspecific process of socialization.

Polanyi's Institutionalism was intended to differentiate his position from neoclassical economists' view of the 'market' as a self-regulating entity, the emergence of which was supposedly the product of spontaneous and natural evolution of trade and exchange (see Perelman 2000).

We must rid ourselves of the ingrained notion that the economy is a field of experience of which human beings have necessarily always been conscious. To employ a metaphor, the facts of the economy were originally embedded in situations that were not in themselves of an economic nature, neither the ends nor the means being primarily material. The crystallization of the concept of economy was a matter of time and history. But neither time nor history has provided us with those conceptual tools required to penetrate the maze of social relationships in which the economy was embedded. This is the task of what we will here call institutional analysis. (Polanyi et al. 1971, 242)

Polanyi's Institutionalism was founded on a 'substantivist' (rather than 'formalist' – neoclassical) view of the economy, described as an 'instituted process of interaction between man and his environment, which results in a continuous supply of want satisfying material means' (ibid., 248). In this, he described 'locational movement' as the production and transportation of goods and services and 'appropriative movement' as the distribution and ownership of those goods and services, deploying both to underscore what he saw as the transcending importance of the institutional aspect of the economy. Polanyi's rationale here was to demonstrate that not all forms of human society are definable according to market relations and 'the logic of rational action' (ibid., 234).

This Institutional approach, drawing on Weberian ideal types, has the unfortunate consequence, however, of emphasizing the mere description and cataloguing of the appearances of societal exchange and distribution (of goods and services), rather than uncovering the causal mechanisms involved in generating the historical forms of society and their dynamics. This leads, perhaps ironically given Polanyi's terminology, to a rather formalistic, rather than substantive, treatment of social organization and change, in which these are accounted for merely by different combinations or relative 'weightings' of essences (ideal types) as 'forms of integration'.

In this way, when we assess Polanyi's explanation for the nature of capitalism as a socio-economic system, for the transformation of labour power into the

commodity form, for its class-bound and in-egalitarian character, and for the consequent constraints on cooperative behaviour (where dysfunctional for capital accumulation), we encounter significant deficiencies in his work (Dale 2016). Thus, for Polanyi, the 'market', like 'reciprocity' and 'redistribution', is simply another 'form of integration' or 'instituted process' that describes how resources are exchanged and circulated in society. His objective is to depict the institutions that govern how goods are circulated and distributed, rather than to explain the social relations between producers and non-producers.

Consequently, Polanyi conceives of the market as a mere technical mechanism for moving goods and services from one individual to another. In this way, his conception of the market is founded rather more on a neoclassical conception of supply and demand than on a Marxian notion of 'social relations of production' (or of 'domination', as we prefer) and on the social property relations which underpin how surplus is produced, controlled, and distributed within a particular 'mode of production' ('domination').

Polanyi, in rejecting, in the manner of neoclassical economics, the Marxian labour theory of value, thereby refused to conceptualize the market as a social relation comprising an exploitative dialectic between capital and labour. This essentialized (formalized!), de-historicized, and de-socialized conception of the market has important implications for his analysis of capitalism and his vision for socialism. This, in turn, has obvious consequences for how we understand the 'economic', the 'more-than-economic', the nature of, and relations between, cooperative behaviour in these domains, and the notion of 'actual' autonomy.

By contrast, Marx's mode of production concept is designed to specify the ways in which the dominant propertied classes secure conditions for the extraction of surplus from the immediate producers. As noted, such extraction can, under capitalism, include the so-called 'commodification of subsistence', whereby small farms may lose their ability to reproduce themselves outside commodity relations but without necessarily being dispossessed of their means of production. Thus, the form of exploitation, by which Marx refers to the appropriation of the unpaid part of the product of the labour of others, is central to his understanding of socio-economic (re)production and historical transformation.

The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers determines the relationship of rulers to ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. (Marx 1972, 927)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> We should note that the means by which surplus labour is 'pumped out' of producers is both material and ideational. Because, under capitalism, this process happens 'within production' and through the mechanism of the 'dull compulsion of the economic' due to the separation of workers from direct access to the means of production, it appears as if the mechanism of extraction is wholly 'material' or 'economic' – hence Marx's preoccupation with the commodity form and the 'economy' as the secret of surplus extraction within capitalism. But to suggest that this represents an 'economism' is misplaced because Marx recognized that the dynamics of the



Selwyn and Miyamura (2014) point to a number of distinct, but inter-connected and mutually constitutive, moments of exploitation that underpin Marx's understanding of capitalism. These include:

- Within the sphere of production (including through subsistence commodification) where value is generated by workers and extracted by capital;
- Within the sphere of exchange (labour market) where worker's labour power is institutionally organized so that it can be sold to capital for its subsequent exploitation in the workplace and where worker's wages constitute 'effective demand' for capital's products;
- Within the private sphere (the family) where (mainly) women's unpaid labour contributes to the generational reproduction of the labour force. Here capital attempts to maximize the externalization of costs of reproduction onto the 'private sphere', whilst maintaining the fiction that labour is just a commodity wholly reproducible within the capital relation – the 'private sphere' is thus treated by capital in the same way as 'nature' (see below);
- In relations with 'nature' where nature is an intrinsic part of the capital relation (as 'source' and 'sink' for everything that capital produces and consumes), but is not fully accounted for because capital 'pays' only for that element of nature transformed through human labour<sup>7</sup>.

In analyzing capitalism from the perspective of exploitation, Marx emphasized its essential class-bound character with the intention of illuminating how the exploited (including 'voiceless' nature) could ultimately overthrow the exploiters. Polanyi's objection to capitalism and the commodity 'fiction'<sup>8</sup> was based partly on his moral condemnation of laissez-faire liberalism. Not only was market society historically unprecedented because it required the transformation of labour, nature, and money into commodities, it also

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system, in the final analysis, are determined by class struggle, an ideational issue, albeit a struggle enacted within the structuring conditions of the capital-labour relation. It is because of this that we prefer the term mode of domination, or exploitation, to mode of production.

<sup>7</sup> In its drive to accumulate surplus value, through maximization of production and minimization of costs (the maximization of surplus value embodied in unpaid human labour), capital generates intensification, specialization, and simplification of production, thereby degrading or destroying nature's multiple use values where these are not related directly to the production of commodities (and even where they are if this means that the commodities in question can be produced at maximum output without any regard for the future – a 'discounting' of the future). In this way, capital fails to 'internalize' the majority of nature's 'costs' in a manner that might secure the reproduction of those use values. And yet capital, hubristically, treats nature as a fungible commodity ('natural capital') as if capital were capable of substituting for the multiple and irreplaceable use values that it destroys or degrades. Nature is, therefore, in most respects a fictitious commodity because capital is incapable of reproducing nature's use values or replacing those destroyed.

<sup>8</sup> Polanyi defined 'commodities' as entities produced specifically for sale in the marketplace. Entities that did not fall into this category, but which capitalism treated as if they were commodities, he termed 'fictitious commodities'.

threatened the basis of society – the fundamental need of people to be sustained by family, community, and other social relations. In response, Polanyi suggested that society engages in a ‘counter-movement’ to restrict the extent of commodification. While Polanyi did recognize the fact that society is constituted by different social classes, he conceived the ‘counter-movement’, however, as motivated by a supra-class and general societal interest (Dale 2016). He contended that the mobilization of narrow class interests would not generate their intended outcomes, the latter requiring a higher level of supra-class cooperation and collaboration. As Burawoy (2003: 229) has pointed out, Polanyi is in this regard rather naïve in his failure to recognize the proclivity of the capitalist state to take the part of the dominant social classes in repression or cooptation of non-capitalist classes (the ‘classes of labour’ (Bernstein 2010)). This naivety is founded at least in part on Polanyi’s antipathy towards Marx’s arguments concerning the inherently exploitative nature of capitalism and the consequent centrality of class struggle in its contradictory reproduction.

Polanyi’s rejection of Marx’s labour theory of value enables him to construct an image of society as an organic whole, one that, in its attempts to protect itself from the market, can politically overcome any systematic form of exploitation. He understood exploitation not only as resulting from unequal exchange (underpayment of commodified goods and services – a non-Marxian interpretation) but perhaps more importantly as arising from society’s inability to sufficiently regulate or modify the effect of the ‘market’ under capitalism. In this way, exploitation could, for Polanyi, be eliminated by re-embedding the market within non-market institutions.

As Burawoy (2003) remarks, Polanyi has a strangely weak understanding of society itself, despite his counterposition of ‘society’ against the ‘market’. As we have seen, there is no notion of the ‘economy’ itself as a social relation between classes generating a conflictual dynamic, and no notion of an internal, but differentiated relation between ‘society’ and the ‘economy’. Polanyi’s uncritical acceptance of the orthodox, de-socialized conception of the market reveals his inability to understand how, under capitalism, ‘social’ (political) and ‘economic’ processes are institutionally discrete but functionally integrated and co-constitutive. Their institutional separation conceals an essential unity, based on the specifically capitalist social relations that underpin commodified labour power – its ability to sell at its full price in the market while simultaneously generating surplus value in production (Selwyn and Miyamura 2014).

By conceptually, separating the two spheres and assuming that the ‘economy’ has its own distinct laws, Polanyi was able to present ‘society’ as potentially in opposition to the ‘economy’ under capitalism (Dale 2016). However, it is precisely this split between the exploitation of labour (in production) founded on the conferral of absolute property rights and the commodification of labour power, on the one hand, and the removal of ‘extra-economic’ authority (the ‘political’) to a separate institutional sphere, on the other, that generates under capitalism the dichotomy between ‘civil society’ and the ‘state’. This constitutes what is historically unique about the form of exploitation within this mode of domination - the (apparent) lack of ‘extra-economic’ coercion as a means to

extract surplus from producers (Wood 1995). Furthermore, the status of labour power as a commodity is not dependent merely on the expropriation of the direct producers from the means of production, it also requires the ongoing political economic and social subordination of labour to capital (including the 'commodification of subsistence'). This requires the generation of varying forms of 'market dependence', as a generality requiring that the sellers of commodified labour power incapable of reproducing the means of livelihood outside the capital-labour relation, but also including wider mechanisms such as indebtedness to capital, or subordination to monetized levies imposed by the state-capital nexus.

The state-capital nexus, first in Britain and subsequently in Western Europe and North America, was concerned, therefore, not only to institute a market society founded on the reproduction of fictitious commodities to underpin an expansionary industrial revolution. It also aimed, systematically, to maintain the mass of the population in a condition of poverty and political weakness in order to maximize its economic exploitation (Selwyn and Miyamura 2014). This relation between the state-capital nexus and the mass of the population was only ever partially overcome via means of imperialism, whereby exploitation, poverty and political weakness could be 'externalized' onto a global Southern periphery (Wong and Sit 2015), while workers' resistance at home, in what became the global North, could be neutralized via consumerism and nationalistic ideologies – the creation of a 'labour aristocracy' (Tilzey 2016).

