

# 6

---

## Green Political Economy II: Solidarity and Sharing

‘What’s the point of a street of fifty houses all going to work to earn money to each buy a separate lawnmower, if you could work shorter hours, earn less money, then buy one lawnmower for the whole street to take turns to share it?’

(Boyle and Simms, 2009: 44)

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues the task begun in the previous one of fleshing out a green political economy to address actually existing unsustainability and serve as an appropriate political economy to underpin green republicanism outlined in the following two chapters. We here canvass a number of key ideas, institutions, and further principles necessary to complete our outline of a post-growth political economy.

The first of these institutions is the social economy (sometimes also called the ‘core’, ‘gift’, ‘informal’, or ‘convivial’ economy). The social economy has long been a feature of green politics and promoted as a third form or way of institutionalizing and organizing human provisioning. It stands, alongside the formal economy and the state, as both the longest existing form of human provisioning (in that it predates the establishment of both the state and the formal market/capitalist system), and is generally viewed, by greens, as an essential part of the transition to a less unsustainable society. We explore the social economy in terms of its capacity to deliver on the aims of a post-growth economy—namely, how to achieve high levels of human flourishing within the ecological, carbon, and energy limits of ‘one planet living’. That is, how and in what ways can the social economy (unlike either the capitalist market or state forms of provisioning) improve the ‘ecological efficiency of flourishing’? We find that a key feature of the social economy is that it represents forms of provisioning activities in which

the ‘economic’ is embedded in and often co-extensive with the ‘social’, such that social economic forms of provisioning are themselves constitutive and supportive of both community and solidarity. An added feature of the social economy is also that it is less likely to result in the types of socio-economic inequalities one finds within capitalist market forms of economic activity, provisioning and production and consumption.

One of the main reasons for supporting the extension of the social economy is that it acts as a site for citizen self-organization, which in a post-growth context enables important citizenship skills and experiences to be developed. Thus, as outlined in more detail in chapter 8, the social economy is important for its moral and political benefits for a green republican conception of politics. In much the same way that Montesquieu noted the ‘civilizing’ effects of commercial interaction in the formal capitalist market (Montesquieu, 1748/1989), or more recent defenders of the civilizing effects of capitalism such as Friedman (2005); we can also observe these ‘extra-economic’ effects within social economic interaction, such as in relation to the experience and practices of citizenship. Indeed, as will be argued there are much more of these positive extra-economic benefits to a post-growth society from extending the social economy, than from either state or capitalist market forms of economic production and consumption.

It is important here to point out (once again to pre-empt the knee-jerk reaction to this suggestion for extending the range and size of the social economy as ‘regressive’, ‘backward’, and/or utopian/romantic etc.) that while it is argued that a post-growth economy aimed at enhancing human flourishing will have to increase the social economy, meaning a reduction where possible and necessary of both state and capitalist market forms of provisioning, this is done pragmatically. That is, it is not proposed that the social economy ‘take over’ both state and capitalist market activities, and, as will be suggested in the chapter, what emerges from this discussion is a new ‘post-growth mixed economy’ which combines elements of all three. And depending on the service or product or sector we are discussing will mean one form of provisioning being preferred over another or some combination of them. However, where possible and practicable, the social economy should be prioritized over both state and capitalist market.

This chapter continues the approach taken in the previous one by suggesting that in creating a more appropriate conception of the economy we need to more carefully distinguish often conflated concepts and ideas. One such example of confusion is the conflating of ‘work’ and ‘employment’ within both neoclassical economic thinking and everyday language. Formally paid employment subsumes ‘work’, is more public and visible (it appears in national accounts such as GDP for example) and more valued in both the orthodox view and everyday discourse. Where non-market forms of work and provisioning are recognized, they are invariably viewed as ‘springboards’

or ‘incubators’ for eventual ‘formal commercialization’ within the formal market. That is, the social economy is not, despite the rhetoric, viewed as intrinsically valuable. This has far-reaching effects since it both downgrades a whole variety of non-market, non-remunerated labour (especially gendered reproductive labour) and elevates formally paid employment as the main or only ‘real’ source of productive value. The separation of work from employment within a social economy context, also allows the possibility for the realization of the emancipatory potentials of ‘work’ as a self-directed sphere of autonomy.

Alongside the previously outlined principle of sufficiency to replace maximization, we also introduce in this chapter another principle beginning with ‘S’, namely ‘sharing’, as a principle governing economic consumption which can help move us towards the goal of a green political economy in terms of ‘decoupling’ higher well-being from carbon energy, resources, and pollution. In this section I defend an argument for more collective forms of consumption as a complement to the socially cooperative forms of production within the social economy. In particular I offer ‘libraries, light-rail, and laundromats’ as indicative of the types of collective consumption in which we see key features of post-growth provisioning such as separating ownership from use, collective in nature and have high levels of ecological efficiency of human well-being in comparison to other more privatized and individualized forms.

The final section of the chapter seeks to offer a direct response to those who would paint a green vision of a post-growth economy in entirely negative terms, as denoting ways of life that are governed by ‘scarcity’ and a self-denying asceticism. I deconstruct the notion of ‘scarcity’ and argue that it is an artificial/socially sustained and created concept which can only be understood, under consumer-capitalism, in relation to socially created and sustained desires and ends. Thus I contend it is possible to see a ‘post-growth’ society as a ‘post-scarcity’ society of abundance, but only if we abandon the naive idea of associating abundance and flourishing with consumption and embrace instead a conception of the person and their flourishing in terms of relationships rather than possessions. Thus, in opposition to erroneous negative views of human life and flourishing, I present a post-growth economy in terms of what I call ‘an economy of sustainable desire’. Much of this positive vision for a high well-being vision rests on the idea that a post-growth economy will be one with less ‘stuff’ but more free time. The creative and life-affirming possibilities of how that free time can be used to enhance and realize new forms of human flourishing are in essence the promises of a post-growth economy and one that makes such an economy something to be positively anticipated, rather than as something to be regarded with dread, or grudgingly tolerated as necessary.

## THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

One of the distinctive aspects of green political economy is the emphasis it places on the social economy as an essential element of a sustainable economy (Robertson, 1985; Jacobs, 1996; Barry and Doherty, 2001; Barry and Smith, 2005; Smith, 2005; Cato, 2008a: 94; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009: 245–7; Jackson, 2009a, 2009b; Stephens, Royle-Collins, and Boyle, 2008; Mayo and Moore, 2001; Korten, 1996). Green political economy has long pointed out that a low-carbon, sustainable, and less unequal economy (and one which aims to increase human well-being) is one which is necessarily going to have a large social economy sector, or what Edgar Cahn calls the ‘core economy’ (Cahn, 2000; Harris and Goodwin, 2009; Goodwin, Nelson, Ackerman, et al. 2009: 383–392) or the ‘solidarity economy’ (Allard, Davidson, and Matthaei, 2008). One can trace this green commitment back to arguments made by Ivan Illich in the 1960s and 1970s, long before formal definitions of the ‘social economy’, and the importance he attached to the revival of the ‘vernacular’ or ‘convivial economy’ (Illich, 1973, 1981), against both market and state forms of economic organization. Other sources also include one strand of eco-feminist political economy analysis and its focus (often drawn from the lived experiences of women in the majority world) on ‘sustainable livelihoods’, the ‘subsistence economy’ (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1999; Shiva, 1988), or more recently as the ‘eco-sufficiency economy’ (Salleh, 2009; Mellor, 2010).

While a complex issue, some handle on what is meant by the core or social economy can be gleaned from Shipman’s view of how the ‘community’ economic sector can be diminished by the activities of both the market and the state. As he puts it, ‘The mutually reinforcing expansion of paid production and commoditized consumption squeezes out a third area of human activity: those once-wide areas of artistic, cultural, and knowledge production *for which people are not paid when they produce and do not pay when they consume (and where production and consumption are often closely linked in time and space)*’ (Shipman, 2001: 349; emphasis added). Another take on the centrality of the social economy is given by Jackson, who suggests that, ‘whatever the new economy looks like, low-carbon economic activities that employ people in ways that contribute meaningfully to human flourishing have to be the basis for it. That much is clear. In fact, the seeds for such an economy may already exist in local or community-based social enterprises: community energy projects, local farmers markets, slow food cooperatives, sports clubs, libraries, community health and fitness centres’ (Jackson, 2009a: 130). One can quibble about Jackson’s apparent conflating of meaningful *work* with formally paid *employment* in talking about ‘employing people’. For example his list of low-carbon, high well-being contributing economic activities do seem to be part of a reformed realm of paid employment in the cash

economy. However, as outlined below in the next section, a less unsustainable economy is comprised not only of the social economy. That is, I am arguing here for a ‘mixed economy’ made up of the existing (but reformed) market economy and the existing (but reformed) public sector economy, part of the reforming of both is to allow the growth and development of the social economy. However, in relation to Jackson’s list of putative sustainable economic activities, I draw on eco-feminist political economy insights in holding that it is vital that we conceptually separate employment from work. However, they do seem to be more in the public sector than the private/market economy, but do not seem to fall into what I am calling the core or social economy.

The social economy has long been recognized as being an intrinsic element of a more sustainable economy. As Barry and Smith point out, ‘organizations within the social economy—cooperatives, mutuals, and associations—have an advantage over other institutional forms in that their ethos and structure already reflect principles implicit within sustainable development. . . . Productive/economic activity in the social economy is associated with a plurality of goods fundamental to the achievement of a vision of sustainable development’ (Barry and Smith, 2005: 256). There are a number of reasons to think the social or core economy offers a better ‘fit’ with the objectives of a sustainable and resilient economy—a low-carbon, high well-being economy. One is that social, community-based, and informal economic activities such as those associated with the Transition movement, like Time Banks and Local Exchange Trading Systems (Barry and Proops, 1999), aim to re-localize the economy, reduce material consumption, and are based on collective not individual forms of social learning and problem solving (Seyfang, 2006: 3, 2009).

Such social economic activities also include credit union activity, local currencies (Douthwaite, 1992), and cooperatives (Cato, 2004; Carter, 1996), which explicitly re-embed economic activity (understood as all forms of production, consumption, distribution, trading, and exchange, and not just that recorded in the formal cash economy) within social relations. They do so in a manner virtually impossible with either free market or state-based forms of economic organization (Gibson-Graham, 2006). That is, such social economic activity creates and sustains community building and solidarity based on weak ties. As Jacobs rightly notes, ‘Community-based organizations tangibly raise levels of hope and self-confidence and a sense of social participation. By enabling people to work together for one another, they give expression to feelings of altruism and mutuality, and thereby help to regenerate a sense of community’ (1996: 100).

