

ERIK OLIN WRIGHT

# The Capitalist State and the Possibility of Socialism

The most fundamental challenge facing Marxist theory today is developing an account of a socialist alternative to capitalism that is strategically relevant for anti-capitalist struggles in the 21st century. The issue here is both the ambiguities in formulating a coherent and compelling concept of socialism itself in the face of the historical experience of the 20th century as well as the difficulty in developing a plausible strategy for challenging capitalism in ways that would help bring socialism, however it is defined, about. The theory of the state bears on both of these issues: the state is one of the central structures that contributes to the reproduction of capitalism and obstructs transformative struggles, and the state would have to play a central role in the successful construction of a socialist alternative.

In this essay I will explore some of the ways Göran Therborn's book, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?*, can contribute to meeting this challenge. The book was published in 1978, at the apex of the wave of innovative theoretical work in Marxism that began in the mid-1960s. It constitutes the most systematic attempt to give analytical rigor to the idea that in capitalist society the state is a *capitalist state* rather than simply a *state in capitalist society*. While this idea has a long pedigree in the Marxist tradition and had been given renewed attention a few years earlier in a debate in *New Left Review* between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas (Poulantzas 1969; Miliband 1970 and 1973; Poulantzas 1976), no one had deeply explored the theoretical implications of this claim nor attempted to develop as elaborate a conceptual map of the class character of the capitalist state.

The book was written in a period of considerable optimism and self-confidence on the left. The developed capitalist economies were floundering in the midst of stagflation and seemed incapable of overcoming their internal crises. The radical upsurge of the 1960s and early 1970s had stimulated new thinking and theoretical vigor, especially within the Marxist tradition. And in spite of the horrific defeat of the Allende regime in Chile, the prospects for significant advance of the left through electoral politics seemed real. In discussing the idea of a ruling class, Therborn could still with some optimism explore ‘how it can be overthrown’ (*What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?*, p. 135). The result was that at the end of the book, after writing about both the possibilities and the contradictions of strategies being pursued by working class parties in Europe, Therborn could write: ‘These and many other contradictions and problems still have to be overcome – and they will be overcome one way or another. But in order to tackle them in the right way, it is far better to prepare for them in advance’ (p. 283).

In the second decade of the 21st century, it is difficult to muster this kind of self-confidence that the contradictions facing anti-capitalist strategies ‘will be overcome one way or another’. In what follows I will argue that it may be possible to navigate the deep contradictions facing any strategy for transcending capitalism, but to do so requires, once again, new thinking on the relationship of the state to the problem. I will begin by reviewing the central arguments of *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?* I will then indicate how, with some modification, Therborn’s framework can help open an agenda for engaging the strategic problem of challenging capitalism.

## The central arguments of the book

### *The class character of state power and state apparatuses*

The title of Therborn’s book asks the question, ‘What does the ruling class do when it rules?’ The answer to the question is this:

When we say that a class holds state power we mean that what is done through the state positively acts on the (re-)production of the mode

of production, of which the class in question is the dominant bearer. (p. 144.)

What then does the ruling class do when it rules? Essentially it reproduces the economic, political and ideological relations of its domination. This rule is exercised through state power, that is to say, through the interventions or policies of the state and their effects on the positions of the ruling class within the relations of production, the state apparatus and the ideological system. (p. 161.)

Power, in this formulation, is defined in terms of the capacity to generate effects in the world.<sup>1</sup> *State* power, then, is the capacity of the state to produce effects through its actions, where the state itself is defined as: 'a separate institution which concentrates the supreme rule-making, rule-applying, rule-adjudicating, rule-enforcing and rule-defending functions of that society' (p. 144). To be a *ruling class* is to identify the class-character of the 'rules' in all of those functions. The rules are not class neutral; they contribute to reproducing the class relations of the mode of production. Insofar as rule-making/applying/adjudicating/enforcing/defending contribute to the maintenance and promotion of a given mode of production, the dominant class in that mode of production can be identified as the ruling class: 'To take and hold state power signifies to bring about a particular mode of intervention of the special body invested with these functions' (p. 145).

The class character of state power is indicated by the effects of what the state does: State power has a class character to the extent such effects promote and protect the class relations of a mode of production. The class character of the state apparatuses is defined by organizational properties of the state that make those effects possible. The basic idea here is that while 'state power is exercised through the state apparatus' (p. 35), the ability of states to actually generate effects

1. This view of power, Therborn argues, is sharply different from the dominant approach in sociology which he refers to as the '*subjectivist* approach' that 'seeks to locate the subject of power' (p. 130). In contrast, the Marxist approach 'starts not from "the point of view of the actor" but from that of the on-going social process of reproduction and transformation' (p. 131).

that maintain and promote given class relations depends to a significant extent on the properties of these apparatuses. The state apparatus 'provides a filter determining the modality of state economic and ideological interventions'. Different organizational forms, then, infuse these filters with a different class content, excluding interventions that would undermine the position of dominant classes and favoring interventions that would maintain or promote those classes.<sup>2</sup> Some forms of state apparatuses would simply be unsuitable for the exercise of state power on behalf of certain classes.

The major innovation in the book is to go beyond these very general formulations about state power and state apparatuses, and attempt to identify the specific mechanisms in the state apparatuses themselves that contribute to the class character of carrying out these functions in different modes of production. Therborn pursues this conceptual task through a systematic exploration of the variation in the properties of the state in feudalism, capitalism and socialism; the specificity of the properties of the state connected to any given mode of production comes from contrasts with other modes of production. The resulting analysis combines an elaborate analytical framework that identifies the relevant structural elements of state apparatuses with extensive empirical discussions of historical variations in the machinery of the state in different times and places.

