

EOW Trip to New York, London, Paris, Amsterdam & Copenhagen

May 15-June 1, 2012

Madison, Tuesday, May 15, 2012.

On the way to the airport I had an interesting conversation with a Union Cab driver. The driver had been in union cab for 8 and a half years. He said that there were two camps in the company. People “who had a life, with families and kids” and people for whom “union cab is their life.” For the latter “their devotion to the cooperative is more like a cult, like David Kuresh or Bob Jones. One person wrote that cooperatives could replace capitalism. That’s a religion. I don’t mind if people go to church, but they shouldn’t bring it to the job.” His feeling was that the only important consideration is whether is well run and does a good job. The pragmatic considerations are what matter: “quality for price.” I suggested that these two perspectives didn’t have to be opposed to each other – you can have a little of that utopian aspiration and still be an effective company. He didn’t buy it.

Later, on the flight to New York I had an interesting conversation with a cabin attendant. I asked how the merger with Continental was going.

The response was a shrug, “We have to live with it.”

“Were you with the United Side or the Continental side?” I asked

“I’ve been with United all the way. The two companies may have merged under one name, but we still function really as separate groups. The United crews are still together.”

“Are the two firm’s cultures very different? Is it hard to merge things?”

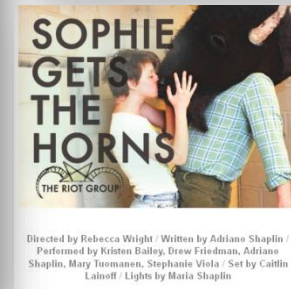
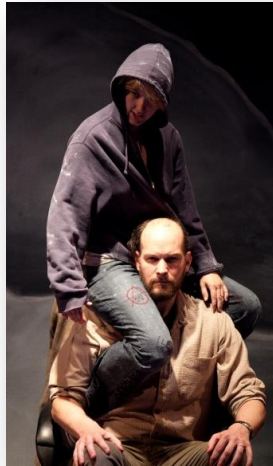
“Oh, very different. They are nasty, nasty to us but we are nice to them. You know, we have a really good work ethic in United, but that is very different in Continental. They always have problems.”

Another attendant:

“I’ve worked in the airline industry for 46 years. I could tell you so many stories about airline experiences. Everything happens: fights, fights between passengers and with us, everything happens. Now they have a system in which a passenger can send an electronic complaint about a cabin attendant to the company and the company can fire you for that. A passenger can say, ‘this cabin attendant was rude to me’ and you could get fired.”

New York, May 15-17

The main excitement in New York was seeing the play, *Sophie Gets the Horns*, directed by Becky Wright written by Adriano Shaplin (daughter and son-in-law). This was the first time Becky had directed a play in New York, and also the first time she had directed a play written by Adriano. This of course was a huge challenge on all sorts of dimensions. The play was a complex exploration of first year university students and their attempts to experiment with different identities and seem cool, while also being extremely vulnerable and uncertain how to deal with the pressures. The form of the play was quite experimental, but still gripping and accessible. I was incredibly proud of both Adriano and Becky for the accomplishment. The play also got very positive reviews in the New York Times, the Village Voice, and other New York publications, which of course was very gratifying.



London, May 17-23

Marcia and I arrived in London on Friday and had the weekend to visit with my old friend Joe Azizallohoff and his partner, Irene. We've known each other over 40 years, since we were students together at Balliol College. We see each other every few years and instantly time dissolves. Mostly we sat around talking about the world, literature, travels, children, the Asian rug market, old friends. The weather was pleasant, so on one of the days we took a long, very leisurely walk through Hampstead Heath, one of the great urban parks of the world. The most interesting site was a blower of gigantic soap bubbles. Really impressive.



Oxford talks

I made two trips to Oxford, one on Monday the 21st and the second on Wednesday. The first was to give a talk at the Cerebus Society at Balliol College. This is an undergraduate club connected to the PPE program – politics, philosophy and economics – and takes its name, I was told, from the fact the Cerebus was the mythical Greek dog with three heads guarding Hades, and PPE combines three disciplines. About fifteen students came to the talk, which I gave in a much more dialogic interactive form than usual. At the outset I encouraged the students to ask questions as I went along rather than wait for a Q&A. When I do this often it turns out students are reticent to interrupt, but not this time. Eagerly they asked questions, to the extent that I actually never managed to get through the whole lecture.