The commodification of labour and its exploitation under capitalism were, and are, two sides of the same process. Economic exploitation and the extraction of surplus value from labour by capital was simultaneously an 'economic' process (in the realms of the private, capitalist workplace) and a 'political' process, supported and instituted by pro-capitalist states as they sought to raise the competitiveness of their economies in relation to other capitalist economies (Wood 2002; Selwyn and Miyamura 2014). This explains both the separation and internal relationship between the 'economic' and the 'political' under capitalism, and the necessarily nationalistic and territorialized shape of capitalism as the state-capital nexus.

Given Polanyi's failure to identify the exploitation of labour (and nature) that Marx saw as the quintessential substance of commodification, it is unsurprising that Polanyi had a very imprecise idea of what 'de-commodification', socialism, and by extension cooperation, might entail. His ambiguous conception of labour under 'embedded' markets makes it unclear whether he advocated an end to the capital-labour relation, as implied by Marx's vision of socialism, or whether he invoked its mere regulation by supposedly 'non-market' actors such as the state. The latter explanation appears more consistent with his overall understanding of commodification and, if this is so, then his conception of 'de-commodification' is actually quite limited. In other words, the Keynesian compromise between capital and labour embodied what Polanyi, on this interpretation, considered to be the de-commodification of labour.

Lacher (2007) refers, however, to the Keynesian compromise as a 'slight', rather than a 'great', 'transformation'. Modernizing capitalist states used this 'slight transformation' of capital-labour relations to enhance their legitimacy and to spread and deepen capitalist social relations through consumerism, 'articulated' development, and nation-building. While capital has sought to unravel aspects of this relation under neoliberalism, precisely because labour had waxed too contumacious under the previous regime, key elements of the relation nonetheless remain in the form of consumerism and nationalism. The privileges of the global Northern 'labour aristocracy' are sustained, however, only by renewed relations of imperialism (Smith 2016) with the global South. Beguiled by the rewards of consumerism and liberal citizenship, this 'labour aristocracy' has thereby forsaken its role as agent in socialist transformation.

Polanyi, therefore, has a rather vague definition of socialism because he lacks an overarching theory of capitalism and of potential transitions beyond capitalism. This stands in contrast to Marx's clear identification of the 'classes of labour' (including class fractions of the peasantry) as agents of socialist transformation grounded in their struggles against, and potentially beyond, capitalist exploitation. While consistent with his analysis, Marx may not have anticipated, however, that such struggles would, for the reasons outlined above and detailed below, attain their most cogent form in the peripheries, rather than the core, of the capitalist system<sup>9</sup>.

We conclude this discussion of Polanyi and Marx by distilling out some of its key implications for the theorization of cooperative activity and the relationship between the 'economic' and the 'more-than-economic' spheres. We have sought to show that the very definition of, and separation between, the trichotomy of 'economy', 'society', and 'environment' arises from capitalist social relations as understood by Marx rather than by Polanyi. In this way, we suggest that engendering sustainability in the 'extra-economic' sphere through cooperative activity and organization cannot be undertaken comprehensively unless social relations in the 'economy' are themselves transformed away from capitalistic competition. 'Extra-economic' aspirations towards greater cooperation will thus continue to be constrained by the 'ecological dominance' of capitalistic relations in the 'economy'. So it does not appear simply to be a question of the re-prioritization of the 'more-than-economic' vis-à-vis the 'economic' as if the two could un-problematically continue to run alongside one another. Rather, the very definition and substance of what we mean by 'economy' needs to be reconstituted so that it no longer possesses an 'external', or alienated, relation to the 'extra-economic'.

Marx achieves this through his social relational and class-based understanding of capitalism. Polanyi, however, does not because he fails to de-construct accepted and reified categories. The 'economy' for him thus retains its neoclassical

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<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, there is growing evidence that, in his later writings, Marx was looking increasingly to the 'periphery' both as the potential source of 'counter-hegemonic' resistances and as the potential foundation of post-capitalistic 'commons', thereby giving the lie to any simplistic and 'stagist' notion, as in 'orthodox' Marxism, that society had necessarily to pass through 'developed' capitalism before socialism could be attained (see Anderson 2016).

meaning and so retains an external relation to the 'more-than-economic'. For Polanyi, the 'Great Transformation' or 'socialism' entails the mere restraining, or embedding, of the 'economy' by 'society', not its reconstitution and transformation through changed social relations between capital and labour. In other words, we need, following Marx, to de-reify and de-essentialize the signifiers 'economic' and 'extra-economic' together with cognate, neoclassically derived terminology such as 'social capital' and 'natural capital'. It is, therefore, not merely the 'cultural normalization of a narrowly economic and individualistic *interpretation* of independence (that is, neoliberal autonomy) ...that has worked to undermine producers' capacity to work together...with others over the long-term' (Wynne-Jones et al. 2015, 2) but, rather, the very nature of capitalist social relations as alienating competition.

It is this necessarily competitive character of the capitalist 'economy', as explained in the Introduction, that, via its 'ecological dominance' over the 'extra-economic' domains, fatally compromises the possibility of thoroughgoing cooperative organization in the latter. Consequently, the assertion here is that any 'long-term success of cooperation' in the 'more-than-economic' domain (entailing the 'emergence of shared values, the casting off of individualized and self-interested motives, the formation of close trusting relationships, and working towards common goals' (ibid.)) will always be tightly constrained so long as the 'economy' retains ecological dominance and is defined competitively on the basis of exploitative social relations.

In this, therefore, Polanyi has a fundamentally different conception of the makeup of society and its constituent parts than Marx. Polanyi employs a Weberian categorization of the essential elements of society that are always the same but merely have differing 'weightings' in different societies. Here there is no notion of a dialectical relation between, or mutual definition of, societal spheres. It is possible in Polanyi's view of society, therefore, to 'embed' some elements, the 'extra-economic', for example, in cooperative behaviour whilst somehow allowing the 'economy' to continue as subject to the 'laws' of supply and demand. Polanyi also has a fundamentally different notion from Marx of what might constitute cooperative behaviour and organization. This comprises, as above, the mere emplacement of social restraints, the ideological sloughing off of individualism, or the assertion of some degree of autonomy, rather than social relational transformation.

Finally, and flowing from this, Polanyi has a fundamentally different notion from the Marxian one of societal change and the ends to which this should be directed. The latter, again, proposes social relational transformation towards unconstrained or 'strong' cooperative relations through a sundering of the capital-labour dialectic and, with this, the termination of 'external' relations between the 'economic' and the 'more-than-economic'.

### **3. Polanyi and the 'Progressives'; Marx and the 'Radicals'**

Polanyi's critique of commodification is founded, therefore, on the fact that it allows 'fictitious commodities', particularly people and land, to become subject to the 'law' of supply and demand. However, in uncritically accepting this 'law', rather than class relations, as the basis of the 'self-regulating' economy, Polanyi inadvertently adopts a neoclassical understanding of the 'economy'. As a consequence, he has no theory of exploitation that underlies commodification, no theory of capital accumulation, and therefore no adequate theory of the social and ecological consequences of capitalist expansion. The result, as intimated above, is a simplistic binary between an undifferentiated 'social interest', on the one hand, and the unregulated play of the 'law' of supply and demand, on the other. This has clear parallels today in populist assertions of a generalized interest of 'civil society' versus 'corporate capital', strong residues of which appear in the work of McMichael (2013) in his notion of the 'corporate food regime', and in that of van der Ploeg (2013) in his undifferentiated, Chayanovian view of the 'peasantry' as unitarily counterposed to 'Empire'<sup>10</sup>. As a result, it is certainly difficult, in the Polanyian frame, to have any clear notion of what cooperative activity in food production, as 'socialism' or 'actual' autonomy, might look like. On Polanyi's own criteria, it could well conform either to the 'political productivism' of the European Fordist era, or to the 'embedded neoliberalism' (Tilzey 2006, Tilzey and Potter 2008) of the current post-Fordist conjuncture, or indeed to both.

Unlike Polanyi, Chayanov (1966) and van der Ploeg do at least accept the Marxian definition of capitalism as an exploitative class relation between capital and wage labour (see van der Ploeg 2013, 124). Unfortunately, they delimit this class relation very rigidly and literally to those forms of production involving capital and the employment of wage labour, thereby excluding from capitalist relations the 'commodification of subsistence' (Bernstein 2010), a phenomenon that affects virtually all farms below the 'upper peasantry' – that is, all farms that do not employ wage labour. All farms that do not employ labour are, thereby, assumed by van der Ploeg to be non-capitalist and/or somehow immune to the compulsions of the competitive market. Such farms are then assumed to possess a common interest as 'peasants' and to operate according to the various Chayanovian principles of 'balance' (van der Ploeg 2013, 23). By failing to grasp the significance of the 'commodification of subsistence', a whole new entity – the 'new peasantries' – is thereby created, supposedly 'autonomous' from the pressures of capitalist competition and accumulation.

One consequence is that, for van der Ploeg, the supposedly 'post-productivist' or 'multifunctional' elements of 'embedded neoliberalism'<sup>11</sup> appear eminently compatible with his conception of 'actual' autonomy, even to the extent that 'these new markets can be considered to be commons' (2013, 130), a bold claim indeed. There appear to be a number of significant problems with this notion of

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<sup>10</sup> Van der Ploeg derives the term 'Empire' from Hardt and Negri (2000) who make the claim that capital under neoliberalism is fully de-territorialized and trans-nationalized and is now counterposed, consequently, to a generalized and undifferentiated counter-movement comprising the 'multitude' (Hardt and Negri 2004).

<sup>11</sup> These elements receive financial support through agri-environmental and rural development measures within the EU Common Agricultural Policy, for example.

‘actual’ autonomy, particularly where seen as equating to the ‘post-productivist’ or ‘multifunctional’ turn.

First, as noted, van der Ploeg posits a narrow definition of capitalism that excludes the ‘commodification of subsistence’ as a key feature of capitalist relations in agriculture, in which ‘peasants’ are commonly workers for capital and in which petty commodity producers are frequently constrained to compete in a capitalist market, irrespective of whether this market is defined by economies of scale (productivism) or by those of scope (post-productivism). Second, this narrow definition of capitalism permits the categorization of the resulting ‘peasant’ forms of production, together with the commodities thereby produced, as non-capitalistic. The further consequence is the construal of the ‘post-productivist’ and ‘multifunctional’ turn in Europe as non-capitalistic and as opposed to entrepreneurialism. Third, since all farms which do not employ wage labour are defined as ‘peasant’, there is a lack of appreciation of class differentiation, or differential class identification, within this broad categorization and, therefore, of the frequent relations of exploitation and competition, as much as of cooperation, that exist between and within the categories of small/family farm, upper, middle, and lower peasantries. Here we may point, for example, to the process of ‘accumulation from below’ (Li 2014) whereby upper peasants commonly appropriate, through the reproduction squeeze, the land and labour of the middle and lower peasantry. Indeed, ‘cooperation’ may well involve activities that entail exploitation simply because, for Chayanov and van der Ploeg, everything that peasants do is, by definition, non-capitalistic.

