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## Introduction

The scope of this book, the second in the series, is to provide an overview of the most popular ideologies. The goal is to provide a taxonomy as simple as possible of the prevailing concepts in the sphere of ideas to change the world. A taxonomy that is useful to have strategic discussions about how to get organized to effect change in a predictable, stable, effective and efficient way.

Therefore the different descriptions are limited to the main motivations and concerns that the ideology pretends to address, a brief historical note to provide context, and an analysis of shortcomings, pitfalls and undesired effects. With this we will be equipped to consider mixing and matching different aspects of different ideologies with the goal of achieving the desired positive results and avoiding the unwanted effects.

It is not in the scope of this book to provide a detailed description or list all the many different flavors for each of them. Each label just captures the essence of a variety of ideological proposals in a certain cluster of ideas. Many thinkers have contributed to shape that cluster of ideas and none of them would identify with the essence that is presented here. Neither would probably anyone who considers themselves as a member of that ideology identify with the description. Ideologies have a lot of variance in different places and throughout history, which are not captured here, on purpose. Such variations are not relevant for having a fundamental strategic discussion, without getting into tactical implementation details.

Also, don't be surprised if none of the major institutions who describe themselves with some of the labels discussed here, have anything at all to do with the content presented here. I.e, a political party that describes themselves as liberal, or conservative might not match either of the definitions presented.

That shouldn't be surprising, since organizations tend to choose their labels according to what is trendy in their environment, not on what they strive for. A well known case is terrorist organizations. Even though they might describe themselves as Christian or Islamic, actual practitioners of those faiths tend to dispute such claims. As a side note, successful political parties are not that different from terrorist organizations. Aside from the pretense to use legal means to access power, they tend to use power to kill adversaries even more than terrorists do.

There are two human activities that are almost as futile as they are popular: predicting the future and persuading others to give up on their core beliefs. This text doesn't aim at either of those.

The discussion that follows is not meant to convert the infidel. If you identify with one or several of the presented ideologies, the concerns listed are unlikely to make you change your allegiance. And if you know someone who does, chasing them down with these arguments is unlikely to gain you their favor.

Hopefully though, if you are already questioning those beliefs the arguments here will help you complete the journey. Also, if you have already abandoned them, hopefully the following arguments will give you extra clarity on what's wrong with them, so that you can have a clearer mindset when considering alternatives.

Some of the discussions that follow point out that certain beliefs have contributed to specific economic or social trends. That is meant to be descriptive rather than predictive. Trends are caused by the interaction of many different memes that become symbiotic and push society in a certain direction. If one of those supporting memes would die out that cluster of memes could become too weak to be a driving factor of history, even if the particular belief discussed would still be popular, maybe as part of a different constellation of memes, pushing towards an entirely different direction. That's one of the reasons why attempting to predict the future is a futile endeavor.

One such example, as we'll see in the lines that follow, is the same liberal ideas about individual freedom have, at a different points in history, both been a driver to reinstate and to abolish slavery.

## **Liberalism**

Liberalism is an ideology that appeared in the European Middle Ages with the express purpose of replacing the prevailing ethos. When it appeared, as is often the case with novelty, it was a totally fringe movement. Their ideas were seen as more than just weird, they were seen as completely preposterous, if not outright

blasphemous. And yet, it succeeded enormously and it has become hegemonic in the western part of the world. Some sociologists, fittingly, call the areas where it succeeded WEIRD ( Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic ).

In fact, it has become so hegemonic that it's virtually impossible to describe any ideology without putting it in contrast to it. Even conservatism, that it's often seen as an ideology competing at the same level, is no more than a poor attempt to patch Liberalism's most egregious aspects. We'll look at that later.

Before that though, let's look at the main characteristics of Liberalism, and assess, with the help of hindsight and science, how outlandish they actually are. Later, in the fourth and last book of the series, we'll cover the history of how it succeeded.

### **Individualism, scarcity and voraciousness**

Individualism is the main defining characteristic of liberalism. It is the idea that humans are independent entities, separated from each other. That each human is a kind of black box of needs, desires and aspirations, and that each one of them acts selfishly to fulfill them.

This idea was seen as completely ridiculous when it was first formulated. All the cultural and ethical traditions had, up to that point, seen selfishness a threat, and had instead emphasized the shared nature of human existence.

As we saw earlier, contemporary science is aligned with the ancient focus on the collective nature of humans. Is not only that, from a practical perspective, humans are not able to survive individually, or even to form complex concepts due to the collective nature of mind. We actually need strong emotional bonds with others to remain healthy and sane.

Liberalism manifests itself essentially as a quest to build societies where people can pretend to be individuals disconnected from each other. This feat is achieved by progressively replacing human relationships with transactional relationships. Instead of people helping each other get things done, people work in exchange for pay and they use their money to buy what they need or fancy. Nowadays people can presumably get all their basic needs met without caring at all about the humans who meet them.

This now seems completely natural but in the middle ages nobody used money for their everyday needs and interactions, and the idea felt completely alien. One could argue that the concept of a market-based society is not opposed to a society with people caring about each other. It seems reasonable to think that it is not possible to care about the people on the other side of the world who manufacture the stuff we consume, but that this should not be a problem. The globalization of trade makes the economy much more efficient and therefore we should all have more time available to care about each other in our communities. We'll have more availability to care about the people in our community and

those who produce the goods we consume will have more availability to care about the people in their community. Everybody wins!

As time has progressed however these theoretically nice effects of trade haven't materialized. On the contrary the trend to replace human care with market relationships has become more and more entrenched and now is common in the WEIRD countries that people use money even to pay for everyday care in their closest relationships, for their children and for their elders. Even long term romantic caring relationships seem to be falling out of fashion. As people see their romantic partners as transactional investments the nature of the relationships shift from long term commitment to short term rewards.

Together with individualism, liberalism relies heavily on the concepts of scarcity and voraciousness. Liberals believe that there aren't enough resources in the world for everybody. This concept nicely reinforces individualism, because, if we were still living in Paradise, surrounded with abundance, why bother competing and fighting with each other?

Another key supporting element is the notion of voraciousness. We humans are insatiable. Even if we are fully fed and clothed we'll hoard as many resources as we can, even if that means seeing our neighbors starve naked in the cold. This aspect works nicely to produce a self-fulfilling prophecy through indoctrination. As seen at the onset of the covid pandemic, and repeated in jokes *ad-nauseam*, even when there is plenty of toilet paper for everybody, when the hoarding programming gets triggered, all the supermarket shelves go empty.

## **Pseudoscientific magic thinking**

It's very difficult to sell the raw idea that it's ok to let humans be as selfish as they want. It would seem that if everybody just cares about their own interest, they try to hoard all available resources and use them at their own discretion, that everybody would be worse off. It's plain to see that when, for example, two countries go to war with each other. Often people from both sides lose, as their cities and infrastructures are destroyed by bombings and their families suffer lost of life in large numbers.

Why would it be any different when it's individual people that compete with each other? Liberalism's solution to this conundrum is to restrict competitiveness in the sphere of peaceful trade. Liberalism encourages people to compete with each other, not by using brute force and plundering each other's resources and setting each other's factories on fire, but instead, with the use of ingenuity. Thus, liberals argue, people will be encouraged to use their inherent competitive instincts, not in a destructive way, but in a creative way. They'll work hard to find more efficient ways to produce and distribute goods and services. In this way, they will be able to sell them cheaper, which will give them more market share than their competitors, and therefore, they'll make more money. In this model, everybody wins, since everybody is a consumer. Therefore, everybody

benefits from prices that, as time passes, become lower and lower, due to the combination of competition and creativity.

Liberals back up this theory with mathematical modeling of societies, and they claim to prove that, under certain conditions, like for example that everybody has some money to use, which they get from a “negative tax”, if they don’t have a job, the system works wonderfully. Both for individual actors (workers) and collective actors (nations). However, as we have seen playing out historically, the tide of progress hasn’t lifted all boats equally. Instead, rich people and rich nations tend to become richer, and poor ones tend to become poorer. There are of course exceptions, which are mystified with concepts such as “the american dream”, but, by and large, the data does not support the liberal theories.

Sometimes, when data doesn’t support their theories, liberals claim that there is no government that truly implements liberalism, and, if they would just get rid of all the remaining regulations, protections, social services and so on, all the things that interfere with the markets, then, magically, all of a sudden, things would fall into place and wealth would pour into the pockets of all citizens. This kind of ideological all-or-nothing thinking, rather than thinking in terms of concrete tools to be used to solve particular problems, is a characteristic of liberalism’s pseudoscientific thinking.

Another one is the tendency to give agency to their models. Liberals often talk about “the invisible hand of the market”, like a divinity that would impose its will into people’s life. They often talk about markets as if they were alive beings, gods to whom society must please to avoid their wrath. When the markets are “suffering” liberals advise governments to impose “austerity measures on the population”, in the same way that religious authorities of yore would advise penitence when the crops would suffer from drought, pests or other calamities. Thus, in the liberal discourse, despite the emphasis on individual freedom, our collective creations are not at our service, but we are instead, at their service and mercy.

This idea again was totally opposite to medieval thought. Back then it was quite obvious that markets were human creations, and as such, tools to be utilized to achieve certain goals. One could design markets, giving out licenses to operate and setting prices, according to certain social goals. For example, making sure that there are few enough licenses so that all the artisans can make a good living, and also that prices are low enough so that the common people can afford the products.

## **Rule of law, State, Nation and Balance**

One obvious gap in the liberal ideology as presented up to here is how to explain why people, who are by nature selfish and violent, would agree to abide by the rules of peaceful trade. Based on liberalism’s dogmas one would easily conclude that markets wouldn’t develop metaphorical aggressive cut-throat competition, but instead, actors would literally engage in cutting actual throats.

The rule of law covers this gap. Since people are rational they see that it is in everybody's interest to abide by fair competition rules, and therefore, through a social contract, they all agree to both abide by those rules and set up a series of institutions to enforce them. Therefore the courts are created to decide who is violating the agreement that they have voluntarily entered into, and the police and penitentiary systems are there to catch and punish those who do.

The apparatus of making laws and managing their enforcement by the use of force is collectively known as the State. The concept of the State presents further difficulty, since it's quite obvious that the people in charge will be in a position of power, and therefore, they will be tempted to use that power for their own personal benefit. Since the whole point of liberalism is to create a system where each individual has the freedom to compete with each other in equal terms, it is necessary to organize the State in a way that acts upon the will of the people, instead of being a tool for the benefit of those who run the show.

At the same time the founding liberal thinkers acknowledged that a democratic government would be a chaos and would be unable to get anything done. Therefore, they devised a way to strike a balance between the will of the people and operational effectiveness. They were very explicit against democracy and in favor of republicanism. However, with the passage of time, the word democracy has lost its fearful connotations, and now republicanism is called representative democracy. Which makes it more legitimate and also, in a rather ironic way, compatible with monarchy.

The balance is achieved by not letting people directly decide on what the government policies will be, and instead let people only vote on who their representatives will be. To further reduce the chance of chaos, further stabilizing algorithms are used. Like the law d'Hondt, which gives more weight to the votes of bigger parties and less to the candidates of smaller parties. Some places implement winner-take-all voting strategies, or give all the power to whichever party gets more votes, even if they don't have the majority of votes or even representatives.

Furthermore, the power of the government gets divided into three different branches, the legislative, the executive and the judiciary, with the goal of people in one branch keeping the ones in the other branches in check.

All this apparatus makes for great theatrics and distraction, however, again, the data doesn't seem to support the liberal theories that such arrangements would lead to governments that would act in a way that somewhat reflects the will, the interests and the wellbeing of the people. The liberal experiment of representative democracy has been repeated every four or five years for the last three hundred years, in hundreds of governments around the world. We've got plenty of data to be rather confident of the results. And the data shows pretty consistently what seems rather obvious to be expected. That the people in governments are largely drawn from the narrow ranks of the privileged elites and that they rule for the benefit of such elites.

The concept of balance is fundamental in liberal thought. It embodies the belief that we can't possibly design systems which are in equilibrium when working for the purpose that they have been designed for. We can't possibly design governance institutions that, by their own dynamics, work for the good of the people. We can't possibly design markets that, on their own, work for the good of the people, and so on. We are condemned to live in a world where human constructions have a life of their own, and they naturally work against their human creators. The only hope that we have is to build multiple such systems that are in tension with each other, on top of being against society. The different branches of the government are in tension with each other, the whole government is in tension with the market, the free press is in tension with both, etc. Also it's necessary to keep the citizens actively alert to identify and compensate for any imbalance that might occur.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" is a famous liberal adage, often wrongly attributed to Thomas Jefferson. It's like saying that we can't possibly build an Artificial Intelligence that won't turn against its human creators, therefore, let's build several and keep them entertained fighting with each other, and let's keep a watch just in case one gains too much advantage, or suffers too many loses, to intervene and restore the balance. If we fail, one of them will dominate, and will be free to then attack humanity. It's quite a frightening thought which begs the question: why bother ?

This notion that we are fundamentally unable to intervene directly in the issues we care about is so ingrained in our societies that it manifests even in some of the ideologies that take aim at some of liberalism's dogmas. We'll see later in this section examples in feminism and environmentalism.

Liberalism considers the collective subject to be the nation, which is reflected even in the title of Adam Smith's 1776 book "The Wealth of Nations", one of the most celebrated books in history, and a cornerstone of the liberal gospel.

As such, similar concerns and solutions appear in the global theatre. Nations are not expected to be good neighbors on their own. They are supposed to care only for their own interests and be prone to invade and plunder each other. Therefore a number of global institutions are put in place to enforce the rules with each other. However, in the international scene, the constructions are much simpler, and there isn't even a pretence of equality. It's quite plain that the so-called global institutions are controlled by the biggest power, often by explicit design.

## **Deregulation, free market and free relationships**

Liberals assign a very narrow role to the State. Since the focus of liberalism is individual freedom, the role of the state is simply to enable that freedom to be practiced in a fair environment.

Therefore the state is not supposed to create any regulation that would interfere with people interacting with each other. Liberals see market regulation and

taxes as government interferences in people's liberties. Therefore they want the government to charge the minimum taxes necessary to keep the state working in order to perform just the tasks of catching and punishing those who cheat the market, the people who harm and steal from others.

Liberalism is against using the state to support people with social services such as housing, education or health. Those are market interferences. According to their theories, society will work much better if everybody purchases those services from the market according to their own needs and preferences. If people don't have money, they should be generally able to get it from banks. The job of banks is to invest money wisely, and investing in health and education is a wise investment which is likely to give large returns to the investors, and therefore they will be safely able to pay back loans and interests.

On top of that, liberalism supports a "negative tax", a money handout from the government to those who can't get money from the free banking system. For example those who are too sick or too old to be wise investments from banks. In this way, their needs are supported by the free market in a way that is much more efficient than services being provided by bureaucrats. Since governments and bureaucrats need multiple layers of checks and balances, to tame their corrupt nature and prevent them from cheating through bribes and embezzlement, they can't possibly be as efficient as free markets. In the free markets the incentives are aligned against people cheating. Free market forces all the actors to produce the best service at the least cost, otherwise customers will go elsewhere and they will lose their business.

It is unclear however who would qualify for such a negative tax. The idea of handing out money to people who haven't planned for their retirement seems unfair and a way for the government to promote bad judgement. Maybe it would be better to let them die instead and limit the negative taxes to those who have unfairly suffered some unpredictable losses.