The most interesting question concerned my standard way of talking about the central principle of equality. I defined it this way: “In a socially just society all people have equal access to the material and social means necessary to live a flourishing life.” I was asked why I put the restriction “equal” before “access.” Why isn’t enough that all people simply have access to the conditions to flourish. Why does it matter if the access is equal so long as everyone has access? I didn’t give an especially good answer to this question, basically just saying that the word “equal” emphasized the social justice dimension, but that the real issue was that everyone should have access to those conditions. Marcia later suggested that unequal access could mean that some people had to work much harder to get access, and this was undesirable. That was a crisper formulation, I thought.

The second event in Oxford, on Wednesday, was a lecture on cooperatives at the Center for Employee Ownership and Mutuals. I am increasingly focus my energies in the real utopia theme around cooperatives and other forms of non-standard ownership within market economies. This is both a good point of entry into the general issue of real utopias and poses interesting issues in its own right. I built the lecture around the debate between Proudhon and Marx, which has some really juicy quotes, and then made two basic arguments: first, that the history of the 150 years since Marx’s last comments on cooperatives in 1863 are clearly more consistent with Marx’s predictions than Proudhon’s – cooperatives have been bottled up in small niches – but, second, I think that it is possible in the 21st century that cooperatives could break out of that restricted space with the help of the state. Stuart White, a philosopher at Oxford, gave prepared comments on my presentation. It was a bit awkward because some of his comments were based on his expectation of what I would say (because of other things I had written) rather than what I actually said, so some of the things he suggested I should have argued I had in fact argued. But other points were well taken a need to be engaged in a real utopia discussion of cooperatives:

- “It is risky for workers to concentrate assets in enterprise in which they work. Worker owned cooperatives can make workers less secure than a more diversified portfolio of assets.” If cooperatives are to become a central feature of capitalist economies, then some other solution to the problem of risk would need to be found. One idea is that basic income can help solve this problem.

- “Linking ownership of assets to status of being a worker can be a problem for egalitarians because not everyone is a worker, so worker cooperatives need to be supplemented by something like a citizen’s dividend.” I suggested that taxation and redistribution can be viewed as a way of treating all assets as at least partially owned by everyone: taxation for a basic income is a way of siphoning off part of the income generated by the productive use of socially-owned assets to all of the “owners”.
- There is a tendency of coops to be restrictive in employment compared to conventional capitalism, since the owner-workers want to protect their individual returns on their assets. I responded that I thought this tendency was exaggerated, and certainly if there was strong state support for a cooperative market economy there would be public policies which could affect this if this turned out to be a significant problem.
- “It may be better to separate ownership and control and have a broader array of diverse forms – labor managed firms with collective capital ownership, for example, or co-determination firms, etc.” I endorse the institutional pluralism view and see democratic hybridization within capitalist firms as one plausible form along with cooperatives.

London

Tuesday morning, back in London, I met in the morning with Michael Fielding and Peter Moss, two education scholars who have written a real utopia proposal essay on schooling for the thematic program at the ASA in August. I had not met them before so it was good to connect. We met at the hotel and walked to Covent Garden for coffee and spent a pleasant hour or so talking about real utopias and its connection to various political agendas. My next stop was Verso publishers to discuss various book projects. I am hoping that Verso would be willing to publish a volume of the proposal essays from the ASA, but Rowan Wilson, with whom I had lunch, was pretty skeptical. He was more interested in the idea of a new volume in the series on Cooperatives, which I will surely work on over the next couple of years, and possibly one on democratizing finance. He was especially keen on the idea of a short, punchier, politically focused book around the real utopias theme, perhaps with the title *Transforming Capitalism through Real Utopias*. This would basically be a version of the presidential address I gave at the ASA. I would like to try to produce the book in a popular form that could be given to activists and even politicians on the left as a way of framing discussions over political agendas. This would naturally flow from the range of talks I have been giving to less academic audiences.

The main events in London were a lecture in the Miliband lecture series at LSE on Tuesday evening and then a follow up seminar with graduate students on Wednesday before taking the train to Oxford. The evening lecture was in an elegant lecture theater and was packed. I was pretty hyped up for the event, and felt very tuned in. I still have a problem with getting everything into the talk that I want in a reasonable time. I treated this talk as a kind of rehearsal for the ASA Presidential Address, hoping to contain it within 50 minutes, but it ran to about 70 minutes, and even then I had to rush through things in places. I don’t think that the issue is just

that I like to hear myself talk. There is something compelling about my giving full treatment to all four elements on the exposition – moral foundations; diagnosis and critique; alternatives; transformation. But somehow I have to reduce it. In spite of the length, the audience was super-enthusiastic, and afterwards a number of people said that they were inspired. All very gratifying.