The social economy, by virtue of its cooperative and democratic potentials, can also contribute to cultivating and supporting more active senses of citizenship (Barry and Smith, 2005: 257–9), which are central to the ‘green

republicanism' advanced in chapters 7 and 8.<sup>1</sup> That is, the social economy and principles of 'co-production' (Cahn, 2000; Stephens, Royle-Collins, and Boyle, 2008) do foster a sense of the individual qua economic/productive agent as an *active citizen* rather than *passive consumer* (market economy) or *welfare recipient* (public sector economy).<sup>2</sup> As Iris Marion Young has argued, the self-organizing and self-directed character of the social economy is such that '[d]emocracy and social justice would be enhanced in most societies if civic associations provided even more goods and services' (2000: 166), a point also echoed by Smith (2005: 276–1). The upshot of this is that such self-organizing activity involves learning and practicing skills of conflict resolution, awareness of and resistance to prevailing power relations, and perhaps above all the experience that collective action works and does not need to be necessarily done with or through the state or formal market economy. But this is not an uncritical account and the social economy is neither a panacea for a post-growth economy, nor so unproblematic that it can simply be left alone, that is, without some degree of state (local or national) support and/or regulation or planning.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The significance of the social economy has always been recognized by states—especially as a cost-effective means to deliver public services. This is always a potential danger for the social economy—being co-opted by the state particularly in times of economic crisis—as a cheap way to deliver services and goods. An example of this is the following from the European Union's INTERREG programme: 'It is therefore increasingly recognized and higher in the EU agenda that the third sector and social economy could be a new kind of economy that profoundly changes the future of public services as well as the daily life of citizens. . . . Social economy brings together features which are very different from economy based on the production and consumption of commodities. The innovative way in which social economy is based on care and maintenance rather than consumption, can address some of the most intractable problems facing modern society, including climate change, globalization, ageing, and inequality. It is now clear that this is the crisis of the real economy, of an old form of production, consumption, and its sources of energy. A new transformation of infrastructures and institutions enabling the recognition of the value of social economy will be the precondition for a new qualitatively and different period of growth. To attend this change, social innovation has as well a central place, because it enables radical and creative new ways in which existing resources can be used.' (INTERREG, IVC, 2009: 3).

<sup>2</sup> It is salutary and appropriate to note that the Beveridge Report which laid the foundations for the British (and other) post-war welfare state was aware of the dangers of state-provided welfare undermining the capacity of citizens to provide for themselves (Beveridge, 1942). The third principle underpinning the report was 'that social security must be achieved by cooperation between the State and the individual. . . . *The State in organizing security should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility; in establishing a national minimum, it should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action by each individual* to provide more than that minimum for himself and his family' (Beveridge, 1942, 6–7; emphasis added). Who knows what this report (and the welfare state that followed its publication), may have looked like if it had as its 'subject' not just the male wage-earner, but women, children, and communities?

<sup>3</sup> As well as supporting policies promoting job security (and job/skill satisfaction), and ones promoting income security within employment (such as minimum wage legislation), greens have been long-standing advocates for economic security outside the formal employment sphere, through a universal, rights-based provision of a basic citizen's income (Scott-Cato, 2009a: 181–2; Boyle and Simms, 2009: 91–2).

Tim Jackson's work also provides some optimism of the potential of more participatory community-based approaches to changing patterns of over-consumption, and also to the promotion of alternative accounts of human flourishing. According to him, 'The role of community in mediating and moderating individual behaviours is also clear. There are some strong suggestions that participatory community-based processes could offer effective avenues for exploring pro-environmental and pro-social behavioural change. *What is missing from this evidence base, at present, is unequivocal proof that community-based initiatives can achieve the level of behavioural change necessary to meet environmental and social objectives*' (Jackson, 2005: 133; emphasis added). In his latest work (Jackson, 2009a, 2009b), he has clearly found this evidence, since he identifies a leading role for the social economy with local and community-based enterprises as important loci for sustainable consumption. This suggests a 'happy marriage' between less unsustainable economic activity and the social economy. The emergence of grassroots initiatives such as the Transition movement do offer excellent case studies for testing this point, namely whether such community-based innovations do lead to sufficient behavioural change to move those communities away from unsustainability even as they increase human well-being (Hillier and Cato, 2010). It is significant to note that many aspects of the Transition ethos, echoing long-standing green principles and ideas, namely, relocalization, rebuilding community, grassroots practical action, 'reskilling' people, and so on, converge with the list Jackson provides above. However, it is clear that a central element of the creation of a new account of economics for sustainability—and one that to date does not figure greatly in Jackson's analysis—is the pressing need to avoid confusing formally paid employment and work. This is as important, I contend, as not confusing quality of life or flourishing with economic growth, or 'the economy' with 'capitalism'.

#### THE SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND WORK, PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION

Just as greens have long asked what would an economy look like designed by a scientist rather than an orthodox economist, likewise they now ask what would social and economic policy look like if oriented away from achieving 'economic growth' towards achieving human well-being and human flourishing? And part of the answer they give to that is the need for policies aimed at providing meaningful *work* for people rather than only focusing on maximizing formally paid *employment*. Separating work from employment does seem to offer an answer to Douglas Booth's observation that, 'Under existing

macroeconomic arrangements, *growth is the only real answer to unemployment—society is hooked on growth*' (Booth, 2004: 153; emphasis added). The replacing of work for employment, where possible and without eliminating formally paid market remunerated employment altogether, does seem a necessary corollary of replacing economic growth with economic security and well-being.

Thus the proposition is that the development of a political economy appropriate to addressing actually existing unsustainable economic activity requires that we distinguish 'economic activity' and provisioning from both market- and state-based forms of provisioning and economic activity. This also requires distinguishing more clearly formally paid 'employment' from 'work' (Jacobs, 1996: 89). It constitutes a view of political economy in which policy is focused on promoting human well-being directly rather than through the proxy of orthodox economic growth and/or formal employment. In simple terms, while employment is a form of work, and constitutes a particular form of provisioning, the reverse is not the case. That is, work should not be conflated with employment and denotes its own, more direct form of provisioning. Both employment and work are forms of provisioning and both involve human labour and the use of natural resources. But as Mellor notes, 'Provisioning in a capitalist economy based on wage labour is a two-step rather than a one-step process. Work is not undertaken directly for social benefit but to maximize profit' (Mellor, 2010: 155). In contrast to this, there are more direct forms of provisioning in non-market practices such as those associated with social economic activities, and care or reproductive work, usually in the domestic sphere. Thus, provisioning here denotes all economic activity aimed at meeting human needs and contributes to human well-being and flourishing. It is a corollary of an expansive view of the economy and includes all four types of economic activity, reproductive, social, market, and state.

Ivan Illich makes a telling point here in arguing that alongside formally paid employment and what he calls 'vernacular' work, there is also the category of what he calls '*shadow work*'. This is unpaid labour done in the service of formally paid employment, to support the formal economy. As he puts it, shadow work is 'A kind of forced labor or industrial serfdom in the service of commodity-intensive economic, [and] must be carefully distinguished from subsistence-orientated work lying outside the industrial system' (Illich, 1980: 13). The identification of this compulsory unpaid labour has been central to eco-feminist political economy in their analysis of 'care labour' as the 'embodied debt' of women (Salleh, 2009). Thus, while a post-growth economics seeks to increase social economic forms of provisioning, it seeks to minimize and eliminate this 'shadow work' and 'embodied debt'. To do this one must pay explicit attention to gender equality in two senses. On the one hand to eliminate gendered shadow work, but on the other to ensure that social

economy work and forms of provisioning outside both market and state are not done in a gender unequal manner.

Analysing the separation of work and employment, and a critical analysis of how and why the latter has become elevated over the former has been done by feminist and eco-feminist writers and activists. One of the key features of this eco-feminist analysis, and its significant contribution to green political economy, is the gendered distinction between ‘reproduction’ and ‘production’ (Mellor, 1992, 1997; Salleh, 1999, 2009; Merchant, 1992; Barry, 2007a; Langley and Mellor, 2002). In a contribution which has direct relevance for the project of ‘de-sequestering’ major elements of modern economic and social life, Ariel Salleh’s notion of the varieties of ‘debt’ which go unrecognized and unpaid in the modern global economy is useful. She outlines three forms of debt (Salleh, 2009). The first is the *social debt* owed by capitalist employers for surplus value extracted from workers. The second is the *ecological debt* owed by the minority world (the North) to the majority world (the global South), including the direct extraction of the natural means of production. The third is the *embodied debt* owed by both majority and minority worlds to unpaid reproductive workers (mostly women) who produce use values and regenerate the capitalist economy’s conditions of production. Women’s reproductive work is thus the basic work that makes other forms of activity possible. That is, it constitutes the basis for the other three types of provisioning activity in modern societies—market, state, and social economy.

In terms of debates around the centrality of the social or core economy, the eco-feminist insight is that such forms of low-carbon/resource economic activity which aims to meet human needs and therefore contributes to human well-being already exists. That is, moving to a less unsustainable economy is not as Mellor puts it a case of ‘getting from here to there’ (Mellor, 1995). The less unsustainable is already here but sequestered, unrecognized and exploited along gender lines. This latter point, as eco-feminists such as Mellor and Salleh note, is important not just in terms of the normative claims for a ‘just transition’ (Speth, 2010; World Social Forum, 2011) to a less unsustainable economy; it is also important in that such *materialist* eco-feminist analysis highlights the importance of economic *practices* and lived non-market *activities* as necessary complements to critically rethinking and reclaiming *economics* (Cato, 2008a). This would also include what Fairlie calls the ‘rehabilitation of manual labour’ (Fairlie, 2008), which is a central concern of the Transition movement vision in terms of both re-connecting people with making things (especially food) but also in the ‘great reskilling’ a central part of which is the recovery of craft and other manual skills. Fairlie’s suggestion about the rehabilitation of manual labour echoes and touches upon the issue of gendered reproductive labour, since most of this type of labour is of this type, that is it does not typically use capital or technology.

For Langley and Mellor, the economic activities of provisioning constitute:

everyday forms of resistance based in domestic–local subsistence, and abandoned–informal provisioning practices need to be harnessed and developed through associational–voluntaristic practices . . . Transformative strategies based within economy itself require not just the theoretical *demystification and disaggregation of economy*, which arguably is the role of radical new political economists, but also the practical reclamation of economy itself through the ongoing struggles for sustainable livelihood that are taking place across the globe.