While Therborn insists throughout his analysis that his proposed conceptual menu of the class character of state apparatuses should be treated as provisional and subject to revision, he also insists that it is not a speculative philosophical analysis based on some purely logical understanding of feudalism, capitalism and socialism. He wants the claims about the class character of apparatuses to be empirically grounded: the categories are meant to be theoretical abstractions from empirical observations of actually existing societies rather than pure thought experiments. This is fairly straightforward for his investigation of capitalism and feudalism. It is much more precari-

---

2. Claus Offe usefully elaborates this idea of filter mechanisms by referring to them as generating *negative selections* with built-in *class biases*. Negative selection identifies the mechanisms as operating through what they exclude: they make certain kinds of interventions much less likely than others. Class bias identifies the content of what is excluded. See Offe 1974.

ous for the investigation of socialism given the highly contentious disagreements even within Marxism over the historical meaning of states that proclaimed themselves to be socialist. Therborn insists that the USSR, China, Cuba and other countries that called themselves socialist were, when he wrote the book, actually socialist. Just as capitalist states can be organized as liberal democracies or authoritarian fascist regimes, so too, Therborn argues, can socialist states be authoritarian or democratic. While Therborn clearly endorses radical democracy, he does not see this as a necessary ingredient of socialism itself. This is a controversial position, and as we will see in the second half of this essay, has important implications for the way we think about challenges to capitalism. Democracy is more central to socialism than it is to capitalism since without democracy it is hard to see what it means for the working class as such to 'exercise power'. It is for this reason that I prefer to characterize the USSR and other authoritarian command-economies as instances of a *statist mode of production* rather than socialism. In any case, in *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?*, Therborn treats the states that called themselves socialist in the mid-20th century as appropriate empirical cases for building his conceptual map of variations in the class character of state apparatuses.

To conduct this investigation, Therborn creates an elaborate inventory of structural elements of state apparatuses involved in determining the inputs to the state, the transformation of those inputs by the internal practices of the state, and the outputs of the state. Two examples of these structural elements will help clarify Therborn's strategy of analysis: the determination of *appropriate tasks* for state activity, and the *acquisition of necessary material resources* for state actions.<sup>3</sup>

---

3. In total, Therborn distinguishes twelve structural elements in state apparatuses. Three are connected to inputs (which he refers to as tasks, personnel recruitment, and energy or the acquisition of resources); three are connected to transformation (handling of tasks, patterning of personnel, utilization of resources); five are connected to outputs (foreign policy tasks, domestic policy tasks, inter-state personnel relations, domestic personnel relations, outputs of material resources); and finally one is referred to somewhat cryptically as the effects of technology. A summary list of these elements can be found on pp. 118–119.

First, every state, regardless of what it does, needs to distinguish between activities that are the legitimate business of the state and activities which are not. This is basically the problem of the relationship between the public and the private. In capitalism, there is a fairly sharp distinction between public and private spheres: ‘The issues with which the bourgeois state is concerned are ... defined by the characteristic *distinction between the private and public spheres*: the state occupies itself only with the latter’ (p. 63). While the precise boundary between the public and private is often contested, and have certainly shifted in the course of capitalist development, nevertheless,

Generally speaking, the private sphere has extended to the choice of occupation and place of work, the choice of marriage-partner, and the ideological convictions, consumption habits and life-style of the individual. In other words, it has comprised the labour market, capital accumulation, the bourgeois nuclear family, and the whole field of bourgeois ‘individualism’. (p. 66.)

This sharp demarcation of public and private spheres acts as a class-based filter mechanism on state actions which protects the core class relations of capitalism, making it much more difficult for state interventions to undermine the private property and the power of the capitalist class.

In contrast to capitalism, ‘Under feudalism the state is “privatized”’ (p. 67). This doesn’t mean, Therborn argues, that the state in feudalism is literally the private property of the king. Rather, in feudalism there is ‘a fusion of this institution with the appropriation of the means of production (land) by individual lords, of whom one rose to the position of king.’ This fusion tends to reproduce the power of the feudal ruling class by making it less likely that state actions will undermine the capacity of feudal elites to coercively appropriate surplus from peasants.

In socialism, there is a ‘politicization of all spheres, including “private life”’ (p. 118). This doesn’t imply that individual autonomy and choice is continually subjected to intrusive state regulation, and it certainly ‘is not the equivalent to the absorption of the private sphere by a public bureaucracy’ (p. 69). Rather, it means that the precise

boundary of personal autonomy is subjected to public deliberation. While the filter mechanism in the public/private demarcation of capitalism protects private property and promotes the power of capitalists, the politicization of the private sphere in socialism, Therborn argues, helps to secure the power of the working class.

A second example of class mechanisms inscribed in state apparatuses concerns the ways in which states acquire the necessary resources to pay for state actions. In capitalism this is accomplished mainly through taxation: 'funds needed for public purposes are provided by regular and compulsory levies on private individuals and business enterprises' (p. 85). Public budgets require a capacity to transfer income from private accounts. Under feudalism, in contrast, 'the state budget depended above all on the size of the royal domain and on the degree of exploitation to which its attached peasants were subjected' (p. 86). In a sense the private accounts of the king were directly the source of public budgets. Finally, in socialism, 'Revenue is drawn principally from public enterprise and is directly bound up with the global planning process and the pricing of goods' (p. 86). The state divides the publicly generated surplus into a part used to fund state functions and a part used for other purposes.

As in the example of the public/private demarcation, these three different ways of acquiring revenues for state activities act as class-biased filter mechanisms on state actions, favoring actions that tend to reproduce the class relations of capitalist, feudal and socialist societies respectively. In capitalism, because state revenues depend upon taxes extracted from private economic activity, the state is forced to pay attention to the impact of its tax and spending policies on private incentives, especially the incentives of capitalists to invest. In feudalism, in order to have a secure source of revenues, the state is forced to be concerned with the size of the royal estates and the degree of exploitation of its peasants, thus reproducing feudal class relations. And in socialism, the dependency of the state on surpluses generated by public enterprise means that there is pressure for state actions to attempt to strengthen the class solidarity and mobilization within the working class that is a crucial source of productivity in a socialist economy.

*Complications and contradictions:  
moving from modes of production to social formations  
and from structural forms to historical contingency*

The analytical framework Therborn develops to specify the class character of state power and state apparatuses is formulated at the level of abstraction that Marxists refer to as the mode of production. Analyzing state power and state apparatuses at that level of abstraction gives the analysis a somewhat functionalist cast: the exercise of state power reproduces the class relations of a mode of production and the state apparatuses are structured in such a way as to facilitate these reproductive effects. This comes close to explaining the form of the state by the functional requirements of reproducing a given mode of production.<sup>4</sup>

Therborn resolutely rejects such functionalist reasoning by insisting that there is no guarantee that these functional requirements are actually fulfilled. Actual states are riddled with contradictions, both in their internal organization and in their relationship to the broader society. Such contradictions can significantly interfere with any smooth functional reproduction of class relations.

There are three main sources of such contradictions.