May 23-26, Paris

We spent the night in a guest room at Wadham College in Oxford on Wednesday night, and then left early Thursday morning on the train to London, connecting to the Eurostar to Paris. Paris was pure vacation, visiting our old friends, the Bouteilles, and their three children, each of which have had new babies in the past six months. Marcia and I walked all over the city, from their house in the 12th arrondissement near the Bastille, to the Marais to buy some spices at an exotic spice shop, to the Jardin de Luxembourg to relax and hang out and meditate, to the apartment of one of the Bouteille children, and then back to our friends. And on one of the days we had a delightful trip to Fontainebleau outside of Paris.



May 27-30, The Netherlands

Sunday morning the 27th we took the train to Amersfort, near Amsterdam, to stay with Anneke Schipper von Otterloo, a friend we have known since Marcia lived in Amsterdam in 1969. Then on Monday we continued on to Amsterdam where I was having some academic events on Tuesday. Early that morning Marcia left for the airport to return to Madison. Marcia doesn't usually join me on these academic trips, but it was fantastic having her along on this one.

The first event on Tuesday was a Speed Dating Master Class: I meet with a group of PhD students and each of them has ten minutes in which they are supposed to tell me the broad topic of the research and then identify some puzzle, problem, confusion, gap, bottleneck – anything that is causing them trouble. The idea is for them to spend 4-5 minutes talking about that, and then I give off the cuff comments and ruminations. Usually even if I don't know anything about the topics I can say something. I find this a wonderful way to get a sense of the intellectual agenda in a place and also, I think, it can be pretty useful for students. We always have a good time with it.

On this particular event only six students came (and one was a spectator, not presenting), much smaller than usual. I was told that students were shy and worried about being put on the spot. I said that actually it was me who was on the spot: they were challenging me to come up with something to say about an issue that they were confronting. In any case, there were fewer than the usual number which meant we could have a more relaxed time. Here are what some the students were working on:

Lidewide was studying how people cope with uncertainty, and shape their lives & dreams under conditions of great uncertainty. The research is being done in Barundi which has had a history of repeated episodes of extreme violence and instability over the past 50 years. She is studying youth who grew up during the war. The fieldwork took place over 2007-11. The political terrain is constantly changing – even in four year period there were big changes. Rebel groups become parties. It is impossible to know what is really happening – there is a culture of rumor and gossip. All stories are politically colored. There are provocateurs who make things up and government reports that make things up. All this is reflected in how people think and act -- people act in tactical modes to navigate the situation, constantly shifting and changing, disguising their motives; people say things that are covers. So real opinions are very hard to detect. Respondents constantly change their minds very convincingly. The question then is: How to write about things that are so changing and you cannot know what people really think. We discussed the distinction between people not really having “true” opinions, so their expressed views change a lot, and situations where they have real opinions, but misrepresent them. I also suggested that if there were at least some people she knew there who she felt she had a real rapport with, she could directly discuss this whole issue with them – in a sense have them be introspective analysts of the situation.

Thomas is studying what are called activation policies in which welfare clients engage in some sort of required activity in exchange for benefits. He is interested in the emotions people have in these situations where there is an exchange built into welfare policy. How does this shift

affect the notions of rights and the emotions of clients. The research focuses on emotions because emotions are often seen as precursor to action. He uses the Hochschild emotion-management perspective. In rapid social change the process of managing feelings is more difficult. The Design: interviewed 65 clients in five different municipalities. Talked to them three times, once every six months. Most of work in the Hochschild perspective leaves out the time dimension. People apply rules to their own feelings. People apply a management rule to shape their own emotions. Thus feelings are collectively shared. People apply framing rules to the past, to other contexts, to one's parents, etc. Moral framing rules involve understandings of rights; pragmatic framing rules compare the existing situation to what is possible. Framing rules vary across groups and across time. The problem I face is that the respondents seem to react to my previous interviews. The interviews therefore may have an impact on how they frame things in the future because it triggers introspection. I said that this was an interesting case of "interviewer effects." If you want to study how changing contexts shape framing, and the interview become part of the context, it certainly can be difficult to isolate the effects of changes in the aspects of contexts connected to their work and welfare. I suggested, again, possibly explicitly discussing this problem with the subjects, especially in the final interview (which had not yet been done). The informants may have insights in the process of the interviews and how much they mulled over it subsequently.