Liberalism encourages complete freedom for individuals to be who they want to be and relate to each other, as long as it's consensual. Therefore renting one's uterus for growing other people's children, selling one's organs, or even selling oneself into slavery are all considered fair and ethical endeavors. On a more positive note, consensual free love is also considered fair and ethical. Since it's not the State's business, or anybody's, to decide how individuals should relate with each other, it doesn't make sense for society to enforce heteronormative monogamous relationships based on binary gender roles. Likewise there is no reason to ban consensual sexual labor.

## **Pseudoscientific Historical narrative**

We all have heard the liberal historical narrative so many times, from so many places, from museums, economy books, popular history books, etc. that it seems so familiar and obvious that we would expect it to be true. More than true. An uncontested historical fact: once upon a time, our ancestors interacted

with each other via barter. It was inconvenient and therefore they invented coins. Later, in humanity's never-ending quest for convenience, virtual money was invented and took the shape of bank cards and electronic transactions.

The only problem with this inspiring narrative of ingenuity and progress is that it's completely and utterly false. It's not even a disputed academic topic. Ethnologists and anthropologists agree that there was never an ancient or "uncontacted" civilization where neighbors would trade with each other bartering. It never happened that trading a goat for a few chickens was the modus-operandi of civic relationships. Our ancestors had other kinds of relationships, very rich and diverse, some were entirely communal where everybody would share everything with everybody. Others were more fragmented, in which families would manage some resources on their own and also would help each other out in different ways. When they did so, they would owe each other favors, which were not countable or enforceable. And much less would bear interest!

As we'll see in the fourth and last book of this series, History actually happened in the opposite order. Virtual currency was invented first, in Mesopotamia at about 3000 BC. Coinage wasn't invented until much later, at around 500 BC. Barter is a very modern phenomena. It happens when people who are used to trading with money lose access to it, such as when a country collapses.

While it's hard to attribute authorship so far back in time, it's clear that both technologies, virtual currency and later coinage, succeeded because they were embraced by the military, as it facilitated the logistics of organizing and deploying troops. It's quite clear that it never happened that a few nearby towns decided, democratically, to join together to build a city and move there, where they would give up their mutual support economies in favor of the "convenience" of a trading economy. What happened is that people were conquered and forced to use money to pay for their tributes.

Another key aspect of liberal pseudoscientific history is the depiction of the European Middle ages as a very Dark period, where the common people were suffering greatly by being subjugated to their feudal lords. In reality however feudalism was a phenomena of the decadence of the Roman Empire at its end, and it mostly vanished when the West Roman Empire collapsed. Without the backing of the Empire (the State) the feudal lords lost most of their might and many people established themselves in free towns, where they were mostly self-governed. The interactions with the common people and the feudal lords was in many aspects more transactional than forced, where people would help the lords play their war games in order to gain something themselves.

In fact, in many areas of Europe, the common people's wealth peaked just before the liberals started to gain power, and then went down during the period of supposedly liberation that liberals call Enlightenment.

## **Progressive fallacy**

Another characteristic central to liberal historical narrative and thought is the concept of progress. Again, for the average medieval peasant, progress would have seemed a very alien concept. At that time technology advanced at a very slow pace and for all practical purposes people correctly perceived time, in their own time-frames, as something rather stable. Things had always been the same, they were the same for their parents and would be the same for their children.

Liberals however, using both mathematical methods and the historical record, correctly noticed that very subtle improvements of technology, even of 1% of productivity increase every few decades, while they would go unnoticed to the people living through that age, over time would result in exponential increases in productivity.

It is a fallacy however to assume, as liberals do, that an increase in productivity will result in an increase of wealth and wellbeing for the common people in society. Indeed, as Harari magistrally narrates in *Sapiens*, as History has progressed and technology improved, people have tended to work harder, longer hours, and suffer with poorer health and living conditions.

## **Misogynist, racist, enslaving and militarist**

The aspects discussed so far are part of Liberalism's DNA. There are two interesting aspects that were very strong in early liberalism, namely misogyny and racism, that seem quite at odds with the liberal principle of individual freedom. They are better understood as a product of historical coincidences, and therefore it is not surprising that liberals' positions on these issues have shifted over time. Still, it's interesting to be aware of their origin and evolution.

Liberalism was formulated at a time and place where women were considered to be at the mercy of their emotions, and therefore not entirely rational. Also, enlightenment heavily borrowed from the ancient Greek culture, which was one of the most misogynistic cultures ever, the first place in the world where women were forced to cover themselves in public.

The liberal credo is contingent on letting go of what our fallible emotions tell us, of letting go of our tendencies to care for each other, and instead submit ourselves to the superiority of the rational mind with the understanding that competing with each other is the best we can do for society. Therefore it's quite understandable that women, who have had more prominent roles in care, and who were seen as unable to restrain their emotions with their reasoning, were not considered agents in society. Also women were more associated with favoring peace over war, and liberalism is a very belligerent ideology. As liberals took power, countries embarked in colonizations and wars with their neighbors, as it would be expected for an ideology that promotes seeking wealth in pursuit of self-interest. French liberal revolutionaries guillotined female intellectuals, women were considered as less than human across Europe and they were banned

to have professional jobs, which they had done for centuries.

At the same time, the liberal revolutions sparked a increase in trade, and when that happens, usually there is an increase in slave trade as well. Europeans still preserved the memory of the Roman Empire slave institution. Their stories had survived through the practice of Christianity and Judaism. It was therefore very hard to make Europeans accept to go back to the good old times where anybody could be kidnapped and sold as a slave. In ancient Greece and Rome, slavery was seen as a fact of life, anybody could become slave, even the wealthy and educated, and they could be sold as, say, music or math teachers.

Instead, Europe turned to black Africa for the new wave of fashionable slavery and invented racism as part of the collection of sybiotic memes to make it tolerable for Europeans, for the citizens in Lisbon, Antwerp, etc. to have their ports used for slave trade between Africa and America. Racism allowed Europeans to see blacks as not quite human and therefore not deserving of the same humane treatment they were demanding for themselves.

Another important part of the cocktail of ideas that kept slavery acceptable, was, ironically, the idea of individual freedom itself. Officially, most slaves had not been brutally kidnapped. They had voluntarily sold themselves to repay the debts their families had incurred. It was customary for slave owners to allow slaves to have jobs and make money in their spare time, with which they could buy their freedom back. It was also customary for the owners to cheat the slaves, steal their money and don't let them become free. After all, they were subhuman and would fare much better under the supervision of a white master.

It's remarkable how liberalism has changed in this aspect during the last century. After the second world war liberals progressively let women have the freedom to work in some professions. Later liberals even allowed women to choose to be part-time men, wear a suit, and have real jobs, and then after work go back home and be women again and take care of their families.

Probably the fact that women are very present in many professional settings has been a key factor in finally letting liberals accept women as full human beings. Another probable important factor is that rationality has fallen out of fashion in the consumer market. Now there is a need for a discourse that keeps people working more hours than they need to, to make more money than they need, so that they can spend it frivolously in branding themselves with fashionable clothes, tech and activities in order to show their "authenticity". This is a behavior difficult to justify from the traditional liberal discourse of "maximizing utility", it is instead a kind of consumerism that celebrates emotional consumption.

Therefore, a society where people are free to choose their gender expression, even in non-binary ways, is much more symbiotic with the current merchant ethos.

At the same time, as farming and manufacturing has become more industrialized, and menial work has moved away from the WEIRD countries towards their ex-colonies, liberals have also conferred human status to people with darker skin

colors.

Society however has a lot of inertia, and even though liberalism is the hegemonic ethos in the west, women, and even much more non-whites, are still in considerable socioeconomic pressure compared to their whiter and maler peers.

It might seem quite a stretch, historically, to call liberalism an ideology that considers women and blacks as full human beings. However, for the sake of simplicity, in this discussion, we'll avoid the complexity of introducing more nuanced terms like capitalism, neo-liberals, libertarians, and so on. We will instead just use the word liberalism, loosely, to describe, basically, the ideology of the merchants of the time, and whatever social constructions favor expanding their markets at that moment.

## **How liberals want to make the world a better place**

Liberalism has been since inception a fanatically missionary ideology. Liberals strongly believed that their ideas were the key to make the world a better place and successfully managed to convert their neighbors over the course of just a few centuries (with the very convincing indiscriminate use of violence, as we shall see in the fourth book of this series).

Earlier on, liberals only made claims to improve the lives of men in their own countries. Being focused on material wellbeing they set out to find natural resources elsewhere and they had enormous successes. The Netherlands, England and France in particular, early bastions of liberalism, managed to colonize large portions of Asia, Africa and America, and enslave for trade and production quite a few of their population.

As technology has improved and the big profits have shifted from resource extraction to services, liberals have been able to make claims about helping all over the world, people of all colors, and also people who identify with other genders.

Liberals believe that the globalization of liberalism is the best way to end war and poverty everywhere. They notice for example that no two countries have gone to war when their trade balance is greater than their military spending. This claim conveys with sweet cynical clarity that State politics are about making profit, and if there is more profit to be made with peace than with war, governments will choose peace. Therefore they seek not only to eliminate regulations and trade barriers inside each State, but also to promote global free trade among States.

Liberals' promotion of free-trade globalization relies on two false beliefs. First, that globalization will benefit all nations equally, and second, that everybody in the nations that are benefitted will gain from it. As many people not blinded by liberal ideology predicted and history has shown, both beliefs are false. Some nations have suffered a lot from globalization of trade, for example those nations whose staple foods like fish or meat have value in the international market have

seen their resources sold far away, with negative impact on their population's nutrition. Even when nations have greatly benefited from it, such in the case of the USA, large segments of their population have suffered greatly. Liberals' economic models assume that when the economy shifts people will retrain into whatever the next hot thing is, but in reality, most people have difficulties changing sectors. As a result, when globalization pushed away millions of well-paid manufacturing jobs, the life quality and life expectancy of those who had had such jobs deteriorated. Indicators such as alcoholism and suicides spiked in that cohort.

### **Blind spots and pitfalls**

It is a trend in Human History that when people set out to achieve some improvements in society they often end up achieving the contrary. In the case of Liberalism, the ideology was allegedly designed to eliminate rent-seeking behaviors and increase individual freedom, and has largely achieved the opposite.

Rent-seeking behavior means to gain wealth out of wealth, rather than using one's wealth to generate value for society. Early liberals were appalled at the landed classes who would make money just by renting their Estates to peasants and contemporary liberals are just as appalled when they see monopolies abuse their power.

Liberalism therefore intended to build a framework which would force wealthy people to use their wealth to compete fairly in the market to provide goods and services. The framework includes tools like anti-monopoly laws. However liberalism is rather blind to the concept that wealth begets wealth, exponentially. Market competition is a winner-take-all game, by definition, and very soon, what could start looking like an ideal market with infinite providers competing with each other ends up with just two or three players, and oligopoly if not an outright monopoly. It's quite easy to see that as time goes on the most successful firms either buy out the least successful ones or drive them out of business.

Liberalism is also quite blind at the fact that wealth is power. Despite their attempts to address abuse of power with tools like the judiciary system which is supposed to be tasked with rooting out corruption, and the division of government in three different branches, still, the immensity of power conferred by the wealth of monopolies and oligopolies, is way beyond what those mechanisms can cope with.

History has shown time and again that the liberal organization of society entrenches power in a small cohort of people, who share the different roles of power both in governments and firms, and that governments end up creating regulations to strengthen the power of oligopolies and monopolies, rather than systematically nurturing competitive markets with large number of small players.

Nowadays the concentration of wealth and power in a few hands is much more extreme than when liberalism was formulated. The other side of the equation

means that the common people are suffering a much greater extraction of wealth from their work than before liberalism. And in practical terms it means that the common people have to work much longer, longer hours, longer years, in order to make a living. Nowadays people must work to just get access to the bare necessities of life, like housing, food, and health. Before liberalism people lived from the commons. They didn't have to pay for housing and food since they could build houses and farm on common land, and they had access to health through the common shared knowledge of healing practices. Despite having much less sophisticated technology than we currently have, not having to pay to the rent-seekers for the privilege of using land for a living meant that they spent much less time, and had more disposable wealth, than later, when liberals gave away the commons to the markets.

The historical balance therefore is that liberalism has failed in their intended goals. Instead of ending rent-seeking it has made it worse and instead of promoting people's individual freedom's it has made the common people live a more slave-like lives.

## **Reformist conservatism**

### **Brief definition**

Now that we have a model for liberalism, let's look at conservatism, the second main ideology in the western world.

The easiest way to understand it, is to see it as a common-sense reaction to liberalism's most visible pitfalls. An emerging property of markets is to replace human relationships with impersonal relationships, and as a result, to break down the fabric of society, and to break down communities.

Conservatives resent being treated as cogs in an economic machinery and the breaking down of their communities. They oppose liberalism by promoting values that strengthen communities and encourage treating people in the community as humans.

Conservatives don't have a long tradition of philosophers outlining an alternative ideal world to liberalism and a strategy to achieve it. Rather, they have a patchwork of organizations, leaders and movements that are pushing tactical changes to local circumstances.

Conservative's main weakness is that they accept and promote the main social constructs from liberalism. They assume that the world is composed of nation-states, with governments that hold the monopoly on legitimate power, with a fair justice system, and who promote markets for labor, products and services, at least within the state. Therefore, they don't promote a change of paradigm, also known as a revolution, they just promote reforms in the aspects that they find objectionable.

## **How conservatives want to make the world a better place**

### **Economy**

The main concern for conservatives usually is the progressive impoverishment of the common people. In electoral terms they often frame it as the destruction of the middle class. This makes sense because those who are already destitute tend to give up on hope and not participate in elections, whereas those who still have access to some wealth, privileges and benefits, and they see how others are losing them, are more inclined to want to preserve them, and therefore more inclined to vote.

This is the root of the concept of conservatism, to avoid change, because change usually means that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Conservatives want to keep things as they are, as much as possible, to be able to cling on to their share of wealth and privileges.

Therefore progress is the enemy of conservatives. Technological progress means that the wealthy owners of the means of production will further automate their industries, which means that they will get an even bigger portion of the pie.

Conservatives target the elements that seem to be enabling the transfer of wealth to the richest and they try to ban them. A typical target is immigration. Since immigrants to a region often lack the social networks and connections to land them a well-placed job they tend to accept lower qualified and lower paid jobs, and work harder, longer hours, for less pay. Which one would expect that it would displace the local workers and create unemployment. Another typical target is trade agreements. Conservatives find it immoral that firms outsource their production or services to countries where labor is cheap, the same way that object to cheap labor coming over to them. Either way they perceive it as foreigners stealing their jobs and oppose it.

Conservative leaders are often mocked as populists for pushing these kinds of programs. They are told that trying to stop progress is like trying to stop a tide piling up buckets of sand at the beach. And indeed they are right, in a world that is based on trade and competition, trying to stop outsourcing and machine learning, or whatever is the current technological trend, is as likely to fail as conservatives in the past failed to prevent automobiles replacing horses or desktop computers replacing typewriters.

Given the emerging dynamics of for-profit markets are so strong, as we saw in the first book of this series, indeed trying to stop technological advances is like trying to prevent an ocean from producing a tide.

### **Rejection of reasoning**

Conservatives tend to come from the ranks of the victims of the weaponization of science, technology and mathematical modeling. Liberals have used such tools to promote political agendas which, in the context of a class struggle, have resulted

in a constantly increasing transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. In recent decades we have witnessed events such as globalization in the 80s and 90s, the rescue of financial institutions “too big to fail” during the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, and more recently, during the covid pandemic, the economic stimulus packages to compensate for the damage inflicted to the economy from the lockdowns. In all these cases, as in uncountable other cases before, the most vulnerable got hit the hardest, while the better off emerged even wealthier. In all these cases policies were justified by mathematical modeling that predicted that the common people would benefit from those interventions, and would suffer greatly if they were not implemented.