First, actual societies never consist of a single mode of production. The state thus always faces the problem of how different kinds of relations of production with their associated class relations are connected and interact within concrete social formations. This opens the possibility of a variety of different forms of disjuncture between state and economy, especially in periods of transitions from one kind of economic structure to another:

These well known cases of disjuncture between state and economy provide glimpses of a number of areas of complexity. Not only do several different classes and modes of production coexist; they also inter-penetrate one another in many ways, giving rise to hybrid forms and special transmutations. (p. 149.)

---

4. For a sustained and rigorous elaboration of the functionalist explanations embodied in the idea of base and superstructure, see Cohen 2000.



Second, the state consists of many apparatuses – it is really a system of apparatuses rather than ‘an’ apparatus – and this creates the potential for tensions and disjunctures among different apparatuses:

It follows that, although the variance between state power and the state apparatus is limited by the fact that they express the class relations of the same society, at any given moment significant disjunctures appear between the two. The possibilities of variance are substantially increased by the coexistence within a particular state system of several apparatuses, in which different sets of class relations may have crystallized. These disjunctures have a fundamentally destabilizing effect ... (p. 35.)

Third, there are potentially significant time lags between the changes in the class relations of a society and the organizational properties of the state apparatus. In Therborn’s words, state apparatuses are a ‘materialized condensation’ of class relations and ‘tend to manifest [those relations] with a particular rigidity’ (p. 153). This rigidity is part of the reason state apparatuses can robustly support a given set of class relations. But rigidity also means that there can be significant changes in class relations and class power in a society that are not instantaneously reflected in the class character of state apparatuses. The tasks which the state is called upon to execute ‘basically derive from the changing totality in which it operates’. This changing totality may involve new configurations of class forces and problems. There is thus the potential for a significant contradiction between the form of class domination currently embodied the state apparatuses and the task execution required of state actions:

But the successful organization of class domination in the state apparatus itself generates new problems of government, administration, judicatures and repressions – problems which call into question the existing organizational forms domination. This contradiction between domination and execution, which may take diverse forms has to be resolved in one way or the other, and it thus becomes an internal force for change within the apparatus. (p. 47.)

Taken together, these three kinds of contradictions imply that the state should not be regarded as a smoothly operating machine for

the reproduction of class domination, but as contingently functional and contested system. The functionalist side of this argument shows how the distinctive class character of the state apparatuses of the state imposes limits on state policies in ways that tend to maintain and promote the position of dominant class in society; the analysis of contradictions and disjunctures helps make sense of why those limits may break down and new possibilities emerge.

## The problem of challenging and transcending capitalism

Towards the middle of the book, Therborn explains why Marxist theory seeks to understand the class character of the state:

It does so in order to discover the characteristic social structures and relations which are promoted and protected above all others by the material force of the state; and in order to determine the conditions under which they may be changed or abolished ... There then arises the question of how this class rule is grounded and maintained and how it can be overthrown. (p. 132.)

This is a fundamental point, also reflected in one of Marx's most famous aphorisms, the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.' The point, of course, is not merely to change the world, but to change in a very particular way: challenging and transcending capitalism by constructing an alternative economic structure in which the working class controls the means of production and capitalist class domination and exploitation is eliminated. This is broadly what is understood as the transition from capitalism to socialism.

One of the crucial issues in the theory of transcending capitalism concerns the role of the state in impeding or facilitating this transition. In *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?*, Therborn frames the problem of the transition from capitalism to socialism in a fairly traditional Marxist way. His most explicit statement occurs in a discussion of disjunctures between the class character of state power (again: the effects of state interventions on class relations)

and state apparatuses. Therborn notes that historically there are many instances in which the class character of state power and the class character of state apparatuses do not coincide. 'The transition from feudalism to capitalism raises just this question in a number of instances' (p. 149). He cites the case of England on the eve of the English Civil War and Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution as instances where the 'state apparatus was still fundamentally feudal' even though 'little remained of feudal relations of production', and thus state power no longer promoted or maintained feudal relations. 'In fact,' Therborn writes, 'in most countries other than France, such disjunctures seem to have been the rule rather than the exception' (p. 149). He then states,

Similar [disjunctures] may be found in the transition from capitalism to socialism, *with the important qualification that here a decisive change in the state apparatus precedes the transformation of relations of production.* The NEP period in the USSR, when maintenance of a new socialist state apparatus was combined with the fostering of both capitalist and petty-commodity production, is probably the clearest example of such a phenomenon. (p. 149, italics added.)

The italicized phrase reflects a critical asymmetry in traditional Marxist understandings of the transition between feudalism and capitalism and the transition from capitalism to socialism. In the former, capitalist relations emerge within feudalism, and for a long period these societies are characterized by an articulation of these two modes of production. The feudal state, especially in the form of the Absolutist State, thus superintends a social formation within which feudal relations are gradually eroded as capitalist relations expand and deepen. The destruction of the feudal character of that state apparatus comes at the end of the process of erosion of feudalism, not at the beginning. In contrast, in the transition from capitalism to socialism, 'a decisive change in the state apparatus precedes the transformation of relations of production'. Therborn discusses the Russian and Cuban revolutions as instances in which 'these revolutions initially fostered peasant petty-commodity production and even capitalist enterprise, at the same time as they brought about a

more or less complete smashing and transformation of the bourgeois state apparatus' (p. 152). As a result of this successful transformation of the class character of the state apparatuses, 'the proletarian character of the state apparatuses secured for [the working class] a decisive position of strength from which to ... embark upon socialist construction' (p. 152). In short: in the transition from feudalism to capitalism, capitalist relations of production develop within feudalism and then the class character of the state is transformed; in the transition from capitalism to socialism, the class character of the state is transformed, and then socialist relations of production can develop alongside remnants of capitalist relations.<sup>5</sup>

This is the standard Marxist model. It underwrites the classical revolutionary vision which sees seizing the state and rapidly transforming its fundamental structures as a necessary condition for the development of socialism. This was an inspiring vision for anti-capitalists throughout much of the 20th century, but it no longer seems credible to many (perhaps most) people today, even if they are resolutely anti-capitalist. There are two basic issues in play here. First, it is very hard to construct a convincing scenario for developed capitalist countries in which anti-capitalist forces would be able to seize state power in a way that would make possible 'a more or less complete smashing and transformation of the bourgeois state apparatus'. One might envision over an extended period of time a democratization of the state through a heterogeneous process of changes in particular apparatuses and the creation of new kinds of quasi-state apparatuses that undermined the unity of the state; what is difficult is to imagine is the ruptural transformation of the state that the standard Marxist model sees as necessary for setting in motion 'socialist construc-