Markus is exploring what he called "Heritage dynamics" connected to the cultural memory of slavery in the Netherlands. In last twenty years there has been a cultural move to commemorate the Dutch history of slavery. This is especially relevant for afro-Surinamese and afro-Antilles in Dutch society. This discussion of slavery was generated by an elite discourse, and Markus is interested in how this discourse relate to people's everyday life. He has studied this in the urban margin of Amsterdam, in an Afro-Dutch area, where he lived in two Surinamese households. In order to characterize the elite discourse and popular discourse he has studied lyrics in Afro-Surinamese music as cultural facts/artifacts. The questions he is grappling with is how to distinguish culture from memory? What is memory? How is it related to cultural products? I raised issues around the category "memory" in this kind of discussion. Memory is both a concept within cognitive psychology and neuroscience, and a category in cultural studies. How are these connected? Isn't a "memory" that you are taught through books and school and the like really a set of beliefs and ideas rather than memories as such? I am not sure that they function the same way psychologically. But perhaps instilled beliefs can be internalized as if they were memories. We know people do sometimes have false memories about their own lives, after all.

Yannis is studying what he termed "The production of space and social mobility" or "the spatial aspect of social mobility." Space plays a big role in the experience of accessibility to social resources. In recent decades there has been a spatial transformation in access jobs, shops, friends, entertainment. He is studying this in a new town near Amsterdam planned as a utopian design 30 years ago. It is not really a suburb, but rather a place for people who cannot afford Amsterdam. It offers different things – more space, more green, more multicentered – but it also separates people from some crucial resources of the city. He was struggling with how this connects really with the concept of social mobility. I suggested that this was not really about

social *mobility*, but more about social *stratification*. Mobility is about the movement of people in some kind of social classification of unequal positions, but the discussion of the inequalities of positions themselves is stratification. It seemed to me that Markus was really examining spatial stratification.

After the speed dating I went out to lunch with Robert van der Veen, one of my comrades in the NBSMG (no bullshit Marxism Group), and then met with a Dutch grad student from Madison now living in Amsterdam who is working on civil war in the Sudan. He was previously in the Dutch Military and worked as a UN peacekeeper in South Sudan before entering grad school.

Late afternoon was another lecture, another stab at giving a tighter version of my “stump speech.” Again the talk went really well, judging from the audience reaction and my sense of being fully engaged, but it still was too long. My prediction is that in the end that is just how it is going to be. I’ll give a presidential address that is too long. Some people will be annoyed. Others will feel it was worthwhile. But I’ll keep trying.

May 30, 2012

Copenhagen

I arrived in Copenhagen after an uneventful flight from Amsterdam. I was met by an undergraduate student in sociology who worked with FOPA, a think tank for political analysis (associated with the Socialist People’s Party, SF) that had invited me to come to talk about Real Utopias.

The afternoon was packed and intense. It began with interviews with two media outlets – one a political newspaper, the other a web publication – held at a student center called Studentarhuset. I enjoy these kinds of interviews – they are a chance to explore the ideas I am thinking about in an informal back and forth manner that falls in the interesting communications space between a conversation and a lecture. I’m expected to give longer disquisitions than would be the case in an ordinary conversation, but also to be interrupted, asked for clarifications, pursue tangents, and meander in a way that would not happen in a lecture. The interviews today I found especially engaging, exploring the logic of real utopias and how this might inform a left party and its program. The interviews also turned out to be particularly productive intellectually, for in the course of discussion I came up with a number of new formulations on some of the issues around the political relevance of real utopias.

One of the themes we discussed was the contrast between social democratic strategies and the transformative logic of real utopias. Social democracy, I argued, recognizes that capitalism generates harms, and tries to put the capitalist tiger in a cage so it can’t do as much harm. What it doesn’t try to do is change the tiger, turn it into a pussycat. Later I shifted to the idea that social democracy tries to neutralize the harms of capitalism –the failure of capitalism to produce public goods and the way it generates vulnerability, insecurity and marginality. Social democracy fills the gaps (public goods) and counteracts the personal harms (risk reduction and security), but it leaves capitalism itself alone. This was a great achievement and the

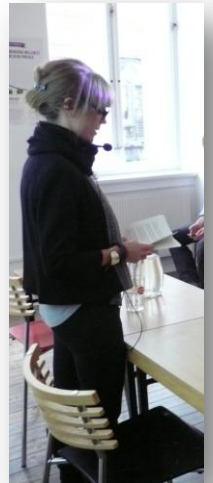
achievement needs to be defended, but it is incomplete. Capitalism itself needs to be transformed. This is the point of Real utopias.

This led to the exploration of the contrast I often make between social systems seen as an organism vs an ecosystem. I explained the pond metaphor for how to think about social systems, and as sometimes happens when one says out loud an idea one has written about, all sorts of ramifications began percolating. These continued in my mind after the interviews ended. And then, just before the beginning of the talk – literally a few minutes before the beginning – I saw a way of bringing all of this into the talk in a good and constructive way, so I added two new slides to my talk while I was being introduced by Nanna Westerby, the program director of FOPA.

