CONFERENCE ON ENVISIONING REAL UTOPIAS

ABSTRACTS OF PRESENTATIONS

UPHAM WOODS WISCONSIN DELLS UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MADISON

May 9-11, 2008

Schedule if Events Conference on *Envisioning Real Utopias* Erik Olin Wright, organizer

Wednesday, May 7 (pre-conference event)

4:30	Tour of Capital Lakes Retirement Center (also called "Meriter Retirement Center), located at 333 W. Main Street, lead by Beatrice Wright (let Erik know you are coming)
5:30/6:00	Dinner at Capital Lakes Center restaurant
7:30	Madison Repertory Theater production of <i>The Nerd</i> . Student rush tickets available day of the performances at the Box Office, 201 State St, \$20.

Friday, May 9

2:00-4:00	Tour & discussion at Just Coffee 1129 E Wilson St
4:00	rides leave for nconference from parking lot at Just Coffee
5:30-6:30	Arrive and get settled
6:30-7:15	Dinner – Pizza ordered from Wisconsin Dells
7:30-10:00	Workshop #1. Main Lodge

Saturday, May 10

8:00-8:30	Breakfast
9:00-12:00	Workshop #2. Main Lodge
12-12:30	lunch
1:00-3:00	recreation: if weather permits, canoeing
3:00-6:00	Workshop #3
6:30-	dinner: cookout & potluck
7:00-10:00	Party in the Lodge (or at bonfire fire circle weather permitting): music, singing, dancing, etc.
10:30-?	Gather at country bar half a mile from the conference center for drinks, pool, Karaoke

Sunday, May 11

8:00-8:30	Breakfast
9:00-12:00	Workshop #4
12-12:30	lunch
1:00-2:30	recreation
2:30-5:30	Workshop #5 [Note: We have the option of having the afternoon session on Sunday begin right after lunch rather than having time for recreation (canoeing, etc.) in the early afternoon. If we have this session right after lunch it would go from 1:00-4:00]
Departure	

Schedule for Sessions

Workshop #1 Friday 8-10 pm	Social economy
1. Edo Navot	Wkipedia
2. Guillaume Neault	Quebec childcare
3. Sung Ik Cho	Social enterprises
4. Molly Noble	Cooperatives
Workshop #2 Saturday 9-12	Social movements, protest, participation
5. Charity Schmidt	Venezuela: land reform
6. Jennifer Seminatore	Venezuela: missiones
7. Roxana Telechea	Argentina: Popular protest assemblies
8. Julian Rebon, Rodrigo Salgado	Argentina: Factory takeovers
9. Mike Levein	India: Narmada dam movement
Workshop #3 Saturday 3-6	Education; Land
10. Eduardo Cavieres	Small schools
11. Maria Ana Gonzalez	Cooperative schools
12. Ricardo Donaire	Teachers union
13. Pablo Dalle, Santiago Rodriguez, Rodolfo Elbert	Popular library, consciousness raising
14. Hanif Nu'Man	Land trusts
15. Cathy Willis	Food systems
Workshop #4 Sunday 9-12	Miscellaneous
16. Wes Markofski	Intentional community
17. Tod Van Gunten	Consensus conferences for science and technology
18. Dmitri Seals	Urban debate leagues
19. Jason Stanley	Labor Unions: alternative strategies
20. Michael McCarthy	Labor Unions: union democracy
Workshop #5 Sunday 2:20 5:20*	Miscellaneous
Workshop #5 Sunday 2:30-5:30* 21. Rene Rojas	Gramsci's materialism
21. Rene Rojas 22. Jesse Wozniak	Masculinity and the police
22. Jesse wozniak 23. Kristin Haltinner	Masculinity and the police Minutement and nationalism
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24. Raphi Rechitsky	Migration activism

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WORKSHOP #1 SOCIAL ECONOMY FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 9

Edo Navot, University of Wisconsin "Wikipedia as Real Utopia"

In the presentation I will examine how Wikipedia works, why it works, and to what degree it in fact works. We'll compare the institutional structure of Wikipedia to its online rivals, its strengths and weaknesses, and explore its impact on knowledge production and knowledge-intensive industries. We will also look at the development of Wikipedia since its inception in 2001, taking its history in numbers, changes in its governance structure, and other evolutionary changes it has undergone. We conclude with some of the negative and positive unintended consequences Wikipedia has brought about.