(Langley and Mellor, 2002: 62; emphasis added)

This struggle for ‘sustainable livelihoods’, and the forms of provisioning that they provide, cannot be gender blind, lest it be women who are left continuing to do the bulk of such social economy labour. Gender-equal provisioning practices within an expanded role for the social economy in meeting human needs, is not automatically guaranteed and needs to be constantly and consciously foregrounded in any discussion of a ‘just transition’. On this point, I am reminded of some arguments which suggest that some types of less carbon-intensive, low impact, more localized and less unsustainable economies might be ones with *less* not *more* gender-equality labour (Somma, 2009; Barry and Quilley, 2009). This of course only highlights the need for a vigilant eco-feminist political analysis of any and all proposals for such a transition.

This theoretical (and ultimately policy-level) separation of employment and work is significant, and indeed a vital objective (along with the prioritization of free time over money as a key economic goal), for the transition to less unsustainable communities. As Fitzpatrick argues, ‘The employment ethic dominates, to an overwhelming extent, the political and economic debates dealing with social policy. This ethic refers to the fact that wage-earning activity in the formal labour market tends to be valued over all other forms of human activity’ (1998: 13). The distinction between employment and work then becomes a central part of the political economy of a less unsustainable economy and key feature of a ‘macroeconomics of sustainability’ (Nadal, 2011; Jackson, 2009b).

The extension of what we mean by ‘economic activity’ to include non-monetary, non-formal, non-market forms of labour and work, opens up new sites for recovering what Breen (2007) calls the ‘emancipatory’ potentials of work. That is, a view of work as something done for its own internal benefits, which is completely contrary to the conventional neoclassical view of ‘work’ (qua ‘paid employment’) which is both valued instrumentally (principally for the wages it brings) but also viewed as something negative (but necessary) as a ‘cost’ (as can be viewed in the discussion of the backward-bending labour supply curve in the previous chapter). Assuming that the extension and development of the social economy is viewed as a central policy goal in the transition away from unsustainable economic activity, a major macroeconomic issue that would need

to be tackled head-on is to explicitly limit or tightly regulate forms of market and state economic provisioning/activity which can undermine or ‘crowd out’ social economic activity. And the dangers here are not completely related to what Breen calls ‘managerial’ conceptions of work (Breen, 2007), but from the very organization and ordering of the economy, its attendant division of labour and creation of occupations and forms of employment under market capitalism and the state.

A major part of what the re-embedding of the economy within society means is that ‘the economy’, viewed expansively as including the social economy, and also market and state based forms of provisioning, should not be seen as devoid of non-economic norms. And all elements of this expansive conception of the economy should be subject to the democratic/political oversight of the community, and be oriented towards maximizing the ecological efficiency of human flourishing. But note, human flourishing is not coextensive with the social economy, and even though such productive activity in this sphere may constitute a large element of an individual’s well-being, we are not here envisaging the abolition of formally paid employment. Rather what is suggested is its radical transformation, and while we need to recognize the negative ecological, social, and gender potentials of the ‘two-step provisioning’ process Mellor talks about, we cannot abandon the benefits of formal economic activity, here keeping in mind that there are non-capitalist ways in which complex, mediated formal economic activity can be organized. For a post-growth political economy to seek to meet all human needs and provide all the goods, services, and relationships required for a negative-Aristotelian account of human flourishing from within either the social economy together with the reproductive sphere would be a regressive move. Formal economic activity and employment, under capitalism and the imperative of economic growth, does have multiple flaws and makes less than its full contribution to human flourishing. However, under different macroeconomic principles (replacing growth with sufficiency for example), and different microeconomic principles (supplementing ‘productivity’ with ‘worker autonomy’ or ‘workplace democracy’), even formal economic activity and employment can be less unsustainable and make a contribution (though perhaps small when compared with other elements) to human flourishing.

In relation to the formal market economy an important point here is the extent to which non-economic norms and practices can or ought to influence the operation and organization of employment within formal economic enterprises. On the one hand, it is an open question as to ‘whether people seeking economic betterment through profits and gains can form true community among themselves’ (Danner, 1984: 232)? That is, can formal employment deliver non-monetary and non-economic/instrumental values and goals? Clearly, to ensure this we need to reform the internal organization of formal employment. It would also perhaps require reforming the extrinsic incentives

and drivers which tend to undermine this capacity for formal employment to achieve non-economic objectives. Primary amongst these would include reform of the 'fiduciary duty' which gives legal force to the profit motive as the dominant imperative of orthodox, market-based economic activity (Kelly, 2003). Others could include the mandatory creation of workplace democratic procedures. This would usher in a radical transformation of the internal organization of formal market economic organizations in order to promote the realization of more meaningful work for example. This would represent a direct challenge to the orthodox economic conception of employment which it views as: (a) the opposite of 'leisure' (conceived of as 'doing nothing'); and (b) a 'negative' experience in that people only undertake employment for wages. Integrating more positive and non-economic attributes within formally paid employment offers us obviously a very different conception of formally paid employment than neoclassical economics. It also clearly means viewing the formal economy not as a self-regulating market, but as an institution which can be and ought to be politically governed. This attitude to the formal market is one that I suggest is perfectly in keeping with a green republican perspective, even though it clearly departs from both neoclassical economic and liberal political theory, since it holds that even formal economic practices are to be judged, evaluated, and ordered from how they contribute to political as well as economic objectives.

Important here is that even though formally paid employment still exists in a post-growth economy, the macroeconomic requirement for 'sub-optimality' as opposed to maximization under a conventional economic growth imperative, does create some 'head room' for non-economic considerations to shape the internal organization of formally paid employment. Such non-economic considerations are not concerned with boosting labour productivity and output, and the associated organization of the labour processes to ensure those strict economic, efficiency, and maximization objectives. There is reason to believe that a macroeconomic objective of 'sufficiency' in a post-growth economy would also 'cascade down' to the micro-levels of the organization of formal employment within firms, especially if those firms are more democratically governed or have more cooperative forms of internal decision-making, as I argue in more detail below. Thus, on the one hand we can say that it is *normatively desirable* to reform formal employment to enable it to realize *both* productive or strictly economic (instrumental) objectives as well as some of the 'internal goods' of human collective (and individual) labour constitutive of human flourishing (Breen, 2007). But, on the other hand, from a post-growth perspective it may also be *necessary* that these reforms take place, as part of the individual firm's contribution to realizing a sufficient as opposed to a maximum economic output. And we keep at the back of our minds here the argument that the internal goods of human productive labour (and reproductive labour I would add), are not only to be found in formally paid

employment, but also in social economic and reproductive provisioning activity.

However, there are limits to this in that we cannot insist that all formally paid employment must, or indeed can, be reorganized to realize certain important non-economic objectives. On pragmatic grounds we must allow both for forms of 'non-meaningful' work and employment. By meaningful work here I follow Arneson's definition as denoting 'employment in which the work for which pay is received is interesting, calling for intelligence and initiative, and in which the worker has considerable freedom to determine how the work is done and a genuinely democratic say over the character of the work process and the policies pursued by the employing enterprise' (Arneson, 1987: 517). Thus, *where possible and practicable*, non-economic norms and values such as community, democracy, equality, and intrinsic values of work, such as worker autonomy, should be embedded within *all* forms of provisioning across social economy, formal market and state sectors. This does not mean that all forms of work are within institutional contexts where these other values are realized. Only that work should be considered to be organized to realize these non-economic values first and only then organized in some other manner. This leads us in a clearly more cooperative direction in terms of production, a mutualist-based conception of economic provisioning, which complements collective forms of sharing in relation to consumption, as developed later in this chapter. However, at the same time we need to recognize that meaningful work is not the only constituent practice for human flourishing. On this point it is salutary to remind ourselves that other elements of human flourishing such as personal relationships and community membership rank higher than work in psychological studies of human flourishing (Jackson, 2009b).

While in large part an empirical issue, the argument in support of extending work in the social economy, is to seek to remove forms of provisioning that are either in the formal market or state sector and put them in the social economy, that is, transform what is currently 'employment' or 'welfare' into 'work'. But, as previously indicated, this does not necessarily require the collapse of either state or formal market/economic activity or of state transfers. A key issue here is that a post-growth economy, and indeed most contemporary concerns that people (not economists or politicians) have about a non-growing economy, is not necessarily related to a failure of GDP to increase. For example, and as developed in more detail in the next section, when this issue of lowering consumption (through sharing goods and moving away from private ownership of goods and towards a form of shared use of the services they give for example), the immediate reaction of most people is the spectre of 'joblessness' and 'unemployment' if we don't increase consumption and grow the economy. Thus most people, (apart from orthodox economists and most mainstream politicians), express this concern not as a threat to 'economic growth' per se,

but a concern about the human cost of a decline in the economy in terms of the impacts on people, families, and communities. *It is the threat of unemployment that concerns most people, not a decline in economic growth.* This concern needs to be taken seriously by any green political economy alternative to ‘business as usual’. However, as outlined below, once we place non-monetary ‘work’, including reproductive labour, alongside and on an equal footing with formally paid employment some of those concerns can be addressed. A post-growth economy may result in less formally paid employment, as well as different employment opportunities due to a shift to low-carbon and resource-efficient sectors and the decline in carbon and resource-intensive sectors. It could also result in differently arranged employment practices within formal economic activity. Thus, the ‘compensation’ for this decline in formally paid employment is both more free time (less formal employment), the reform of paid employment (to enable non-economic, intrinsic values associated with work), and also the maximization of work opportunities (as what was previously ‘employment’ becomes ‘work’).