In the talk I then improvised, adding things, expanding on the metaphor, deciding to add an extended example right at the beginning, playing with the pond & invasive species image. It was exhilarating. There was a large audience, and as sometimes happens, I felt that I had everyone's full attention.

Usually in the talks I have been giving on real utopias in the past several months, I set up the problem by discussing the moral issues and the critique of capitalism and only then discuss a few examples as a bridge to the more theoretical analysis of my model. The talk then ends with the problem of transformation. This time I switched things around considerably, but really without that much planning ahead. I like the new format. I started by stating the core problem: capitalism creates great harms, but also to most people seems like the only possible way to organize a modern complex economy. Social Democracy responds to these harms by trying to counteract them without fundamentally challenging or transforming capitalism itself. Revolutionaries in the 20th century imagined the possibility of a rupture with capitalism: if capitalism creates such harms it must be destroyed. Such attempts at rupture have never resulted in a humane, just, democratic transformation. Real utopias imagine building real alternatives to capitalism inside of capitalist societies in ways that point beyond them. I then introduced the pond metaphor and played with it a bit:

There is a pond with many species and conditions, all interacting and affecting each other. The dominant species is a voracious capitalist fish. We introduce an invasive species of socialist fish; the capitalist fish gobbles them up. We do this again. The capitalist fish gobbles them up again. Then we see some weeds in one corner of the pond. We introduce the socialist fish and they hide in the weeds. The capitalist fish doesn't like the weeds, so it leaves them alone. The fish thrive, but are only on the margins of the pond. When they venture out of the weeds, they get gobbled up. Then the socialist fish figure out that maybe they can plant weeds a little further out in the pond and expand the space in which they can operate. The capitalist fish ignore this at first, but then try to destroy the weeds. But that isn't as easy as gobbling up the fish. And so on. [The next time I gave a version of this talk – in the Danish Parliament the following morning – to a gathering of Socialist People's Party staff and politicians, I



Nanna Westerby

added that the political party of the socialist fish adopted a party program of planting weeds, since this was best done by the state that regulated the pond.....]

I followed this parable with an extended discussion of worker cooperatives as an example. Worker coops exist in the capitalist economy/pond, but mostly on the margins. They offer all sorts of advantages over capitalist firms for the vitality of the pond itself. And they embody many aspects of emancipatory values around democracy and equality. The real utopia problem is how to expand the space in which they can operate – how to change the ecosystem of the pond so that they can survive the pressures of capitalism. This led to a discussion of credit markets, the need for public financing and a number of other kinds of issues. Only after the extended example did I move on to the core of my standard “stump speech”.

The discussion afterwards was interesting and intense:

- “What is the argument against the problem posed by global forces?” I replied that it is very important not to exaggerate the impact of global processes, even in the era of capitalist globalization. Much activity remains deeply local, and there is always space for building new local institutions with local resources to create new social relations and possibilities.
- “You talked about equal access in terms of a flourishing life. Why did you pick this rather than the pursuit of happiness?” Of course I am also for happiness, but because it is a good thing and because it is hard to imagine flourishing and being miserable. These different dimensions of wellbeing are all interconnected. But I prefer flourishing as the anchor for the egalitarian concern around social institutions. Some people have cheerful dispositions and are happy even under dreadful social conditions, but those conditions still block their ability to realize their potentials, develop their talents. Flourishing is a more observable dimension of wellbeing and more directly shaped by social contexts than happiness.
- “The Iceland case in the current crisis has generated remarkable responses and transformations that have been hidden from Europe. It refused to pay back the banks and is experimenting with all sorts of new initiatives. If Greece elects radical left – like in Iceland -- maybe it can also accomplish such things. How does the electoral system fit in the system of real utopias?” Elections are deeply connected to Real Utopias, both because representative democracy is an important aspect of a robust democracy which is itself a form of Real Utopia, and because elections can create opportunities for important real utopian innovations. A crisis like in Iceland can be an historical window of opportunity in which previously dominant political forces are discredited and new political forces emerge. Elections are one critical way of translating those conditions into concentrated power capable of initiating innovative processes of institution building.
- “Aren’t there sectors within which cooperatives are not the primary goal?” Yes, absolutely. My model calls for institutional pluralism, not a universal cooperative market economy. There are branches or sectors in which statist firms would play an important

role, for example. I don't think metropolitan transport would be best run by cooperatives, for example, although taxi cooperatives might be a component of such a system. And there could even be an important role for capitalist firms in specific niches, perhaps for entrepreneurial, risk taking enterprise.