Guillaume Neault, University of Wisconsin Socialism begins with socialist childcare services: remarks on the Québec model

In 1997, Parti Québecois drafted a proposal that aimed to alter radically the provision of childcare services. Universal services, \$5/day! Organized around parent-users, state actors, and civil society associations, the Québec model is depicted throughout Canada as a prime example of collective organization. My presentation addresses the three following points: which problem is the Québec model meant to solve, how does the institutional setting work, and has the model delivered on its promises?

Sung Ik Cho, University of Wisconsin

"How Can Democratic Egalitarian Social Enterprises Be 'Viable' in the Market? - The Institutional Design of Social Enterprises and its Dilemmas and Strategies"

The purpose of this paper is to address the viability problem of social enterprises. Unlike the previous studies understanding the viability as survival or being reproductive, this study views it as being tranformative. Based on the analysis of important conditions and institutional limits, the complex organizational structure of social enterprises is the key to understand the dynamics of social enterprises. Thus, focusing on two dimensions, i.e. democratic governance and multi-stakeholder structure, consisting of the organizational structure of social enterprises, this paper will explore what critical challenges social enterprises would have to deal with in the evolutionary trajectory of social enterprises, and then it will discuss what institutional principles come into important play for "viable" social enterprises.

Molly Noble, University of Wisconsin Worker Cooperatives and Just Coffee: a model for justice or just another element of capitalism?

In this paper I will trace the formation and development of cooperative thought and the modern cooperative movement. Using Just Coffee as a case study I will evaluate the institutional design of the cooperative model and discuss the possibility of worker cooperatives as a desirable, viable and achievable path to a radical egalitarian democracy.

WORKSHOP #2 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, PROTEST, PARTICIPATION SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 10

Charity Schmidt, University of Wisconsin Urban Land Committees in Venezuela: A Real Utopian Organization... and Movement.

This presentation speaks to the benefits and challenges of urban land reform in the barrios (slums) of Venezuela within a three-tiered institutional framework between the state, a national technical office and community groups (Comités de Tierra, CTUs). In a country where makeshift homes constitutes 53% of all urban housing, CTUs have become a mobilizing force for projects of land regularization (titles), home/neighborhood improvements, land acquisitions, cooperatives and access to services. An ever-expanding organization, in size and scope, CTUs have become a powerful space for challenging capitalist control over land/housing, reinforcing state programs, and building local democracy and political will.

Jennifer Seminatore, University of California - Berkeley Reimagining the Relationship between the State and Civil Society: The Potential for Achieving Social Justice through the Venezuelan Misiones

Abstract: After the rise to power of the Chavez administration in Venezuela, a series of objectives for the achievement of increased wellbeing and empowerment of the majority of the population were developed under the title The Bolivarian Project. While geared towards the achievement of both political and social justice, I will examine the institutional projects of the latter. Through collaboration with Cuban leaders and

following successful model of public goods provision in Brazil, a series of social programs were initiated in part by the state and public health officials and in part by the political party and social movement, Movimiento Quinta Republica (MVR). While a central goal of these programs was to improve the quality of life of Venezuela's "popular" classes through the provision of a variety of social services, including healthcare, nutrition, housing, and education, the structure and functioning of the programs were intentionally designed towards empowerment and inclusion of the populations to be served, resulting in a series of experiments towards building a socially and politically just society. In this preliminary survey, I will utilize limited participant observation, interviews, and secondary texts in order to elaborate the structure of some of these programs, how they function in practice, and suggest their potential as constituting "Real Utopian" projects.

Roxana Telechea, Research fellow of Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) The Gualeguaychú Citizen's Environmental Assembly

This paper analyzes The Gualeguaychú Citizen's Environmental Assembly located in the argentine province of Entre Ríos. This is an instance of social mobilization with the objective of avoiding the installation of two paper mills in the neighboring country of Uruguay. I will explore the Assembly internal organization, its relationship to other environmental organizations, its degree of integration (or not) of emancipatory objectives and all actions taken to implement its objectives.