However, as Sayer points out, ‘The corollary of sharing complex, interesting, rewarding tasks is of course that we share routine, tedious, and unfulfilling tasks as well’ (Sayer, 2009: 14). This links to the idea of ‘socially necessary labour’, as eco-feminists have suggested in relation to reproductive labour. The distribution of this reproductive form of labour needs to be on a considerably more gender-equal basis. The organization and fair distribution of ‘socially necessary labour’ within a post-growth economy, relates to what I have elsewhere described, with clear echoes of Marx, as ‘socially necessary sustainability labour’. I have previously canvassed the idea of ‘compulsory sustainability service’ (Barry, 2005) as one way to think about how to distribute this labour. The fair and equitable sharing out of tedious (but socially necessary) labour, what Andre Gorz termed ‘heteronymous labour’ (Gorz, 1982), is something that is of central concern to a green republican conception of the economy and society, and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

## THE EMANCIPATORY AND WELL-BEING POTENTIALS OF WORK

Thus, the key question for a post-growth political economy is how to maximize human flourishing while reducing energy, resources, and inequality. One way of doing this, as indicated in the previous section, turns on separating ‘work’ from ‘employment’, and seeking to reform the latter so it becomes more ‘work-like’. That is, less guided by and organized in alignment with the achievement of purely or only economic-cum instrumental criteria of

productivity, maximization of output or ‘competiveness’. And while seeking to extend the social economy as much as practicable, together with this internal reform of formal economic activity, a guiding policy objective for a post-growth political economy is the maximization of ‘meaningful work’ to enable those doing this work to develop their capacities, realize autonomy, and achieve what Keith Breen terms the ‘emancipatory potential’ of productive work (Breen, 2007: 392). Breen enlists MacIntyre’s Aristotelian notion of ‘practice’ as indicative of an intersubjective and self-transformative productive process which is simultaneously both, in Habermasian terms, communicative and instrumental (Breen, 2007: 383–84). He modifies MacIntyre’s notion on the grounds that it tends to reject or neglect the creative- and freedom-providing potentials of modern forms of work. As he puts it, ‘If we are to constructively employ MacIntyre’s theory of practice to lessen the excision of meaning and purpose from our working lives, it has to be on the basis of modern social forms and institutions, not peripheral communities’ (Breen, 2007: 413).<sup>4</sup> Breen does not rule out, as MacIntyre does, that reformed market and state economic institutions and organizations could deliver or create meaningful work, though it is a pity Breen does not sketch out what such reforms may entail. However, it is extremely doubtful that most capitalist economic organizations could offer more than a kind of tokenistic ‘worker representation’ and thus fall short of the degree of internal reorganization of the labour process within formally paid employment.

The forms of productive activities encompassed under the banner of the ‘social economy’ would seem to offer an excellent, distinctly modern range of productive activities for realizing Breen’s MacIntyre-inspired conception of the ‘emancipatory’ potential of work. Initiatives such as time-banks, LETS systems, worker-run cooperatives, not-for-profit social enterprises and a host of other forms of social economic/productive activity do, on the face of it, offer conducive modes of potentially meaningful work. Reproductive work, reorganized to be less gender-unequal, could also become a site for meaningful work. Though here the notion of ‘meaningful’ perhaps has less to do with this work being ‘self-directed’ and ‘autonomous’, since often this work is ‘compulsory care’ for young babies, children, the old, and the sick. The sense of this reproductive work being ‘meaningful’ relates both to the fact that even though this work may not be self-directed, creative, or especially complex and interesting, it nonetheless may be a central component of flourishing for the person

<sup>4</sup> Here we can think of the debates about how modern forms of technology—especially communications such as peer-to-peer, social networking, and the internet and wireless/mobile communications technology more broadly—are often condemned as either ‘inferior’ to ‘old-fashioned’ face-to-face communication or viewed as dangerous and inimical to well-being and flourishing. A large part of what is missing from these debates, and in some of Breen’s analysis, is recognition of the *complementarity* of these innovations to already existing forms of communication and modes of human flourishing.

performing these tasks. Of course like all work, it may at other times be tedious, boring, and unfulfilling, hence the need to distribute such socially necessary labour as equally and fairly as possible. Although such work may contribute to human flourishing, it may not necessarily realize some 'emancipatory' potential, but I do not think this is necessarily a problem.

The reason for this is what is key, I think, in the relationship between human flourishing and meaningful work: on the one hand a sense of the individual as (ideally) working across a number of areas of this expanded conception of the economy (that is social economy, state, formal/market economy, and the reproductive sphere) and on the other, this perspective advances a view of the individual conceived over a lifetime as opposed to one moment in time. Thus, the proportion of an individual's work in each of the four sectors may vary over time. The vital issue (only part of which is an empirical issue) is, I think, the *proportion of meaningful work* within an individual's total work experience that is important for human flourishing. Unless one thinks that *all* human productive work needs to be emancipatory, meaningful, intersubjective, transformative, and so on, then it seems reasonable to suggest that a modified version of Marx's romanticized notion of a 'day in the life of a communist worker' is perhaps required. I do not think that all work needs to be meaningful, in the sense that there will also be what Marx called 'socially necessary labour', forms of labour which may be difficult to render meaningful, or as meaningful as fully autonomous, self-directed work (Gorz, 1982: 5), but without which community or social life would be either impossible or severely impoverished. What this means is that productive activity maximized for human flourishing is balanced with tedious, non-meaningful even heteronymous work. One could, *ceteris paribus*, work within a technocratic-managerial work setting with limited potential for autonomy, self-realization, and so on, so long as this: (a) did not constitute the only or the main form of productive work available; (b) was equally shared with others; and (c) was performed alongside or together with other meaningful forms of work. Such forms of work need to be distributed justly, and this issue is taken up in chapter 8 in defending—from a green republican perspective—what I call 'compulsory sustainability labour'. Once again, as in previous discussions, what is important is the identification of thresholds beyond which the balance between meaningful and non-meaningful work (which may also relate to the proportion of work an individual has across the four spheres of provisioning), has a detrimental rather than a positive effect on their capacity for flourishing.

In sum, we can see a fourfold division of work in three spheres social, market, and state, together with two types of work—meaningful and non-meaningful. With meaningful work roughly equating to Gorz's distinction between 'autonomous labour' and non-meaningful corresponding to what he calls 'heteronymous labour'.

	Meaningful work	Non-meaningful work
Reproductive	Caring for others	
Social	Non-paid community project work	Collective labouring—socially necessary labour
Market	Internal reorganization of work practices	Status quo, managerial/technocratic
State	Public service Nursing—reorganized	Collective labouring—socially necessary labour (compulsory & shared sustainability service)

A major macroeconomic decision for the creation of a sustainable economy would seem to be the relative division of economic activity (meaningful and ‘socially necessary’) between the four economic modes or modalities, that is, reproductive, state, market, and social. Another decision would similarly revolve around the reduction of non-meaningful work to its absolute minimum required for individual and collective conditions for flourishing. A third would have to be around the fair distribution of that socially necessary labour. Above all what is required in the relationship between employment and work, production and reproduction, the formal cash economy and the core economy is ‘a redefinition of work to include the full diversity of what is necessary for life. It requires we find new ways of valuing parenting, caring, and community building as much as paid work’ (Boyle and Simms, 2009: 89).<sup>5</sup> It is significant (and a hopeful sign perhaps of greater cooperation and links between green politics, sustainability, and the trades union movement), that the International Labour Organization report discussed above, explicitly states that its conception of ‘economic security’ extends to *all* productive work,

The security espoused in this report is for work, *all forms of work, not just labour*, or even just all forms of income-earning activity, including so-called informal economy activity. In other words, all legitimate productive and reproductive work should be given equal basic security, including such work as caring for children and the elderly, voluntary work and community work, as well as service activities that may not have the moral approval of a majority, as long as they do no harm to others and are chosen in real freedom.

(International Labour Organization, 2004c: 15)

I realize that this discussion raises as many questions as answers in terms of giving more ‘shape’ to the principles regulating a post-growth economy. How do we organize the economy to ensure a ‘fair’ distribution of meaningful and

<sup>5</sup> A similar sentiment is expressed by Mahatma Gandhi when he wrote ‘The truth is that man needs work even more than he needs a wage . . . For the object of work is not so much to make objects as to make men. A man makes himself by making something useful’ (in Astyk, 2008: 107).

non-meaningful work for each individual across a lifetime in a manner which reduces work-related obstacles to human flourishing? How are meaningful and non-meaningful work to be balanced as those non-work related elements of human flourishing? What policies are required to ensure a fair distribution of reproductive work? What is the role of the state in regulating formal economic/market, social economy and reproductive work and activity? These and other issues need answering, but for my purposes here in further fleshing out some of the principles of a post-growth economy, the important issues are the necessity of separating ‘work’ from formally paid ‘employment’, extending the conception of ‘the economy’ to include reproductive and social economic work, and establishing the argument (in terms of human flourishing) for favouring the promotion where possible of meaningful over non-meaningful work, even if this means lower economic productivity and output, as viewed by orthodox economics.

#### SHARING AND THE SOCIAL ECONOMY: LIBRARIES, LAUNDROMATS AND LIGHT RAIL

A post-growth economics presents multiple problems, not least the legitimate challenge from defenders of the economic status quo about how a post-growth economy would meet human needs, provide jobs (and work), stability, a money system within a complex socio-economic institutional setting. In terms of meeting human needs, a feature of the green political economy perspective is a focus on sharing, and a defence of adopting forms of social and collective provisioning (Mellor, 1997, 2010). Some of the latter can be done through community and other social organizations, that is, outside both the state and the market within the social economy, and the view outlined here is that the social economy will have a much greater role to play in any post-growth, post-carbon economy. Social economy provisioning is understood to be different from reproductive, market, and state forms of provisioning and offers one of the central institutional features for a green political economy. Sharing as a modality of production and consumption is something that both market and state forms of provisioning and associated incentive structures (money/profit or compulsion) can undermine. Overall, while prone to erosion from both state and market, sharing as a modality of production and consumption is most at risk from and in need of protection from market modes of economic activity (again echoes of Polanyi’s ‘double movement’).

While seeking to expand this non-market and non-state economic realm, it is also clear that any policy which seeks to maintain and expand ‘economic security’ (as previously defined) needs to focus on defending the welfare state

and its public goods, even as it is reformed and restructured to enable social provisioning and the social economy to expand. As Seabrook notes, ‘much of the modest security enjoyed by people depend[s] upon public goods—health care, social security, unemployment and sickness pay and old age pensions’ (Seabrook, 2008: 6). The welfare state (despite its many failings) does still stand as a Polanyian ‘double movement’—a spontaneous, essentially defensive move by society to protect itself from the organized efforts to create an unfettered, dis-embedded market economy. And while greens are and should be critical of the welfare state (Barry and Doherty, 2001), they should also be pragmatic enough that, under current circumstances, it remains an absolutely necessary institution strong enough to regulate the market and indeed will also have a role in regulating social and reproductive provisioning, economic activity, and work.<sup>6</sup> The impetus behind this green focus on economic security and the post-growth imperative for lowering socio-economic inequalities directly (rather than ‘managing’ them indirectly via economic growth and ‘trickle down’), can be regarded as a contemporary Polanyian ‘double movement’, aiming to protect society, the non-human world, and the most vulnerable and insecure members of both against the ravages of the ‘neo-liberal vulgate’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001).