- "You didn't talk about alienation. In a consumerist world people are alienated from their own needs; advertising shapes needs. How can you overcome alienation in a capitalist economy?" I didn't talk about alienation, but the idea of a radical democratization of the economy under egalitarian conditions deals directly with these issues. Of course a consumerist culture makes this difficult, and the capitalist economy keeps fueling alienation. Building real utopian alternatives within capitalism may help counter these processes.

The lecture – at least as I experienced it – was as good a talk as I have ever given. By the end I was high as a kite. Naturally I couldn't get through everything, not even close, but it didn't matter. I told the audience that I would stay for a half hour after the event ended to go through the formal framework, and about 25 people stayed.

After my presentation, two other people spoke: Balder Jacobson, the leader/manager of a cooperative construction company called Logik & Co, and a woman from a national association of cooperatives. The person from Logik was especially interesting and funny. He said something in Danish and everyone laughed. Then he began in English: "I will speak in normal bad English, up to the standards of the Danish foreign minister." I'll write about his cooperative in my notes for tomorrow where I describe the visit. The speaker for the national cooperative association gave a presentation on what I am now seeing as a kind of general way that people inside what is called the cooperative movement characterize the issues. She emphasized that cooperatives are everywhere – 800 million people are members of cooperatives around the world, but most don't know it. To get this kind of figure you have to include consumer cooperatives, credit unions, farmer cooperatives, mutual insurance companies, and many other variants. There is nothing wrong, of course, in talking about the virtues of these organizations, but they do not constitute rivals to capitalism in the same way that a worker owned and democratically firm does.



Balder Jacobson, Logik

After the talk I had dinner with Nanna, Magne Vishamer (the person who had invited me to Denmark) and several other people at a terrific restaurant in Christiania, the anarchist community in an army base in the heart of Copenhagen occupied since the 1960s. The restaurant was completely wild. You enter a gloomy building from a scruffy lane within



Christiania and walk up a couple of flights of stairs, dimly lit, completely covered with endless layers of graffiti on the walls, ceilings and stairs themselves. And not pretty graffiti – ugly, angry looking graffiti. It had the appearance of a passage to some dreadful hell-hole. But then, when you get to the top of the stairs and enter open the door to the restaurant you enter a beautiful, calm, open space, with lovely wood floors and pleasant lighting, and fantastic food. The restaurant was a cooperative founded years ago by people living in Christiania and is, apparently, a very popular spot. When we left and descended, the stairwell was packed with boisterous people, mainly men, many stoned. We literally had to push our way through the space was so jammed with people. On the floor below the restaurant there was some kind of rock concert/dance going on. Lots a weed being smoked and generally a pretty intense and slightly unsavory scene, although not threatening. And then we were outside and into the pleasant seediness of Christiania on a cool late spring evening, after 10pm and the light just fading.



May 31

The first event of the day was a presentation to people involved in the Socialist People's Party at the Danish Parliament. The SF was founded about fifty years ago or so as a democratic split off from the Danish Communist Party, but this is the first time it has actually been in government as a coalition partner with the social democrats. FOPA organized a one-hour event in which I would share my basic perspective real utopias with the political staff of the 13 SF members of parliament and any of the MPs who could attend. It turned out that there was a delegation of 13 members of the Egyptian political party linked to social democracy, so they attended as well. At one point I was struck by the special qualities of the moment: a boy from Kansas who teaches sociology at the University of Wisconsin talking to Danish and Egyptian socialists in the parliamentary wing of the Queen of Denmark's Palace.



Being introduced by Nanna Westerby

In the talk I focused mainly on the idea of the interplay of interstitial and symbiotic strategies in the project of transforming capitalism. I continued with the metaphor of society as an ecosystem rather than an organism, and extended the metaphor of the pond by saying that the socialist fish that were able to thrive in the fish got organized into a political party in order to use the state that regulated the pond in order to expand the zone of the weeds. But mostly I talked directly on the issue of thinking of ways to use the state to enlarge the socio-economic spaces in which alternatives to capitalist relations can develop.