Julián Rebón (Instituto Gino Germani – Universidad de Buenos Aires y CONICET) Rodrigo Salgado (Instituto Gino Germani – Universidad de Buenos Aires) Takeover Enterprises from an emancipatory project: one point in the compass?

"Takeover Enterprises" (TE) is the term used to describe a heterogeneous set of processes, in which companies in crisis begin to produce under worker's control. Since the end of the last decade, and with particular intensity since 2001, thousands of employees across the country have take control of companies in bankruptcy proceedings, closure and / or significant breach of contract with its worker's wages.

In this paper we want:

a) To present a hypothetical-conceptual framework about the socio-genesis of the process. We propose to analyze the causal sequence and the implication relationships that allow understanding the process, giving particular emphasis to the context of crisis that structures the experience. In this regard, we are interested in linking the process of TE with the conditions of social crisis that constitute the structural possibility of its socio-genesis.

b) To analyze the social character of the resulting productive space. Is building new institutional designs in the productive field? What are its mechanisms? What are its

fundamentals? What are the ruptures and continuities with the failed enterprises, and what implications it has on the construction of egalitarian and democratic spaces? We propose to answer these questions by analyzing dimensions such as property relations, ownership, work process, income distribution, power distribution, decision-making, outside-relationships.

c) To reflect on the basis of these two items, potentialities and weaknesses of the experience from an emancipatory perspective.

For the purpose of advancing attempt to answer these questions we'll use as inputs the results of our UBACYT project "Socio-genesis of the takeover enterprises process in the City of Buenos Aires" carried out between 2004 and 2005, and the progress of our current research UBACYT project "Emerging transformations of the takeover enterprises process", These projects involve conducting interviews, surveys and participant observations in the totality of the takeover enterprises of the City of Buenos Aires.

Mike Levien, University of California - Berkeley <u>Sangarsh</u> and <u>Nirman</u>: Alternative Development in India's Narmada Valley

For the last twenty years, India's Narmada Valley has been the site of the world's most famous struggle over dams and development. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement, NBA) has waged a protracted nonviolent struggle against the Sardar Sarovar mega-dam on the Narmada River, which is dispossessing hundreds of thousands of farmers and indigenous people of their land, forest, and homes. While there have been innumerable critiques of the Narmada dam project and the development paradigm that it represents, what has received less attention is the NBA's alternative vision and practice of development. In the course of its resistance (sangarsh), the NBA has also elaborated a vision of "alternative development" (nav nirman) in opposition to the hegemonic development model. Moreover, it has tried to actually construct "real utopias" in the Narmada Valley as a way to meet pressing social needs and as a form of pre-figurative politics. In this paper, I will: 1) elucidate the NBA's alternative principles of development; 2) examine the successes and shortcomings of the movement's attempts to build alternative development projects and draw out their lessons for a real utopian politics; and 3) elaborate the role of real utopias in posing immanent critiques of modernizing capitalist development. In the process, I will build on and reconstruct Polanyi's theory of re-embedding the market to understand the dialectic between political struggle (sangarsh) and alternatives (nirman) in the NBA's strategy of social transformation. In this strategy, real utopias are not interstitial *means* for achieving broader ruptural transformations of the state; instead building local utopias is the ultimate end for which ruptural politics is a necessary means. Drawing on the Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) literature, I will show how effective political transformation of the state appears as a necessary precondition for enduringly successful utopias. But I will also show how real utopias are crucial to such political struggles both because they are the ultimate ends, and because they provide "real" bases from which to critique the hegemonic development model.

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WORKSHOP #3 EDUCATION; LAND/AGRICULTURE SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 10

Eduardo Cavieres, University of Wisconsin Small schools: figuring out its transformational strategy.