In this section I want to use Yochai Benkler’s fascinating article ‘Sharing Nicely: On Shareable Goods and the Emergence of Sharing as a Modality of Economic Production’ (Benkler, 2004), to flesh out this sharing economic modality of a less unsustainable economy. Benkler suggests that contrary to the commonly held view of the decline of the ‘gift economy’, another term often used for the social economy (Offer, 1997, 2006), non-monetary based sharing and forms of social provisioning are ubiquitous. As Benkler puts it, ‘There is a curious congruence between the anthropologists of the gift and mainstream economists today. Both treat the gift literature as being about the periphery, about societies starkly different from modern capitalist ones . . . *And yet, sharing is everywhere around us in the advanced economies*’ (Benkler, 2004: 332; emphasis added).

He notes that ‘the introduction of money, or prices, for an activity may in fact lower the level of that activity’, which he terms ‘the crowding-out effect’

<sup>6</sup> Many of the green critiques of the welfare state relate to issues of paternalism, infringements on freedom, what one could call essentially ‘republican’ concerns about the dangers of (often well meaning) paternalistic and potentially dominating and demeaning experiences and relationships. I would argue that one of most long-standing of green economic policies—universal, non-means-tested basic income—is defended on grounds of avoiding the indignity and intrusion of the state means-testing citizens. It is significant I think in terms of the potential of a ‘green republican’ perspective (to be developed in the next two chapters) to provide a broad base for alliances between green and Left positions, that the International Labour Organization study denotes as ‘republican’ what it calls ‘basic income security’ (International Labour Organization, 2004c: 15).

(Benkler, 2004: 323). The reason for this is that the introduction of money or prices into the equation is a direct appeal to the motivational power of extrinsic rather than intrinsic values and reasons for action—such as altruism or wanting to do good for others. As Benkler points out, such, ‘Extrinsic motivations . . . “crowd out” intrinsic motivations because they: (a) impair self-determination—that is, a person feels pressured by an external force, and therefore feels over-justified in maintaining her intrinsic motivation rather than complying with the will of the source of the extrinsic reward; or (b) impair self-esteem—they cause an individual to feel that his internal motivation is rejected, not valued, leading him to reduce his self-esteem and thus to reduce effort’ (Benkler, 2004: 324). The link to self-esteem is telling, given the centrality of maintaining high levels of self-esteem for human flourishing. While this observation from Benkler refers to the lowering of the quantity of the shared good, Tim Jackson makes a related point about this but in terms of quality. Jackson draws attention to the fact that, ‘The pursuit of labour productivity in activities whose integrity depends on human interaction systematically undermines the quality of the output’ (Jackson, 2009a: 133). Something similar, was famously discovered by Richard Titmuss in his path-breaking analysis of the ‘gift economy’. He found that introducing money incentives into donating blood—as had been done in America and therefore commercializing it—led to *less* blood being available (both in terms of quantity and quality). This was in comparison to the case in Britain where donating blood was—and still is—regarded as a form of altruistic behaviour motivated by non-commercial concerns, such as citizenship or virtue (Titmuss, 1970).<sup>7</sup>

Benkler’s analysis is based largely on the ‘efficiency’ of social provisioning/sharing where efficiency is viewed in the standard neoclassical sense. The solidarity and community-enhancing effects of such sharing-based forms of

<sup>7</sup> Here I note in passing an article that perhaps deserves to be better known which encapsulates the ways in which conventional economics mis-describes and misunderstands the complex moral and psychological determinates of human behaviour. In Denis Robertson’s 1954 article ‘What Do Economists Economize On?’ it turns out the answer is love, altruism, and fellow feeling (Robertson, 1956). The point I make here is related to arguments about Humean-based ideas of ‘limited altruism’ or notions of ‘limited virtue’ (Brennan and Hamlin, 1995), but one which is more prescriptive in the sense of suggesting that we cannot simply take as ‘given’ a limited degree of altruism. Rather the point of a green political economy perspective in supporting the expansion of the social economy (and thus replacing where possible and practicable both market- and state-organized economic activity), is that a sustainable economy is one which aims to maximize and stimulate more altruism, as well as ‘work from’ some baseline level. As Mary Midgley puts in a different but related context of expanding one’s scope of ethical concern to the non-human world, ‘concern, like other feelings . . . is *something that grows and develops by being deployed, like our muscles, not a sort of small oil well that will run out shortly if it is used at all*’ (1992: 35; emphasis added). The ‘trade-off’ that green political economy posits is less economic productivity and ‘economy growth’ (as conventionally understood) for higher social solidarity and non-material, relational practices of human flourishing.

production and consumption are not considered by him (except where the maintenance of intrapersonal trust is functional for the efficient provision of the good in question). Hence his rather formal description of the strict technological conditions under which sharing becomes the preferred (i.e. *optimal* according to the precepts of orthodox economics) form of economic modality:<sup>8</sup>

Under certain technological circumstances, practically feasible opportunities for action are distributed in such a pattern that they are amenable to execution by a class of approaches to organizing production that rely on sharing. These are typified by (1) radical decentralization of the capacity to contribute to effective action and the authority to decide on the contribution, and (2) reliance on social information flows, organizational approaches, and motivation structures, *rather than on prices or commands, to motivate and direct productive contributions.*

(Benkler, 2004: 331; emphasis added)

The argument here is that as we go beyond Benkler's limited focus on 'efficiency' (as given by orthodox economics) and 'technology', so also the range of goods and services that can be provided by sharing as an economic modality expand. Doing so would expand the size of social provisioning relative to market and state provisioning, larger than Benkler's account would indicate. However, doing so does not contradict his basic point about: (a) the recognition of sharing as an economic modality; (b) the existence of a fourfold provisioning model encompassing reproductive, state, market, and civic/social economy models; and (c) the acknowledgement of the importance of (a) and (b) in policy decisions, especially where the impact of a policy may lead to a transition from one mode of provisioning to another, or the undermining of one form or modality of provisioning by another.<sup>9</sup>

Equally, the concept of sharing has wider ramifications. We can image that a less unsustainable economy is one in which goods are shared a lot more and where concepts like 'usufruct', 'mutuality', and 'reciprocity' characterizes economic activity. Rather than orientated towards debt-based forms of private consumption and ownership, green political economy moves us in the direction where the promotion of shared goods becomes an object of public policy.

<sup>8</sup> A clear indication that he is not interested in the solidarity-enhancing aspects of sharing is his injunction that 'we invest greater effort in further research into the internal dynamics of social sharing and exchange systems, *focused not so much on their characteristics as modes of social reproduction* as on their characteristics as transactional frameworks and modes of economic production' (Benkler, 2004: 358; emphasis added).

<sup>9</sup> There would seem to be a structural similarity here between the size and relationship between these three modes of economic activity (state, market, and community) and Michael Walzer's 'spheres of justice' argument (Walzer, 1983) in terms of different spheres having different distributive principles, and the need to guard against one sphere 'colonizing' another. However, I do not have time to develop any such links but have touched upon this issue here (Barry and Dobson, 2004: 188).

What does public policy look like aimed to promote this type of mutualism and cooperative sharing?<sup>10</sup>

While this makes eminent sense, it does require some degree of community, trust, organization and, (at least initially) some institutional support. What they do not discuss is that ‘the point’—from an orthodox economics point of view—of each of the fifty households purchasing their own lawnmower, is that failing to do so would threaten lawnmower makers, and jobs in the lawnmower manufacturing industry. This would lead to these businesses having lower profits or perhaps going out of business, creating unemployment and leading to lower economic growth. But as indicated above, the concern of a post-growth green political economy is with maximizing meaningful work opportunities not maximizing orthodox economic growth.

Beyond sharing as an effective form of economic organization, there are also other shareable goods and services that indicate forms of social provisioning which meet needs though public use and access rather than private ownership. This makes these forms of social provisioning compatible with, and indeed necessary for, a ‘post-growth’ economy. These can be summarised by the ‘three Ls’—‘libraries, laundromats and light rail’—as denoting collective forms of service provision which meet needs, but are divorced from private ownership. And these forms of provisioning can exist across all three main forms of economic organization—market/for profit, state/public service, and social/non-profit. The attraction and interest in these forms of social provisioning is not simply that they offer forms of meeting needs which do not necessitate private consumption and ownership. They offer the prospect of meeting more needs in a less inegalitarian and less ecologically unsustainable, energy-intensive manner. If, as this book has stressed throughout, we are entering an era of declining carbon energy which implies (absent nuclear power) an era of less energy, then finding less energy-hungry ways to meet needs is necessary, even as finding ways that are less unequal is also desirable.

A central consideration here is the need to shift our thinking about meeting needs away from ‘goods’ and towards ‘services’. The ‘product of service’ concept, outlined by green entrepreneurs like the designer Bill McDonough amongst others (McDonough and Braungart, 2002), is revolutionary and is perhaps the one element of the ‘natural capitalism’ literature (Hawken, Lovins, and Lovins, 1999), that I would see as compatible with the broader green political economy vision outlined in this book. McDonough and Braungart define ‘product of service’ as follows, ‘Products of service are durable goods,

<sup>10</sup> Sharon Astyk also notes the connection between this urge for private ownership and economic growth, ‘American culture is unusually solitary, with a heavy emphasis on individualism, privacy, and not sharing things—and it no coincidence that these tend to be characteristics that the growth economy encourages. *If we don’t share much we need more things*’ (Astyk, 2008: 123; emphasis added).

such as carpets and washing machines, designed by their manufacturer to be taken back and used again. The product provides a service to the customer while the manufacturer maintains ownership of the product's material assets. At the end of a defined period of use, the manufacturer takes back the product and reuses its materials in another high-quality product' (McDonough and Braungart, 2002). While they (rather like Benkler) confine their analysis within an 'orthodox' account of the economy, and focus on private and individual forms of use, the important point for my purposes here is the recognition of separating use and enjoyment from ownership that is possible even within a market-based economic context.<sup>11</sup>

A more radical example of this separation of use from ownership (and more traditional in some respects in terms of being associated with the welfare state) but one which foregrounds sharing as an economic modality in a way 'products of service' do not, are libraries. What libraries meet is not the need for owning a book—or for reading a book by owning it—but libraries meet our need to read a book (or listen to a CD or watch a DVD, or borrow and enjoy a piece of art), which once we have read it—and thus have our need met—we return, thus enabling someone else to enjoy it. In the case of libraries, use and enjoyment are divorced from possession, and available to all, free or at low cost. It is nothing short of amazing that the library as an institution has survived against the colonizing dynamic of commodification and enclosure under neo-liberalism (though of course such subsidized forms of goods and services are among the first to be threatened under public sector austerity cuts). What light rail and other public transportation systems like buses meet is again our need for mobility—not the need for private ownership of a vehicle for that purpose. Laundromats provide a washing service so that washing clothes is separated from having to own a washing machine. And as a rule of thumb the more a need can be met through a collective and shared facility, the less energy and resource intensive is the meeting of that need.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Other examples of sharing from within a conventional economic and political frame, that are potentially compatible with the broad position being developed here can be found in Botsman and Rogers' argument for 'collaborative consumption' (Botsman and Rogers, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> While complex, in terms of health-care, the American privatized system uses up a greater proportion of US GDP, and delivers a less universal system, than other nationalized or part-nationalized systems such as the French, Irish or British National Health Service. Indeed, a survey for the World Health Organisation found that the best health care system in the world judged in terms of value for money was the French one (World Health Organisation, 2000). There is also the possibility of the private provision of collective goods which as Dobson (personal communication) suggests may be compatible with the various ecological and social objectives of a green and sustainable economy. There is nothing in principle to rule this out, especially, as suggested in the following two chapters, we adopt a pragmatic green republican position about the organization of the economy.