Unfortunately conservatives tend to learn the wrong lesson from being victims of mathematical modeling, science and technology. One could draw the right conclusion that those economic models are faulty, fix them so that they match the historical data, realize that there is no obvious way that in a market-based society wealth is distributed more uniformly, and impeach the whole system, while at the same time embracing technology, to be used for the benefit of all, rather than for the benefit of the owners of the planet.

Instead conservatives tend to reject the concepts of formal and critical thinking altogether. They tend to conclude that mathematical modeling, science and technology are inherently evil, and want to avoid them as much as possible.

Having rejected reason, conservatives are left with lesser technologies such as common sense, intuition, tradition and religious prescriptions from divine revelations.

We have seen how beautifully flawed the human mind is. As for traditions, they tend to stick around because they benefit the status quo of the powerful. And divine revelations don't need elaboration. Is therefore easy to realize why conservatives are doomed in their goal of making the world better.

### **Community and religion**

Conservatives correctly notice the absurdity in the liberal concept of individualism and tend to put the emphasis in their communities instead. Communities such as their towns or their religious congregations.

Religions tend to be symbiotic with big power, to help people cope with misery while keeping them away from revolting. Civic institutions on the contrary tend to empathise opposing power. Therefore, religious organizations tend to be stronger than civic organizations, as they get less resistance, and often help, from the powers-that-be.

Consequently conservatives tend to be religious. Not out of a calculated analysis of the different choices, since that modus operandi is not part of their ethos, but just as a simple matter of convenience. Religious organizations are just there, conveniently handy, and provide useful community cohesion which translates to companionship and mutual support. Also, let's not discount the placebo effect

of prayers and the fact that the practice of spirituality contributes to a mentally healthier life.

Since conservatives have the concept of community very prominent in their values, they easily embrace policies that are supposed to protect their communities from what they perceive as the excesses of the liberal unregulated markets. In particular policies that protect their community from the “others” who would steal their jobs.

During the covid pandemic we’ve seen the signature conservative combination of rejection of science and community protection in many anti-lockdown events. For conservatives the ability to interact with the members of their community is vital and therefore they find the lockdowns unacceptable. It would be quite easy to oppose lockdowns from a scientific and reasoned position. The science of attachment bonds between human adults is quite clear, and the data gathered since the earlier lockdowns supports it: the number of deaths due to suicide have spiked, as well as depressions, and drug abuse (legal and illegal), especially among women, and in particular, single mothers.

Therefore it is understandable that some people want to take the calculated risk of getting covid while socializing over the more certain risk of depression due to loneliness. How everybody weighs the risk on either side of the education varies person to person, depending on how extroverted they are and the risk factors associated with catching covid in their lifestyle.

Conservatives however haven’t come forward with such reasoning. Their participation in anti-lockdown events has been based on denying the science, often to absurd levels, like even denying that covid exists and feeding all sorts of ridiculous conspiracy theories.

### **Gender equity**

Historically, conservatives have been better equipped than liberals to deal with gender equity.

While early liberals didn’t consider women as fully human adults, and they saw them more like children incapable of individual autonomy, conservatives have always seen women as equally valuable members of society than men.

Conservatives believe in the non-scientific idea of binary sex and gender, and promote a social construction where people’s roles are assigned according to the binary sex/gender assigned at birth. Both women and men are equal in front of God, both have a complete soul, and both are assigned tasks critical for the wellbeing of the community.

This difference explains why historically women have tended to be more conservative and men more liberal. A dramatic case was the Spanish civil war of 1936-1939 where tens of thousands of women volunteered to support the conservative uprising and acted as clandestine agents to subvert the ruling liberal

government. When the uprising succeeded many families were split, with the surviving men having to flee for their lives, to a lifelong exile, while women remained.

If we extend the concept of conservatism far back in history to “whatever pragmatic solutions people come up with to resist the pressure of the markets”, we can even see Patriarchy itself, as conservative invention to protect women from markets.

As we’ll see in book four, the markets have generally been about enslaving women for domestic labor. Men in contrast have historically been considered useless and discarded (assassinated during conquests). Therefore women have had a considerable market value for being traded as slaves. As markets evolved, being a woman became more and more hazardous.

Eventually patriarchy evolved as a compromise between the market and the communities. Women were considered properties of their male protectors, their father or husband, and couldn’t be taken as slaves as long as their protectors had good credit. In exchange, free women were allowed to cover their faces with scarfs to signal that they were not merchandise. Non-free women were subject to harsh punishments if they were caught covering up.

Patriarchy illustrates the quintessential conservative ethos. There is an absolute lack of analysis of the problem (the market). Instead, the status-quo is taken from granted (we can’t possibly remove the market from society) and a pragmatic workaround is devised to protect, not all women, but only our women, those that belong to our community. Not surprisingly, with the passage of time, the memes of segregating women between merchandise and free citizens took a life of their own and brought unintended consequences. After a few centuries women disappeared from social life and professional environments and misogyny spread.

During the last century however, after WWII, liberalism has evolved to be attractive to women as well. Where conservatism offers a single role for women, the role of a housewife married to a bread-winner man, liberalism offers some extra choices. The recommended path is to share the household and career responsibilities equally marrying a “new masculinity” kind of man. There are also other acceptable options, like the woman being the bread-winner and the man taking care of the household, or the woman making a family on her own, assuming the full responsibilities for both career and household work.

Since more choice is always portrayed as better by the (liberal-dominated) media, the liberal credo is usually portrayed as preferable to women than the conservative one. We’ll look later, at the section about feminism, in which cases that’s the case and which cases is not. For now, suffice to say that a large percentage of female voters don’t seem convinced by the argument, since liberal/conservative votes are no longer split along gender lines.

Consistent with liberals’ interests in choices and conservatives’ preference for clear roles, other arrangements such as non-binary genders and non-monoogamous

relationships are gaining more acceptance among liberals than among conservatives.

## **Politics**

One could caricature most governments (without being too far-fetched) as voracious beasts that grow ever bigger. Governments tend to solve every problem by expanding themselves with a new branch or agency. Is there corruption? An anti-corruption agency. Is there poverty? A welfare agency. Is the anti-corruption agency corrupt? A transparency agency. Etc.

This seems to be an emerging feature of governments. Conservatives however, don't see it this way and instead associate it to the will of whoever is running the government, often liberals. Which is ironic, since liberals aim at the leanest government possible and want to delegate as much as possible to the market.

In spite of wrongly assigning blame, however, conservatives see right through this (often well-intentioned) scam and realize that adding more layers into an already messy government tends to result in more complexity, which makes the government functioning even more inscrutable, more red tape, which makes it more difficult to get anything done for the benefit of the common people (although, curiously, tax cuts and benefits for the richest seem to go through ever faster), and ultimately, more nepotism, more elitism, more friends of the privileged getting a civil servant job for life with little accountability and dubious value to the population.

Conservative's solutions to governance tend to be in the opposite direction: leaner governments.

This is, therefore, one area where both liberals and conservatives agree, even though for slightly different reasons, as liberals put their trust in the markets, and conservatives more in communities and families. And yet, curiously, even in places where there is a well established dynamic of alternating power between liberals and conservatives, with little interference from social-democrats, this dynamic is still quite strong, pointing to an emergent behavior rather than a premeditated goal.

Conservatives have a very different relationship with power than liberals. Liberals are blinded to the power conveyed by wealth, they don't see any problem with people becoming rich, since to them it means they are being rewarded by society for their contributions. They trust their own organizational structures to prevent power abuses, and, in the rare cases when such cases come to light, they attribute it, scandalized, to a rare case of corruption that slipped through the institutional safety measures.

Conservatives on the other hand see power all too clearly. They despise those in power who use it for themselves rather than to help their community. They despise the entrenched power between the ivory tower scholars who move through

the revolving doors of the halls of power, in corrupt governments, greedy corporations and brain-washing universities. They believe that power can't be avoided and they aspire instead to put one of their own, or at least somebody with a heart and soul, who would care for them, in power.

Unlike liberals, conservatives don't place much value in fair democratic process and equitable voting rights. Liberals see competitive democratic elections as one more market, where candidates compete, and the one with the best product (policy proposals in their program) wins.

Conservatives see governance more as a matter of nurturing relationships with different leaders and communities and less as a matter of formal policies. They are more attracted to the Great Men leadership style and want their leaders to be strong in temperament and in morals, and tend to be less fuzzy about how their leaders gain and retain access to power.

On the flipside, conservatives tend to be blind to the performative nature of power, and tend to believe that a leader who claims to have people's interest at heart is truthful.

In the international arena, conservatives tend to be less interventionist than liberals. While liberals have an insatiable missionary drive to spread their gospel all over the world, conservatives instead prefer to deal with international affairs by leaving other people (communities) alone, and trust that they'll figure it out themselves.

On the flip side, however, their focus on "their own community" makes them even more likely than liberals to fall for the fallacy of the national "virtual community". Therefore, they are easier to be tricked with the manufacturing of enemies that supposedly pose an existential threat to the nation.

## **Acceptance and sanity**

Conservatives see the world in a rather simple and intuitive way. They tend to have an easier time accepting things as they are and not fighting for things they can't change.

They see it as obvious that, despite people getting meaning from life by belonging to families and extended communities, they still try, to some extent, to be selfish. Likewise, they accept that since men are stronger and more aggressive than women they'll get the positions of power, and that more beautiful and cunning women will marry the successful men in the powerful families.

Also, they accept that everybody has a certain place in the community. Women have certain roles and men have certain other roles.

This ability of not looking beyond appearance and the willingness to take the role that has been given spares conservatives from the anxiety of the paradox of choice. Also accepting things as they are rather than trying to fight them, gives conservatives an advantage to stay sane while embedded in a dysfunctional

society. Buddhists defined psychological pain a long time ago as the distance between reality and desire, and modern psychological research concurs that conservatives tend to be happier than liberals.

The flip side is of course, the same as in all “tight” cultures. A tight culture is one where people are expected to conform to the social norms and roles, and will complain to those who transgrade them.

In conservative communities those who transgrade their gender, sexual or other roles pose a danger to the cohesion of the whole community. If one person is allowed to do so publicly then all the people that accept the whole social construction might start having doubts, which might fuel more transgressions, and lead to the collapse of the group. Therefore conservatives tend to believe that it’s appropriate to severely punish the transgressors, with prison or death. At some times in history, some conservatives even believed that people could be cured of their transgressions and thought that the most compassionate way to deal with, for example, same sex relationships, was therapies, often using electroshocks. A contemporary manifestation of this reasoning is the Islamic Republic of Iran, which simultaneously offers free sex-changing surgery to it’s citizens and punishes with death homosexual sex.

In summary, conservative communities tend to provide an easier way to feel happy and fulfilled for the majority of the group that conforms to their social constructions but that comes at a great cost to the minority who doesn’t.

## **How does it plays out**

For millennia memes that we would nowadays associate with a conservative ideology have been opposing the perceived abuses of the market to vulnerable populations. Back in biblical times pastoralists were already criticizing the cities, the despicable Babilon, for dehumanizing people, making them work in menial works and pushing them towards crime and prostitution.

For as long as conservatives have been defending the traditional lives of nomadic pastoralists and sedentary towns of farmers, cities have been gaining power. Nowadays nomadic pastoralists are gone and small-town farming is nearly extinct as well.

Plainly, conservatism has failed in the goal of promoting small traditional communities, where people can live from working the land, or trading services with farmers and pastoralists. They have failed at protecting their own from the market, from being forced to work for a salary and being at the mercy of capricious employers and economic crisis. They have failed as well at protecting their community members from having their utilities cut off if they don’t pay the bills, or being evicted from their homes, unrooted from their communities and forced to sell themselves to Babylon.

The main reason why it has failed is because it has been focusing on the symptoms instead of the causes. In a way, it has even accelerated the demise of autonomous

communities by promoting the mirage that it is possible that such communities exist as part of a wider for-profit market, where people in the community trade goods with the outside, to get money to purchase technology and energy that they cannot produce. They have distracted people by putting the focus on resisting technological and social advances rather than focusing on the sovereignty of the community. Once a community accepts property rights on their resources, and accepts to be part of a wider market, where the finance instruments such as banking, money and credit are managed by outsiders, it's rather inevitable that outside capital will come in and rip the community apart by buying bits and pieces of it and forcing locals out.

## Bipartidism dance

Western “representative” “democracies” tend to have two major parties who alternate in power. This happens due to explicit design and not through emerging behaviors. The designers took care to add rules in the system such as grouping votes in small geographical areas, and then picking one or few representatives from each area, in a way that smaller parties cannot pool the votes across the whole voting populations to get even a single representative. Other popular rules that benefit the biggest parties are the law d’Hondt (used almost everywhere) and the “majority-takes all” votes distribution (used for example, in most USA states for presidential elections).

This bias in design is not surprising since both major ideologies that influence such designs are profoundly anti-democratic. Liberals abhor the idea that common people could have a direct say in the governance, and want them to choose representatives among the learned elite. Conservatives favor strong, unified, leadership over a choir of diverse voices.

On top of the explicit systemic bias towards bigger parties, there is a secondary, behavioral bias, which is the “utility vote” or the “lesser of two evils” phenomenon. When people know that voting their preferred actor, a small party, is going to be a wasted vote because it is going to be rounded off, they tend to vote for one of the two major parties instead, the one that they find less objectionable. In other words voting is often a negative act, the act of voting to prevent the other major party from winning.

As a result the political campaigns tend to be polarizing, demonizing the other party, and calling people to the polls with a message that boils down to “we know we suck but the other party is evil so you must vote for us to avoid them getting into power”. This in turn creates the illusion that most people favor one of the two major parties, or that they don’t care enough to vote.

In recent years there have been pushes for more democratic elections. As a result alternative vote counting algorithms, such as ranked voting, are gaining popularity. Ranked voting allows everybody to express their true preferences, to vote positively, without fear of their vote being discarded. Voters rank different

candidates or parties according to their preference, and if their preferred one doesn't have enough votes to win a seat, then their vote goes to their second preference, and so on. In this way at least dissent can be expressed and measured. One could for example vote for an anarchist party that proposes dismantling the government and private property with the full knowledge that they have no chance to win, and put as second, third, or fourth option whatever seems to be the lesser of the two big evils in that particular contest. This would at least achieve visualizing that there are some people who object to the status-quo.

Anyway, so far, the democratization efforts in the western countries have achieved very little and, by and large, alternating power between two major parties is the most common government dynamic.

Typically those parties don't neatly correspond to one liberal and one conservative, as defined here. Typically both parties have elements of both, plus many elements from other ideologies. Often one has more elements of one of the two ideologies than the other, and that modulates their discourse, but not necessarily. Sometimes they are mixed and so is their discourse.

In any case, there is a tendency for an interesting emerging behavior in bipartidism, which is that each party tends to push for a more centralized, stronger, and despotic government structure, in complementary ways. Each party tends to pass reforms that would be politically really hard for the other one to push for, and yet, when the power alternates, the other party doesn't undo them. Often, they make use of a big scare to have more leverage. As Naeomi Klain documented in *Shock Doctrine*, the elaborate legislation that tends to be passed in a rush after a catastrophe is not improvised on the spot, and doesn't have anything to do about responding to the crisis. It had been written long ago, and parked in a drawer, waiting for the right moment to push it through, for the combination of a crisis that makes people too busy, distracted or scared to resist, and the right actors in the government to do business with.