Fourth, there is a radical underestimation of the degree to which these ‘peasants’ of all classes are subject to the need to produce commodities at a competitive rate (whether within economies of scale or of scope) and/or to the need to sell labour power in order to meet the imperatives of economic reproduction. At the same time, consequently, there is a radical over-estimation of the degree of autonomy available to ‘peasants’ to pursue the Chayanovian ‘balances’ that supposedly structure their actions. Van der Ploeg (2013, 32) suggests that, in respect of Italian *minifundi* ‘the desire to maintain the patrimony (and keep the property in the family) is a basic drive that explains the presence and continuity of farms, the existence of which cannot possibly be solely explained by reference to markets’. There may well be, and frequently is, a strong desire to retain land in the face of market non-viability, but the unavoidable fact remains that these farms and farm families, where they require to variously service debts, mortgages, make a profit, or simply maintain a certain level of consumerism, are obliged to engage in the capitalist market to enable farm survival. Unless they can do so with some measure of success, the farm will have either to be sold or ‘de-activated’. Consequently, pluriactivity, often involving off-farm work, is a frequent strategy to generate sufficient family income to sustain the farm. This hardly suggests a high degree of autonomy from capitalist social relations. Additionally, far from continuing to produce ‘autonomously’, he admits, almost as an aside, that many of these farms are now partly de-activated precisely ‘because of low prices for farm products’ (ibid.).

Fifth, there appears to be an inadequate grasp of the relationship between the state, capital and the agriculture sector and the way in which agrarian social property relations have been manipulated by the state-capital nexus 'all the way down', since the dawn of the modern state, to variously facilitate capital accumulation, enforce private property rights, secure through productivism the supply of cheap wage foods for the urban proletariat, bolster the legitimacy of the state through the creation of a middle farm 'yeomanry', and secure extirpation and/or de-radicalization of the peasantry. The creation of a politically compliant class of family farms has been an important ingredient in the engineering of the 'farmer road' to capitalism and nation-building characteristic of the imperial powers of the global North and their 'settler states'. Many of these farmers, despite state-capital dependency, exhibit a strong ethos of independence and autonomy, but to suggest that they are anti-capitalist or anti-entrepreneurial is surely very far from the truth.

Sixth, the absence of the notion of class differentiation and inequality, together with the way in which van der Ploeg defines the 'peasantry', has the necessary effect of perpetuating market dependence through the denial of the phenomenon of the commodification of subsistence. In other words, the way in which the 'peasantry' and 'actual' autonomy are defined fatally undermines the possibility of addressing class relations, exploitation, and inequality, not only within the rural, but also throughout the wider society.

Finally, there is a failure to appreciate the degree to which the 'post-productivist' turn has been embroiled in neoliberal conceptual definitions, and material constructions, of environmentalism and 'sustainable consumption', and the degree to which this turn has been enabled by imperialistic relations with the global South. It is no accident that the 'post-productivist' turn coincided with deepened (albeit 'embedded') neoliberalism in the global North and the extension of 'informal' (economic) imperialism to the global South. And it is no accident that the fragmentation of informal empire with the food and financial crises of 2007/8 has ushered in a renewed focus on (neo-)productivism and the relative demotion of 'post-productivism' in the global North (see Tilzey 2016)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> As Tilzey and Potter (2008, 47-8) have noted: 'It is within this [neoliberal] context that a putatively oppositional paradigm of post-productivism (more specifically that of endogenous or agrarian-based rural development) has been promoted, premised on the assertion that the market power of corporate food interests can be countered by exploiting the turn by consumers away from industrial food provisioning in favour of quality food production (Marsden 2003; Marsden and Sonnino 2005; Morgan *et al.* 2006). While these authors place emphasis on elements – localism, ecological sustainability – that are key to strong sustainability, their paradigm remains centrally wedded to market dependency (see Wood 2002, 2005) and therefore subject to the contradictions that attend this condition. Thus, the turn to economies of scope and niche markets, and therefore dependency by smaller producers on middle-class consumption as their principal revenue stream, is likely to afford only temporary respite from the pressures of competition as more producers enter the field of quality production. Downward pressure on prices and capital concentration are predictable outcomes, while the volatility and arguably unsustainable nature of upper income consumption – premised as this increasingly is on global, neoliberal circuits of finance capital – would suggest considerable caution in relation to the longer-term viability of this 'alternative' paradigm. Indeed, these authors (Morgan *et al.* 2006, 195) have themselves expressed reservations concerning the assumed 'alterity' of their paradigm, intimating that the turn to the 'local', when allied to continuing market dependency,



The consequence is that neither Polanyi nor van der Ploeg provides us with a full explanation of capitalist dynamics and its relation to the modern state (with respect particularly to the agrarian dimension in the case of van der Ploeg). The result is that both present visions of ‘alterity’, and of potential modes of cooperative organization and behaviour, that lack trenchancy and are in important respects actually conformable with capitalism. In this, their analytics and normative imaginaries appear to share much in common with the class positionality of what Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) have termed the ‘progressives’. This positionality is invoked typically by small farm petty commodity producers and domestic agri-business, located principally in the global North, whose primary livelihood concern is the erosion of ‘their’ local markets by more globalized circuits of ‘corporate’ agri-food capital. This concern is to be addressed principally by ‘re-embedding’ such markets through the mechanisms of localization and ecologization, thereby re-equilibrating the principles of ‘balance’ that putatively characterize small farmer and ‘peasant’ rationality. The model of cooperative organization envisaged here appears to have much in common with the Swiss example of *Prolait* examined by Stock et al. (2014).

As described by Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, the ‘radical’ positionality, by contrast, appears to be inspired by a more Marxian stance in its invocation of a class-based, and deeper, social relational, transformation towards social equality and universal access to the means of production via re-assertion of the ‘commons’. This entails an abrogation of absolute property rights in, and the alienability of, land, as upheld by the state-capital nexus, such that the market no longer acts as mediator between people and their access to the means of production. In this view, cooperative and collective endeavours become liberated from the shackles of capitalistic competition (Herrera and Lau 2015, Wong and Sit 2015). When allied to a political ecological praxis, this positionality invokes food sovereignty in its foundational (global Southern) definition (Edelman 2014), with access to land – land sovereignty – a pre-eminent demand, entailing a reversal of the process primitive accumulation and subsistence commodification. This, more Marxian-inspired, invocation of food sovereignty is expressed by global Southern scholars particularly, including Amin (2015), Katz (2016), Moyo (2015), Patnaik (2015), Wong and Sit (2015), and others. Given the dynamics of land and resource scarcity under capitalism, a political ecological praxis also suggests the need for a programme of de-growth solidarity (see Exner *et al.* 2013) and a strategy of dual powers in order to dissolve current social relations of domination. Of the examples of ‘variegated cooperation’ presented by Stock et al. (2014), the radical positionality appears to have most in common with that of the MST in Brazil.

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may merely represent the ‘inside’ of a wider process of rescaling the state, the ‘outside’ being the growth of supra-national scales of governance associated with neoliberal globalization [imperialism]. This reprises our earlier discussion of denationalization and destatization as key elements of neoliberalization, suggesting that while endogeneity and the ‘alternative food networks’ paradigm do contain oppositional (anti-systemic) elements, their discourse of market dependency assures tendential conformity to a systemic (neoliberal) form of post-productivism.’

Further, this positionality implies a profound problematization of the institutional separation of the 'economy' and 'polity' in society that marks the co-constitution of capitalism and the modern state. Equality and ecological sustainability are the twin principles underlying this 'radical' alterity, thereby challenging both class relations within and between states, notably imperialism, and also capital's expansionary and ecologically dysfunctional dynamic. This positionality is invoked typically by the middle and lower peasantries (commonly semi-proletarians), the landless, proletarians, and indigenous people, located overwhelmingly in the global South. As the impacts of neoliberal austerity deepen and the ranks of the 'labour aristocracy' dwindle, this positionality is also likely, however, to gain increasing purchase in the global North, and particularly on its periphery (southern and eastern Europe, for example).

#### **4. Elaborating the Marxian Approach**

In this section, we elaborate a Marxian understanding of the origins of capitalism and the modern state, the accompanying dissolution of cooperative relations in production and distribution of use values, the perpetuation of capitalism through the state-capital nexus as variegated capitalism, and the differentiated resistances to neoliberalism by sub-, alter-, and counter-hegemonic social forces. We do this in order better to understand what it is about capitalism that subverts untrammelled, or 'strong', cooperative social relations, how this subversion is sustained through constrained forms of cooperation, and which social forces of resistance are most likely, in turn, to subvert capitalism through assertions of 'actual' autonomy.

Marxian political economy, together with its understanding of society's metabolism with nature (political ecology), proposes that the contradictions of capitalism arise from a disembedding of production and reproduction from socio-ecological relations. Disembedding constitutes the subordination of a prior and/or exterior moral economy to the alienated relations of the capitalist market, abstracted from socio-communal control and from local ecological affordances, checks and balances<sup>13</sup>. Alienated market relations, as market dependence (Wood 2002, 2009), are predicated on the formal or real expropriation of producers from their means of production, enforcing the sale of labour power to capital<sup>14</sup>. Marx (1972) termed this 'primitive accumulation', a process originating in the spatially and historically-specific social property relations of late-medieval England (Brenner 1985, Dimmock 2014), crystallized in the enclosure movement of 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, and subsequently extended globally through colonization and imperialism.

In this process, the peasantry and indigenous peoples were expropriated, fully or partially, from their direct and customary access to the means of livelihood and

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<sup>13</sup> Thus far, Marx and Polanyi would have been in agreement.

<sup>14</sup> At this point, however, Marx and Polanyi would have parted company.

subsistence, a process that not only continues today, but is also accelerating in the global South, particularly. This ongoing process of dispossession and (semi)-proletarianisation forces producers to become 'free' wage labour in order to survive<sup>15</sup>. This process is a fundamental element underpinning the genesis and reproduction of capitalist social relations. It is unsurprising, therefore, that it has been associated historically with profound contestations surrounding access to land (and water and other resources) as the basis of the means of production. Today, as the 'new imperialism' (Smith 2016) continues the process of enclosure, primarily in the global South, dispossession and (semi)-proletarianization are reflected in diverse and on-going struggles over the conditions of livelihood. Resistances to, and claims to reverse, primitive accumulation may therefore be termed, in their most comprehensive aspect, 'livelihood sovereignty'.