---

5. Marxists often also argue that within capitalism the *forces of production* gradually have a more and more social character, while the relations of production continue to generate the private appropriation of the surplus generated using those forces of production. This 'contradiction' between the forces and relations of production is one of the conditions which makes the transformation of the relations possible. Nevertheless, that transformation of capitalist class relations only occurs after the seizure of state power and transformation of state apparatuses.

tion'. Second, the historical evidence from the 20th century does not provide much confidence that even if it were possible to smash the bourgeois state apparatus, the result would be human emancipation through the broad, democratic empowerment of the working class. If, then, a revolutionary rupture in the capitalist state is actually a necessary condition for socialism, this suggests that socialism simply is not possible.

There is, however, an alternative model of the transition from capitalism to socialism which is constructed around the possibility of socialist relations emerging within capitalism and eroding its dominance. Even though Therborn does not envision such a possibility, his framework for understanding the complex, contradictory configurations of the class character of state power and state apparatuses is congenial to this model of socialism as a destination and the process of getting there. The model can be distilled into four basic arguments.

I. SOCIALISM AS ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY. There is no agreement among anti-capitalists, even among Marxists, about how to define socialism. Do markets play a significant role in a socialist economy, or does socialism imply comprehensive planning? Is socialism based on state ownership of the means of production, or are there a variety of social forms of ownership in a socialist economy? What does it really mean to say that the working class controls the means of production in socialism? Is socialism the only post-capitalist alternative to capitalism?

One way of approaching these issues is to focus on the way power is organized within economic relations, particularly over the allocation of the social surplus and control of the process of production. This, I would argue, is the most fundamental line of demarcation between economic structures (or modes of production in traditional Marxist terminology). Invoking power, of course, opens up a Pandora's box of theoretical issues. I will adopt a deliberately stripped-down concept of power: power is the capacity to do things in the world, to produce effects. This is what might be called an 'agent-centered' notion of power: people, both acting individually and collectively, use power

to accomplish things. In particular, they use power to allocate investments and control production.

At first glance this definition of power might seem like the kind of subjectivist concept of power that Therborn criticizes. This is not correct. While I have specified the concept in terms of agents using power to accomplish things in the world, this does not imply that their actual capacity to do so is at attribute of the agents themselves rather than the structure in which they are embedded. Capitalists use their economic power to allocate investments, but they can only do so because of the ways in which the relations of production enable them to do so. People wield power, they use it for particular ends which are in part their subjective purposes, but the power they wield is structurally determined and a property of the social relations in which they act.

With this broad definition of power, we can then distinguish three kinds of power that are deployed within economic systems to allocate the surplus and control production: *economic power*, rooted in control over the use of economic resources; *state power*, rooted in control over rule making and rule enforcing over territory; and what I will term *social power*, rooted in the capacity to mobilize people for cooperative, voluntary collective actions.<sup>6</sup> Expressed as a mnemonic slogan, you can get people to do things by bribing them, forcing them, or persuading them. Every complex economic system involves all three forms of power, connected in different ways.

Different economic structures can be distinguished on the basis of which of these forms of power is most important for determining the use of the social surplus and the control of production. In particular, capitalism can be distinguished from two post-capitalist economic structures in these terms:<sup>7</sup>

---

6. There is a sense, of course, in which all power is 'social'. I am using the expression *social power* in a narrower sense here to refer to power that is embedded in the capacity of people to make choices within social interactions.

7. This is not a complete theoretical specification of the differences between these three types of economic structure, but only their differentiation in terms of power relations. For a fuller discussion, see Wright 2010: 111–123.

– *Capitalism* is an economic structure within which the means of production are privately owned and the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is accomplished through the exercise of economic power. Investments and the control of production are the result of the exercise of economic power by owners of capital.

– *Statism* is an economic structure within which the means of production are owned by the state and the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is accomplished through the exercise of state power. State officials control the investment process and production through some sort of state-administrative mechanism.

– *Socialism* is an economic structure within which the means of production are socially owned<sup>8</sup> and the allocation and use of resources for different social purposes is accomplished through the exercise of ‘social power’. In effect this is equivalent to defining *socialism as pervasive economic democracy*.

This definition of socialism differs from the one adopted by Therborn in *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?* For Therborn, socialism is not an ideal-type abstraction; it is a theoretical characterization of the kind of economic system socialists empirically struggle to create: ‘... socialism is that which socialists are fighting to realize in history’ (p. 277). It was on this basis that he argued that the Soviet Union and China were empirical examples of socialist economic structures and socialist states, even if the regimes in these societies had many undesirable characteristics. If socialism were

---

8. Social ownership should be distinguished from state ownership. Social ownership of economic resources means that these are owned in common by everyone in a society, and thus everyone has the collective right to decide on the distribution of the net income generated by the use of those resources and the collective right to dispose of those resources. Under conditions of deep and pervasive democracy, state ownership becomes one way of organizing social ownership.

the only possible economic structure that could replace capitalism, then this might be a reasonable solution to the problem of giving some empirical grounding to the discussion of socialism and the socialist state. But if this is not the case, then the situation becomes much more ambiguous, for while socialists might be fighting for an alternative to capitalism in which workers become the dominant class, the unintended consequences of their struggles could result in something quite different. Socialists could fight for socialism, but nevertheless produce authoritarian statism and still, for purposes of legitimation, call this 'socialism'.

Because of these considerations, I will adopt a definition of socialism as an alternative to capitalism that is not an abstraction from empirically observable cases of post-capitalist societies. This does not mean, however, that this concept has no empirical grounding. The existence of relations of production embodying social power is part of real structures of actually-existing capitalist economic systems. The theoretical extrapolation that these could constitute the dominant relations of a future economy is therefore not simply an affirmation of normative ideals.

To understand this proposition, we need to turn to the second element in the model: the idea that economic systems are complex combinations of heterogeneous relations of production.