Again I used the example of cooperatives, emphasizing the importance of creating an increasing part of the economy that was strongly rooted geographically. This was important for two complementary reasons: first, cooperatives rooted in the local economy created a better work environment for people, more fulfilling, more interesting, more secure; and second, economically rooted firms were more easily regulated democratically. This is critical for the project of broadly democratizing the economy. It is also critical, I argued, for defending the historic achievements of social democracy. Social Democracy thrived under conditions of a bargain with capitalism: it would promote a vibrant capitalist economy in exchange for using part of the social surplus generated within the market economy for the social objectives of public goods and social insurance. It would pretty much let the economy itself run on capitalist principles and then use part of the surplus for noncapitalist purposes. The conditions for that bargain have eroded as capitalism has been financialized and globalized. To defend these social democratic achievements – public goods and the welfare state – it is now necessary to transform capitalism. Capitalism as it is undercuts the foundations for the welfare state. The president of Citigroup, after the election victory of Hollande in France, said that Hollande would have the summer to try a new direction but then would be forced to return to austerity. Greece is held hostage by the Troika.

I then further explained the opportunity of using the frequent successor problems of small and medium privately held firms -- the situation in which the owners wish to retire and there are no family members to take over – as a context for promoting worker buyouts for the formation of cooperatives. This is extremely difficult for workers to do without a supportive set of institutions, especially from the state. To be successful these need to involve significant subsidy. This is defensible on the grounds that economic rootedness is a public good, a positive externality of worker ownership. With a supportive set of policies, the population of worker cooperatives could significantly grow over time and potentially become the core of the market economy.

Because of the limited time for the whole event, there was only time for two questions from the audience:

The SF party chief consultant on welfare issues asked me to say a little more about the conditions for these kinds of institutional innovations. What is the social drive for developing these real utopias? I said that there really wasn't any kind of general formula for this. Innovations occur under highly contingent, contextually specific conditions. I gave the Porto Alegre example for participatory budgeting. But once an innovation occurs, then it can be copied, modified, extended in other places under less peculiar conditions. The innovation models become exemplars of problem-solving to be transferred and modified. I suppose in a very general sense "crisis" creates opportunities, but they also create considerable danger, especially in the case of severe crisis where repressive authoritarian solutions are another way of coping with institutional disorder.

A Strategic advisor for the party asked about the issue of size. The Danish people would love a new kind of bank that would be oriented to real community development, maybe cooperatives. But how do you build up to necessary size? How do you build cooperatives that are big enough

to compete with large capitalist firms? For banks, I suggested, the basic solution is for the state to create public banks with ample funds and a mandate dedicated to serious local economic development. I don't see a bank like in Mondragon which emerged from within the cluster of cooperatives as a cooperative bank being very likely today. As for manufacturing, size can be a major obstacle for cooperatives, to be sure. While there are economies of scale in certain lines of production, there are organizational diseconomies of scale for worker cooperatives. I don't know what the optimal size is, but surely once a firm gets into the thousands, real, sustained democratic involvement is likely to be more difficult. What this suggests is that a pure cooperative model may not be optimal for all lines of production. But I also think that in the course of the 21st century we are very likely to see a dramatic decrease in the economies of scale in many lines of production because of IT and other innovations. We have already seen this in publishing. Very small scale publishers can now produce books, especially ebooks, but even print books. The economies of scale are now almost entirely a question of publicity and distribution, not physical production. Economies of scale are also declining because of robotics and other changes. So perhaps the future for cooperatives will extend more deeply into manufacturing, especially as mass production is replaced by equally cheap customized to order production. One can imagine a kind of modular form of worker-cooperative production linked through networks and meta-cooperatives into systems of production.

After the talk at the parliament I spent the afternoon with Jonas Toubøl, a sociology student at the University of Copenhagen, visiting two "real utopia" sights in the city. It turns out that he had spent an academic year at Wisconsin a few years ago but somehow we had never met then, which is a shame.

The first visit was to the worker cooperative construction firm Logik & Co that was discussed yesterday at the lecture by its lead manager, Balder Johansen. Logik is clearly a very distinctive kind of cooperative – really more like a collective with social property than an ordinary worker owned cooperative, or perhaps best thought of as a kibbutz-like workplace without being embedded in a living community. Here is how Balder described the organization of the firm:



- Logik & Co currently has 80 members. They do all sorts of construction work, from construction of houses and buildings to remodeling. They have received many awards for outstanding work and innovative designs.
- To avoid the possibility of the cooperative turning into a conventional capitalist firm, the founders of the firm set up a nonprofit foundation which is the formal owner of the cooperative. What this means is that if ever the cooperative ceased doing business and was either sold to another company or simply liquidated its assets – buildings, equipment, reserve funds, etc. – then the proceeds could not be distributed to the

members of the collective. Instead, they would have to be given to another nonprofit foundation according to a set of criteria established in the founding documents.