Small schools have been conceived by a progressive front of educators pursuing school reform. However, the implementation of these schools has not been linear. While sometimes they have been implemented autonomously from school policies in other times the effort has been to explicitly connect these schools to official reforms. The reason to do so has mainly been related to the need to solve problems of scalability, funding, and sustainability. Thus, small schools seemed to have been moving between interstitial and symbiotic strategies. Still, considering the results, in many cases they may just look as another reformist strategy more concerned in improving current policies rather than to replace them. This paper traces some of the development of small schools, and provides some general directions towards which the discussion should be headed in order to understand the extent up to which small schools can be considered part of a real utopian project.

Maria Ana. González, Universidad de Buenos Aires

Researchers and Popular Educators Cooperative: Some Challenges of collective school management

This presentation introduces the discussion of the collective school management around a case study: The schools of the *Researchers and Popular Educators Cooperative*. This cooperative was founded in Buenos Aires in 2004, and together with social organizations, carries out basic secondary schools for adults. Among the analysis done of the experience, this paper focuses on the institutional design principles and how they are put into practice, the role of the teachers and the students, their relation with the knowledge, the perspective of transformative education and participatory research that the cooperative has, the internal contradictions and its unintended consequences. Moreover, this presentation describes the relation of these schools with the State and some critical analysis that from the field of the critical pedagogy is done.

The methodology used as mentioned above, is a case study from the logic of the qualitative research. Therefore interviews with members of the cooperative and students were conducted, as well as observations. We also worked with secondary sources, previous researches on this subject and bibliographical analysis.

Ricardo Donaire, Universidad de Buenos Aires *The building of teachers' unions confederation in Argentina*

The objective of this paper is to analyse the historic process of formation of the confederation of trade unions of teachers as wage workers in Argentina. This case was chosen because this kind of organization had originally been built as an alternative to the hitherto existing institutions which had organized teachers as professionals or as civil servants rather than salaried workers. Since professional associations and trade unions are both part of civil society, has this latter alternative organization historically meant a more democratic path than the previous ones?

Pablo Dalle, Santiago Rodríguez (Instituto Gino Germani, UBA) & Rodolfo Elbert (University of Wisconsin-Madison) The weapons of knowledge: teaching and learning socialism in the Bella Vista popular library.

This study analyzes the institutional design, stated goals and grassroots activities of a Popular Library located in a working class neighborhood in the city of Cordoba (Argentina). The library's project is based on a socialist critique to contemporary capitalist society and aims to transform it through popular education (i.e. the construction of a counter-hegemonic knowledge based on a critical pedagogical praxis and grassroots democratic activities). The present study aims to understand the role of the popular library in a socialist-oriented social transformation, identifying the type of strategy it is carrying out, the normative values involved in the project, their practices, decision making process and main activities, etc. Data comes from interviews with different participants of the library (the director, teachers and neighbors) and observation of the activities.

Hanif Nu'Man, University of Wisconsin Community Land Trust: A Mitigation Tool or Detriment for Real Property Ownership

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are quickly becoming a viable alternative to land ownership by the private sector. It provides housing for low and moderate income households and often positions itself to maintain the affordability of that housing for subsequent occupants. Proponents have turned to CLTs to facilitate community development as well as mitigate such things as highway environmental projects - the idea being that this alternative represents the greatest potential to preserve long-term affordability. However, 'the jury is still out' in regards to the experiences of land trusts in this country. This paper attempts to present the various characteristics of CLTs, including the pros and cons, as well as the perceived impacts they have on communities. I intend to highlight some key legal and environmental hurdles that CLTs must deal with, and offer some suggestions on how to win the confidence of those who find its implementation worrisome.

Cathy Willis, University of Wisconsin Envisioning a Real Utopian Agri-food System: learning from the very real and the less than Utopian.

In this paper I use the real-utopian framework to inform a discussion of policy options in the agri-food sector. This framework will help interrogate and refine the normative principles behind alternative agriculture practices and evaluate the success and failures of agricultural policies in a new light. The framework will also be used to bridge the divide between agricultural policy on one hand, and human food needs on the other. Associational democracy and participatory democracy are the two conceptual tools that will inform our discussion of certain thought provoking, yet imperfect, institutional designs in the agri-food system. The examples chosen are less than utopian to varying degrees and occur within a highly developed capitalist agri-food system. In the analysis we will look to see which design weaknesses could have been overcome by changing the institutional design and which ones persist.