2. ECONOMIC STRUCTURES AS COMPLEX ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEMS. The definitions of capitalism, statism and socialism I have proposed are ideal types. In the world, actual economies are complex forms of combination of these three types. They are *ecosystems of economic structures* that vary according to how these different forms of power interact and intermix.<sup>9</sup> To call an economy 'capitalist' is thus shorthand for a more cumbersome expression such as 'an economic ecosystem combining capitalist, statist and socialist power relations within which capitalist relations are dominant'. The idea of

---

9. This formulation is similar to the idea of 'articulation of modes of production', but has a bit more empirical flexibility since some of the different forms in an ecosystem may not be full-fledged 'modes of production' in the traditional Marxian meaning of that concept.



economies as ecosystems dominated by particular relations of production can be used to describe any unit of analysis – firms, sectors, regional economies, national economies, even the global economy. These power relations also interpenetrate within individual units of production, so particular enterprises can be *hybrids* operating in the economic ecosystem that surrounds them. The possibility of socialism thus depends on our ability to enlarge and deepen the socialist component within the overall economic ecosystem and weaken the capitalist and statist components.

This way of understanding the complexity of economic structures is familiar in the case of the ways capitalist relations emerge within feudal societies. As Therborn writes: ‘Mercantile capital not only coexisted with feudalism within the social formation; it also entered into the reproduction of the feudal mode of exploitation itself, connecting the economic units of the latter with one another’ (p. 46). What is less familiar is the idea that socialist relations of production can emerge as a salient feature of the economic structure of capitalist economies. But what does this mean concretely? What are instances of socialist relations of production within capitalism?

Here are a few examples:

- Worker-owned cooperatives in which the means of production are owned by the workers and production is governed through democratic mechanisms.
- The social and solidarity economy in which production is oriented to meeting needs and governance is organized in a variety of democratic and quasi-democratic ways.
- Community land-trusts in which land is taken out of the market, its use specified through the conditions of the trust, and the trust itself is governed by some kind of community-based board.
- Peer-to-peer collaborative production of use-values such as Wikipedia and Linux.

- State production of public goods when the priorities for public goods production are set through robust democratic processes.<sup>10</sup>

All of these examples, in different ways, embody some aspects of socialist relations of production insofar as social power plays a significant role in the organization of economic activities, but of course, these examples also often take a hybrid form in which features of capitalist relations are also present.<sup>11</sup> Worker-owned cooperatives often have some employees, for example. Capitalist corporations may pay some of their employees to participate in peer-to-peer collaborative production – Google pays some of its software engineers to contribute to the development of Linux, even though Linux itself is an open-source, free software system. Enterprises in the social and solidarity economy sometimes get grants from private foundations and philanthropists whose resources come from capitalist investments. The articulation of the capitalist and socialist elements in this complex array of social forms is messy, ambiguous and contradictory. Nevertheless, these all constitute ways of organizing economic activities in which social power plays a significant, and in some cases, dominant role.

3. **ERODING CAPITALISM.** If one accepts the idea that capitalist societies contain a variety of noncapitalist forms of economic organization, including socialist and proto-socialist forms, then there is at least the possibility that these socialist relations and practices could expand and deepen over time, even in an economy in which capital-

---

10. In my proposed typology of economic structures, the direct state provision of public goods can be an instance of either statism or socialism or a hybrid depending upon the extent to which the state itself is democratically subordinated to social power. The state's production of use values, including public goods, can be viewed as one of the *pathways of social empowerment* when it is the case that the exercise of state power is itself effectively subordinated to social power through robust mechanisms of democratic rule. For an elaboration of these issues, see Wright 2010: 131–134.

11. Details of these examples and many others can be found in Wright 2010, chapter 7. For an extended discussion of the complex hybridity of these forms, see Wright 2010, chapter 5.

ism is dominant. This could occur both within capitalist firms, if the socialist elements become stronger over time, and within the broader ecosystem of capitalism, if *socialist* economic organizations (i.e. organizations built around the exercise of social power) occupied an ever greater economic space. The first of these involves, for example, an increasing role for workers' assemblies and other forms of worker-governance within capitalist firms, along with increasing worker-ownership of the assets of the firms and participation on boards of directors. The second involves the development and spread of a wide range of economic organizations that operate on non-capitalist principles. The growth of the social/solidarity economy in some parts of the world and the development of novel forms of peer-to-peer collaborative production mediated by the Internet would be examples. Over time, then, if these socially-empowered relations and practices developed sufficiently, the cumulative effect of such expansion could be a gradual erosion of the overall dominance of capitalism. Capitalism would continue to exist, but in a more restricted domain of economic activities and without being able to impose definitive constraints on the other economic forms within the economic ecosystem.

4. THE CAPITALIST STATE AND THE EROSION OF CAPITALISM. It is one thing to observe that capitalist societies contain all sorts of non-capitalist forms of production, including forms that have in some sense a socialist character, and quite another to imagine that these quasi-socialist forms of production could expand in ways that seriously eroded the dominance of capitalism. Here, then, is the critical problem: On the one hand, it is implausible that socialist relations of production could expand to the point of undermining the dominance of capitalism within the economic ecosystem without the support of the state, but on the other hand if socially-empowered forms of economic activity were seriously encroaching on capitalism in ways that threatened capitalist dominance, the capitalist class would use the capitalist state to neutralize the threat. This, after all, is precisely what the capitalist state is designed to do: to reproduce the dominant relations of production in the face of threats. So the question: how can the capitalist state simultaneously reproduce capitalism and

facilitate conditions that in the long-run undermine the dominance of capitalism?

If the class character of the capitalist state meant that it was a functionally-integrated coherent machine preoccupied with the long-term reproduction of capitalism, then the prospects of non-capitalist forms of economic organization ever eroding capitalist dominance would indeed be dim. Therborn's account of state power and state apparatuses argues, however, that the capitalist state should not be analyzed in such strongly functionalist terms. More specifically, there are three elements of his analysis that open a space for a more contradictory relationship between the capitalist state and the development of potentially corrosive alternatives to capitalism: heterogeneity in the class character of different state apparatuses; concessions, compromises, and contingent functionality; and temporal inconsistencies in state actions.