One of the major social casualties of primitive accumulation and enclosure of commons was (and continues to be) the loss of cooperative behaviour in the production and distribution of food and other essential resources<sup>16</sup>. The benefits of such pre-enclosure cooperative activity were more constrained than they might have been, of course, by the need to yield up, to the lord of the manor and to the church, a 'surplus' either of labour or of produce. Post-enclosure, with many expropriated commoners now labouring for the new agrarian capitalists or removed to the industrial towns and cities, cooperation became subordinated to the principle of competition. Enclosure was the central premise underpinning the emergence of capitalism as a mode of domination defined by the generalization of the commodity form to labour-power (Brenner 1985; Teschke 2003), entailing a fundamental break with previous modes.

This emergence involved the simultaneous formation of a new institutional sphere designated the 'economy', constituted as such by the modern state, but given freedom to function or fail within a 'depoliticized' arena of generalized competition. Lords of the manor now let their lands to the highest bidder, the new tenancies only secure, however, if they could 'improve' the land and yield a favourable rate of profit. Failure to do so would result in eviction and

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<sup>15</sup> Semi-proletarianisation means that part of the labourer's subsistence needs is still derived from food production for home consumption, but this is insufficient, due to lack of land, to supply in full the subsistence needs of the family, generating the need to sell labour.

<sup>16</sup> Joan Thirsk describes vividly this process in the case of the English enclosures: 'Common fields and pastures kept alive a vigorous cooperative spirit in the community; enclosures starved it. In the champion country people had to work together amicably, to agree upon crop rotations, stints of common pasture, the upkeep and improvements of their grazings and meadows, the clearing of the ditches, the fencing of the fields. They toiled side by side in the fields, and they walked together from field to village, from farm to heath, morning, afternoon, and evening. They all depended on common resources for their fuel, for bedding, and fodder for their stock, and by pooling so many of the necessities of livelihood they were disciplined from early youth to submit to the rules and customs of the community. After enclosure, when every man could fence his own piece of territory and warn his neighbours off, the discipline of sharing things fairly with one's neighbours was relaxed, and every household became an island unto itself. This was the great revolution in men's lives, greater than all the economic changes following enclosure. Yet few people living in this world bequeathed to us by the enclosing and improving farmer are capable of gauging the full significance of a way of life that is now lost.' (Thirsk 1967, quoted in Perelman 2000, 13)

replacement by a more 'competitive' tenant. This rate of profit depended, in turn, upon the efficiency of the newly commoditized labour power of former commoners. This generalization of the commodity form to labour-power, the fundamental premise underlying the formation of the average social wage that underpins capital accumulation, necessarily entailed the deconstruction of the communal and collective use of, and access to, the means of production. Such deconstruction was necessary both to separate labour from its means of production and, subsequently, to pit the resulting de-collectivized individuals against one another to lower the social cost of labour for capital to secure accumulation through competition. There is, thus, a general impulse within capitalism to atomize collectivities and communal activity where these are dysfunctional with respect to the competitive formation of a socially average wage.

Capital's genesis thus depended upon, and was co-constituted with, the formation of the modern state. Capital's subsequent survival has also depended upon its co-evolution with a protective state within which classes and class fractions contend in relation to the degree to which contradictions should be mitigated, via 'flanking' measures, in order to ensure the 'relational sustainability' of capitalism (Drummond and Marsden 1999). This process may be grasped from a combination of the Political Marxian, Neo-Gramscian, and Regulation Theoretical traditions (Wood 1995, Potter and Tilzey 2005, Tilzey and Potter 2008). In the parlance of the latter, modes of regulation may, depending crucially upon the nature of the regime of accumulation, introduce various types of measures, 'formal' or 'informal', that seek to mitigate the negative social and environmental impacts of accumulation through, for example, notions of 'social capital', 'natural capital', greater cooperation between enterprises, but crucially without subverting capitalist relations of domination that continue to secure the 'ecological dominance' of capital (see Jessop 2002). Thus while a Marxian approach would view these measures as the outcome of class contestation within the state-capital nexus and as constituting various forms of 'embedded' capitalism, the Polanyian approach would view them, mistakenly, as the outcome of a generalized 'double-movement', representing various forms of 'alterity' as socialism.

This Marxian conceptualization of capital and its relation to the modern state contrasts with van der Ploeg's and McMichael's reproduction of the Polanyian 'double-movement' as a relatively simple binary comprising 'empire' or 'corporate food regime', on the one hand, and 'resistance' (from the 'outside'), on the other. This binary neglects the 'flanking' measures that the state-capital nexus is compelled to construct and which embody compromise and co-optation between, in the current conjuncture, neoliberal tendencies and sub-hegemonic and oppositional trends. In other words, it elides both the differences within capital (intra-class contestation) and the differences in opposition to it, for example, between alter-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements, or between 'progressives' and 'radicals' (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck 2011). This has important implications, because not only does it blunt our analysis of the complexity of capital's dynamics, it also, normatively, and through conflation in the significant degrees of resistance to 'capital', subverts our capacity to specify

definitions of, and pathways to, non-capitalistic, cooperative futures, including those based on food and land sovereignty.

The co-optation of 'market constraining' interests through modes of regulation, means that capital's successive iterations are the outcome of contextually specific forms of resistance engendered through this process of intra- and inter-class contestation, primarily at the level of the state. Within the current conjuncture, a singular world-scale application of the Polanyian double-movement scheme represents an undifferentiated depiction of neoliberalization processes associated with 'empire' or the 'corporate food regime' and the resistances to it. The concept of *variegated capitalism*, within and between states, can, however, advance our understanding of neoliberalization, its crisis tendencies and the nature of opposition, and the possibility of its transcendence (Brenner et al. 2014). In this way, the Polanyian double-movement, as opposition, is *already* instantiated within variegated neoliberalism as modes of regulation, wherein there is no simple binary between neoliberalism and its opposite, but rather various gradations from hegemonic, through sub-hegemonic, to counter-hegemonic class positions. Awareness of these gradations sensitizes us to what is 'post-capitalist' and what is not, rather than subsuming all beneath the assumed alterity of generic 'resistance' in the manner of Polanyi, McMichael, and van der Ploeg. This suggests the need for a Marxian analytics, based on class and relations of exploitation and domination, and structured around the state-capital nexus such as is afforded by Political Marxism and neo-Gramscian theory, rather than a Polanyian approach.

Such an analytics of the dynamics of variegated capitalism, and the intra- and inter-class antagonisms and alliances that inform these dynamics, are well illustrated in the work of Tilzey and Potter (2006, 2007, 2008) with respect to country case studies in the global North. Indeed, the theoretical framework presented in Tilzey (2006) and Tilzey and Potter (2008), although developed in order to understand variation in modes of agri-environmental governance, appears well suited nonetheless to an analysis of the forms of 'variegated cooperation' presented in the work of Stock et al. (2014)<sup>17</sup>. The forms that these authors discuss extend, we suggest, from strongly neoliberal at one end (cooperation designed to enhance competitive capacity - what we might term 'accommodation' to neoliberalism), through 'hybrid' or 'embedded' forms (cooperation designed to 'insulate' farmers from extra-regional competition

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<sup>17</sup> As intimated in the Introduction, we believe their analysis is, for a number of reasons, not as strong as it might be. One reason is that it appears to rely quite heavily on ideological determinations, perhaps under-emphasizing the equal importance of social property relations of capitalism, their class foundations and relation to the state, in the determination of the varieties of neoliberalism and cooperation discussed, together with their degrees of alterity. Further, the reliance on van der Ploeg (2008) to define 'actual' autonomy seems problematical because, in Polanyian fashion, he tends to subsume 'progressive' and 'radical' positionalities within an assumed and generalized anti-capitalist 'counter-movement'. In other words, he conflates the 'compromisers' (alter-hegemonic) and 'resisters' (counter-hegemonic) under the general rubric of the 'new peasantries'. The reliance of Stock et al. (2014) on van der Ploeg and his binary is therefore unfortunate because this theoretical frame seems not to do full justice to the differentiation in cooperative behaviours and structures that their analysis presents.

through the construction of local markets based on economies of scope – what we might term ‘compromise’ with neoliberalism), to more or less anti-neoliberal at the other (cooperation designed to prioritize the production of use values over profit – what we might term ‘resistance’ to neoliberalism). Embodying, broadly speaking, hegemonic, sub-hegemonic, alter-hegemonic, and counter-hegemonic positionalities, this spectrum seems to reflect the relative importance of particular agrarian classes and class fractions in relation to politico-economic complexion of the state (Tilzey and Potter 2008).

Stock et al. (2014) discuss four forms of ‘variegated cooperation’: in New Zealand, where Fonterra Dairy represents a monopoly cooperative to facilitate competition in global markets in the complete absence of state support (what we might term hegemonic neoliberalism); in England, where landscape-scale agri-environmental and PES initiatives, craving supra-farm cooperative organization, are constrained both by individualized payment structures and by the atomized petty commodity rationalities of farmers (what we might term a sub-hegemonic reformism, where state support modifies, through ‘flanking measures’, the full impacts of capitalist commodity production); in Switzerland, where a territorializing service cooperative (Prolait) attempts to construct a local/regional market through economies of scope whereby to insulate farmer members from wider, extra-territorial competition (what we might term an ‘alter-hegemonic’ or ‘progressive’ positionality, where the emphasis is on survival of medium and small farmers through reduction of dependence on external inputs, and the localization and ecologization of markets); and in Brazil, where the MST comes closest to ‘actual’ autonomy by mobilizing, in anti-capitalist fashion, cooperative and collective production towards the satisfaction of social and environmental needs, not profit (what we might term a ‘counter-hegemonic’ or ‘radical’ positionality where capitalist market dependence is itself challenged).

Accordingly, it is possible to suggest that this variegation, extending from accommodation associated with neoliberal autonomy, at one end of the spectrum (the case of New Zealand), to something approaching ‘actual’ autonomy as resistance, at the other (the MST in Brazil), may be attributed to the ...balance of class interests in the state and by the latter’s status within the ‘world system’ – whether core/dominant or peripheral/subordinate...State level, systemic responses to post-productivism [read ‘cooperation’] ...exhibit variability in the degree to which they are willing to intervene in the market to secure sustainability objectives within a context given by the ascendancy of processes of neoliberalization...*Variability in neoliberalization appears to flow...from the way in which it is subject to articulation with, and compromise by, other class and related interests within each state-society complex.* (Tilzey and Potter 2008, 42-44, emphasis added)

In other words, as the outcome of ‘territorially-bounded constellation of state/class interests, alliances and compromises’ (Tilzey 2006, 4) we have, in the examples presented by Stock et al. (2014) a spectrum, from New Zealand to Brazil, of progressively more market restraining forms of cooperation. In this,

they parallel Tilzey's (2006) categorization of modes of agri-environmental governance from radical neoliberalism (accommodating - New Zealand), through 'embedded' neoliberalism (mitigating - England), and social democratic or social income support (compromising - Switzerland), to 'strong' multifunctionality (resisting - Brazil).