WORKSHOP #4 MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 11

Wes Markofski, University of Wisconsin Intentional Communities and the New Monasticism: Harnessing Religion to Social Empowerment in the US

Various social groups, motivated by a range of normative principles and practical goals, have experimented with *intentional communities* (e.g. kibbutzim, the 19th century British settlement house movement, Hull House, etc.) as a strategy of social empowerment and the expansion of social justice. While American evangelical Christianity is not the first place one might think to look for examples of innovative egalitarian institutions, a new intentional communities movement has been growing among emerging strains of leftleaning evangelical Christianity in North America and Europe. Self-described as a "new monastic movement", their model takes an interstitial approach to social transformation and envisions the establishment of radical holistic alternatives to existing unjust social relations and institutions under capitalism. While the normative vision targets both macro- and micro- level political, economic, and social transformation, in practice these intentional communities operate primarily at a local or neighborhood scale. The core strategy is to relocate personal, community, and work life as much as possible into specific neighborhood contexts where the pathologies of capitalism are readily apparent and to build relationships and community-based programs, organizations, and businesses that embody social justice principles and extend social, economic, and political

opportunities to these "abandoned places of Empire" (Claiborne 2006). The emergence of intentional communities out of a pre-existing religious community helps solve typical collective action, capital accumulation, and scalability problems common to interstitial strategies (such as worker cooperatives), but also raises questions about exclusivity and compatibility with alternative visions of social justice and emancipation. Based on empirical case studies and a more general model of new monastic communities, this paper examines the potentials and limits of this movement and of similar interstitial strategies more generally for increasing social empowerment in advanced capitalist democracies.

Tod Van Gunten, University of Wisconsin Deliberative Process and Expertise: Consensus Conferences and Empowered Participatory Governance

This paper explores the consensus conference model of deliberative democracy from the standpoint of the Real Utopias Project. Consensus conferences are institutional forms that create a democratic forum in which to generate deliberative responses to controversies surrounding science and technology, such as genetically modified organisms in food. The consensus conference model is unique in that it foregrounds the problematic interaction of experts and lay publics. I explore the extent to which this model of deliberative process provides a solution to the tension between technocracy and democracy in modern societies.

Dimitri Seals, University of California - Berkeley Democratic deliberation in the mixing bowl: Urban Debate Leagues and the integration of the American political sphere

Urban debate leagues have spread to more than eighteen of America's largest cities in their first two decades of operation, significantly altering the demographic balance of the high school policy debate circuit. As an explicitly political activity with direct ties to real-world policy work, debate plays a substantial role in both the development of political ideas and the grooming of national leaders. Movements that bring young people of color into competitive debate thus have the potential to impact the distribution of political power in the American democratic system; they also generate opportunities to understand and intervene in the politics of racial and cultural inclusion in deliberative democracy. This paper investigates the sustainability and impact of urban debate leagues as an institutional model, identifies obstacles to realizing the real utopian promise of the model, and suggests directions forward.

Jason Stanley, NYU Parting Ways: Comparing the diverging strategic orientations of autoworkers in Canada and the US, 1970-1984

Abstract: In 1984, after close to fifty years of unity with their American counterparts, Canadian autoworkers struck out on their own, severing ties with the American-based international United Auto Workers (UAW). The root of conflict between the two groups lay in their divergent political orientations: the American-dominated UAW pursued a policy of 'responsible unionism', while the Canadians increasingly turned to militant strategies. This paper is concerned with the reasons behind this divergence. Past research points to differences in the internal dynamics and ideological orientations of the two camps, yet this approach ignores important structural differences. Without denying the importance of ideology and organizing, this paper argues that the success that Canadian autoworkers had in fending off cut-backs can only be understood in the context of structural conditions that provided greater space for mobilization and in the context of a wider upsurge of labor unrest than was the case south of the border.