*Variability in the class character of state apparatuses*

Even if the state is properly described as a 'capitalist state' by virtue of the class character of state as a whole, as was explained in the summary of Therborn's framework, Therborn stresses that this does not imply that there is no variability in the class character of specific apparatuses within the state:

Although the state is, in a fundamental sense, always one, the level of integration of its apparatuses varies considerably, and it should not be taken for granted that they share a common class character. For the state is the concentrated expression of a highly complex set of class relations, which are refracted in disjunctures of varying profundity between the different apparatuses. Within limits imposed by the general nature of the state, it is especially probable that the class character of its diverse apparatuses will vary with the link between the tasks of the apparatus and the concerns of classes rooted in the mode of production. (p. 41.)

Therborn goes on to clarify this point by saying 'It may thus be expected that ... the welfare apparatus, whilst remaining bourgeois, would be affected by its close relationship with the working class' (p. 41-2). Different apparatuses within the state are thus likely to coexist 'in which different sets of class relations may have crystal-

lized' (p. 35). Therborn is careful to add the qualifier that these variations occur 'within limits imposed by the general nature of the state' (p. 41) and that 'the state is, in a fundamental sense, always one' (p. 35). Still, he leaves open the question of how wide or narrow those limits are. In particular, the class heterogeneity of apparatuses opens the possibility that certain apparatuses will be at least partially amenable to protecting and promoting noncapitalist economic relations, not merely capitalist relations.

Of particular relevance in assessing the variability in the class character of different state apparatuses is the problem of democracy. The more robustly democratic are the forms of accountability of particular apparatuses, the less purely capitalist is the class character of that apparatus. Even ordinary parliamentary democracy has always had a contradictory class character: while it may be true, as Marxists generally claim, that the rules of the game of electoral democracy have the general effect of constraining and taming class struggles over the state in ways that support capitalist dominance, it is also true that to the extent elections involve real democratic competition, they introduce potential tensions in the class character of legislative bodies. In times of crisis and popular mobilization, those tensions can loosen the limits of possibility for new forms of state initiatives.

Demands for deepening and revitalizing democracy can thus be thought of as demands for diluting – not eliminating, but diluting – the capitalist character of the state apparatuses. This is not simply a question of the democratic accountability of ordinary state machinery, but also of the wide variety of parastatal commissions and organizations that interface with all modern states.<sup>12</sup> Deepening democracy is also not simply a question of democratization of centralized national states, but of local and regional state apparatuses as well. Struggles over the democratic quality of the local state may be especially important in terms of thinking about ways in which state initiatives can enlarge the space for noncapitalist economic initiatives.

---

12. For a discussion of the principles of democratic deepening that extend beyond the boundaries of ordinary state apparatuses, see Fung and Wright 2003.

*Concessions, compromises, and contingent functionality*

While the class character of state power is defined by Therborn in terms of the reproductive effects of the state on class relations, the actual actions of the state are the result of struggles, not a smooth response to functional needs: 'state power is exercised not according to a pre-established functionalist harmony, but in and through the struggle of antagonistic classes. In this process it may be necessary to have recourse to concessions and compromises whereby, for instance, the state goes against the logic of capital accumulation without breaking it' (p. 146). Concessions and compromises can be short-lived and reversed, or they can create more or less institutionalized alterations in social relations. This also opens the possibility – not explicitly discussed by Therborn – that some concessions and compromises could directly or indirectly create more secure spaces for the development of noncapitalist relations, including relations of a distinctly socialist character. Such possibilities could be relatively durable if they became 'crystallized' in particular state apparatuses, giving those apparatuses a class character in tension with the state as a whole. One can imagine, for example, that under some circumstances, apparatuses of the local state responsible for community development and poverty alleviation could become closely connected to local social movements in ways that were particularly supportive of the social/solidarity economy and worker cooperatives.

*Temporal inconsistencies and disjunctures*

The final element in Therborn's analysis of the state that suggests that there are situations in which the capitalist state would tolerate, and even encourage, economic practices rooted in social power, concerns temporal inconsistencies between the relatively short-term reproductive effects of state actions and the long-run dynamic consequences. The reproductive effects of state actions on the dominant relations of production that define the class character of state power are the result of actions that mainly respond to immediate conditions and challenges. This why, for example, the feudal state facilitated merchant capitalism even though in the long run the dynamics of merchant capitalism was corrosive of feudal relations: 'Mercantile

capital not only coexisted with feudalism within the social formation; it also entered into the reproduction of the feudal mode of exploitation itself, connecting the economic units of the latter with one another' (p. 46). Mercantile capitalism helped solve immediate problems for the feudal ruling class, and this is what mattered.

Similarly, in the middle of the twentieth century the capitalist state facilitated the growth of a vibrant public sector and public regulation of capitalism associated with social democracy. Social democracy helped solve a series of problems within capitalism – it helped reproduce capitalism – while at the same time expanding the space for various socialist elements in the economic ecosystem: the partial decommodification of labor power through state provision of significant components of workers material conditions of life, the increase in working class social power within capitalist firms and the labor market, and the democratic regulation of capital to deal with the most serious negative externalities of the behavior of investors and firms in capitalist markets (pollution, product and workplace hazards, predatory market behavior, market volatility, etc.).

The fact that this array of state actions contributed to the stability of mid-twentieth century capitalism is sometimes taken as an indication that there was nothing non-capitalist about these policies, and certainly that they could not in any way be considered corrosive of capitalism. This is a mistake. It is entirely possible for a form of state intervention to have the immediate effects of solving problems for capitalism, and even strengthening capitalism, and nevertheless set in motion dynamics that have the potential to erode the dominance of capitalism over time. Indeed, it is precisely this property of social democratic initiatives that eventually lead to the attacks on the affirmative state under the banner of neoliberalism as the capitalist class came to see the expansive affirmative state as creating progressively suboptimal conditions for capital accumulation.<sup>13</sup>

The question for capitalism in the twenty-first century, then, is whether or not this kind of temporal disjuncture is still possible

13. I prefer the term 'affirmative state' to 'welfare state' as a way of characterizing the expansive role of the state in neutralizing the harms of capitalism, since the term 'welfare state' is often taken as referring to a narrow range of issues concerned with individual insecurity.

within the capitalist state. Are there arrays state interventions which could solve pressing problems faced by capitalism but which, nevertheless, also have the potential long-run consequence of expanding the space in which democratic, egalitarian economic relations can develop?