In a similar vein, but with a global focus, Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) break down the double-movement binary through a quadripartite structure denoted as 'neoliberal', 'reformist', 'progressive' and 'radical'. These nuanced gradations in intra-class and inter-class positions enable these authors to lay out the complexities of contestation and compromise in the dynamics of agri-food regimes, allowing them not only to explain such dynamics, but also to detail the definitional content of 'resistance', not as one, but rather as several, contested, class positions. This enables these authors to paint a realistic picture of the potential fusions and fissions that, flowing from these class positions, are likely to attend food movement mobilizations. Thus, Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck's 'progressives' may often be members of La Via Campesina (LVC, the global movement of small farmers and peasants), but their aim is, as we have seen, not so much the transcendence of capitalism as the re-localization and ecologization of markets in conformity to the alternative food networks paradigm (Goodman et al. 2012). For the 'radicals' of LVC, by contrast, it is the critique of market dependence that, defined by the re-unification of producers with the means of production and an imaginary of 'strong' cooperation, constitutes the essence of their class position.

If this imaginary of 'strong' cooperation as 'actual' autonomy can be equated most to the radical fraction of the food sovereignty movement, a fraction located differentially in the global South, how then is this positionality to be accounted for spatially, and what are the prospects for its consolidation and diffusion? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to have some understanding of the relationship between classes, class co-optation and the state-capital nexus, and of the dialectic between the territorialized form of the state-capital nexus and the global capitalist system.

To date, it would seem that capitalism has been remarkably successful in neutralizing and co-opting, through hegemony, resistance to its exploitative dynamic. This success, however, has been located differentially in the global North. An essential part of this ability to neutralize and co-opt resistance lies in the fact that the capitalist world system is characterized by a broadly bi-polar structure: the socially 'articulated' states of the global North, and the 'disarticulated' states of the global South.<sup>18</sup> The oppositional relations between capitalist and non-capitalist classes in 'articulated' states have been defused, tendentially, by 'flanking' measures based on (re)-distributional, nation-building,

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<sup>18</sup> Social disarticulation occurs when the state-capital nexus is interested in its labour force principally from the perspective of production (its ability to generate surplus value) and not primarily from the perspective of consumption (the realization of surplus value through the sale of commodities). Social articulation implies a complementarity between the role of the labour force as producers and consumers, or a situation in which their role as consumers outweighs their significance as producers.

environmental and other policies, together with the bestowal of citizenship rights that have mitigated the conferral on capitalists of absolute property rights in the means of production<sup>19</sup>. This explains the predominance of ‘embedded’ (mitigating) and social democratic (compromising) forms of cooperation in the global North (radical neoliberal forms tend to be located in the ‘semi-periphery’, such as New Zealand and Australia, where, under neoliberalism, the family farm structure of settler states has been divested of public subvention).

Under neoliberalism, attempts to sustain this compact in the global North have been undertaken increasingly by means of imperial relations, both ‘informal’ (economic) and ‘formal’ (politico-military), with the global South. Surplus value from the classes of labour now flows from South to North, ‘subsidized’ by the massive and destructive haemorrhage of ‘ecological surplus’ that lies behind this relationship (Exner *et al.* 2013; Moore 2015). Burgeoning levels of social and ecological dislocation in the South have been the consequence of this extractive relationship, arising from the combined, although differentiated, operation of these ‘political’ and ‘biophysical’ dynamics of the state-capital nexus (see Tilzey 2016). Neoliberalism has similarly subverted the incipient processes of nation-building in the South that had characterized the Keynesian ‘developmentalist’ era. Neoliberal re-assertions of absolute private property through primitive accumulation, with the state acting as an organ of the expropriators and agro-exporting fractions of capital, have served to undermine the legitimacy functions of the capital-state nexus throughout much of the global South. The outcome of this ‘new imperial’ relationship (Harvey 2003) between North and South is that citizens of the former are accorded certain privileges (public services, social welfare/protection, higher consumption) denied to those in the capitalist periphery (see, for example, Mooers 2014).

This lack of legitimacy and effective ‘flanking’ measures for capital in the global South carries with it, however, the increased likelihood of challenge to the state-capital nexus by counter-hegemonic forces of a ‘radical’ complexion. The implication is one of an increased, immanent possibility of attempted re-appropriations of the state by counter-hegemonic social forces in re-assertions of national, and possibly post-national, forms of sovereignty. Such ‘radical’ counter-hegemonic social forces potentially challenge the essential foundations of capitalism, propounding a more Marxian imaginary of ‘actual’ autonomy and cooperative social relations. This has occurred in partial and varying degrees in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela in Latin America, and in Nepal in Asia, for example (Moyo and Yeros 2011). Nonetheless, these global Southern re-assertions of sovereignty in its national form are not without ambiguity – there is no singular ‘other’ counterposed to neoliberalism. Rather, these re-assertions of national sovereignty comprise a complex *mélange* of sub-hegemonic (national capital fractions) and counter-hegemonic (lower/middle peasantry, landless, proletarians, and indigenous) social forces. The assertion of national sovereignty here, as a counter-narrative to neoliberalism, represents a tension between

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<sup>19</sup> Agri-environmental and ‘post-productivist’ policies in the global North represent examples of such flanking measures that have served to co-opt and neutralize ‘small farmer’ resistance to neoliberalization, simultaneously dulling more radical, and potentially post-capitalist, imaginaries of ‘actual’ autonomy (Tilzey 2006, Tilzey and Potter 2007).



populist 'neo-developmentalism', on the one hand, and 'post-developmentalism' (combining environmentalism, indigenism, re-peasantization, agroecology, food sovereignty, founded on a cooperative and communal imaginary), on the other.

This Marxian-based analysis suggests that global capitalism and its state form are much less monolithic, and more fractured, than Polanyi, van der Ploeg, or McMichael, through their binary of the 'corporate empire' versus 'society', would lead us to believe. The suggestion here is that these fracture lines are at their widest in the global South because, as a periphery for the core, it is here that the contradictions of accumulation are greatest and the legitimacy of the state is lowest. Consequently, it is in the South that the potential for transformations towards 'radical' cooperative futures is greatest.

In the next section, we explore the dynamics of accumulation and resistance, with particular reference to Latin America (Bolivia), in order to understand the political and ecological conditions in which a 'radical', Marxian-based imaginary of 'actual' autonomy, invoking land and food sovereignty (livelihood sovereignty?), might be germinated. In the final section, we explore what this radical imaginary of 'actual' autonomy might entail in terms of new social and ecological relations of production as 'strong' cooperation.

## **5. Capitalism, the State, and Resistances in Latin America**

We now examine how relations between the state-capital nexus and its resistances in Latin America, the latter often structured around a discourse of cooperative and communal living as *buen vivir*, may be understood through the theoretical perspective developed in this paper. Neoliberalism, as 'informal' empire, although still hegemonic in the North, and dominant in the South, is increasingly crisis prone and subject, therefore, to a variety of resistances (Tilzey 2016). Some of these are reformist or sub-hegemonic, reflecting the interest of states, in conjunction with more nationally focused fractions of capital, in re-asserting national sovereignty, whilst others are more radical, or counter-hegemonic, and seek a post-developmental path in which food/land sovereignty, agroecology, and imaginaries of cooperative and communal ways of living, are of central importance. We are therefore passing through a crucial period, socio-politically and ecologically, in which a number alternative politico-ecological imaginaries, some systemic and others anti-systemic, are being defined and contested.

These trends are well demonstrated in Latin America, where there has been widespread resistance to the socially polarising consequences of neoliberalism and to the progressive loss of national sovereignty (including sovereignty over food) that has accompanied the deepening of 'extroverted' dependent development, a reflection of the hegemony of neoliberal, trans-nationalized fractions of capital. Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela all represent examples of states where popular forces, comprising peasants, semi-proletarians, proletarians and landless, indigenous groups (in Bolivia and Ecuador particularly), and more endogenously oriented class fractions of the bourgeoisies, have attempted, with varying degrees of success, to resist and displace the dominance of the 'disarticulated alliance' of trans-nationalized

capital. What these countries have in common is a new commitment to greater state guidance and interventionism in the economy, a greater formal or substantive commitment to national food sovereignty, and the introduction of social programmes to alleviate the severe income disparities characteristic of the neoliberal era.

The above named states have engaged in processes of 'passive revolution' (reform from above, led by nationally-oriented fractions of capital, but in alliance with proletarians, peasants and indigenous people) that has been characterized as neo-developmentalism, or neo-extractivism (Veltmeyer and Petras 2014, Spronck and Webber 2016). Despite some countries (Venezuela in particular) seeking to address the causes of semi-proletarianisation, landlessness and *precarismo* through structural measures such as land reform, all these states, nevertheless, continue to pursue policies of both energy and mineral extraction (often on 'protected' lands of indigenous peoples), and of productivist, export agriculture, in order to fund social programmes and infrastructure development. In Ecuador, Bolivia and Brazil, despite the election of left-leaning regimes, little progress has been made with respect to land reform in favour of the semi-proletariat and landless (Giunta 2014; Spronck and Webber 2016). This is largely due to continuing opposition from an entrenched landed oligarchy and their governments' apparent willingness to overlook this in the pursuit of export earnings through extractivism. A percentage of revenues from primary resource extraction has been diverted to social programmes to placate the urban proletariat, leading to an uneasy compromise, embodied in these populist regimes as 'compensatory states' (Gudynas 2012), between subaltern classes and the continuing power of the landed oligarchy.

As a result, increasing tensions have become apparent between these neo-developmental regimes and their erstwhile constituencies of support among the indigenous groups and semi-proletarian and landless peasantry, often members of LVC. For these constituencies, tensions focus around access to land and the means of production, and around the neo-developmental focus on economic growth as a means of bypassing the need to address the structural causes of land poverty and landlessness. In this way food (and land) sovereignty has become a highly contested discourse, deriving initially from re-assertions of national sovereignty as a counter-narrative to neoliberalism, but now often appropriated by neo-developmentalism. This discursive tension and ambiguity is expressed in the constitutionalization of food sovereignty in Ecuador and Bolivia, for example. The appropriation of food sovereignty discourse by the governments of those countries, in the service of neo-developmental ends, is increasingly contested by peasant and indigenous movements seeking a post-developmental model of cooperative social relations founded on the principle of *buen vivir* (good living) (Giunta 2014; Tilzey 2015, 2016). The irony here is that the governments of Ecuador and Bolivia have both invoked the cooperative principle of *buen vivir* to legitimate further capital accumulation by means of a Polanyian process of 'embedding' extractivism through the 'compensatory state'.