All three—libraries, laundromats and light rail<sup>13</sup>—represent forms of socialized or collective consumption and provisioning, but allow for a variety of production modalities.<sup>14</sup> That is, one could think of state, market, and community forms of providing them, though of course one may have a preference for one or another, or some combination, or view one or a combination as more appropriate in a transitional phase. In this way, a sustainable economy is compatible with (restricted) market, state, and community forms of production, even if socialized consumption and provision is a dominant (and perhaps permanent) feature of a sustainable society.<sup>15</sup> The ‘three Ls’ above do seem to offer examples of what Jackson calls ‘low-carbon economic activities that employ people in ways that contribute meaningfully to human flourishing’ (Jackson, 2009a: 130), which he regards as the basis for any new sustainable economy. In orthodox neoclassical economic terms such forms of social provisioning are non-excludable and non-rival, since my enjoyment of the service does not exclude your enjoyment, and it is impossible to privatize the service. Such forms of meeting needs—which of course extend beyond the ‘three Ls’ indicated here—represent inherently more sustainable and egalitarian modes of social and economic relations. These collective and shared forms of provisioning also have the added advantage of potentially enhancing social solidarity and strengthening community. What I mean by this is that a necessary feature of the enjoyment of the service is having to share with other people, and also having to be with other people as part of meeting one’s own needs. One is reminded here of the former Conservative Party

<sup>13</sup> I was inspired to come up with these three Ls in response to Colin Hines’ wonderfully provocative triumvirate he uses to describe the ‘busted flush’ of the economic model which caused the global economic crisis of 2008: ‘buildings, banks, and boutiques’ (property speculation, financial deregulation, and debt-based consumerism).

<sup>14</sup> Strictly speaking, collective consumption we should reserve for forms of forms of collective *use* i.e. collectively produced goods and services that are enjoyed cooperatively by the community as a whole, as opposed to collective *provision* of goods and services which can be individually enjoyed. Harking back to the discussion in chapter 3 about public holidays, these can be seen as perhaps examples par excellence of collective consumption. The UK experience of the Second World War does offer some historical evidence for the types of public policies needed to help with the transition to a low-carbon, high well-being economy. As the Green New Deal Group notes, ‘There was also a huge focus on enjoying low-consumption good times. *There were campaigns to holiday at home, and endless festivities such as dances, concerts, boxing displays, swimming galas, and open-air theatre—all organised by local authorities with the express purpose of saving fuel by discouraging unnecessary travel.* Over the course of the war, spending on relatively “weightless” entertainment went up, as classic consumption went down’ (Green New Deal Group, 2008: 29; emphasis added).

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting in this regard to see the prominence of arguments for rationing (including discussion of the ‘wartime’ mobilization), as the last widespread experience of this mode and principle of distributing consumption, within recent work on designing policies for a sustainable economy (Simms, 2001; Brown, 2008; Green New Deal Group, 2008; Doran, 2010, Seyfang, 2009).

minister in the UK who disliked public transport because using it meant having to come into contact with ‘ordinary people’.

Thus, even if we observe individual consumption of collectively provided goods and services (i.e. rather than collective consumption per se), it is still the case that the individual (usually) has to interact, meet, or otherwise be in the presence of their fellow citizens. Socialized provisioning thus has community-building potentials in a way that market (and to a lesser sense state-organized) economic activity does not. This sharing of public or socially provided goods and service is an important point from a republican perspective (outlined more fully in the next two chapters) in terms not only of the necessary levels of solidarity that a republican politics requires (lessening damaging class divisions), but also as underpinning the ‘rough equality’ between citizens that underpins the civic republican view.<sup>16</sup>

#### BEYOND THE ‘SCARCITY’ PRINCIPLE: TOWARDS AN ECONOMY OF SUSTAINABLE DESIRE

That a post-growth economy is one characterized by ‘abundance’, pleasure, and desire, is not something that is immediately obvious or self-evident. Unfortunately it is ascetic notions of less unsustainable lifestyles, and the deliberate misrepresentation of a sustainable society in terms of sacrifice, loss, regress, and totalitarianism, that tend to dominate discussions. Against these negative portrayals, I here argue that a post-growth green economy can be an economy of pleasure. Situated between the affluenza of modern consumerism and the puritanical self-denial of some visions of a sustainable economy lies what could be called an *economy of sustainable desire*.<sup>17</sup> A reason for so characterizing a post-growth economy based on green political economic principles is to directly challenge and offer an alternative to what Steigler terms the ‘libidinal economy of capitalism’ (Steigler, 2008). To Steigler, ‘Capitalism needs to control conduct and in order to achieve this, it develops techniques of capture or captation’ (Steigler, 2008: 12). To counter this, strategies to ‘release’ people from this consumer discipline are therefore required. One strategy to counter this consumer-driven capitalist economy of unsustainable desire, it is proposed here to replace it with an economy of sustainable desire.

<sup>16</sup> In this way a civic republican perspective defends both *public service* as well as *public services*.

<sup>17</sup> There are also strategic reasons as well as intrinsic ones for greens to present what they’re selling as better, more desirable than what is currently on offer. This represents a return to some of the utopian origins of green politics.

Rejecting the disciplining notion of neoclassical economics which makes ‘scarcity’ the organizing principle for the economy, an economy of sustainable desire is characterized by abundance and possibilities for pleasurable, life-affirming living. This economy of desire harks back and is explicitly built on the arguments greens and others made in the 1960s onwards to the effect that consumerist culture was not only not appreciably adding to human well-being and quality of life, but in many areas was positively detrimental to human well-being. An economy of abundance is based on the very simple notion that pleasure, life-affirming experiences and practices, do not have any necessary connection with either individualized and/or maximizing material consumption. The best things in life do turn out to be free after all in that it is meaningful relations between people not possessions or income, that are the major determinate of human flourishing. The subjectivities created in and through these post-material forms of pleasurable living are necessarily different from the passive consumer subjectivities created by an increasingly obsolete carbon-fuelled consumer capitalism.

It also begins from the (rather obvious) contention that ‘scarcity’, much like ‘abundance’, is socially created and politically negotiated, that is, neither are ‘given’ but both are ‘created’.<sup>18</sup> As Xenos succinctly notes, ‘The simple fact of finitude of anything does not necessarily constitute a scarcity of that thing’ (Xenos, 2010: 32). What ‘transforms’ finitude into ‘scarcity’ (and associated issues of rarity, price, use-value, possession, allocation, distributive mechanism, and desire) are social relations, how human beings ‘see’, relate to, and ‘value’ that which is finite. For the ancient Greeks (and contemporary greens) the problem in politics was not ‘scarcity’ in the sense of finitude and what orthodox economists would call ‘limited supply’, but rather the proliferation of desire beyond the satisfaction of need. Hence, *the solution of the ancients was to limit desire and acquisitiveness, not to ‘overcome’ scarcity as it was for modernity* (Xenos, 2010: 33).<sup>19</sup>

The modern economic mobilization of a power/knowledge discourse of ‘scarcity’ is vital to understanding both contemporary orthodox economics and modern capitalism. As Illich reminds us, ‘Economics always implies the assumption of scarcity. *What is not scarce cannot be subject to economic control. . . . Scarcity . . . now seems to affect all values of public concern*’ (Illich,

<sup>18</sup> Mehta offers a cautionary note in pointing to the ways in which ‘scarcity’ is deployed as an exploitative political economy of allocation (usually appealing to need for the free market as the allocative mechanism), by powerful groups against less powerful ones as a way to maintain their unjust position of privilege and power (Mehta, 2010a: 2–3).

<sup>19</sup> This is why the contemporary ‘voluntary simplicity’ movement can be seen as echoing this ancient Greek insight and why modern thinkers in this transition such as Thoreau sound ‘pre-modern’. For example, Thoreau’s view that ‘Man is rich in proportion to the things he can afford to let alone’ goes completely against the principles of consumer capitalism, which is why such thinking is so politically radical.

1980: 123; emphasis added). Within modernity more generally, and under capitalism in particular, we find a similar situation in regards to scarcity as we did in relation to inequality as discussed above. That is, capitalism seeks not to eradicate scarcity in the sense of abolishing it as a concept (as the ancient Greeks did). Rather, it seeks to institutionalize scarcity as a permanent condition, as a ‘management tool’ to create and govern docile bodies (Sahlins, 1972: 4). It is the permanency of scarcity as Xenos points out that explains the paradox of highly affluent societies (the most materially affluent societies ever seen), also being characterized by the discipline and presence of ‘general scarcity’.<sup>20</sup>

‘Scarcity’ (and related ideas of maximization, efficiency, productivity, inequalities as incentives, zero-sum games etc.) has to be created and maintained for it to have its disciplining power as deployed through orthodox economic policies and internalized forms of ‘commonsense’ economic thinking and acting. For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘Lack is created, planned and organized in and through social production . . . It is never primary; production is never organized on the basis of pre-existing need or lack. . . . The deliberate creation of lack as a function of market economy is the art of the dominant class. *This involves deliberately organizing wants and needs amid an abundance of production; making all desire teeter and fall victim to the great fear of not having one’s needs satisfied*’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 29–30; emphasis added). This fixation on scarcity is one of the main reasons orthodox economics and public policies based on it are skewed towards ‘supply side’ solutions (Goodin, 1983). Take the energy debate. The orthodox approach is to present this as largely an issue of the *security of supply* of low-carbon energy with support for nuclear power justified on the grounds that renewable sources of energy leave a dangerous ‘energy gap’, as the UK government energy report in chapter 3 demonstrated. Nowhere in this narrative is the simple point made that perhaps the issue is not so much *a shortage of supply but an excess demand* that is, we may be *using too much energy* rather than not having enough energy. While there is usually some obligatory reference to ‘energy efficiency’ and ‘energy conservation’ as important, this framing of the public policy debate over energy futures does not include a space for reducing consumption or considering ‘energy descent’ as a possible and viable option (Barry and Ellis, 2010). This way of framing the debate would at one stroke enable us to see ‘energy scarcity’ for what it in fact is—an artificially and asymmetrically created ‘gap’ based on locking society into a perpetual struggle with exponential rising energy demand. The latter is viewed as ‘given’ and therefore depoliticized, and so we are presented with a ‘Malthusian’ situation of energy