## Prospects for the future

The world in the first decades of the 21st century looks very different from the period in which social democracy flourished. The globalization of capitalism has made it much easier for capitalists to move investments to places in the world with less regulation and cheaper labor. The threat of such movement of capital, along with a variety of technological and demographic changes, has fragmented and weakened the labor movement, making it less capable of resistance and political mobilization. Combined with globalization, the financialization of capital has led to massive increases in wealth and income inequality, which in turn has increased the political leverage of opponents of the social democratic state. Perhaps the decades of the so-called Golden Age were just an historical anomaly, a brief period in which favorable structural conditions and robust popular power opened up the possibility for the relatively egalitarian, social democratic model of encroaching on the absolute dominance of capitalism. Before that time capitalism was a rapacious system, and under neoliberalism it has become rapacious once again, returning to the normal state of affairs for capitalist economic ecosystems. Perhaps in the long run the dominance of capitalism is just not erodible. Defenders of the idea of revolutionary ruptures with the capitalist state have always claimed that the dominance of capitalism could not be mitigated by reforms and efforts to do so were a diversion from the task of building a political movement to overthrow capitalism. Therborn, at the time of writing *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?*, certainly adopted the language of 'overthrow' as a way of thinking about a socialist future.

But perhaps things are not so dire. The claim that globalization imposes powerful constraints on the capacity of states to raise taxes,



regulate capitalism, redistribute income and foster noncapitalist forms of economic activity is a politically effective claim because people believe it, not because the constraints are actually that narrow. In politics, the limits of possibility are always in part created by beliefs in the limits of possibility. Neoliberalism is an ideology, backed by powerful political forces, rather than a scientifically accurate account of the actual limits we face in making the world a better place. While it may be the case that the specific policies that constituted the menu of social democracy in the Golden Age have become less effective and need rethinking, the capitalist state remains an internally contradictory structure facing temporally inconsistent conditions for the reproduction of capitalism.

There are two trends that suggest some grounds for optimism about future possibilities for the kinds of state initiatives that could potentially foster long-term erosion of capitalist dominance.

First, global warming is likely spell the end of neoliberalism. Even aside from the issue of mitigating global warming through a conversion to non-carbon emitting energy production, the necessary adaptations to global warming will require a massive expansion of state-provided public goods. The market is simply not going to build sea walls to protect Manhattan. The scale of resources needed for such state interventions could easily reach the levels of the major wars of the twentieth century Second World War. Even though capitalist firms will profit enormously from such public good production – just as they profit from military production in times of war – the financing of such projects will require substantial tax increases and an effort ideologically at rehabilitating the affirmative state. If these processes occur within the framework of capitalist democracy, then this reinvigoration of the affirmative state will open up more space for broader, socially-directed state interventions.

The second trend with which the capitalist state will have to contend in the course of the 21st century is the long-term employment effects of the technological changes of the information revolution. Of course, with every wave of technological change there is speculation about the destruction of jobs leading to a widespread marginalization and permanent structural unemployment, but in previous

waves, economic growth eventually created sufficient jobs in new sectors to overcome deficits in employment. The forms of automation in the digital age, which are now penetrating deep into the service sector, including sectors of professional services, makes it much less likely that future economic growth will provide adequate employment opportunities through the capitalist market. The magnitude of this problem is further intensified by the globalization of capitalist production. As the twenty-first century progresses, these problems will only get worse and will not be solved by spontaneous operation of market forces. The result is increasing precariousness and marginalization of a significant portion of the population. Even aside from social justice considerations, this trend is likely to generate social instability and costly conflict.

These two trends taken together pose major new challenges to the capitalist state: the need for a massive increase in the provision of public goods to deal with climate change, and the need for new policies to deal with broad economic marginalization caused by technological change. This is the context in which popular mobilizations and struggles have some prospect of producing new forms of state intervention which could underwrite the expansion of more democratic-egalitarian forms of economic activity coexisting with capitalism within the economic ecosystem.

More specifically, consider the following scenario.

The necessity to deal with adaptations to climate change marks the end of neoliberalism and its ideological strictures. The affirmative state embarks on the needed large scale, public works projects and also takes a more intrusive role economic planning around energy production to accelerate the shift from carbon-based energy. In this context, the broader range of roles for the affirmative state is back on the political agenda, including the state's responsibility for jobs and the problem of increasing marginalization and economic inequality. But full employment through capitalist labor markets seems increasingly implausible.

One approach to responding to these challenges is unconditional basic income (UBI), a policy proposal that is already being given increased public discussion in the first decades of the 21st cen-

ture.<sup>14</sup> The design is simple: every legal resident receives a monthly income, without any conditions, sufficient to live at a culturally respectable, no-frills standard of living. It is paid for out of general taxation and paid out to everyone regardless of their moral worth or economic standing. Of course, for people with well-paying jobs taxes would increase by more than the UBI they receive, so their net income (wages + UBI – taxes) would decline. But for many net contributors, it would still be the case that the existence of a UBI component to their income would be experienced as a stabilizing element that reduces the risks they face in the labor market.

UBI is a possible form of state intervention that responds to the difficult challenges confronting the capitalist state in the face of the decline of acceptable employment opportunities within capitalist markets. From the point of view of the reproduction of capitalism, UBI would accomplish three things. First, it would mitigate the worst effects of inequality and poverty generated by marginalization, and thus contribute to social stability. Second, it would underwrite a different model of income-generating work: the self-creation of jobs to generate discretionary income for people. UBI would make a wide range of self-employment attractive to people even if the self-created jobs did not generate enough income to live on. One can imagine, for example, that more people would be interested in being small farmers and commercial gardeners if they had a UBI to cover their basic costs of living. And third, UBI would stabilize the consumer market for capitalist production. As a system of production, automated production by capitalist firms inherently faces the problem of not employing enough people in the aggregate to buy the things produced. UBI provides a widely dispersed demand for basic consumption. For these reasons, UBI may become an attractive policy option for capitalist elites, especially in the context of the exhaustion of neoliberalism as an ideology in the face of a rehabilitated affirmative state.

If UBI is an attractive solution to problems facing capitalism, how can it also contribute to the erosion of capitalism? A central feature of

---

14. For discussions of unconditional basic income, see Parijs 1995; Ackerman, Alstott and Parijs 2006.

capitalism is what Marx referred to as the double separation of workers – separation from the means of production and from the means of subsistence. Unconditional basic income reunites workers with the means of subsistence, even though they remain separated from the means of production. A tax-financed unconditional basic income provided by the state would thus enable workers to refuse capitalist employment and choose, instead, to engage in all sorts of noncapitalist economic activities, including those constructed through social power. Worker cooperatives, for example, would become much more economically viable if the members of the cooperative had a basic income guaranteed independently of the commercial success of the cooperative. UBI would also help solve credit market problems currently faced by worker cooperatives by making capital loans to cooperatives more attractive to banks: such loans would suddenly become less risky since the income stream generated by a cooperative would not need to cover the basic standard of living of its members. Unconditional basic income thus expands the space for sustainable socialist – socially empowered – economic relations.