Let's look at a few examples

- An ongoing one is the push for censorship with the excuse that, with > the threat posed by the covid pandemic, there is misinformation > that is too dangerous to let loose. This is something that > conservatives would have a hard time pushing for, as they would be > attacked by liberals as pushing towards authoritarianism. > Liberals, on the other hand, can easily get a pass on it, since > they have a pro-freedom and anti-authoritarian discourse, and > people believe they wouldn't push for anything that would enable > authoritarianism, and therefore they don't resist. However, it's > very likely that when conservatives take over, since they do like > authoritarianism, they won't revoke the censorship laws and they > will use it for their own gains
- In the recent past we had all the emergency surveillance powers > granted to the governments with the excuse of fighting the "war on > terror" in the wake of the 2001 September 11 counter-attacks. > Whoever was in

the opposition at that time, in different western > countries, haven't really bothered to revoke them since

- The periodic cuts on social services since the Soviet Bloc started > faltering in the 1980s and the capitalists didn't need anymore to > pretend anymore to care for the common people, since there was no > longer a major alternative discourse. Whatever the crises that > have been used as excuses, the cuts haven't been reverted during > more favourable times.
- In some European States, the "progressive" parties passed taxes on > blank media to pay to copyright holders to compensate them for > unauthorized digital copies. This meant a direct transfer from the > government to private firms, in a similar fashion that in the USA > the infamous Obama Care passed an "individual mandate" that forced > individual citizens to buy private insurance, or else be fined. > Surprisingly this one was repealed by the Trump administration. > Although Trump was a bit of an outlier, which makes it a bit less > surprising.

The take-away point here is the following: both major parties represent the same interests while pretending to have the interest of the common people at heart. This makes it very difficult for a dissenting voice to come into government and revert the trend, towards less repression, less wars, and reverting wealth distribution that has historically been flowing from the poor to the rich. Furthermore, even though both of them loudly accuse each other of fascist, it's their collaboration that is literally moving western governments towards fascism, as per the classical definition of an authoritarian government that fuses the state with the corporate interests. The authoritarian elements of surveillance, censorship, punishing dissent and whistleblowers are being put in place piece by piece, often spearheaded by the USA and followed by their client regimes. The mingling of state and corporate interests has always been there and is getting more accentuated with every removal of regulations and made violently plain every time a law is passed that forces citizens to literally pay tribute to their corporate overlords.

On the surface it might seem that the alternating power between both big parties is healthy because they don't let the other go to extremes, but the reality is completely disconnected from their discourses. Theoretically both parties oppose big corporations and big government, and yet, governments steadily increase their taxes and control a bigger portion of the economy while wealth redistribution is increasingly flowing from the poor to the rich.

Power is becoming more entrenched and at the same time the spectrum of what behaviors and thoughts are acceptable is narrowing. As a consequence, the window of opportunity for creating an alternative global dynamic, one that is supportive of life, happiness and fulfillment, might be closing.

## Paradigm shifters: Communism / Anarchism

### Conceptual framework

Conceptually, there are three main ways in which groups of humans relate to each other in the group.

1. Hierarchy: power and decisions flow from the top to the bottom.
2. Trading: individuals have equal access to markets of goods and > services, and their power depends on a combination of their wealth > and their skills to manage that wealth.
3. Communism: property is held as a group, not individually. Everybody > is expected to participate in the satisfaction of each other's > needs (i.e. in the economy) according to their capacity, and the > resources are distributed equitatively to everybody in the group > according to their needs, independent of their status or > contributions to the economy.

In practice, human collectives often mix the three elements in an infinity of combinations.

### Ancient communists

For most of human history, most communities had predominantly communist cultures. However, there have been large societies where the prevailing way of relating has been trading or hierarchy for about 5000 years. In this context large means that most people in the group are beyond the circle of close relationships of the individual, which started happening with the advent of the cities. In the last few centuries, cultures with predominantly trading and hierarchical relationships have become almost universal.

For as long as there have been societies with predominantly market-based human relationships there have been reactions against them. We've already seen the reactionary kind of reaction, the conservative one, that tries to patch over the symptoms of the destruction of human relationships created by the market, and shift towards more hierarchical social organizations, where human relationships are more centric to society.

There has been another kind of response that dates as far back in time. One that, instead of being reactionary, has been more conscious. Also, it has responded both to markets and hierarchy as well.

This response is communism. Our ancestors a few thousands of years ago were sharing the planet with nomadic bands. And if the oppression in the cities would become too strong to be unbearable they would go back to the nomadic bands. Sometimes they would do so in such large numbers they'd have the strength to come back and ransack the city.

Another option would be to make intentional settlements, away from the centers

of power, in the cracks between empires, hoping that they were too far to be conquered. Ancient Taoists, escaping from the Chinese rules, often took this approach. Ancient Christians on the other hand, instead of joining the barbarians or finding some available land to settle beyond the empire's borders, favored clandestinity. It is often forgotten that ancient Christians were in many aspects the opposite of modern Christians. They were a bunch of rebels opposing the rule of the Roman state. They favored communism, sharing all properties together and opposing hierarchy or gender roles. They condemned all the pillars of the State: private property, trade, war, the farce of the justice system, etc.

The main point about the ancient communist ideologies though, is that they really understood human nature. They understood that what makes us human is the experience of helping each other and building together a social reality based on that mutual support. They understood that certain social dynamics like market and hierarchy lead to the opposite social construction and that a radical departure from them is necessary to be able to live in a humane way.

This separates communist ideologies from the main currents of thought that instead seek to accept or justify things as they are. Liberal thinking sees the market dynamics in society and tries to justify them by postulating an individualistic and selfish human nature that is opposite to our scientific understanding. Conservatives see the negative social and individual effects created by market dynamics but they don't see the causes. Instead they try to prevent such dynamics by taking refuge in their communities, inserted in the market, and leaning towards hierarchy to restore order from the chaos created by the market.

## **Modern revolutionary communism**

At around the 19th century, after about 5 millenia with the dynamic of market and hierarchy becoming dominant forces in centers of power around the world, and groups of people trying to create more humane communities either beyond the edges of power or in clandestinity, it became apparent that there weren't anymore any safe places to run or to hide. Different governments aspired to take over all the corners of the world and to have complete control of their societies.

Therefore, thinking about revolutionary ways to deliver communism became logical and popular. A revolution means a fast-paced change in some dominant dynamics of the society. Fast-paced is relative to the pace of change of society at that given point in history. The first agricultural revolution started 10.000 years ago and it took a few milenia for agriculture to become predominant. The second agricultural revolution, also known as the Industrial Revolution, took a mere few decades.

Revolutionary communism means to find a way for society at large to realize that the technology that they are using for governance and economic management is very deficient, and to embrace instead the much superior technology of communal social and economic organization.

It's important to notice the difference between a revolution and a revolt or uprising. A revolution happens fast in historical terms, but it usually happens slowly in terms of the lives of individuals. In a revolution new ideas are adopted progressively, one institution, one firm, at a time, and after a while it has become the new norm, without there being a sudden transition. A revolt or uprising usually happens when a large part of the population is upset with their rulers, but usually, it doesn't have a political agenda for changing the technologies used in governance. As a result, even if the revolt seems successful, in the sense that rulers are ousted and new ones are installed, the new ones use the older paradigms, and the dynamics that afflicted the population come back.

Occasionally though, there are revolutions that are catalyzed with a revolt. The French Liberal Revolution of 1789, which happened after a couple of centuries of liberal propaganda to gain the favor of the general population, managed to replace a feudal regime with a liberal one. A key reason why the revolt succeeded in implementing a regime change is that it had a concrete program that was backed up by a substantial portion of the population. It was not just a protest against the status quo without a counter-proposal.

During the XIX century, two distinct currents of communist thought emerged. The Marxist and the Anarchists.

### **Socialism (Marxist Communism)**

The most famous current of communist thought, the one that often comes first to mind when people hear the word communism in a political context, is the one based on the theoretical works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They wrote *The Communist Manifesto*, one of the world's most influential political documents, and since then, the word communism has been associated with their philosophy.

The main characteristics of Marxism are

- Materialism - Marx and Engels failed to recognize the relative > abundance at the disposal of each society with respect to previous > generations with less technology. They assumed that in their > present time there was a scarcity of resources and they bought > into the liberal's fairy tales that humans compete with each other > under conditions of scarcity. Therefore they concluded that > producing abundance, through massive industrialization, was a > precondition for the people to be able to embrace communism.
- As a consequence of the materialist premise, they proposed a > transition strategy that involves first taking control over the > existing States. Such control can be gained either via democratic > means or through armed revolt. Once achieved the State power is > used to promote quick industrialization and redistribution of > wealth from the rich to the poor. The government is run by a > single-party system organized through local

assemblies (or "soviets" in Russian). In a Marxist context this transition period is known as Socialism and the governance style as dictatorship of the proletariat. Marxists believe that once society reaches a certain level of industrial development in a context of socialist distribution of wealth, it will naturally transition to communism. Work won't be a chore anymore. In a similar way that physical movement stopped being a hassle with the advent of modern transportation, and now people voluntarily go to the gym, Marxists expect people to voluntarily go to work for fun and social responsibility, once there is so little of it to do because automation has taken care of most of it. Famously socialist transition regimes were implemented in the USSR and in China, and equally famously, their respective communist parties completely failed at implementing communism.

### **Anarchist Communism**

In parallel to Marxism, at around the same historical period, anarchism emerged as an alternative path towards communism.

Rather than focusing on material wealth, anarchists focus on power and hierarchy. The word anarchism etymologically means "without ruler". In the popular media, including dictionaries, anarchy is often ridiculed as a synonym of chaos. Obviously that's the opposite of what anarchists have in mind. One of the founding philosophers of anarchism, Proudhon, defined it as "Anarchy is Order Without Power".

Like Marxist and ancient communists, anarchists desire communist societies that dispense with the market-state mode of organization. However anarchists are much more suspicious of the power relationships that emerge in more intimate settings, in families and in organized groups of activists for example. They think that, as organizations grow bigger, the dangers of power abuse grow exponentially. Therefore they tend to oppose strategies that rely on the use of State institutions like participating in elections or taking the government by force. They also tend to oppose strategies that involve participating in the market like creating firms to fund their organizations. Anarchist's relationship to power could be summarized by the quote "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely" (this quote was coined by Lord Acton, not an anarchist but an ardent Liberal).

Initially, the favorite social change strategy for anarchists was to educate the working class population. During the XIX century they organized an extensive network of popular or workers' athenaeums. Those were a mix of cultural centers and professional training centers and their activities were free of charge. Workers could get access to culture as well as acquire literacy and management skills. This was a similar plan that the liberals had previously used to shift the population allegiance from the nobility and clergy to the merchant classes. This time the goal was to shift allegiances from the merchant classes to the self-government of the working classes.

The expectation was that if the workers were trained in self-management, when the next crisis would arise, they would be able to take over. Famously, this happened in Spain at the time of Franco's fascist uprising. Anarchists were able to stage a successful counter-uprising in some areas of the Spanish Republic, mainly around the Catalan Countries region. Despite getting sympathies from workers across Europe, and attracting volunteers to fight against fascism, among them George Orwell, all the State powers were favoring the fascists over the anarchists. Liberal regimes like the UK and France colluded with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy to allow them to support Franco's army. And Stalinist forces that were allegedly sent to fight the fascist and support communism instead they fought the anarchists.

### **Anarchists' strengths and concern on power dynamics**

Marxist theoreticians tend to focus on the dynamics of power at the State and social level. Marx and Engels wrote "Das Kapital", where they analyze how the owners of the means of production squeeze the workers (proletariat) appropriating the surplus of their labor through the use of wage labor relationships. Another example, Antonio Gramsci, developed the notion of hegemony. He described cultural hegemony as the situation where the worldview of the ruling class (the bourgeoisie) becomes the accepted cultural norm. Their beliefs, explanations, perceptions, values and mores are seen as natural and inevitable rather than artificial social constructs.

Anarchist's analysis on the other hand tends to focus on organization practices. There is a long tradition in anarchist circles of identifying the dangers in systems based on hierarchy and representation. Such analysis is complemented with proposals of alternative organization forms which are based on horizontal assemblies. For bigger groups or organizations, several groups can be federated, with each assembly sending delegates to the federal assembly. Delegates function very differently than representatives because they are only allowed to pass on their respective assembly decisions, and not to make decisions on their own. Furthermore, the agreements reached by the delegates in the federal assemblies are not binding for the local assemblies until they have been rectified by each one of them. This structure can be scaled further by joining several federations in a confederation, and so on.

Even though anarchism itself has become a fringe credo, anarchist practices have become ubiquitous in many organizations that are part of social and environmental movements. Often such organizations are not even aware that they are using anarchist methodologies and ironically promote a liberal-style governance for the population at large, one based on markets and elected representatives. It's rather hypocritical of them to believe that they deserve to use anarchist governance tools in their own organizations, but that those are not good enough for the common people.

One area where anarchism is particularly symbiotic with social movements is

the subset of feminisms that focus on intimate dynamics, as opposed to macro socioeconomic topics like pay gaps and glass ceilings. The feminisms that focus on power dynamics in direct human relationships, either in romantic partnerships, or organizational and business settings find a lot in common with anarchist's analysis in those settings. Concepts related to micro-power dynamics, such as microaggressions and microsexism are familiar to both. Not surprisingly, a relatively popular ideology of anarcho-feminism has emerged, which, as opposed to mainstream movements, aims at applying anarchism for the society at large, instead of keeping it as a privilege for their organization's members. The symbiosis between anarchism and feminism was described by L.Susan Brown in 1995: "as anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist".

Another, related area, is the challenge of monogamous heteronormativity. Free love has been a topic in anarchism since the end of the XIX century and is one of the focus of anarcho-feminism. The free love ideology promotes the ability for people to enter and leave romantic and sexual relationships on their own will, without the interference of the State or the Church. In the context of feminism it also highlights women's right to their own body which opposes forced sexual interactions with legal partners and the right to abortion. The free love ideology has proponents both in liberal and anarchist circles and has several variations and names. Two of the most popular nowadays are Polyamory and Relationship Anarchy. As is often the case with practices that come from anarchist groups, Relationship Anarchy has become popular beyond anarchist circles. Many people who identify with that label don't see themselves as anarchists at all and they openly embrace liberal concepts like the state-market system in other areas of their lives.

Anarchists' lore is full of stories about how when people try to use power to foster anarchist goals they get co-opted and the anarchist organization is neutralized. One popular example is the German green party, which was created with an anti-war and anti-nuclear agenda, sold as "the anti-party party", and just after two terms in power, was supporting war and nuclear energy. The lessons supposedly to be learned from such stories are that people are prone to be corrupted, and as soon as they get some power or some wealth, they will use it for their own benefit, and betray their communities. People who have the temerity of having children and raising them on their own, as a couple or single parents, are particularly vulnerable. Being responsible for children instills fear in people and makes them support whatever policies are safer to keep a fixed salary from their civil servant or corporate jobs. As a result, comrades who have stable well paid jobs are instantly suspected of being reactionaries.

### **Weaknesses of Anarchism**

Anarchists correctly identify that the core of the problem in our unequal societies lies in the relationships between its members, rather than on material scarcity. They also correctly identify the causal relationship between the two liberal pillars

of society, competitive markets and representative competitive elections, and the concentration of power and proliferation of unequal relationships.