<sup>20</sup> A simplistic ‘scarcity narrative’ (taking rising wants as given against a backdrop of limited ecological means to fulfil those wants), is often behind most (if not all) of the ‘hard green’ apocalyptic predictions of the future canvassed in the Introduction.

demand always outstripping (or better still ‘threatening’ to outstrip) energy production, which ‘must’ keep up. In short, in the energy debate as elsewhere, the idea of scarcity as the organizing principle of industrial capitalism has to be manufactured and constantly reproduced. Simply put, not to do so would undermine the imperative for continual expansion and economic growth.<sup>21</sup>

The opposite of scarcity is not material abundance and productivity, as the neoclassical dogma has it. Rather, as Zadak has suggested in his book, *An Economics of Utopia*, it is ‘a liberation from the constraints imposed on our understanding by social, political, and other factors’ (Zadak, 1993: 239). And I would suggest, going back to the concepts of sufficiency and ‘redundancy’ outlined in previous chapters, that these concepts are central in any liberation from the discipline of ‘scarcity’. Sufficiency, making ‘enough’ rather than ‘more and more’ a central feature of economic activity, does not, as some might suggest, imply a diminution of desire and pleasure. They denote other desires and other ways of meeting and satisfying our desires. And notions of sufficiency and enough-ness, redundancy, sub-optimality, and so on are consistent with a claim that regular and temporary withdrawals from fulfilling desires, such as fasting, frugality (Cato, 2004), voluntary simplicity (Alexander, 2011), refusing to consume and buy and instead making or doing it oneself or with others, public holidays and festivals and other rituals of non-consumption (Astyk, 2008: 33), or simply slowing down (Berressem, 2009), can actually serve to liberate desire, and in so doing create a new post-scarcity, sustainable economy of desire.

I also think what Peter Doran has called an ‘ecologically-motivated *askesis*’ or care for the self, would also be prominent as one (amongst many possible) practices of a ‘post-growth’ sustainable economy of desire (Doran, 2010). In much the same way Astyk reclaimed and revalorized frugality above, so likewise it is possible to do the same with asceticism. This is a much misunderstood concept, usually viewed as denoting an otherworldly, poverty-is-a-virtue, self-denying attitude to material life. Indeed so bare is the life conveyed by asceticism that only a deep spiritual belief can sustain the practice. Yet, this is not an accurate understanding of asceticism. As Chryssavgis points out, asceticism ‘aims at refinement, not detachment or destruction. Its goal is moderation, not repression. Its content is positive, not negative. It looks to service, not selfishness—to reconciliation, not renunciation or escape.

<sup>21</sup> It is disappointing that Mehta’s analysis of scarcity dismisses the insights of the limits to growth perceptives, viewing it simplistically as ‘neo-Malthusian’ and placing it on an equal footing with ‘cornucopian’ techno-optimistic perspectives—both as problematic responses to ‘scarcity’ (Mehta, 2010b: 25–6). She does not engage in any critical deconstruction of ‘economic growth’. Indeed it is telling that the volume of which she is editor, entitled *The Limits to Scarcity*, contains only one contribution in which we find any sustained critical analysis of economic growth (Luks, 2010). I find it difficult to see how one could advance *any* critical analysis of scarcity without relating it to the ideology and imperative of economic growth.

Without asceticism, none of us is authentically human' (2003: 28–29). What he, Doran, and Alexander, mean, I think, is that the practice of asceticism is akin to breathing, and closely associated to cultivating particular healthy rhythms in one's life. It encourages one to periodically focus on resting from work, from consumption, from the myriad pressures of daily concerns, and look inwards to cultivate and take care of oneself without recourse to work, consumption and so on. But, as I understand it, such advocates are not suggesting that people stay in that mode, only that it, like the social/core economy, should figure larger in people's lives in a post-growth sustainable society. That is, such practices of non-consumption are integrated within and regarded as part (not the whole) of a healthy life and community.

In traditional virtue ethics terms, sufficiency represents a balance between the extremes of privation on the one hand and excess on the other. Or perhaps more accurately, stressing the non-material, non-commodity character of sufficiency as understood here, sufficiency involves switching desire and pleasure from the consumption and accumulation of things to the enjoyment of experiences and relationships. Important here I think is to recognize the social dimension of desire for humans. Girard makes a fundamentally important point I think when he suggests that, 'Humankind is that creature who lost a part of its animal instinct in order to gain access to 'desire', as it is called. Once their natural needs are satisfied, humans desire intensely, but they don't know exactly what they desire, for no instinct guides them. . . . *The essence of desire is to have no essential goal.* Truly to desire, we must have recourse to people about us; we have to borrow their desires' (Girard, 2001: 15; emphasis added). What he gestures at here is that desires for humans (beyond meeting basic needs which are satiable) are ineradicably socially created and sustained. We learn how to and what to desire, and these desires and their fulfilment are therefore not only political but also ethical. That is, they require an ethical context and regulatory frame within which to exist. Thus to question contemporary consumerist desire is always already to interrogate its ethical regulation (or lack thereof), as well as evaluate its normative content or contribution to human flourishing. And here we need to remember that arguing for no or a minimal regulatory framing of desire is itself an ethical and political decision. We can learn how to desire different things or the same things in different material ways. Indeed, this is expectation behind much of green political economy—to either provide new means to fulfil existing desires, or to provide new (or currently suppressed) desires to replace existing ones. And here green political economy fully accepts the point Girard and others, such as Doran, make—*namely that what desires people have and how they fulfil them are fundamentally political and ethical and their regulation is a legitimate political objective.*

While it is possible to imagine forms of 'abundance' which are considerably less resource and ecologically damaging than commodity consumption (at

least to the extent that such non-materialist forms of pleasure are beyond the material bounds of the discipline of ‘scarcity’ under capitalism), there are of course non-ecological, ethical, and political reasons why unregulated (and mindless) desire fulfilment is problematic (especially as outlined in the next chapters, from a civic republican perspective). However, as ecological vices go, pleasure seeking in terms of non-material experiences and relationships are *ceteris paribus*, less problematic than rampant consumerism and commodity accumulation, but not necessarily unproblematic simply because of that fact.

To develop the argument further, slack and redundancy could be understood as a mean between the extremes of under or non-utilization on the one hand and maximization on the other. What I find evocative about the concept of ‘slack’, is that it stands in opposition to ‘tautness’, a sense of being wound so tight, stiffly, as to be in danger of snapping at any time. Maximization understood in this way as tautness reminds us of the inflexibility and stiffness outlined in chapter 3, which were viewed as characteristics of non-resilient systems. This sense of maximization could also be viewed as a form of vulnerability, harking back to the discussion in chapter 2 where redundancy is viewed as way to manage risk and reduce and respond to vulnerability.<sup>22</sup> Finally, maximization of course also means growth and expansion, governed by principles of ‘positive’ rather than ‘negative’ feedback. We see this in everyday life in terms of the phrase ‘maxed out’ (especially and revealingly in relation to having exceeded credit card limits).

In much the same way the permaculture principle of ‘slack’ was viewed as essential in creating resilient socio-ecological relations and systems in chapter 3, here one can view these alternative economic principles of sufficiency and optimality as indicating the necessary slack and ‘unproductiveness’ that a sustainable economy needs to have ‘built-in’. A good example of what this in-built ‘slack’ might entail is Jackson’s discussion of the macroeconomics of investment within a sustainable economy. He points out that ‘Investments in ecosystem maintenance contribute to aggregate demand, but make no direct contribution to aggregate supply—at least under the assumptions of a conventional production function. They may be vital in protecting ecosystem integrity. And this, in its turn, is vital for sustaining production at all over the long term. *But in the short-term, they appear to ‘soak up’ income without increasing economic output*’ (Jackson, 2009a: 140; emphasis added). As he puts it later in the book in reference to such investments, ‘In conventional terms they are likely to be “less productive”’ (ibid. 176; emphasis added), yet can contribute considerably to quality of life, as well as obviously protecting the basic ecological systems for human and non-human life. It is this ‘soaking up’ that we might also term the necessary in-built redundancy required for any

<sup>22</sup> Redundancy and non-maximization of production and use are features of the ‘original affluent societies’ in Sahlins’ classic study (Sahlins, 1972: 17).

economy moving from being unsustainable to being less so, to fulfil the demands of adaptive management and become more resilient.<sup>23</sup> What is suggested here is the reverse of an all too common reality within capitalist economies of ‘jobless growth’, that is, to focus on providing and working out policies which can deliver a ‘work-rich’ post-growth economic strategy.

But notice how this concept of ‘unproductivity’ also translates to the relationship between production and reproduction, ‘employment’ and ‘work’. Once we begin to see that the point of public policy, or how we should judge the success or not of the economy, is how it provides meaningful work which contributes directly to social well-being, has forms of provisioning which meet peoples’ needs, fairly distributes reproductive labour and socially necessary labour, and balances this with formally paid employment and the needs of the formal economy, we are entering a very different economic world view, indeed in many respects a very old political economic world view. While of course bound to attract criticism, and not for one moment denying or minimizing the devastating effects of losing one’s job, in our current economic difficulties, I do think the time has come to seriously revisit Ivan Illich’s wonderfully provocative notion of *The Right to Useful Unemployment* (Illich, 1978). In short, we need to ask ourselves what does ‘unemployment’ look like within the context of a different economy, one in which ‘work’, reproductive labour, forms of domestic and community care, and the social economy were objects of public policy, recognized and valued? Is ‘unemployment’ such a pressing problem in these circumstances? Indeed, there may be reasons to think that in a sustainable economy, unemployment is functionally necessary as yet another ‘in-built slack’ for the achievement of key social goals. There may be considerable social and well-being costs to a policy of ‘full employment’. As Boyle and Simms, point out, ‘Full employment . . . is likely to be corrosive of social capital, if it leaves nobody available in communities’ (Boyle and Simms, 2009: 87). Why would ‘jobless growth’ be preferred over ‘work-rich de-growth’?