Furthermore, the same technological developments that create the problem of marginalization also, ironically, may contribute to a more robust space for the expansion and deepening of economic activities organized in a more democratic, egalitarian and communitarian manner. One of the material conditions of production that helps to anchor capitalism is the increasing returns to scale in industrial production: when the unit costs of producing hundreds of thousands of something is much lower than producing only a few, it is very difficult for small scale producers to be competitive in a market. The hallmark of the industrial era of capitalist development is massive returns to scale. The new technologies of the 21st century are, in many sectors, dramatically reducing the returns to scale, making small scale, localized production more viable. Basically, the amount of capital needed to buy sufficient means of production to be competitive in the market declines in a digital world. This, in turn, is likely to make cooperatives and social/solidarity economy enterprises and worker cooperatives more viable as well, since they operate more effectively at a relatively small scale oriented to local markets. To use classical

Marxist terminology, the changing forces of production expand the possibilities for new relations of production.

Other state policies, many of which could be organized at the local level, could further stabilize a dynamic noncapitalist sector. One of the obstacles to many varieties of social production is access to physical space: land for gardens and farms, workshops for manufacturing, offices and studios for design, performance spaces for the performing arts, and so on. These could be provided as public amenities by local states interested in creating favorable infrastructure for these more democratic-egalitarian forms of economic activity. Community-land trusts can underwrite urban agriculture. Publicly provided or subsidized makerspaces and fablabs with 3D printers and other digital manufacturing technologies can underwrite physical production. Educational institutions could also provide training specifically around issues of cooperative management and social production.

The combination of a UBI facilitating the exit of people from the capitalist sector of the economy, new technologies facilitating the development of noncapitalist forms of production, and a congenial local state to provide better infrastructure for these initiatives, means that over time the sector of the economy organized through social power could develop deeper roots and expand in as yet unforeseen ways.

All of this would occur, it is important to stress, within capitalism, and thus inevitably these noncapitalist forms of production would have to find ways of positively articulating to the imperatives of capitalism. Many inputs to the noncapitalist sector would be themselves produced by capitalist firms; producers in the noncapitalist sector would purchase some of their consumption, perhaps most, from capitalist firms; and the state's production of public goods would also often involve contracts with capitalist firms. Even after this new configuration stabilized, the state would still be superintending an economy within which capitalism remained prominent, and almost certainly dominant. But the dominance of capitalism would be reduced insofar as it imposed much weaker constraints on the ways people gain their livelihoods and open new possibilities for on-going struggles to enlarge the scope of social power within the economy.

There is, of course, nothing inevitable about this trajectory. There is certainly no guarantee that a basic income would ever be instituted, or if it were instituted, that UBI would be accompanied by the kinds of state initiatives to create supportive infrastructure for the expansion of democratic, socially empowered forms of economic activity. There is also certainly no guarantee that an unconditional basic income would be used by its recipients to construct socially empowered economic structures. UBI can also be used purely for individual consumption. As Philippe van Parijs argues, UBI redistributes ‘real freedom’ to people and thus enables beachcombers and couch potatoes as well worker cooperatives and the social economy. The specter of parasites exploiting those who work is one of the potent moral arguments against UBI, and such arguments could certainly block political efforts for UBI, or at least result in adding undesirable conditionalities to the program.<sup>15</sup> What’s more, an unconditional basic income sufficiently generous to set in motion a dynamic expansion of noncapitalist economic activities would be costly, although by no means beyond the fiscal capacity of capitalist states, and so it is likely that if a UBI were to be passed it would be set at a level below the culturally respectable standard of living. This would also undermine its dynamic effects.

For these reasons, the prospects for eroding capitalism, aided by unconditional basic income and other interventions of the capitalist state, depends in significant ways upon political mobilization and struggles over the state. If the limits of possibility inscribed in the capitalist character of the state are so narrow as to prevent state actions that have the effect of facilitating the growth of these kinds of noncapitalist economic processes, then the prospects are remote. But if, as Therborn suggests, the class character of different appa-

---

15. There are many possible conditions that could be appended to a basic income proposal: for example, there could be ‘social contribution’ requirements in which a person would have to provide evidence of some productive contribution in order to receive a basic income; or there could be means testing, so only people below a certain income or wealth level can receive a basic income. Some conditionalities would destroy the positive dynamic effects of a BI; others would simply weaken those effects.

ratures can vary quite a bit, if the democratic class struggle can in some circumstances dilute the dominance of the capitalist character of some state apparatuses, and if disjunctures between present problem-solving and future consequences is possible, then it is possible that a significant growth of the space for economic activity built around democratic, egalitarian and communitarian values could be possible.

## References

- Ackerman, Bruce, Alstott, Anne and Parijs, Philippe van (2006) *Redesigning Distribution: Basic Income and Stakeholder Grants as Alternative Cornerstones for a More Egalitarian Capitalism*. London: Verso.
- Cohen, G.A. (2000) *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense*, expanded edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fung, Archon and Wright, Erik Olin (2003) *Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. London: Verso.
- Miliband, Ralph (1970) 'The capitalist state – Reply to Nicos Poulantzas', *New Left Review* 59.
- Miliband, Ralph (1973) 'Poulantzas and the capitalist state', *New Left Review* 82.
- Offe, Claus (1974) 'Structural problems of the capitalist state: Class rule and the political system. On the selectiveness of political institutions', in Beyme, Klaus von (ed.) *German Political Studies*, vol. 1. London: Sage, pp. 31–54.
- Parijs, Philippe van (1995) *Real Freedom for All: What (if Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Poulantzas, Nicos (1969) 'The problem of the capitalist state', *New Left Review* 58.
- Poulantzas, Nicos (1976) 'The capitalist state', *New Left Review* 95.
- Therborn, Göran (1978) *What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules?* London: Verso.
- Wright, Erik Olin (2010) *Envisioning Real Utopias*. London: Verso.