However, as much as anarchists despise liberals, they also accept the core belief of liberalism that people are individuals separated from each other, with their own wills and their inclinations to pursue their own self-interests. An indication of this is that some anarchists and some liberals use the same word to describe themselves. Libertarians might refer to liberals who endorse a bare-minimum state that protects private property and markets, which is the usual meaning in the USA, or might refer to anarchists who want to overcome the state and market, as is more common in Europe.

As a result, when anarchists talk about communities, those are devoid of collective identity and shared will. When they talk about collective decisions in assemblies, they think in the same competitive terms as liberals. Assemblies are not viewed as gatherings to search for the common good. They are viewed as spaces where everybody comes to fight for their own interest and to keep the others in check. This approach, as we've seen, is not conducive to happiness and fulfillment, since it hampers the practice of generosity and gratitude.

Anarchist communities have a tendency towards precarity and lack of resources. It comes from the self-defeating (liberal) belief that power necessarily corrupts. Money is power and therefore anarchists tend to fear money. They tend to favor squatting over buying property. Squatting is much more costly for a community than buying. It requires constant vigilance on the judicial and police fronts, on a playing field that is uneven, biased against them, and where there are no repercussions for corruption and malpractice. A judge might decide to evict a squat by surprise during a pandemic eviction moratorium, the police might show up at a different time than the one assigned by the judge, or without a judge's order at all, etc. Once a squat is evicted it takes enormous effort to squat a new place and galvanize again a community there, gain the favor of the neighbors after years of providing free services to the neighborhood, etc. often, investing in learning skills that would allow the community leaders to make good money in the labor market or setting up a for-profit firm would be much cheaper, in terms of community effort, than squatting. However, due to the aforementioned self-defeating beliefs, typically such options are not even considered.

It is very difficult to attract people, especially talented and skilled people, to communities characterized by poverty and precarity, and a tendency to celebrate it rather than organizing towards abundance and comfort.

Finally, in the strategy department, contemporary anarchists are seriously lacking. Their initial approach of bringing free education and culture to the uneducated masses has been rendered completely useless with the liberals' deployment of universal education and the advent of TV entertainment, and the Internet. All of them relentlessly deliver liberal propaganda.

Nowadays, when strategy is discussed in anarchist circles, tends to revolve around insurrectionalism. Insurrectionists aim at disrupting the state-market

infrastructure, by sabotaging key, centralized, infrastructures, like train stations, power plants, airports, and so on... they believe that a small vanguard of revolutionaries will be able to cause enough chaos that the common people will find the state-market system untenable, and will support anarchy instead. This is a very condescending view of the common people, and one that unsurprisingly contributes to the anarchist's bad reputation, rather than gaining many sympathies.

## **Social Ecology, Libertarian Municipalism and Inclusive Democracy**

During the second half of the XX century two interesting strategic proposals to transition to communism were developed but unfortunately didn't catch up. One of them was Social Ecology and Libertarian Municipalism by Murray Bookchin and the other Inclusive Democracy (ID) by Takis Fotopoulos. Both of them merged environmentalism concerns with the anarchist tradition of bottom-up social organizations.

Both of them endorsed as part of a transition strategy to participate in local municipal elections and in the local market economy. Differentiating between the tools needed during a transition where virtually all the world is part of the state-market system and the institutions needed once communism has become hegemonic again is a good idea because, clearly, there are two opposed scenarios that call for different approaches. However, the idea of participating in Statist or for-profit market institutions goes against the core beliefs of anarchists. Core beliefs are very difficult to change and, predictably, both Bookchin's and Fotopoulos' ideas were rejected in anarchist circles. Both authors use the concept of "tension" between the confederation of municipalities and the State. In Takis' own words:

The immediate objective should therefore be the creation, from below, of "popular bases of political and economic power", that is, the establishment of local public realms of direct and economic democracy which, at some stage, will confederate in order to create the conditions for the establishment of a new society. To my mind, this approach offers the most realistic strategy today to tackle here and now the fundamental social, economic and ecological problems we face and at the same time to dismantle the existing power structures.

[...]

Thus, once the institutions of inclusive democracy begin to be installed, and people, for the first time in their lives, start obtaining real power to determine their own fate, then the gradual erosion of the dominant social paradigm and of the present institutional framework will be set in motion. A new popular power base will be created. Town by town, city by city, region by region will be taken away from the effective control of the market economy and statist forms of

organisation (national or international), their political and economic structures being replaced by the confederations of democratically run communities. A dual power in tension with the statist forms of organisation will be created.

The Multidimensional Crisis and Inclusive Democracy, Takis Fotopoulos (2005)

Chapter 16: The transition to an Inclusive Democracy

Both propose to get organized at the municipal level. Engage in political propaganda and community participation and convince the majority of citizens to vote for an organization that will promote communism through either the Libertarian Municipalism or the Inclusive Democracy frameworks from within the local municipal government. Starting with dissolving the representative arrangement and replacing it with direct democracy through a people's assembly.

On the economic transition, Bookchin argues for the municipalization of the economy but he doesn't explain how that would be achieved. Fotopoulos gives more details on how to transition to a local and democratic economy. Starting with gaining local financial and tax power, then using such power to influence local agents, and finally shift production to community-owned and community-managed (demnotic) enterprises:

Steps in this direction could be the effort (which will be made easier when local power has been won) for the increase of:

**local financial power**, through the creation of Demotic Credit Unions (i.e., financial co-ops supported by the demos) to provide loans to their members for their personal and investment needs, as a first step in the creation of a demotic bank network; also LETS[22] schemes could be introduced as a first step in the installation of a demotic currency (i.e. a currency controlled by the Demos rather than by a central bank [...])

**local tax power**, through tax decentralisation, i.e. the shift of taxing power from the national to the local level. Initially, new local taxes could be complementary to state taxes but the ID movement should fight for tax decentralisation and the parallel introduction of a new demotic tax system (i.e. a tax system controlled by the demos) which could be used to: finance a program for the demoticisation of the local productive resources, providing employment opportunities for local citizens; finance a program for social spending that will cover the basic needs of all citizens; finance various institutional arrangements that will make democracy in the household effective (e.g. payment for work at home, for the care of children and the elderly etc); finance programs for the replacement of traditional energy sources with local energy resources, especially renewable energy (solar, wind, etc.); to penalise economically the anti-ecological activities of branches and

subsidiaries of large corporations based in the area [...]

**power to determine local production**, through, initially the provision of financial incentives to local producers/shops/citizens in order to induce them to produce/sell/buy locally produced goods with the aim of breaking the chains of big manufacturers/distributors. At a later stage, the creation of demotic enterprises (i.e. enterprises owned by the demos) would give the power to the demos to increasingly take over production.

**power to cover the welfare needs of local citizens** through the creation of a demotic welfare system, i.e. a welfare system controlled by the demos that would provide important social services (education, health, housing, etc.) [...]

Coming next to the creation of a demotic economic sector [...] This could be achieved through the creation of:

**Demotic enterprises**, i.e. productive units that could belong to the demos and be managed by the workers working in those units, while their technical management (marketing, planning, etc.) could be entrusted to specialised personnel. However, the overall control over such enterprises should belong to the demotic assemblies that would supervise their production, employment and environmental policies ensuring that the 'general social interest' rather than the particular interest of each demotic enterprises' employees is pursued. Such enterprises may be established even before supporters of the inclusive democracy project take over a city/town council through the use, for instance, of Land Trusts, although it will be after local power has been won that such enterprises can flourish.

The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY, Vol. 1, No.1 (October 2004)

How an Inclusive Democracy?

The transitional strategy of the Inclusive Democracy project

(by the editorial committee)

One particularly interesting innovation from Fotopoulos in Inclusive Democracy is a mechanism for decoupling economic inequality and power inequality. In market economies people with more wealth can convert that into money which can easily be converted into political power. Thus, democratically-minded people tend to dislike the wealthy, out of suspicion that they'll abuse their wealth as power against their peers.

In Inclusive democracy everybody has access to a level of wealth determined by the demos based on the communist principle of "everybody according to their needs and from everybody according to their capacity". Thus, the ill and infirm get the same wealth in form of housing, care, access to culture, etc. than the

most able workers, but the former are not expected to contribute with their work while the latter are. Fotopoulos misleadingly calls this wealth level “basic needs”. This nomenclature reflects 19th century Marxist and anarchist obsession with scarcity, but in the wealthy society that we live in now, with the unprecedented access to technology and resources that we have, if we would distribute them equally, the minimum level of wealth could be rather luxurious and require very little amount of work. Therefore a better nomenclature could be “demotic needs”.

On top of the demotic needs, every citizen can freely choose extra luxuries. In ID those are called, again misleadingly, non-basic needs. A better name would be personal desires. In exchange that person has to commit to work proportionally more. Therefore people are free to choose to have extra wealth. But in ID there is no money to swap products and services with. Services are provided to the specific person who requested them and are intransferable. One could imagine bartering with goods, but the difference of wealth is not significant enough that even the most skilled speculator could gain any significant power from it.

## **Limitations of Inclusive Democracy**

Even though both ID offers a significant improvement in the area of transition strategy towards a communist society, it still has some serious drawbacks that will be addressed in the next book of this series, devoted to strategy.

The main one is that it only goes halfway in getting rid of Marxist’s materialism. ID insists on focusing on the here and now and avoiding waiting for the mythical utopian Marxist post-scarcity. Which is a great move. However, as noted, it still sees scarcity as a concern.

On top of that, and crucially, it sees the concentration of power as the root cause of the problems that society is facing:

If we accept the premise I described at the beginning that the ultimate cause of every aspect of the present crisis is the concentration of power at all levels, then the obvious way out of this crisis is the abolition of power structures and relations, i.e. the creation of conditions of equal distribution of power among citizens.

The transition to an Inclusive Democracy

The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy, Vol. 6, No. 2/3  
(Spring/Summer 2010)

The Barcelona Talks, ID meeting (April 11, 2010)

Takis Fotopoulos

As we have seen, it is more accurate to see the concentration of power as a symptom of certain hegemonic values in our society. More precisely, as the emerging behaviour of institutions that reflect and reinforce such values.

This foundational mistake in the ID perspective weakens the stability of the whole edifice. Even though the need for cultural change is mentioned repeatedly in ID literature, the focus on personal growth, strengthening personal bonds, curating attachments and nurturing trust in interdependent relationships is lacking.

As a result, like in Bookchin's work, and in the larger body of anarchist literature there is an aversion to gaining too much power. As with Libertarian Municipalism there is an inexplicable limitation to participating in institutional politics and market economies only at the local level.

Justifications are attempted by both authors but are closer to rhetorical fundamentalist dogmatic adherence to the anarchist credos than a proper cost / benefit analysis, which is the usual mechanism for making rational decisions.

Power is the capacity to effect change, and an organization that aims at shifting the hegemonic values globally should not shy away from acquiring as much power as possible in order to make the transition as swift as possible, to avoid as much irreparable environmental damage and avoid the risk of losing too many civil liberties that would make organizing unfeasible.

Anarchists' concerns about people being co-opted when getting too close to power are valid. But the solution of renouncing power altogether is cowardly. A more humble analysis would include self-criticism and recognizing the weaknesses of current anarchist organizations. A more courageous response would be to build stronger communities that would give their members more security and enjoyment than switching sides.

## Contemporary conscious revolutionaries

There have been a couple of successful communist revolutions towards the end of the XX century and the beginning of the XXI that are attracting attention from collectives in the western countries. Namely, the **Zapatistas** organization in Chiapas (Mexico) and the **Democratic Confederalism** in Kurdistan. Both of them are organized in ways that are aligned with the anarchist traditions.

The Zapatistas are an indigenous organization while the Democratic Confederalism was started by the Kurdish independentists but was designed to be inclusive to the variety of ethnicities in the area. Abdullah Öcalan, the main author and historic leader, explained that Mooray Bookchin was his principal influence in the journey of leading a transition from a Marxist-Stalinist organization to this new paradigm. He adapted Libertarian Municipalism to the peculiarities in the middle east.

Neither of them has much to teach in terms of transition strategy to the leaders in WEIRD countries, since both of them base their initial power on militias that operate in remote and hard to reach mountains and forests. This approach is not feasible in the western countries so we'll have to find a different way to get started.

However they are an inspiration because they show that it is feasible to run a modern society of millions of people from the bottom up, without using the market-state and competitive representative elections as the foundation. This is significant because a common argument against communism is that it has been tried before, and it has failed. Therefore we should look for different solutions to our current problems. Both Zapatistas and Democratic Confederalists provide, once again, a living proof to the contrary: communism is perfectly viable, the main problem with it is that everybody else bombs them.

Also both of them can be of inspiration on how to adapt the general principles of anarchism to the peculiarities of the social realities in different regions. Both organizations, for example, have made it a central feature of their programs to restore women's central place in society, which they consider an area which is particularly behind in their societies and therefore needs more resources devoted to it. Both of them have prioritized promoting female leadership in all the ranks of their organizations, military and civilian.

There is a lot to learn from them as well in terms of practices to make revolutionary organizations more conscious and more humane, on how to strengthen interdependent human relationships that also promote individual freedom and autonomy. The Democratic Confederalist organizations for example have periodic self-awareness rituals, where the group gives feedback to each individual on topics that they consider could improve in their attitude, for the benefit of the collective. After receiving feedback each individual chooses a topic of their own interest and commits to work on it until the next ceremony.

## **Reformist Movementism**

### **Taxonomy, success and limitations**

Up to here we've been discussing that since the advent of modernity until present the ideology that has become hegemonic is liberalism. We've seen a few ideologies that have evolved to contest the hegemonic beliefs and symbiotic organizations, in major or minor parts. The ideologies that we've seen so far use strategies that involve the creation of organizations tasked with transferring power to the desired ideology. Conservatives and Marxists promote top-down organizations while Anarchists promote bottom-up organizations.

One of the premises of the thesis presented in these books is that the lack of effective transition strategies is a big part of the reason why we are stuck in liberalism and we don't advance to a better paradigm. Is not for lack of ideas on how a better world would look like, that has been covered quite extensively by a multitude of authors. Due to our focus on strategy different ideologies are classified here according to their strategy style.

In this section we'll look at ideologies that do not advocate for a structured organization as a vehicle to deliver change. Instead they promote a network

of agents that take action independently, or sometimes loosely coordinated. Agents might be individuals or organizations. Such organizations typically have a narrow area of concern, or act locally rather than globally or at a State level. They usually organize protests or lobby for policy changes rather than aiming at acquiring power and delivering the change themselves. This network is called movement and has the goal to create a shift in society's values and beliefs. Prominent examples are veganism, environmentalism and feminism.

In certain aspects movementism has been very successful. Movements have managed to galvanize large groups of people around a common concern. They have managed to assemble significant amounts of resources and devote them to study their issues of concern and advertise them to the larger population. They have contributed significant theoretical advancements in many areas and have managed to include many concerns into the general population awareness. Three examples: nowadays virtually everybody has heard about the suffering of animals inflicted by the food industry, climate change driven by industrialization and the unequal distribution of pay and responsibilities between men and women in the corporate world.

The criticism presented here doesn't dispute such contributions, on the contrary, it celebrates them. The criticism presented is focused only on the narrow topic of the viability of movements to actually effect change. Let's be more specific. Movements have, and are, contributing to expanding the consciousness of the population on certain topics. Which is obviously a step forward towards taking political action to address them. However they are not managing to introduce on the collective consciousness ideas about actionable items that would actually make a difference. Instead, they tend to encourage the population towards symbolic actions that don't have impact or even make the situation worse. We'll see some examples shortly.