Consequently, these agrarian and indigenous constituencies of support are becoming increasingly alienated from centre-left regimes such as those in

Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador. Moreover, the current decline in primary commodity prices, hitherto supported by Chinese capital accumulation, will see a reduction in government budgets for social programmes and a renewed focus on austerity, with a resultant melting away of urban working class support for these regimes. Such contradictions are reviving divisions on the political left and intensifying debates amongst peasant and indigenous constituencies, particularly, concerning the respective strategic merits of ‘autonomist’ or ‘dual powers’<sup>20</sup> approaches to securing socially equitable, cooperative, and ecologically sustainable futures (Mooers 2014; Geddes 2015).

## **6. Class Differentiation amongst the ‘Peasantry’: Contested Constructions of *Buen Vivir* as an Imaginary for Cooperative Futures in Bolivia**

In this section, we examine the accuracy of van der Ploeg’s and McMichael’s, Polanyian-inspired, assertions concerning subordination of class positionality amongst the ‘peasantry’ to the political purpose of unity of all ‘people of the land’ against their principal enemy, corporate agribusiness. As Bernstein notes (2016), peasant populism has always denied the dynamics of class differentiation among small farmers, a legacy of the most important theorist of the ‘peasant economy’, Chayanov, and that while differences among farmers may be acknowledged by champions of the ‘peasant way’, such acknowledgement remains gestural. Such displacement of the analytical by the political (ie the normative), he also suggests, impoverishes the means by which to understand some key drivers and directions of agrarian change and class formation today, as it does historically. Again, the central relevance of this debate to the question of ‘actual’ autonomy and cooperative social relations lies in the capacity of the Polanyian derived approach to mistake ‘embeddedness’ and ‘embedded’ capitalism for anti-capitalism<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Autonomist approaches advocate grassroots struggle ‘outside’ bourgeois forms of the state and a withdrawal to local ‘autonomous’ zones of resistance (e.g. Zapatistas in Mexico, MST in Brazil); dual powers approaches consider it premature to call for a dispersion of power before power has been secured – the strategy here is to radically transform the state in order then to disperse power downwards.

<sup>21</sup> It is, of course, true that ‘objective’ class position and ‘subjective’ class positionality may not coincide. This is truer still given the increasingly all-pervasive (‘economic’, ‘socio-cultural’, and ‘ecological’) contradictions of capitalism, the impacts of which seem to transcend class and find expression in the ‘new social movements’ (Foweraker 1995). This means that there is now greater potential for ‘unification’ of disparate classes under a common banner given that the ‘enemy’ – ‘corporate capital’ – is now apparently so all encompassing. This is evidently the case with the ‘peasant way’ and ‘food sovereignty’ on its now widened definition (see next section). This widened definition represents the ‘master frame’ (see Rice 2012, Claeys 2015) to which all adherents of the ‘peasant way’ can subscribe. While such a ‘master frame’ may be an important and valid basis for social movement coherence and mobilization up to a certain point, the more so when the ‘enemy’ appears to be so pervasive, it nonetheless elides crucial differences in class position amongst and between followers of the ‘peasant way’. These differences are likely to come to the surface, however, as social movement strategy moves forward from an oppositional stance towards the proactive formulation of more detailed policy proposals. The elision of class difference, whilst understandable and perhaps strategically necessary up to a point, nonetheless has the effect of perpetuating a ‘master frame’ as simplistic binary, both overemphasizing the monolithic character of the ‘opposition’ and evacuating the immanent bases of dissension amongst ‘allies’. To adopt an uncritical stance in relation to this binary of the ‘peasant way’

We now examine the contention that there is an undifferentiated peasantry, and a unified 'peasant' positionality, by looking (briefly) at rural class structure in Bolivia. We do this because Bolivia encapsulates all of the key issues discussed above, food sovereignty has been enshrined in its constitution, and the ruling MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*) party explicitly invokes pro-'peasant' and indigenous positionalities in its anti-imperialist rhetoric, including the assertion that its policies embody the cooperative principle of *vivir bien*.

Rural class structure in Bolivia is characterized by a concentration of land in the hands of a few, and large numbers of often landless peasants. *Haciendas* occupy ninety per cent of Bolivia's productive land, leaving only ten per cent divided between mostly indigenous peasant communities and smallholding peasants. Four hundred individuals own seventy per cent of productive land, while there are two and a half million landless peasants in a country of nine million people (seventy-seven per cent of peasants are indigenous) (Enzinna 2007; Webber 2016).

Of the 446,000 peasant production units remaining in the country today, 225,000 are located in the *altiplano*, 164,000 in the valley departments (*yungas*), and only 57,000 in the eastern lowlands. Capitalist relations of production now predominate in the eastern lowlands and are increasingly displacing small-scale peasant production in the valleys and *altiplano*, although the latter continues to be the most important form of production in the *altiplano* (Ormachea Saavedra 2007). (The *altiplano* accounts for only nineteen per cent of total cultivated land.) The rural population is diminishing throughout the country as processes of semi-proletarianization and proletarianization accelerate with the gradual expansion of capitalist relations of production to all parts of the country (ibid.). From the early 1970s, migrant semi-proletarians provided the workforce for sugarcane and cotton harvests in the lowlands, while, for the rest of the year, they maintained small plots of land in the highland departments from which they primarily travelled (that is, Cochabamba, Potosi, and Chuquisaca). Between 1976 and 1996, rural population as a percentage of total population fell from fifty-nine to thirty-nine percent (Pacheco Balanza and Ormacheo Saavedra 2000). This decline was caused by two main factors: declining production in the *altiplano* due to soil exhaustion and increasing division of land into *minifundios* over time due to population expansion; and increased capitalization of agriculture in the lowlands, leading to decreased employment opportunities (ibid.). This squeeze has accentuated the differentiation of the peasantry into rich, medium, and poor strata. 1988 survey data suggest that seventy-six percent of peasantry were poor peasants (lacking means to reproduce their family labour-power on their own land and obliged to sell labour elsewhere on a temporary basis). Medium peasants constituted eleven percent of the peasantry (defined as family units able to reproduce labour without selling labour-power elsewhere). Rich peasants (making a profit after reproducing their family and means of

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versus 'corporate capital' (the 'double-movement') is to invoke a Polanyian narrative, effectively denying, as Polanyi did, the essence of capitalism as an exploitative class relation.

production, and purchasing the labour of poorer peasants and using modern technology) comprised thirteen percent (Ormachea Saavedra 2007). This process of peasant differentiation has only accelerated since then (the middle being squeezed), with richer peasants becoming commercial farmers (ibid.).

This process has continued under the government of Evo Morales and his MAS party, despite its pro-peasant and indigenous rhetoric. Capitalist social relations in agriculture have continued to expand under this regime, from seventy-nine percent of farm production to eighty-two percent. In 2005-6 small peasant production accounted for twenty-five percent of total agricultural production in the *altiplano*. By 2008-9, however, this figure had fallen to under twenty-two percent. State subsidies and support are directed to capitalist, agro-industrial production in the lowlands while small-scale peasant producers in the highlands are effectively abandoned (Ormachea Saavedra 2011).

A Marxian, rather than a Polanyian/Chayanovian or populist conceptualization (such as taken by the ruling MAS party in Bolivia), suggests that certain groups of the peasantry – that is, the upper peasant stratum – are actually benefitting from these processes of differentiation at the expense of other groups – that is, the great majority in the form of semi-proletarians and the rapidly diminishing cohort of middle peasants. This process of class stratification is mystified, however, by pro-government, populist discourse in its treatment of the peasantry as a homogeneous social class (Webber 2016). The reality is that a significant, and growing, stratum of the peasantry are coming to be defined as ‘rich’ as per the tripartite classification above. They are accruing profits as a direct result of surplus appropriation through the work of salaried labourers – that is, of semi-proletarians from the growing stratum of poor peasants in most instances. They also have growing motivations for expanding accumulation through expropriation of further land, either from the middle or lower strata of peasantry, or from indigenous tribal groups in the lowlands through a process of primitive accumulation (Ormachea Saavedra 2011).

The result is that it is very difficult to speak of a ‘peasant way’ in general as one encompassing the class interests of all three strata of peasantry. Rather, the upper peasantry is likely to espouse a type of Polanyian ‘alterity’ more akin to that of small capitalists and petty commodity producers of the global North (the ‘progressives’), their primary opponents being the agro-industrial landed oligarchy with whom they are in competition for land and labour. Absent threats from this quarter, the rich peasantry is relatively happy with the status quo under MAS, from whom the latter draws its core support (and the class from which Morales himself comes). By contrast, it is the middle and semi-proletarian peasantry who, for the reasons identified above, are most likely to advocate ‘radical’ change away from the status quo and towards land and food sovereignty – a change involving, at its heart, fundamental land reform in favour of these lower peasant strata. This is a Marxian road to alterity through social relational change to ‘real citizenship’ (see final section) through human emancipation by means of the re-unification of producers with their means of production. The land involved in such reform will need to be taken not only from the landed oligarchy but also from the upper stratum of peasantry. The objective of such

land reform is likely to be the creation of a stable stratum of middle peasantry, able to support its own reproduction and to produce modest surpluses from which to supply the non-farming population.

A transformation in this direction will be important, indeed vital, for both social and ecological reasons. The current conjuncture is highly unstable and unsustainable for both reasons – for the social reasons identified above, and for the ecological reasons deriving from the nature-destroying and fossil-fuel based character of the agro-industrial agriculture being practiced in the eastern lowlands. The classes benefitting from this process, the landed oligarchy, extractive industries, and the upper peasantry, are placing in jeopardy the livelihoods of the majority of Bolivians – the middle and lower peasantry (semi-proletarians), the urban proletariat, and lowland indigenous groups. To date, the urban proletariat has been placated by the ‘compensatory state’ (Gudynas 2012) through the proceeds of ecologically and socially destructive extractivism – but this cannot continue and is, indeed, faltering, as the commodity boom decelerates and austerity again begins to bite. The class interests of the middle and lower peasantries coincide in this conjuncture with those of proletarians – indeed many ‘proletarians’ *are* semi-proletarians. If the sustainable utilization and stewardship of Bolivia’s rich ecosystems, including agro-ecosystems, are to be assured through food and land sovereignty for the long-term benefit of all as ‘real citizens’, then an alliance of these subaltern social forces – the middle/lower peasantry, the urban proletariat, and lowland indigenous groups – would seem to be an imperative development.

In the present, but increasingly unstable, conjuncture, *buen vivir* has been deployed as the foundational ‘myth’ for MAS’ populist programme, taken as a projection of the collective, cooperative Andean and indigenous way. The reality described above, one of extractive capital and the peripheral, compensatory state, is very different from this assumed cooperative ideal. Using this cooperative ideal to legitimate its standing amongst the subaltern classes, MAS has attempted, via the compensatory state, to embed capitalism in Polanyian fashion by mitigating, in some measure, the impacts of extractivism on the subaltern classes.