- The Board of Directors of the foundation is made up of two co-op members and 4 non-coop directors. They have a very narrow mandate to be sure that the collective remains a collective and prevent any schemes that could emerge to privatize the assets. The BOD does not play a strategic role in overseeing business decisions or plans. This is entirely done by the members of the collective.
- All members are 100% voting members in all decision-making assemblies right from the first day of employment. There is no formal probation period. On only two occasions has someone been kicked out of the collective.
- There is no capital stake contributed to by members. They are just hired into the firm and become members. Because there is no capital stake, profits are 100% retained as a capital and reserve fund; nothing distributed as dividends or profit sharing to members. This capital/reserve fund is also used for social purposes. The firm contributes to various social projects in the neighborhood, and I think also to certain activist causes as well.
- Wages are completely equal on an hourly basis regardless of seniority or skill, and no one can be paid for more than 40 hours/week. Balder said that he often works more than 40 hours a week because it is interesting and he likes it. I told him that he was like a professor. Professors work many more hours than 40 and never think of it was unpaid work, but simply doing what they find worthwhile and interesting.
- The collective currently has a deliberate youth program designed to bring young people into the firm and the sector. About 20% of current employees are youths from the neighborhood brought into the organization as part of a social mission. The firm remains, however, very male dominated, reflecting the construction sector as a whole.
- The collective is very committed to the life of the neighborhood and is quite involved in various kinds of neighborhood affairs. It is based in one of the poorer parts of the city, with lots of immigrants and social housing. Many of the members live in the neighborhood and bike to work. The organization is actively engaged in the neighborhood's affairs, often serving as an arbitrator when there are conflicts of one sort or another.



I was really impressed with the organization and culture of Logik, although of course my impressions are only based on discussions with one person and a visit to the physical site. It has been around for 25 years so it has proved a durable model. I found the social property idea, embodied in the connection between the firm and the nonprofit foundation, especially interesting. It has some similarities with solidarity cooperatives and nonprofit cooperatives in

Quebec. While this strategy obviously requires a bolder, more radical set of ideological commitments at the outset, I wonder if it might also contribute to sustaining a more egalitarian and democratic culture by taking privatized profit-appropriation about of the equation. Profitability then becomes simply the necessary condition for reproducing the firm as such, but not a maximand for individual strategies.



Balder Johansen next to an equipment carrier designed by the cooperative



Gym and PT Center within Logik

After the visit to Logik, Jonas and I wandered around the neighborhood a bit until we found a place for lunch – a sandwich shop run by North African immigrants. After that we visited *Koebenhavns foedevare faelleskab*, a kind of Grocery cooperative which, in a way, was more like a version of a Community Supported Agriculture cooperative. In this grocery organization, people join for 100 kroner, about \$15. Then for 100 kroner they can order a bag of produce each week. 93 kroner goes to the farmer for the vegetables and 7 kroner for administration of the service and for creating collective funds for various kinds of festivals. This kind of organization has become quite popular in Copenhagen. Unlike a CSA it does not seem to create any direct solidarity between consumers and small farmers, but it does contribute to community organization, since each of these grocery cooperatives is located in a specific neighborhood in which it recruits members. In discussing the operation with one of the coordinators it had a little bit the feel of a social movement.

The evening was spent in a delightful dinner at Nanna Westerby's house with eight or nine people connected in one way or another with FOPA or SF. The gathering was unusual for a dinner party connected to this kind of visit, for we intensely carried on the discussion more in the spirit of a seminar than dinner table banter. I liked it a lot – it helped really consolidate a sense of mutual understanding. This is definitely a circle of people with whom I would like to stay connected.

June 1

My flight from Copenhagen to Newark was scheduled for 8:30, so I wanted to get to the airport by 6:30, which meant a taxi at 5:45. No problem. I arrived at the airport a little after 6, whizzed

through security, hung out in the SAS club Lounge for an hour or so (because of premiere executive status on United Airlines) and went to the gate. Around 8:00 we were informed that there was a maintenance problem. Delays. Then we were told that they were looking for a part in Copenhagen. Next update scheduled for 11:00 a.m. The monitor indicated a departure time of 8pm. We were informed they were trying to find a part in the UK and fly it to Copenhagen. I called United Reservations to see about alternative routes, using skype in the SAS Lounge. Every other flight to North America had already left or was fully booked. Finally the flight was cancelled and we were all bussed to an airport hotel a few km away.

Overnight they fixed the engine. Apparently they did find the needed party in Derby, England, but because of traffic through London connected to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, it took too long to get to the airport in order to arrive in time in Denmark to fix the engine before the crew had been on duty too many hours to fly....The new flight was at 7:30 a.m. and everything went smoothly.