## **Ritualism and guilt**

The concept of movement as a vehicle for change is theoretically rather weak. The science of getting things done usually involves very clear patterns of identifying and prioritizing goals, breaking up each goal into smaller sequential tasks, allocating resources to those tasks proportionally to the relevance of the goals, identifying who will be accountable for accomplishing each task, setting expectations on the deliveries, agreements on indicators of progress, etc.

In contrast movementism ceremonies resemble practices from religious traditions such as mass gatherings, mass praying, mass celebrations,... from the time when gods ruled the world and kings were agents on earth... ceremonies that don't make sense in a context where politicians are supposed to be elected. There is already a competitive election process in which political parties have presented their options and people have chosen their preferred one. Why protest after the elections? Why protest against the elected officials?

It is also a common thread in movementism to appeal to feelings of guilt. Vegan

propaganda often makes references to the suffering of animals in the food and clothing industry, some feminist propaganda disparages women who choose to prioritize taking care of their family over their careers, and is quite common to find environmentalist who feel guilty about traveling by plane or warming up their homes in winter. This appeal to guilt is also reminiscent of religious traditions that promote feelings of guilt towards pleasurable activities, mainly those involving sex. It's quite dubious that such ethos of self-inflicted pain would be attractive to most of the population.

Probably the reason why movements are so popular comes from historical disappointments at big organizations. Mainly disappointments at political parties and their roles in the government. People who support movements as the right strategy to effect change wrongly attribute the reason for failure to the organizational paradigm, or to corruption. They tend to believe that an organization cannot effect change because the leaders will inevitably become corrupt, and that they need to be pushed from the outside to do the right thing. They don't realize that the source of the problems are the beliefs that are shared by the members of such organizations, not the concept of organization itself.

### **[anti] Liberal Reformism**

An implicit premise of movements is that we in the WEIRD countries live in more or less functional democracies. This, as we discussed in the first book of this series, is a fallacy. There is no correlation between the desires of the population and the implemented policies by the elected governments. Just from this observation it seems rather dubious that movements would be able to effect any change.

Since movements don't aim at replacing the competitive representative elections as a method for governance they are intrinsically reformist. I.e they don't aim at a paradigm change or revolution, no matter how much the press tends to label them as "radicals".

It's interesting to note that the ideologies we are going to discuss are ironically often labeled as liberal, even though their manifest goals are to oppose the effects of liberalism such as the destruction of the environment or the sexism in different modes of market exploitation of the laboring class. Again, this should not surprise us since the usage of confusing labels is part of the reason why it's so difficult to get a clear understanding on how the world actually works. Ministries of war are called defense, the suppression of dissent via murder, imprisonment and censorship is called stability or peace, etc. People who participate in such movements tend to be rather confused themselves, often calling themselves liberals and professing animosity to neo-liberals or ultra-liberals. Which seems to imply that a bit of liberalism is good but too much is catastrophic. It is extremely odd that somebody would feel comfortable advocating for a little bit of an ideology and at the same time against too much of the same ideology! To avoid such confusions we are much better off completely abandoning the labels

used in mainstream media and instead define labels and taxonomies that fit our purposes of clarity for strategic analyses.

## **Innovation paralysis**

A major strategic handicap of movementism is that it makes innovation almost impossible. The literature on innovation unanimously declares that experimentation, trial and error, and prototyping are key for success. Anybody who has tried innovation has experienced coming up with tons of ideas and then, upon testing them, discarding almost all of them. For any good idea inventors come up with a multitude of bad, and really bad ideas.

How is innovation likely to play out in a movement? Imagine that a movement converges into a particular idea, a policy, that they want to promote. What are the chances that it is a good idea? For what we know about the science of innovation, the chances are rather slim. If the same ideology would favor an organization, which would aim at having institutional power, several such ideas could be prototyped. Perhaps in different small regions in a bigger State. Then the results could be compared and assessed if they are satisfactory enough to implement the policy across all the State.

A movement doesn't have such luxury. In order to communicate effectively typically it has to choose a single policy and push for it for a long time, possibly many decades. What would happen if once implemented the policy that is supposed to help with, say, environmentalism, or women's quality of life, doesn't work as expected (which would be normal to happen most of the time, as per innovations dynamics). What if it actually hurt those intended to help but it instead helped the rich people become richer? What are the chances that a government would admit that and retract the policy? When was the last time you saw a government admitting they were wrong? It would be much more likely that they claim that it worked great (specially if some people make lots of money from the policy and are keen on financing the propaganda). And then, likely more governments would adopt such counterproductive policies as well.

## **Hypocrisy and confusing historical correlation with causality**

The folklore in the world of movementism is full of stories about how protests led to victories. There is an underlying narrative that good ideas are convincing, they spread, create tension, lead to social struggle and eventually to positive change.

History however doesn't conform to such narratives. People's core beliefs are notoriously hard to change. When there have been social struggles it has often been the most violent side of the argument that has prevailed, by killing and torturing their opponents, rather than by convincing with irresistible ideas. Sometimes there have been massive protests that have been totally ignored or violently suppressed.

However, when the protests are asking for something that can be delivered in a way that benefits the existing powers, then, the government tends to deliver and make it look like it was a victory for the people. The rights that were won with the civil struggles after the second world war, the improvements in social services and labor wages, were in the interest of the government to implement. The elites needed to counter the narrative of the soviet block and present the idea that a kind capitalism is possible. At the same time, they benefited from creating internal demand for products and services, at a time before globalization, when creating a services sector depended on it.

Therefore movements confuse the (apparent) correlation of protests and policy changes with the causality of the protests making the policy changes happen. But correlation doesn't imply causation. In order to determine causation one would have to analyse a wide range of policy changes, and initiatives that don't involve policy, some which involve protests and some which don't, and see if protest actually increases the likelihood of policy changes. One would probably find that there isn't even correlation between protests and policy changes, that the idea that protests lead to policy changes comes from a biased selection of historical events, a kind of "survival bias", where all the protests that were not successful have been forgotten.

Let's step back for a moment and look at what movements are trying to accomplish: a minority of the population who has a very strong opinion on a given topic are trying to make the government implement some policies aligned with their strong opinions that will impact the whole population subjected to that government. Therefore they are trying to impose the will of the loud minority on a larger silent majority.

Such loud minorities are often using pro-democratic narratives which imply that they are defending the will of the majority against the tyranny of undemocratic and corrupt governments. While their analysis might be correct, i.e. climate change impacts the health and economy of the common people more than the elites, and sexist social constructions tend to harm also the relationships and economies of the common people while benefiting the ones of the elites, still, it's quite a stretch to claim that protests are defending the will of the majority. There is a big difference between interests and will. That is very plain in more democratic regimes like Switzerland, where it's as easy for the activists to call for a State referendum as it's likely to get disappointed with results of around 10% of support. It's less clear in less democratic regimes, that deploy a wide range of the tactics described earlier to impose bipartidism, but it's still relatively easy to find out using polls, and sometimes municipal elections, which might be prone to more diversity.

One clear recent example is the anti-austerity and pro-democracy movement, the Outraged, also known as 15M from the may 15th mass demonstrations that started in Spain in 2011. It got enough traction to create new political parties, and some of them managed to take over the city councils of some major cities

in Spain. Unfortunately, cities are not sovereign and must follow the policies dictated by the State government. Therefore gaining control of a city council offers little more than a powerful platform to voice descent. At the State level however the majority of voters are still favoring the traditional, democracy-suppressing, pro-elite parties. Which makes the calls for more democracy of the movement rather ironic, because the democratic will of the people is to have less democracy.

## **Fight and combat**

Another rather hypocritical aspect of movements are their frequent claims of non-violence. It is true that violence is relative, and the disruptions caused by protests against war for example, can be considered non-violent in comparison to the war they are protesting. The same argument can be used for the protests against the massive police brutality which results in killings and torture all over the WEIRD countries. On the other hand there are often protests, for example environmentalists, that aim at creating a disruption in the everyday lives of common people in given cities. Blocking transport like roads or trains and preventing them from going to work. While in the grand scheme of things these acts are relatively peaceful and harmless, in the particular context of the relationship between the vanguard of activists and the general population that are trying to influence it is rather violent. It impedes by force that common people move where they want to. The fact that many of them would rather not go to work, that they are forced to go to work by structural economic violence, is besides the point. In the relationship between the protesters and the common people, the common people are being harmed, suffering penalties for failing to go to work, which is likely to deteriorate rather than strengthen their relationship.

Different movements, and different factions within each movement, have different approaches towards violence. Only small factions within each movement call for open violence. Vegans, environmentalists, and feminists that call for arson against industrial operations or the castration or extermination of males are few and don't represent the whole of the movement. However it is rather pervasive in the communication style of all the movements to frame their plight as a fight. Their calls to combat are usually metaphorical and refer to organizing protests and engaging in debates in social networks. Still the use of such vocabulary puts the collective in an unresourceful state. It primes people to look at other people to blame for their problems instead of nudging them towards a journey of introspection to discover what their contributions are and what they can do to change the situation. Movements' combative narratives often encourage people to fight against the elusive "system", without reflecting that everybody is "the system", and fighting against our neighbors and ourselves is futile and self-defeating.

One of the thesis defended in this work, one that will be expanded in the next book of this series, is that a much more efficient use of our resources is to invest them in creating an alternative society that is more attractive than the current

one and invite people to switch over. Even though certain interventions in the current system might help delay environmental and social harm, movements only accomplish this, delays. We should invest most of our efforts in solutions rather than protests, if we want to make a change. The narrative of fighting and combating distracts from the focus on building alternatives

## **Environmentalism**

### **Apparent successes and limits**

Since the second half of the XX century there has been a growing environmentalist movement and consciousness. Nowadays it seems that every big company and political organization has to claim to be environmentalist in order to be successful. A lot of it is just plain fraud. Since it sells more to advertise products as environmentally friendly a lot of firms claim that their products are recyclable, organic, or environmentally friendly in some other way. Most of such claims are unregulated and firms just lie to get cheap publicity. Until summer 2021 California didn't start legislating the usage of the recycle symbol, for example. The rationale for the legislation was that many firms were using the recyclable sign in items that were not recyclable, which resulted in people disposing non-recyclable items in the recycle bins, which in turn complicated the recycling of legit items. Other governments give lower priority to the environment and are lagging even further behind.

It is true that environmentalists have scored a large number of small victories. Many development projects that were threatening ecosystems were halted or modified to reduce their impact. Also a number of environmentalist consumer regulations have been passed. The most remarkable are probably the laws that mandate energy efficiency and the ones that ban the use of plastic bags and make it mandatory for shops to charge for disposable bags (even if they are compostable).

What has been accomplished with all those victories though? The destruction of the environment keeps progressing at an ever increasing pace. They might stop or slow down where environmentalists are posing resistance but moving faster elsewhere. Victories tend to cluster in WEIRD countries while the destruction of the environment tends to accelerate in poorer economies. There have even been some trend reversals, like increasing forestation in some areas in Europe. We all share one single planet though, and what counts are the global indicators, not the local victories.

All the global indicators confirm that the situation is worsening: climate change, global warming, deforestation, coral destruction, mass extinctions, depletion of water reservoirs, etc.

In light of such discouraging indicators we should question the real value of the victories scored and assess whether we are aiming at the right goals. How good are the bans on plastic bags if everything we buy in the supermarket or is

shipped to our home is wrapped in plastic, often two or three times over? What good is energy efficiency if we are consuming more and more, in a way that the increase of volume in consumption not only offsets the gains in energy efficiency, but actually makes the total consumption of energy increase?

In the beginning of the environmentalist movement there were voices calling for the reduction in the extraction of carbon fuels. Conceptually is something that should be feasible in the current political framework. International agreements could be reached, and sanctions and tariffs levied against the states that wouldn't comply. However this approach didn't move forward and it was soon abandoned, replaced instead by the approach to promote energy efficiency.

As noted in the first book of this series, this situation is easy to understand through the lenses of emerging dynamics of competitive market societies. The laws that mandate increases in energy efficiency are symbiotic with a consumerist society that extracts wealth from the poor and gives it to the rich. It allows governments to give subsidies to large firms to invest in more energy-efficient technologies. The same applies with passing laws that force consumers to replace older vehicles with newer ones. The environmental benefits of such replacements are rather dubious, as the energy invested in making the new car will probably exceed the energy savings from using it. However, the financial benefits for the firms involved are obvious.

### **Paradoxical failure**

One could think that, given the climate emergency, such an increase in upward transfer of wealth is a small price to pay for saving the environment. After all, the ones who are most likely to get harmed by climate change are the poor. Paradoxically tough, but not surprisingly, the measures in energy efficiency haven't reduced the overall consumption of energy. On the contrary, they have increased it. Which was to be expected since this paradox, called the **Jevons paradox**, has been known since the XIX century.

Jevons was an economist that noticed, at the onset of the Industrial Revolution in England, that as factories improved their energy efficiency, and were able to produce more goods using less coal, the overall coal consumption in England actually increased. The explanation of the paradox is that the demand for the products manufactured in such industries was elastic. I.e. firms were able to reduce prices of sold goods due to increased energy efficiency, and small reductions in prices resulted in large increases in sales, which meant that much more coal was used to produce the extra items than was being saved due to increased energy efficiency.

Likewise, we could expect that nowadays, at least from some products, their demand, or the demand of their usage is elastic, and therefore, gains in energy efficiency will lead to more energy consumed overall. This phenomenon is called rebound effect. Indeed this link was established as soon as governments were starting mandating energy efficiency improvements. In the 1980s economists

Daniel Khazzoom and Leonard Brookes studied how the Jevons paradox would apply in that scenario. In particular Khazzoom focused on the mandatory performance standards for domestic appliances being set in California. The **Khazzoom–Brookes postulate** argues that such mandates in energy efficiency will lead to more overall energy consumption.

In 1992, the **economist Harry Saunders** expanded on the work of Khazzoom and Brookes and noted that improvements in energy efficiency could backfire even if at the microeconomic level, in a particular market, the rebound effect would be less than 100%. The reason is that at the macroeconomic level, the increases in efficiency in different sectors mean increased real incomes for the average population, which leads to faster economic growth. The consequence of economic growth is greater energy consumption, possibly in areas different than the ones that have seen energy efficiency improvements. Looking at the economy as a whole is likely that the overall increases in energy consumption offset and offshoot the gains in energy efficiency in particular areas.

Unsurprisingly though, even though this economic dynamic has been known since the XIX century and was revisited and revalidated as soon as energy efficiency policies were introduced in the 1980s, still environmentalists and supposedly green politicians keep advocating for them. It's the usual dynamic that **convenient falsehoods get repeated and amplified until they are considered truths**, and inconvenient facts get pushed away from mainstream narratives.

Let's revisit another apparent big victory, the reduction of plastic bags in retail. It is quite telling that in the more recent debates about environmental issues voices that argue for a more sensitive approach to the plastic issue aren't even there. There is no need to silence them because no-one is arguing a sensible approach. Nobody is pointing out how wasteful it is, in terms of packaging, energy, and labor, that everybody buys food in the supermarket and cooks it at their own home. It would be much more reasonable to have public eateries. They could procure ingredients in bulk with little need for plastic packaging and cook in large quantities. In many WEIRD countries citizens expect the government to provide free universal access to health and education. But, for some reason, they don't expect the government to provide free, high quality, nutritious, fresh and delicious meals.

### **Tendencies towards misanthropy, racism and self-inflicted pain**

A darker side of mainstream environmentalism derives from it being a single-issue movement. Because it focuses on the environment, social and economic issues are out of scope for environmentalism. Despite the fact that most environmentalist grass-roots organizations share social and economic concerns, mainstream environmentalism, by definition, shares the mainstream model of socioeconomic organization.