## **7. Counter-hegemony and the Promise of Cooperative Futures**

Counter-hegemonic movements assume their most comprehensive oppositional form on the extractive frontier of the global South, and in Latin America particularly, as rural and radical social movements of subaltern classes assert their right to reclaim both the land and the nation (Moyo and Yeros 2005, 2011). These social movements comprise the middle and lower peasants, semi-proletarians, landless and indigenous peoples who, as explained earlier, have often lent their initial support to neo-developmental regimes, but who have become increasingly disillusioned with policies that have failed to address the structural causes of land poverty and market dependence, and have simultaneously despoiled, through extractivism, the foundations of their livelihoods.

In response, these constituencies increasingly advocate a model of post-capitalist socio-ecological relations that challenges market dependence, asserts the state/nation as the *key* focus of, and medium for, emancipation, centred around sustainable, non-fossil fuel based production. More than this, however, these constituencies, and particularly indigenous people, are destabilizing assumptions about state-ness, seeking, as they are, the redistribution and de-concentration of power away from the state (Picq 2014) towards more devolved, communal and cooperative modes of living. Key and overlapping principles that guide this model are derived from agroecology (Altieri 1995), and food sovereignty (as summarized in the Nyeleni Declaration of 2007).

The Nyeleni (Forum for Food Sovereignty) Declaration, while clearly anti-systemic in intent, is at the same time deliberately broad and inclusive in scope, designed to codify and consolidate food sovereignty as a political project characterized by a widening constituency of support in both the global South and North (Alonso-Fradejas *et al.* 2015). The declaration is thus intended to be of sufficient discursive breadth to embrace both ‘progressives’ and ‘radicals’. This is the narrative ‘master frame’ described earlier. Despite such ‘dilution’ in the cause of political inclusivity, however, there remain within the Declaration strong assertions relating to land sovereignty and social equality that spring clearly from the class positionality of the ‘radical’ fraction of LVC.<sup>22</sup> This, more radical, interpretation of food sovereignty, one arising from its initial anti-imperialist impulse, builds, significantly for our argument, on the ‘return’ of the national question in the South in response to socio-ecological contradictions of neoliberalization (Moyo and Yeros 2011; Edelman 2014).

Food sovereignty, as advocated by its global Southern advocates (see Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck 2011), thus emphasizes *social relational* transformation towards national (perhaps post-national) and land (resource) sovereignty, with social equality. Similarly, it emphasizes the need for a supersession of market dependence and a problematization of the ‘state’, both as complicit in the new imperial project, but also as potential challenger to it. This approach appears to combine a normative ‘autonomism’ with a ‘dual powers’ strategy. The radical fraction thus seeks to transform the jurisdictional authority of the state by challenging the state system, as a class relational system, so as to enable the state, as a key nexus for emancipatory change, to define socially equitable and ecologically sustainable policies for agriculture and food (Moyo and Yeros 2011). This process captures the paradox of the state both as a constrainer and as a potential enabler of emancipatory change (McKeon 2015). This paradox is possible precisely because the state is not a ‘thing’ but itself a social relation internally related to the balance of class forces in ‘civil society’. In this way, food sovereignty challenges the institutional relations of the new imperialism that,

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<sup>22</sup> The following assertions seem most pertinent here: ‘[Food sovereignty] ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies *new social relations* [sic] free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations.’

embodied in the state and inter-state system, underlie primitive accumulation and market dependence.

The state here, therefore, is seen to be an essential means to an end, not an end in itself, marking a clear disjuncture between 'radical' re-peasantization discourse and that of the 'old' left and neo-developmentalism. For the former, new social relations are founded on strong rural community development, embodying a re-unification of 'community'<sup>23</sup> members with the means of production, socialization of the means of production as a common pool resource (vested in the community under devolved democratic control), adoption of a circular economy, and satisfaction of human needs according to criteria of human well-being and ecological sustainability (Wong and Sit 2015). In this process, equality is both a prerequisite for, and the objective of, cooperation. Cooperation, strictly circumscribed within capitalism by the imperative of competition and the drive to generate surplus value, is here liberated in the service of use value production and its allocation according to need, not profit. Social equality combines with the ecological imperative of de-growth, yielding a political ecological programme of de-growth solidarity (Exner *et al.* 2013). This, in effect, constitutes an agrarian transition *in reverse*, in which the agrarian question is resolved in favour of the middle and lower peasantry, other subaltern groups, and the environment.

Land sovereignty, in its turn, can realistically come about only through a process of reclaiming the nation (Moyo and Yeros 2011), in which new assertions of national sovereignty utilize the key jurisdictional authority of the state to transform class relations away from state centrality and 'modern sovereignty' to the benefit of the semi-proletarian, landless, and indigenous majority. As Amin suggests (2015, 30) '... a land tenure reform conceived from the perspective of the creation of a real, efficient and democratic alternative supported by prosperous peasant family production must define the role of the state (principal inalienable owner) and the institutions and mechanisms of administering access to land and the means of production.' This social relational transformation, re-asserting the political authority of community (commons) as solidarity, and subverting the institutional separation of the 'economy' and 'polity' of the capitalist state as the foundation of modern sovereignty, finally removes the market (capitalism) as essential mediator between people and their means of livelihood.

As Herrera and Lau suggest:

The guiding principle is community control over and management of land and water as commons...As La Via Campesina demands, the struggle is not just for 'land' (for individual households to operate in an atomized

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<sup>23</sup> Defined as a community of people living together and practicing common ownership, sometimes in reference to communal forms of organization that preceded the modern state, for example, the *ayllu* in the Andes. We should be wary, however, of de-historicizing and idealizing such 'traditional' and customary forms of social organization, these being frequently inegalitarian, patriarchal and embedded in wider systems of hierarchy such as the Incan state. As Amin (2015: 23) notes, '...there is no reason to heap excessive praise upon these traditional rights as a number of anti-imperialist, nationalist ideologies unfortunately do.'



manner, vulnerable to the dictates of the market and financial capital), but also for 'territory', which involves cultural, social, and economic reorganization of communal relations to produce in a cooperative and collective manner. This necessitates that the 'commons' are not objects for appropriation or control still operating within the logic of capitalism, but focal nodes supporting a different relationship of community members amongst themselves and with nature. (Herrera and Lau 2015, 156)

This vision of land, territorial, perhaps livelihood, sovereignty appears to have strong links with Marx's comments, albeit often fragmentary and programmatic, on possible communism in general, and on cooperation and mutual concern more specifically (see, for example, Ollman 2003). While some of his commentary on possible communism in relation to the development of the productive forces, for example, may appear anachronistic in the light of current and looming biophysical contradictions and constraints, the main thrust of his argument appears, nonetheless, entirely consistent with the 'radical' LVC positionality articulated above.

Thus, a major characteristic of communist society as envisaged by Marx is the high degree of cooperation and mutual concern that is discernable in most human activities. One indication of this is simply the increase in the number of things that people undertake in common. Marx claims that:

Communal activity and communal consumption – that is, activity and consumption which are manifested and directly confirmed in real association with other men – will occur wherever such a direct expression of sociality stems from the true character of the activity's content and is adequate to the nature of consumption. (Marx 1972, 104)

Of greater significance than the mere spread of cooperation, however, is the fact that it is envisaged to be qualitatively superior to what may be characterized as cooperative behaviour in pre-communist society. Marx believed, of course, that production is social in any society since it is always carried on through some relationship with other people. Cooperation in pre-communist society, however, is seen to be tenuous, unconscious and forced, characteristics of all class-based societies, including capitalism, in which cooperation is subordinated to the exploitative relations between the dominant propertied classes and those from whom surplus labour is extracted<sup>24</sup>. In communist society, however, cooperation becomes unconstrained, close, conscious and free, such that interdependence becomes the recognized means to transform the limitations defined by what was hitherto unrecognized and constrained interdependence (Ollman 2003).

Because people are now, in communism, 'brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world' (Marx 2000, 196), interdependence and cooperation are worldwide and appreciated as such.

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<sup>24</sup> As we have seen, in capitalism cooperation is subordinated to the need to sell commodities at a profit, dependent on competitive relations between enterprises and labour, with surplus value extracted from the latter being contingent on its separation from the means of production and its alienation from cooperative association with others outside the confines of the workplace.

Crucially, this represents the liberation of human capacities and production from the necessity under capitalism to produce commodities solely for the purpose of realizing the surplus value contained in exchange values. In communism, these capacities are directed to the production of use values for the satisfaction of human needs in conformity with those of extra-human nature. These relations, in communism, lead each individual to become conscious of humanity (and extra-human nature) as part of him/herself as a 'social being'. 'Not until man has recognized his own capacities as social capacities...will human emancipation be achieved' (Marx 1993, 600). In other words, it is not until people recognize that humans are social animals, with altruism and cooperative motivations being intrinsic facets of our species being, will our emancipation and the realization of our full capacities be attained. Perhaps nothing in communist society helps to explain the extraordinary cooperation that Marx envisages as characterizing this period as much as the individual's new conception of self, which in turn could emerge fully only as a product of such cooperation. 'The labour power of all the different individuals is consciously applied as the combined labour power of the community' (Marx 1972, 78).

The route to this fully cooperative and collective society of the commons, realizing the potentiality of humanity's 'species being', is seen to be undertaken via the 'first stage of communism' in which the satisfaction of social needs (not profit) becomes the accepted goal of material production and social organization (Ollman 2003). In this process, the state, through the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'<sup>25</sup>, is seen to have a key transitional role, one of the most important of which is the abolition of capitalist social property relations including abolition of property in land (see quote from Amin 2015 above). In this process, Marx seems to suggest the need for a strategic alliance between proletarians and peasants (middle and lower) and, indeed, suggests that the lower peasantry and the proletariat may be one and the same, constituting a natural alliance.

The proletariat must take measures, as a government, through which the peasant finds his position directly improved, which thus wins him for the revolution; measures which facilitate in essence the transition from private property in land to collective property, so that the peasant himself is converted for economic reasons. But it must not antagonize the peasant by, for instance, proclaiming the abolition of the right of inheritance or the abolition of his property: this is only possible where the capitalist owner has ousted the peasant, and the real tiller of the soil is just as much a proletarian, a wage worker, as the urban worker, and hence has directly, and not only indirectly, the same interests as he. (Marx 2000, 606)

This seems to suggest, in line with our own argument, that the upper peasantry (the capitalist owner, including the 'progressives') has a closer affinity with other fractions of the capitalist class than with the other levels of the peasantry. To what extent, however, is this proposed alliance between the proletariat and the

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<sup>25</sup> Marx did not use this concept to refer to the extra-legal and often violent rule by one individual or clique of individuals. Rather, his use is a reference to ancient Rome, where the constitution provided for the election of a dictator to carry out certain specified tasks for a limited period, generally in times of crisis. For Marx, the expression meant the democratic rule of the entire 'working class', including subaltern classes (Ollman 2003).

lower/middle peasantries, with the putative potential to overthrow capitalism (whether neoliberalism or neo-extractivism), apparent or emergent in the social movements today in the global South, and in Latin America specifically? We suggest some answers to this question by returning, albeit briefly, to our Bolivian case study.