These principles of sufficiency and redundancy offers a greening if you will of George Bataille’s ‘general economy’, unsurprising given the centrality of the ‘unilateral gift’ of solar energy, freely providing power for life on earth without ever receiving anything in return, within his thinking (Bataille, 1985). Or perhaps these principles involve a return to a conception of ‘the original affluent society’ one finds in Sahlins’ classic work *Stone-Age Economics*, and his contention that there is what he calls a ‘Zen road to affluence. . . unparalleled material plenty—with a low standard of living’ (Sahlins, 1972: 3). Either way, their general acceptance and use as principles by which to regulate the human ‘economy’ (understood expansively as denoting all forms of human

<sup>23</sup> As Deb comments, ‘An adaptive economy that learns from experience of resource crunch and the loss of value can build caution in manufacturing happiness from exploitation of nature’ (2009: 496).

labour and the activities associated with providing for human life, rather than narrowly confined to the cash economy) would, I suggest, represent a ‘post-scarcity’ economy, and the liberation from the discipline of scarcity.<sup>24</sup> They would also spell the end of capitalism. An economy organized along such lines would not mean the end, please note, of desire and pleasure or even of material consumption—thus dispelling both the tired condemnation and dismissal of a sustainable green economy as one of puritanical asceticism (Allison, 1991: 170–178), and those for whom denial and asceticism is viewed as somehow necessary or desirable elements of a green economy (see, for example, Torgerson, 2002: 10; Goodin, 1992: 18).

I would suggest that life-affirming pleasures, practices, and experiences are not simply good in themselves (in terms of being constitutive of a good life and human flourishing), but equally important are sources of resistance to consumer capitalism. If one of the most significant political acts one can do in a consumer culture is to resist and refuse to consume, deploying alternative sources of non-consumerist, non-commodified pleasure is a potentially radical politics of desire. It is not only a truism that the best things in life are free, but that these are also, usually, sustainable and renewable sources of abundant pleasure. Pleasure—like meeting some needs through sharing—does not need to be individually possessed to be enjoyed. Equally concepts such as ‘the commons’, ‘usufruct’ (developed in more detail in chapter 8), mutuality, the moral economy, reciprocity, the enjoyment of public space, all point towards a ‘post-scarcity’ economy.<sup>25</sup>

What if the most important things in life really do turn out to be free? In a time of ‘peak everything’ (Heinberg, 2007) it is worth noting the many good things that are not close to exhaustion or depletion, such as ‘Community, personal autonomy, satisfaction from honest work well done, intergenerational solidarity, cooperation, leisure time, happiness, ingenuity, artistry, beauty of the built environment’ (Heinberg, 2007: 14).<sup>26</sup> Hence, what is unique or defining about an economy of sustainable pleasure or desire is the centrality

<sup>24</sup> An early green analysis of ‘post-scarcity’ can be found in the work of Murray Bookchin in his classic eco-anarchist work *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (Bookchin, 1971). However, unlike the argument here, Bookchin’s post-scarcity is premised (like classical Marxism) on the production of material abundance in a post-capitalist economy, rather than the elevation of non-material sources of pleasure.

<sup>25</sup> I would also include here practices and concepts such as ‘meitheal’, an Irish term meaning shared, reciprocal working between neighbours within the framework of mutual aid and the reciprocal gift economy.

<sup>26</sup> Similar sentiments can be found in Seabrook’s suggestion that, ‘A different narrative is required: the story of quiet satisfactions, contentment with sufficiency, admiration for those who declare how much humanity can do with little money and not how little we can achieve without more, another tale that celebrates the heroism of the everyday, that retrieves from darkness the acts of charity and kindness, the ample storehouse of human rather than material resources’ (Seabrook, 2008: 7).

of an array shared means and collective practices. Unlike the ‘one size fits all’ straightjacket of consumerism, an economy of sustainable desire promises greater not less variety and a plurality of conceptions of the good, as people and communities experiment and find new post-consumer ways of being and doing. This is but another way of talking about the ‘commons’. And while the benefits and pleasures derived from it may be free (in the sense of being unpriced and unpriceable), it does require work to defend and protect it, and manage it in the interests of all.

Note that absolutely central to all of this is the need to value free time over material possessions and to place *free time* at the centre of our political objectives for a sustainable society. A sustainable, more resilient form of life is necessarily one with much more time and less money, and fewer commodities, but lest I be accused by cynics as simply re-describing unemployment (forced free time and less money), let me make it clear. A society with more free time is a society with higher levels of ‘unemployment’ in the conventional sense. And that this is no bad thing, since once we re-focus public policy debate away from ‘economic growth’, ‘competitiveness’, and ‘full employment’ towards the objectives of ‘economic security,’ ‘well-being’, ‘work’, and ‘free time’, then we begin to see the outlines of a low-carbon, sustainable, high well-being economy. Equally important—and directly related to the discussion above about collective provisioning—is that such an economy of sustainable desire is one where *pleasure is elevated over possession*; and where we see the creation of what might be called ‘a usufruct of the means of sustainable pleasure’ through forms of collective provisioning. This would represent the return of the Eros and the erotic, the positively life-affirming over the life-denying and life-threatening ‘possessive’ character of modern commodity production and consumption.

Thus a sustainable economy of desire is one where free time is at its centre, in which relationships (between people and between people and the environment) and experiences are valued over individually owned and consumed possessions. Hence, for instance, the Slow Food movement is a clear example of this type of economy, the centre of which is the recovery of taste, enjoyment, and the sensuality of food, and a celebration of local, seasonal foods. This movement attempts to protect or re-create a food culture in the face of the *mal bouffe*, of industrialized organized ‘fast food’. The Slow Food movement in its explicit linking of enjoyment, pleasure, food cooking and eating within the context of family, friends, and neighbours, is therefore an example of this sustainable economy of desire. It contains all the ingredients (excuse the pun!) of such an economy—pleasure seeking, collective in form, sustainable, and renewable. Other examples or potentials of this sustainable economy of desire would be public festivals as collectively created and enjoyed ‘free time’. Here, while linking back to the discussion about rituals in chapter 3, there is also much to be learnt from the history and political struggles around festival and

fairs in Europe and elsewhere, particularly around their capacity to disrupt the disciplinary logic of industrial capitalism's scarcity-fuelled productivism and organized mass consumerism. The transgressive potential of festivals is as important as their status as collective experiences of exuberance and pleasure (Bakhtin, 1984).

## CONCLUSION

This final chapter completes 'clearing the ground' for articulating a green political economy. It has suggested that a major concern for a post-growth political economy, and what marks its distinctiveness in comparison to orthodox models of political economy, is the distinguishing of conflated concepts, most importantly distinguishing 'work' from 'employment', the identification of 'sequestered' experiences such as reproductive work, the tracing of post-growth principles such as sufficiency as opposed to maximization, and the development or recovery of new and older principles such as 'sharing', 'mutuality', and 'usufruct'. Perhaps above all, a green political economy is defined by a much more expansive notion of 'the economy' than the narrow one offered in orthodox economic discourse. The identification and recognition of thresholds is also a characteristic of a post-growth political economy, even if there are difficulties in measuring or quantifying them. Lack of empirical or conceptual definiteness cannot undermine arguments for recognizing the existence and importance of such thresholds. So, for example, a key threshold is that point above which a level of income or bundle of consumption leads to decreases in well-being, or the point beyond which economic growth becomes 'uneconomic growth' and undermines economic security or transgresses ecological thresholds. A green political economy recognizes four forms of provisioning spheres (reproductive, social, market/formal, and state), and therefore another threshold concern is the point beyond which a particular combination of reproductive, social, economic, and market forms of work and employment undermines rather than enhances individual human well-being, is exploitative, unfair, and so on. In particular, the 'de-sequestering' of reproductive labour, fully acknowledging its foundational significance for all forms of provisioning, raises significant gender-equality concerns for any post-growth conception of political economy.

Another key aim of green political economy is to 'reconnect' production and consumption, to reduce the separation (conceptual, or in time and space) between the making and using of a good or service. This explains the stress on localizing economic activity, seeking to 'de-complexify' production where possible with the aim of 're-embedding' the economic within the social (which is an inevitable result of the more expansive conception of the

economic offered in this chapter). This chapter has sought to establish the social economy as a central element of the sustainable economy, alongside the market and state. This sphere is one which green political economy seeks to grow and expand, while at the same time seeking to reduce the size of both market exchange and the state/public sector, and in so doing deliver upon the green promise of creating more people-centred and socially embedded economic practices. And part of the latter can be seen in green political economy's interest in promoting forms of economic modality such as sharing and collective provisioning (including collective consumption).<sup>27</sup>

Finally, what this chapter has sought to do is overturn the idea of a sustainable economy as deprived and joyless, that such an economy is necessarily a grim 'survivalist' one. Above all (and anticipating the discussion of a green republicanism in the following chapters), what stands out from this chapter's discussion of 'post-scarcity' and seeing a green economy as a sustainable economy of desire, not privation, is its particular notion of human flourishing and well-being. What is foregrounded is a focus on providing the economic sufficiency, the wherewithal, necessary for human flourishing, a constitutive element of which is *freedom* (and not just 'free time'). Following Peter Doran, what is required is a progressive and imaginative delinking of the 'good life' from the 'goods life' (Doran, 2006: 152). And to view this as a creative, emancipatory act freeing up human possibilities limited by the 'false arrest' as he puts it of neoliberalism (ibid. 152). In relation to our commonly (and mistaken) view of hunter-gatherer communities as deprived, Sahlins perceptively wrote, 'We are inclined to think of hunters and gatherers as *poor* because they don't have anything; *perhaps better to think of them for that reason as free*' (Sahlins, 1972: 14; second emphasis added). This perhaps is the choice, starkly put, that green political economy offers, *freedom or consumerism*. One answer to this, from civic republican political theory is outlined in the following two chapters.

<sup>27</sup> I have not touched upon what would seem like an obvious issue here which is the role of 'planning' in a sustainable economy. While I do think a sustainable economy is a (more) planned one that our current unsustainable economy (that much I agree with eco-socialists and eco-Marxists), and also that the expansive social economy indicated in this chapter will require local and other levels of democratic planning, support, and regulation, I do not think a sustainable, resilient economy is one that will either be of the type of 'economic planning' we have witnessed in the twentieth century, nor that there will be the same type of planning in different contexts, policy areas, or regions of the world. For some discussion of the role of planning and sustainability see Wheeler (2004), Kenny, and Meadowcroft (1999).