Therefore most popular environmentalist narratives take for granted that societies will become richer as time passes, that they will consume more, and they will

tax more the environment, extracting more fossil fuels, more minerals, cutting down more forests, polluting more the air and water, etc.

Following this train of thought one could reach the conclusion that the human population should decrease faster than the economy grows. And indeed, among actors in the environmentalist movement concerns about having an excessive human population on Earth appear periodically.

A different side of the same story is that, according to liberal economic models, poor economies are expected to advance through the same paths of rich economies until the world is in a market equilibrium, and wealth is distributed uniformly. Otherwise capital would flow to where salaries are cheaper and continue the equalization. This is expected to happen through differentials in the growth rates of different regions, with poorer economies growing faster than richer economies, like China has done in recent decades. A reversal of growth is not considered feasible as the current global socioeconomic system is based on growth.

As a result from this model there is also the concern, which also comes up periodically, that if poorer regions indeed become richer then they will consume as much per capita as the richer economies do now. Since the population in poor economies is much larger than the population in WEIRD countries, the fear is that such economic improvement would be catastrophic for the environment.

This kind of reasoning is conducive to misanthropy, racism and the justification of colonial power. They are not usually expressed in such clear terms, but those feelings are latent underneath the concerns about economic growth.

## **Degrowth**

There is one faction within the environmentalist movement that explicitly concerns itself with the liberal economic model of growth and is conscious about the implications for the poor and the environment.

This faction points out the obvious elephant in the room that nobody wants to see. That economic growth is incompatible with environmentalism. At least, economic growth as it is commonly understood, one that leads to an increase of pollution. This faction is called Degrowth and proposes to reverse the tendency of economic growth and instead aim at shrinking the economy.

Degrowth has managed to achieve a rather impressive feat: to make millions of people conscious that the “trickle down” liberal economic theory is a fraud. All governments in the world are pursuing economic growth with the support of their populations under the explicit promise that “growing the pie” will make everybody better off. That making the rich richer will result in them spending more money which will trickle down to the poorest families through the creation of better jobs, more stable and well-paid.

It’s proponents correctly point out that the economy should be about quality and not about quantity. That using GDP as an indicator for economic success

is absurd. Other indicators such as social well-being and environmental health would be more appropriate. Also correctly they remark that a large part of the economy doesn't contribute to satisfying people's needs.

Large sectors such as the military or advertisement actually have a negative impact. Many other sectors are terribly inefficient since they are making products that are not designed to last, but are instead designed to break down after a short period of usage. Therefore, they are designed to make people work more than necessary to buy them again. Overall the economic growth mindset tends to create a society where people work like slaves for the economy, instead of the economy working towards the satisfaction of people's needs. And indeed, we are witnessing that jobs are becoming more precarious, more unstable, and more demanding, with the shift towards a gig economy.

From these observations Degrowth argues that it is possible and desirable to increase people's wellbeing while at the same time decreasing economic growth. It proposes to grow only the sectors of the economy that provide large amounts of well-being at low environmental cost, such as public transport and caregiving. At the same time it argues for the reduction of economic sectors that provide little or no social benefit or have high environmental impact, such as the military, advertisement, private transport, etc.

Unfortunately, despite all these achievements and insights, the Degrowth movement has three serious shortcomings. First, it doesn't provide much in terms of strategy to transition to the society that it describes as desirable. Degrowth proposals have a large overlap with many other proposals of socially just and environmentally friendly alternatives. They emphasize autonomy, care work, self-organization, community, localism, and so on, ... and like most proposals, besides encouraging a few privileged to build eco-villages, they don't quite explain how to achieve that at a massive scale so that everybody in the world could benefit.

Second, it focuses on particular supposed solutions, rather than on achieving environmental goals. One example is that it focuses on shrinking the economy because it assumes that it will imply a reduction in pollution. But that is not necessarily the case, we could see a reduced economy and reduced energy consumption but more pollution if dirtier fuels were used, for example because we exhaust the high quality oil and turn to more contaminating fuels. Conversely, we could see a growing economy that uses less energy because it produces value in ways that are less energy-intensive and uses more renewables.

A second example is the focus on local economies. Degrowth proposes to move production closer to the communities of consumers assuming that doing so will reduce the impact of transportation. This assumption misses the point of economies of scale. It is quite reasonable to assume that for some products it would be more efficient to produce them in large quantities in big factories and distribute them, than producing them locally.

Therefore, while it is sensible to completely remove whole sectors of the economy

like the military and advertisement, for the sectors that actually contribute to people's wellbeing it would be more useful to let them organize in the way that is most efficient, economically and environmentally, rather than mandating specific solutions. The focus should be in reversing the overall trend of destroying the environment not on constraining the economy. The economy (limited to useful activities) could still grow overall, and therefore could produce more aggregate wellbeing, while reverting the destruction of the environment.

Finally, it is quite doubtful that any of these, neither degrowth nor a growing economy that promotes ecological regeneration, could be achieved in the context of a competitive market economy. The reasoning has been already discussed: competitive market economies tend to produce concentration of wealth, which means concentration of power, which means that it is likely that those few in power will successfully move society in the opposite direction.

### **Eco-villages and open-source ecology (life-style environmentalism)**

Another popular faction within the environmentalist movement, and one that has significant overlap with the degrowth faction, is the eco-village movement. Their proponents prioritize moving away from the cities and settling in smaller rural communities.

In general eco-villages promote a kind of self-sufficiency that aspires to be as close to autarchy as possible: growing their own food, making their own energy, collecting and filtering their own water, etc. they choose technologies perceived as being more friendly with the environment, for example they favor the use of solar, wind or biofuels for energy, rather than using fossil fuels. Autarchy is the collective equivalent to the philosophy of individualism at the personal level. It favors the independence of the collective over the interdependence.

It is a growing movement, with thousands of eco-villages built around the world and many more in construction, some of them even with local government support.

Despite the impressive success, however, it is not clear how their strategy of settling into ecovillages will contribute to a better world. In order to reverse the tendency to destroy the environment, using the ecovillage strategy, we would need the majority of the population to move to ecovillages. That seems very unlikely. Ecovillages are generally designed to cater to a very narrow segment of the population, the people who are so privileged that they can afford to move away from the city, because they can work remotely or they have the capital and knowledge to start an ecotourism business. Most people can't afford that or they are more interested in living in the cities.

Proponents of the ecovillage strategy don't have a clear answer to this problem. Some expect that more people will "see the light" and abandon the city, which seems more wishful thinking than strategic planning, and still doesn't address the situation of the unprivileged. Others believe in collapsism, which is quite popular

in ecovillage communities. They believe that soon the industrial society will collapse, typically due to the exhaustion of fossil fuels, or the unsustainable growth and concentration of wealth necessary to keep it going. When that happens, life in the cities will become unsustainable, as it has happened periodically throughout history when empires have fallen. Then people will be forced to abandon the cities and the ecovillages will be the vanguard of the new world order, the ones who have already tested a new way of living and will be able to teach the others. This way of thinking again has more of wishful thinking than scientific and is reminiscent of the patterns of sects, where a few chosen ones are the ones who'll be saved when the end of the world arrives.

There is also the issue of technology that is largely neglected in the (lack of) strategic thinking of ecovillagers. Despite their efforts to be as authentic as possible they depend on many high tech external inputs. Small villages don't produce solar panels, windmills, cellphones, computers, airplanes, and so on. If everybody would move to ecovillages, where would those inputs come from?

There is one fringe subset within the ecovillage movement, a group that embraces the philosophy of the much wider makers movement, which has given thought to the issue of technology. They are the open-source ecology movement and are trying to build the "Global Village Construction Set" which they define as a "technological platform that allows for the easy fabrication of the 50 types of industrial machines that it takes to build a small civilization with modern comforts". The kit includes machinery for farming, cooking, construction, energy production and storage. Some examples are tractors, bulldozers, cement mixers, laser cutters, bakery ovens, laser cutters, solar concentrator, steam generator, wind turbine, and nickel-iron batteries.

If the open-source ecology movement succeeds in creating the Global Village Construction set they will enable eco-villages to be much more autarkic. They will enable less privileged people to join the movement since the capital expenditure for starting and maintaining the eco-village will lower significantly. It won't dramatically change the equation though. Still to be able to join an ecovillage one will need to be quite privileged to be able to afford at least to buy enough land for living, farming and building modern industries. Also, it is quite doubtful the the majority of humanity will be happy to live just with modern comforts and will willingly give up post-modern comforts such as state-of-the art surgery, computing and fast transoceanic travel.

## **Feminisms**

### **Diversity, popularity and holistics**

Feminism is one of the most popular and diverse contemporary social movements. It deals with issues related to gender, mainly related to the discrimination against the female gender, although some branches of feminism also notice that discrimination affects all genders, than non-binary genders are particularly affected and that gender discrimination can act as a multiplier to other kinds of discrimination.

Intersectional feminism for example studies the extra discrimination suffered by women who are not white or have disabilities, and also the one received by members of the LGTBIA+ collective, mainly in north-america.

Even though feminism is often criticised for being narrow in focus, many feminists instead consider feminism to be rather holistic, since issues of gender compound with most social concerns. Family, labor, housing, health, education, etc. all of them can be seen through a gender lens. Even environmentalism is among some feminists' chief concerns. In FEM magazine's introductory series to feminism, the "Feminism 101" articles, there is one called "What is greenwashing" by Chloë Vigil, written in February 2021. It explains the corporate practice of making dubious pro.environmental claims and focuses on examples in the fast fashion industry. Fashion is a sector of the economy that particularly impacts women, both on the production side, often in sweatshops, as well as the consumption side.

Most feminisms are, like most movements, reformists in nature. They don't question the main social constructs of society, and instead they aim at adding extra layers of complexity to compensate for the dynamics that create inequalities. However there are many diverse feminisms and some of them do challenge some of the prevalent social constructs. Post-colonial feminism for example challenges the western narratives that women outside the WEIRD countries experience discrimination as perceived by western standards. They oppose the white-savior narrative that justifies ongoing neo-colonial wars and they instead advocate for empowering local women to find their own place in the world given their cultural contexts. They support for example Islamic feminism, which strives for a version of equality that involves ritual modesty for women, and veiling, as a way to feel empowered and closer to God. This kind of empowerment though is utterly incomprehensible by mainstream western feminists.

In fact feminisms are so diverse that historically they have had high profile battles among factions. For example in the USA, between the 1930s and 1970s the labor feminists joined conservative women in the fight against the passage of the Equal Rights constitutional Amendment (ERA), and they narrowly won, the amendment was not passed. Labor feminist didn't want women to have equal rights to men, they wanted to have special protections in the labor force such as maternity leave, health coverage during childbirth, disability and unemployment coverage for mothers and employment hours compatible with their domestic responsibilities. Similarly conservative women wanted to retain their legal privileges such as obtaining custody of children and receiving alimony on divorces and exemption for being drafted into the military. Even though ERA was never passed, legal jurisprudence in the USA and in the WEIRD countries in general is shifting towards equal rights, and women are increasingly participating in military combat missions and paying alimony to their exes.

## **Structuralist waves and repetition pattern**

Feminisms have evolved a lot since it's origins. A common taxonomy to chronicle their evolution, which is generally accepted within the movement, is to divide it in successful waves. The pattern of new feminisms appearing in waves is a consequence of feminisms focusing on the symptoms rather than the causes of inequality, like generally movements do. Once those symptoms are addressed the media proclaims that equality has been achieved, that feminism is over and that we've entered a new era of post-feminism equality. But of course, that's not the case and as soon as people notice it and get organized around it a new wave of feminisms appear. The dating of the waves follows mostly events in the USA but they were reflected along the WEIRD countries in similar chronologies.

The first wave spanned the period between the end of XIX century and the 1950s and focused mainly on the rights to vote and own property, and achieved an undisputed complete success on both fronts. Even though black women were among the founders of feminism, and feminism was born in circles opposing racial inequalities, mainstream feminism quickly became white supremacist and elitist. Some early feminists openly opposed black people's rights and stood against black men getting the right to vote before white women. Black militants were often denied access to meetings, and if they were allowed in the marches they were forced to march segregated, at the end, and usually were not captured in the press. The mainstream leadership was white and wealthy and they were not attuned to the plight of women in less affluent families.

On the other hand, anarchy-feminism already appeared during the first wave, and was of course not interested in legal rights but pursued overcoming the state-market system altogether. They also tackled free love, showing that they were quite ahead of their time.

First wave feminism was mostly an urban phenomena which makes sense because liberalism was stronger in the cities and women there were at the front lines of the destruction of communities and their replacement by individualism and state-market bureaucracies. Women had been at the center of communities, they had been their architects and stewards, and now they were being kicked off society by liberal misogyny and systemic communal breakdown. Liberals thought that women were not fit for political or intellectual pursuits, and they had to be protected from the toilsome nature of labor. Therefore, even though women were not physically sequestered at their homes like in other times of history, their existence was being robbed of meaning.

Rural women meanwhile, were still quite far away from the liberal centers of power, and they didn't suffer yet the consequences of liberal misogyny and communal dismemberment. They were still experiencing being valued members of the society, and indeed in certain ways privileged ones. In rural communities they participated like men in productive activities as well as in political life. Many towns, especially in Europe, still preserved communal mechanisms of governance, with everybody, men and women alike, voting directly on collective

issues, rather than delegating their power to representatives.

Looking at feminism from this angle, the reaction to liberal explicit and structural misogyny, it is quite understandable that it attracted primarily urban women and didn't attract rural ones.

After the second world war there was a period of economic growth coupled with unprecedented distribution of the gains across the population. Capitalists felt the need of using a carrot to counteract the threat of the soviet block and refrained for a short period of time to capture all the productivity gains. From liberal theory one might have expected that this newfound wealth coupled with the newly acquired rights to vote and own property would mean that women, who constitute the majority of the population, which usually numbers about 51% and increases in times of war, would enjoy an unprecedented level of well being and satisfaction. Women should have used their majority to replace patriarchy with matriarchy and reap the benefits of economic growth.

The attentive reader won't be surprised that that was not at all what happened. From memetic theory we would expect instead that memes are the ones who are guiding preferences in elections, and that both men and women are captured by the same memes and vote similarly. And indeed that is what happened. There wasn't a feminist revolt in the ballots. In the USA, where land was plentiful, the new wealth translated into the now iconic suburban developments. Social roles, which are ruled by memes and not by laws, didn't change. That meant that many women found themselves completely isolated, without neither the community that women enjoyed in the rural areas nor the ability to easily reach out to the members of their subculture of choice that urban women enjoyed.

Disappointingly then the new rights and wealth lead to a situation of women being practically sequestered at their own homes, which was the spark for a new wave of feminisms.

Second wave feminisms spanned the period from the 1960s to the 1980s and focused on challenging patriarchy by enabling women to access the liberal centers of power: university education, corporate management and executive roles as well as government offices. They also tackled the issue of reproductive rights. The movement was very successful in the education, labor and government fronts, and achieved a remarkable shift in society's organization. The reproductive rights front was not so successful and it remains a contested issue oscillating between conservative legal restrictions and feminist legal rights.

This wave was about as racist and elitist as the first one. It was only white women that were excluded by the liberal misogynistic need to protect them from the physical and emotional hardships of the labor force. Black women were not of concern for liberal paternalism and generally had to work to provide for their families. They didn't have any expectation of ever getting any good job either, since black men didn't have access to those.