Under conditions of neo-extractivism and the 'compensatory state', the class struggle in Bolivia appears to have assumed two principle dimensions (Veltmeyer 2014). The first dimension relates to labour in the public sector and to the mass of proletarianized and semi-proletarianized rural and urban workers comprising, firstly, the huge urban proletariat of self-employed workers in the informal sector and, secondly, a rural proletariat of landless or near-landless workers. Labour in this sector makes up well over half the 'economically active population' and the mass of the urban poor. This dimension of struggle refers in the main to rural urban dynamics in the *altiplano* and *yungas* regions of Bolivia, largely outside the new extractive zones located primarily in the eastern lowlands of the country.

The second dimension of class struggle, located largely in the eastern lowlands, relates, firstly, to the conditions generated by the operations of extractive capital, conditions that have given rise to conflict between the mining companies and the government, on the one hand, and the indigenous peoples and communities negatively affected by extractivism, on the other. It relates, secondly, to the mega-infrastructure projects proposed or undertaken by the MAS government and capital in support of extractivism. The class struggle here is one waged essentially by indigenous groups in defence of their territorial rights to the land, water and subsoil resources on which their social existence and well-being depend, and in protest against the destructive effects of mining operations on the environment and their livelihoods. The movements formed to this end have been increasingly active in recent years, as the foreign mining companies have intensified their operations with government support (Webber 2016).

There are indications that these two dimensions of the class struggle are beginning to coalesce, with the confrontation between the government and social movements becoming increasingly dynamic and fractious. The proposal by the MAS government to construct a trans-continental highway through the *Territorio Indígena y Parque Isiboro Secure* (TIPNIS) in support of extractivism and against its own constitutional commitment to protect indigenous lands and nature has acted as a catalyst for the coalescence of these two dimensions of class struggle (Ormachea Saavedra 2011; Veltmeyer 2014).

The approach to development taken by the Morales government, the 'compensatory state' through 'progressive' extractivism, and the policy measures taken to redress the 'inequality predicament', raise serious questions about the likelihood, or even the possibility, of this regime consolidating and sustaining the few and limited gains made towards fulfilling its stated aim of creating a cooperative and communitarian society in which all Bolivians 'live well' in social solidarity and in harmony with mother nature. The government, like others in Latin America, has chosen to build the compensatory state on the proceeds of a

particularly regressive and destructive form of capital accumulation, in which the heavy social and environmental costs are borne disproportionately by the communities most directly affected by the operations of extractive capital (Veltmeyer and Petras 2014).

This extractivist offensive has given rise to a destabilizing process of class struggle characterized by a veritable wave of protest and social resistance (Webber 2016). In the last few years, a large number of movements and struggles have been calling into question the extractivist-export model and its attendant violence and environmental devastation wrought primarily by transnational capital via the medium of the Morales regime. By means of the compensatory state, the Morales government has constructed a structure of legitimacy, or in other words 'flanking' measures, to support renewed capital accumulation through extractivism (Orellana 2011). This represents an attempt to embed capitalism through income and infrastructure measures for low-income groups founded on a narrative of communalism and cooperation as *vivir bien*. In this way, the MAS government had, until recently, temporarily stabilized the contradiction between the accumulation and legitimation functions of the capitalist state, a manoeuvre on which Polanyi might have looked favourably. But because this development model failed to address the class and environmental contradictions of capitalism, it now appears to be unravelling, as elsewhere in Latin America. With the de-legitimation of extractivism, the proletariat, lower and middle peasants, and indigenous groups are increasingly advocating a model of the cooperative society beyond capitalism, a trend that Marx might have viewed as a vindication of his critique of political economy.

It seems clear, then, that the capital-state nexus, whether neoliberal or neo-developmental, is incapable of satisfying the demands generated by the 'radical', counter-hegemonic struggles of the middle and lower peasantries, indigenous groups, and the proletariat for cooperative futures beyond capitalism and liberal citizenship<sup>26</sup>. When Marx refers to the 'illusions about freedom' of bourgeois (liberal) democracy or 'autonomy', he is not suggesting that they are false but rather that their reality masks deeper forms of unfreedom. The 'citizenship illusion', as liberal autonomy, arises from the reified structure of capitalist social relations. It is an 'objectified illusion' that reveals and conceals simultaneously: it 'reveals' certain limited rights and freedoms within the political sphere while concealing the class inequalities of the economic sphere. The latter entails, inter alia, the subordination of cooperation to the dictates of capitalist competition. This is something that Marx, but not Polanyi, identified. As a reified social form,

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<sup>26</sup> As Zibechi notes, enlarging the sphere of liberal 'autonomy' or citizenship (modern sovereignty) appears not to be one of the demands of these movements: Their de facto exclusion from citizenship seems to have prompted them to build a fundamentally different world. Understanding that the concept of citizenship has meaning only if some are excluded has been a painful lesson learned over the past decades. Hence, the movements tend to press beyond the concept of citizenship, which was useful for two centuries for those who need to contain and divide the dangerous classes (Zibechi 2012, 16).

liberal autonomy both constrains certain types of social action, such as cooperation, whilst enabling others, such as being 'free' to compete.

As such, it is also tightly bound up with the distribution and exercise of social power: the structural separation of the economic and political spheres within the modern state was intended to constrain actions which might impinge on the economic powers of capital, such as 'strong' cooperation, while enabling purely political rights and obligations. And these constraints hold similarly for actions in the 'more-than economic' (as 'society' and 'environment'), actions that can be undertaken only when consistent with private property rights and the profit imperative. This trichotomy, however, was only ever an imperfect solution to the deeper contradiction between politico-legal equality and environmental sustainability, on the one hand, and class inequality and exploitation, on the other. And even the conferral of such constrained, liberal and 'ecological' citizenship rights has been contingent on imperialism and the territorial form of the state, defining the included (the majority in the global North) and the excluded (the majority in the global South).

That is why Marx insisted that the political emancipation embodied in abstract citizenship remains only a partial victory (and one rendered more partial still because of its reliance on the 'spatio-temporal' fix that is imperialism). This is why food sovereignty based in abstract rights and in the 'embedded' markets of the 'progressives' remains inadequate to the task of fulfilling its real mission of radical egalitarianism (Patel 2011). Human emancipation - 'actual' autonomy - requires the reintegration of political power into society, where social organization is oriented to fulfilling human needs (and those of extra-human nature) rather than the demands of profit. This requires the liberation of cooperation by means of the dissolution of constraints imposed by market competition. It also entails the reintegration of 'economy', 'society' and 'environment' referred to in the title of this paper. It is precisely because the 'illusions' of liberal autonomy are less encompassing in the global South, due to the intimate relation between modern sovereignty and imperialism, that counter-hegemonic social forces are more likely here to achieve this human (and extra-human) emancipation. The suggestion here is that food and land sovereignty need to be an essential part of this emancipatory process, encapsulated in the more integral concept of 'livelihood sovereignty' – and that this process should be informed by a Marxian, rather than Polanyian, definition of the 'great transformation' towards cooperative futures that this must entail.

## **8. Conclusion**

Marx, writing in *Capital*, and Polanyi in the *Great Transformation*, noted that the transition towards 'market civilization' (Gill 2014) in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain was predicated on state action to foment changes in social structure (social relations) that enabled this original germination of competitive capitalism. Central to this transformation, they maintained, was the alienation of land and labour, such that these newly defined 'factors of production' could now be bought and sold at market determined prices instead of being allocated, through conscious political

authority, according to tradition, redistribution, or reciprocity. This paper has argued that it is this element of generalized competition, premised on the alienation of land and labour, that exerts 'ecological dominance' over the forms of cooperative organization which are possible within capitalism and which arise in response to it. Similarly, capitalism exercises ecological dominance over cooperative activities in the 'more-than-economic' spheres and will continue to do so long as the impulse to competition in the 'economy' remains the principal societal driver. We have also suggested that it is this competitive impulse, and resistances to it, that gives rise to the forms of 'variegated cooperation' described earlier as 'hegemonic' (enhancing competition), sub-hegemonic (mitigating competition), alter-hegemonic (compromising competition), and counter-hegemonic (resisting competition). We proposed that these forms of variegated cooperation 'map onto' identifiable class positionalities, the latter two (alter-hegemonic – 'progressive', and counter-hegemonic – 'radical') being informed by, or consistent with, the thinking of Polanyi and Marx respectively.

We have argued that, of the two thinkers, it is Marx who undertakes the more trenchant critique of capitalism and who, by the same token, identifies the essential prerequisites for an imaginary of unconstrained cooperation as communism. Essential prerequisites here are the sundering of the capital-labour relation and the alienability of property that underlie the competitive impulse and the atomization of non-capitalist social collectivities. Since the alienation of land and labour thus constitutes the quintessence of capitalism, it is the re-appropriation of land by the dispossessed, for the cooperative production of use values for society as a whole, that marks the key element in capital's transcendence and as the basis for future sustainability. Here the transformation of class relational power through political action within and around the state – a 'dual powers' strategy – will be key in expunging exploitative relations and laying the jurisdictional and material foundations for social equity, cooperative organization, and ecological sustainability.

We have argued that Polanyi, by contrast, failed to identify the class relational basis of capitalism, leading him to suggest that its contradictions could be addressed through a generalized and spontaneous response as the 'double movement'. This difference between Polanyi and Marx is of profound importance now as we seek, with renewed urgency, our own 'great transformation' towards post-capitalist socio-natural relations. Polanyi, in failing to differentiate resistances according to their class relational character, simultaneously underestimated the polythetic character of capitalism and its capacity to co-opt, through hegemony, selected resistances into its protean dynamic. The result of this process, in the decades following publication of the *Great Transformation* (1944), was the co-optation of socialist impulses by capital into what became the Keynesian compromise. This compromise proved unsustainable, precisely because of the profound incompatibility between the goals of social solidarity and cooperation, and those of capitalism. The result was neoliberalism, a strategic relational response (Jessop 2005) by certain class fractions to the political contradictions for capital of the Keynesian compact. The failure of the socialist emancipatory impulse serves today to underline the need for a strategic relational approach, in which social movements such as food

sovereignty might be well advised to undertake an effective analysis of the complex and contradictory social realities they seek to transform (Bernstein 2010), rather than assuming a simplistic binary between the 'corporate' food regime and its 'other'. Effective transformation of the state-capital nexus towards desired cooperative futures will not occur without such analysis, even if the goals of transformation are necessarily framed in more inclusive and 'populist' ways. In this paper, we have suggested that the 'radical' fraction of the food sovereignty movement, and its calls for land sovereignty and cooperative/communal relations as 'actual' autonomy, appears currently to offer the greatest promise in this regard, precisely because it pinpoints the key socio-ecological contradictions of capitalism and the means by which they may be overcome.

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