Michael McCarthy, NYU

Why should the business agents be bigger than the organization? A Study of Failed Rebellion in New York City's Painters' Union, 1960 – 1973

Union democracy – active rank-and-file workers' participation in and control of their union's organization and its decisions – has tended to result in pro-labor contacts in the American labor movement. However, despite the existence of movements for democracy, moderate and oligarchic unions are much more prevalent in the historical record. This paper examines the reasons why insurgent movements are typically unable to institute lasting democratic structures and militant reforms. It does so via an in depth analysis of a failed rebellion in New York City's painters' union, 1960-1973. In contrast to recent literature that explains success and failure by emphasizing the internal characteristics of the insurgent caucus, I argue that fuller attention be given to processes external to the insurgent caucus – processes articulated by William Z. Foster so long ago. I conclude that while certain internal characteristics of an insurgent caucus – a radical ideology and strong links between leaders and members – are necessary to mobilize support, ultimate failure in maintaining that mobilization is due to conditions within the union generated by the relationships between union officials and employers.

WORKSHOP #5 MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS Sunday Afternoon, May 11

Rene Rojas, NYU *The Politics of Hegemony: Rescuing the Materialist Roots of Gramscian Thought*

This work challenges the dominant view that Gramsci's concept of hegemony is above all 'a theory of the superstructure'. These interpretations of Gramsci privilege the role that culture and ideology play in securing the consent of exploited and oppressed groups. Instead, I argue that Gramsci developed a materialist treatment of politics and the state. Using Gramsci's conceptual framework is particularly useful in addressing some of the shortcoming of existing theories of the state.

Jesse Wozniak, University of Minnesota Real Men Use Non-Lethals: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Construction of Police Weaponry

In recent years, a range of new non-lethal weapons have been introduced for use by police officers, military personnel, and other consumers. This article examines how manufacturers are employing ideals of masculinity as both physical dominance and technical expertise in marketing these weapons to police officials. Based on a first-hand ethnographic account of a major weapons manufacturer's educational and sales conference, we explore how marketing appeals are adapted to suit a hypermasculine police subculture. Connell's (1995) theory of masculinities is employed to understand how such a tightly-defined subculture absorbs challenges to its core values of hegemonic hyper-masculinity and re-imagines itself to keep those core values intact.

Kristin Haltinner, University of Minnesota The Minuteman Civil Defense Corps and the production of Nationalism

Since September 11th, 2001, there have been heightened levels of xenophobia within US society. In the midst of this emerging fear the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps was established. This paper examines the texts found on the Minuteman Project website in order study the frames constructed by the movement organization and understand the meaning of nationalism produced by the texts given the organizations¹ unique position as both a nativist and militia social movement organization. The emerging frames include:

Immigrant as Dangerous, Government as Traitorous and Minuteman as Patriot. These frames, possible due to the movement¹s unique position as a nativist and militia movement, contribute to the American discourse of nationalism.

Raphi Rechitsky, University of Minnesota Temporality in European and North American migration activism

This preliminary exploration compares European and North American migration activism. I discuss the converging historical contexts of migration, systems of migration control, and the other social movements that contribute to the rise of this oppositional discourse to the control of human mobility.

Teresa Gowan, University of Minnesota *Compulsory addiction treatment and the medicalization of poverty*

Over the last 30 years we have seen a fundamental transition in American models of inequality/poverty from structure to culture, starting with the reworking of historical fears of a culturally pathological ghetto "underclass." On the national level, the domination of poverty debates by a curious hybrid of moralistic/medicalised narratives has increasingly limited discussions about endemic poverty, underemployment, and homelessness to elaborations of individual failure. A key area for the individualisation of poverty has been the increasing articulation between the criminal justice system and (compulsory) drug addiction treatment, and we will be drawing out some emblematic examples from our ongoing ethnography of various rehab facilities in the Twin Cities area. Addiction treatment is the most important site, we will argue, where the impoverished and marginal are taught to suppress resentments about the (not so) hidden injuries of class, race, and gender, and to articulate their lives in terms of family dysfunction and individual fallibility. Following Peck, we understand this process as a second, "roll-out" phase of neoliberalism which has moved from the moment of welfare state destruction to the institution and expansion of new forms of governmentality.