In the USA the second wave achieved huge legal victories. The Equal Pay

Act outlawed the gender pay gap, a series of landmark Supreme Court cases throughout the 1960's and 1970's gave married and unmarried women the right to use birth control; Title IX gave women the right to educational equality and in 1973, another landmark Supreme Court Case, Roe vs. Wade gave women the right to abortion.

First and second wave feminisms are structuralist in nature: they assume objective differences between males and females. Few feminists at the time though took such structuralism to its logical consequences like Valerie Solanas did in 1967. She explained in her SCUM Manifesto that men are genetically deficient, incomplete women, emotionally limited, egocentric, responsible for all the world's ills and who must therefore be exterminated. Solanas rose to fame with her failed double assassination attempt, the shooting of Andy Warhol and Mario Amaya, but her views remained fringe. There wasn't a massive uprising of women slaughtering men.

On the other hand, the SCUM manifesto is credited with sparking the antipornography movement. During the second wave attempts were made to tackle issues about sexuality, which are fundamentally not about legal definitions but about social constructions. That originated a big split among feminists, dividing them between anti-pornography and sex-positive factions. This confrontation marks the end of the second wave. In this indirect sense then Solanas managed to push structuralist feminism to the edge until the point of unintentionally breaking down the movement.

### **Constructionist waves and repetition pattern**

After the second wave we had in the WEIRD countries a situation where a minority of women wanted to pursue a career, either in the industry, the government or the academia, and they had the legal framework to allow them to do so, and to protect them from systemic abuses such as pay gaps.

And indeed a few women arose to the highest echelons of power. Even though that might have required them to come from wealthy families and out-male their men competitors, like Margaret Thatcher. Just as an example, Thatcher voted in favor of birching as a judicial corporal punishment, against the official position of her Conservative Party.

However, in practice, for the women in the middle class who desired to pursue a career, they still experienced many obstacles. And the women from poorer families found more obstacles than men in similar conditions. Women who pursued a career were generally not taken seriously. Only clerical work was seen as fit for women. Also, it was not considered that it was necessary to offer women a proper pay or a stable job. It was thought that women were entering the labor force just for fun, because they were bored at home, and therefore they didn't need a real salary, and could be fired without ethical qualms since their husband was the breadwinner and his salary was enough to maintain the family. The business climate then was quite different than now. The labor market didn't

encourage mobility and temporality like now. Instead firms were advertising themselves as sort of extended families that would care for their workers. It was common for sons and grandsons to work at the same firm as their fathers. Business leaders were encouraged to display modesty and have relatively modest salaries, to be seen as part of the team, rather than the extravagant bonuses of contemporary CEOs. Firms had a moral commitment to keep their workers employed for the stability of their families and communities. In this context business magazines were promoting hiring women as the perfect temporary worker to deal with peaks of work: they could be fired without impacting their families and they didn't even need to be paid with real salaries, just symbolic ones!

This, again, is to be expected. Removing legal barriers and providing legal protection for minorities are useful steps forward. However, society retains their own inertia and emergent behaviors which are not determined by law. In this context the word minority reflects that even though women made up more than 50% of the voters, the ones who wanted to pursue professional careers were less than 50% of the voters. This should be a lesson learned for any movement who wants to better the condition of minorities, or even non-humans, like environmentalists and animal welfare collectives do.

Once more the discrepancy between law and reality caused discontent. A third wave of feminism emerged during the early 1990s and lasted until around 2012. It's origins are tied to the punk scene. Third wave feminists criticized previous generations of feminists as being white elitists. Intersectionality, the recognition that non-white and non-wealthy women suffer from many layers of discriminations, and vegetarian ecofeminism which sees all form of oppressions as being linked, even those toward non-humans, emerged during the third wave.

During this wave feminists started to understand and tackle social constructs. Sex positivity or sexual liberation acknowledges the social constructed nature of sexual practices and social arrangements around them such as marriage and monogamy. Transfeminism, and the overlapping works in queer and feminist theories, are fruit of the recognition of the social constructionist and performative nature of gender. There is even a third wave faction, postmodern feminism, devoted to rejecting essentialism. For the purpose of this discussion we'll consider postmodernism, post-structuralism, and social constructionism as equivalent, the philosophical schools of thought that reject the notion that the foundations of societies, such as gender, property, money, nations, languages, etc. are objective and claim that they are instead human-made and performative.

The third wave also criticizes previous waves for trying to make women emulate men and instead advocate for more diverse lifestyles, to be chosen freely from every woman's individuality, and which might include, not reject, traditionally girly and fun pursuits such as fashion and makeup. Lipstick feminism seeks to dismantle the cliches of the angry, ugly and anti-sex feminist from previous waves by embracing traditional concepts of femininity including sexual power, womanhood and female sexuality emitted from a woman's body. This brand of

feminism was popularized as Girl Power in the mid 90's by the Spice Girls pop band.

The third wave didn't aim for, and didn't achieve, any major legal battles. They were more concerned about practicing feminism than legislating it. They worked on exposing and eliminating practices and cultures of workplace sexual harassment and in helping women achieve positions of power.

Because of the lack of unifying goals and major achievements it is hard to tell, and is disputed, when the third wave finished and a fourth one started. However the more popular taxonomy places the rise of a fourth wave around 2012 and considers it is still ongoing (even though some already claim that a 5th wave has started). The main characteristic of the fourth wave is the shift of medium it uses to express itself, which has shifted towards the internet and in particular social networks. Beyond the change of medium of is hard to tell what are the contemporary focuses on issues since different feminist chroniclers disagree. Domestic violence seems to be one of the focus. Grassroots movements seem to be becoming more inclusive, more focused on the collectives, and specially on the disadvantaged ones. In contrast, institutions and the media seem to be regressing to focusing on the privileged and on the individuals. One example is the focus on the pay gap in highly paid IT workers. Another is the #metoo movement, which was a protest on powerful males using sexual favors as currency for distributing privileges among their female colleagues.

Let's close this summary of contemporary feminism with a mention to anarcho-feminism, which has been riding along since the first wave. If one were to take as a metric of success, let's say, the number of graffiti in the streets of Catalonia, or perhaps the practices in certain underground cultural hubs in Berlin, one could conclude that anarcho-feminism has become the most successful form of practiced feminism. On the other hand, looking at the biggest online media feminist spaces it would seem extinct. Even in Wikipedia, which being an online medium one could presume under control of fourth-wavers, mentions anarcho-feminism only once across all of the fourth pages dedicated to each wave. Only in a passage about Argentina in the first wave, like anarcho-feminism didn't exist in the wealthiest economies.

### **Successes**

The volume of theoretical knowledge amassed by the feminist movements is simply amazing. From the perspective defended in these pages, that the biggest chance we have at collective liberation is to construct a brand new society with science-based values of cooperation, little of that body of knowledge applies, since most of it refers to behaviors within the liberal competitive state-market system.

Of the remaining, there are three aspects that seem very useful to build upon.

First, that the economy is about care. Is not the case that there is a "care

economy” separated from the real economy. Often, when feminism is expressed through the filters of institutions and the media it sounds like there is a real economy, which traditionally has been the domain of men, and a domestic, a care economy, which traditionally has been the domain of women. In reality, all the economy is care. We build bridges and automobiles because we care about the people on the other side of the river and we want to have an easier time traveling to visit each other. We build phones with video-conferencing apps so that we spend time with the people that we care about even when they are not next to us.

The second is the deconstruction of gender and sex, done by feminists in tandem with queer theoreticians. From this deconstruction it follows that monogamous binary heteronormativity is just one of many possible constructs. The popularization of this ideas is driving a sexual liberation, much more extensive than the hippie one in the 60s, which is allowing people to build relationships of friendship, romantic love, and sexuality tailored to the involved parties, choosing from a much wider menu of options than the immediately preceding generations had access to.

The third is a solid critique on the golden standard of economic studies, the randomized control trials (RCTs). From a social constructionist perspective it is quite obvious that most RCTs, or the next best thing, near-natural experiments which are more likely to be found in experimental economics, have a fundamental flaw. They are comparing two (or more) outcomes that take for granted the same social construction of the liberal competitive market-state. It would be wonderful to see an RCT comparing the wellbeing of say, a society of millions living under an anarchy-feminist regime with ones living in the current system. But, alas, that doesn't happen. As example in this line of thought is the article “Women’s Empowerment and Economic Development: A Feminist Critique of Storytelling Practices in "Randomista" Economics”, by Naila Kabeer published in *Feminist Economics*, Volume 26, 2020, Issue 2. Is a “speak truth to power” kind of article that dares to challenge a 2019 Nobel Laureate in economics.

On the practical side, feminism has accomplished remarkable wins in the amount and scope of laws, which have already been listed in the previous section about the two first waves.

### **Limitations**

Despite the remarkable theoretical and legal advances made possible by feminisms, those have had many practical limitations. As noted earlier, the legal advances haven't accomplished their desired effect. Women still suffer from multiple layers of discrimination, including the theoretically outlawed ones like pay gaps. Therefore the feminist struggle still goes on, and looks far from reaching completion.

Despite many governments allegedly having embraced feminism (and environmentalism and so on), unsurprisingly feminist economics theory hasn't been adopted

by any of them. Feminist economics remains a scholarly niche. Look for example at the critique on randomista economics cited earlier: it was published on the Feminist Economics journal! No serious journal would publish a critique to a recent Nobel Laureate. Feminism scholarship is an entertainment for dissidents to do on their own bubbles, without impact on mainstream scholarship thought.

At the social level, despite feminism's understanding and challenging social constructions, still in some business environments, women are seen as less capable than men, and as a secondary earner to whom the firm owes less accountability than their male colleagues, who are supposed to be the breadwinners.

At the government level, feminism suffers from the same nasty politics effects that all causes suffer from. Governments implement policies just for show, to attract voters, instead of incorporating the issues in their core strategy. Do you want feminism in the government? Sure! We'll create a feminist ministry that gives alimony to women and protects them from scary men. Never mind that the government is reproducing the patriarchal condescending paternity role towards women, replacing men with public servants in the act of performing paternalism. Would you like it to have more visibility in the media? Sure, we'll make up some scandals with fabricated evidence for supposed domestic violence perpetrators and pedophiles. After all, we have plenty of experience fabricating terrorist plots, and we can easily transfer the skills.

Reproductive rights is another front where progress has been stagnant for generations. Which makes a lot of sense if we look at activism through the lens of symbiotic opportunities with the military-industrial-slavery complex. On the labor front it seems quite logic that adding women (and people who are not cis-men in general) to the workforce and the military will be quite symbiotic with the memes that support the hegemony of the complex. For reproductive rights, however, no such symbiosis seems logical. Instead, what helps the exploitation of the people is for them to be divided on issues. It therefore makes sense that there has been an ongoing battle between conservatives and feminists on this issue. In the USA the situation is particularly dire since Christian fanaticism is rampant there and gives support to conservative terrorism against avortion providers. Clinics that perform abortions are routinely targetted with violent actions and their doctors ocasionaly killed.

Beyond the obvious direct ethical implications, the best case to support legalized abortion was made in 2001 by economists John Donohue (Yale) and Steve Levitt (Chicago) in their landmark paper "The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime". Taking advantage of natural experiments they were able to use RTC methodologies to establish causality and affirm that the availability of abortion for the poor had direct impact in reducing criminality later on, that would have been performed by the unwanted children. They even predicted how then-current abortion availability would impact crime in the following decades. Impressively in 2019 they revised their paper with updated data and confirmed the accuracy of their earlier predictions. Accuracy in predictions is a rather singular event in the field of economics!

Unsurprisingly the crime-reduction effect is quite hard to sell as well. Whatever increases crime is beneficial for the stability of the military-industrial-slavery complex. The main example of this trend is the so-called “war on drugs”. Research has been quite conclusive for many years about the benefits of legalizing drugs, which would have a dramatic effect in reducing crime and no negative impact on people’s health.

One conclusion for movements in general is that, contrary to common belief, effecting change is not directly tied to just marching and protesting. There are usually other forces at play that need to be reckoned with. Instead of that, when facing failure, movements usually just ask their followers to organize more massive events and be louder.

### **Collateral effects**

The second wave of feminisms aimed at allowing the middle class women who so desired to have a professional career. A naive person could think the the result of achieving that would be that (hetero-normative) couples would have more choice about how they distribute the responsibilities in the family. They could decide that either the man or the woman would be the breadwinner, and the other would take care of the home, or they could decide to both have part time professional careers and share equally the domestic work.

Alas, a more savvy observer at the time with knowledge about economics and systems could have easily predicted the very different outcome that happened. Is surprising that we don’t seem to have records of this kind of contemporary critiques. Compared with another recent historic economic shift, at the onset of globalization, there were many critics who predicted that globalization would not only mean cheap imports from poor countries, but also would mean massive unemployment for the middle class. Basically everybody except the professional economist saw it coming. Strangely, the record of similar foresight at the onset of the second feminist wave seems missing.

In any case, at least in hindsight, it is quite obvious that the possibility of middle class women entering the workforce would create a systemic pressure for all of the middle class women to join the workforce. When a few young couples decide that both will earn money from their work, then they collectively have significantly more income than the others, and can spend more money buying or renting houses. Since the supply in the real estate market is limited this brings the real estate prices up, which in turns brings up the prices of mostly everything, which puts pressure on other couples to decide to work both of them as well, and so on goes the positive loop. . . .

The result has been that most couples have been forced to work twice as much as before the start of the second wave, and they together earn comparatively less than a man did before. A man’s salary was enough to support a woman and 4-5 children, and nowadays both salaries combined they barely support a couple and 1-3 children. There have been other factors contributing to the loss

of wealth for the middle classes, but the role that feminisms played in easing the social pressure on men having salaries good enough to support a family seems hard to dispute.

Recent statistics in the USA for example show that about 40% of breadwinners, or highest income earners in the household, are women. Also about 58% of adult women participate in the workforce, compared to 70% of men. A relatively small gap within the two who is being decried by some feminisms that aim at closing the gap. The notion that closing the gap between percentage of men and women in the workforce is feminist goal is preposterous. Such a mindset implies that participating in the workforce should be the highest aim for everybody and neglects that many people have other priorities like caring for their families or participating in their communities through different forms of civic engagements. The proper way to look at the situation would be to ask how many hetero cis-women who would like to have a job don't, and compare that number to those who do have a job but they would rather not have it, and would like their partners to earn for both of them instead.

How would the number of women that have a job against their will compare with the ones who would like to have one and don't? A missive Gallup poll of more than 323 thousand Americans in 2016 concluded that 54% of mothers with kids under 18 who currently have a full- or part-time employment would rather not have it. Therefore, as a result of feminism focusing on women's access to the workforce, rather than on making sure that mothers have the means to raise a family in whatever form they wish, 54% of mothers are being directly hurt. And this is on top of everybody being indirectly hurt by doubling the offer of working hours in the labor force, which heavily devalued them. The same poll also indicates that only 23% of men prefer a homemaking role.

Of course not everybody agrees. And it seems that those who claim that the increase of women in the workforce has had a generally positive economic impact can even publish beyond the feminist niche, in mainstream avenues. Take for example the article "When More Women Join the Workforce, Wages Rise — Including for Men" published in Harvard Business Review, by Amanda Weinstein on January 31st, 2018 (and reposted on Facebook by Ivanka Trump a few days later).

Despite the prestige of the publication, the article seems to be a low quality epidemiological study, a case of "torture the data until I get the results I'm looking for". The author claims that for every 10% increase in the female labor force there is a 5% increase in median real wages. However the article doesn't mention any near-natural experiment that would help establish causality. In this context, where both comparisons are instances of the same economic and political system, it would be proper to use Randomized Control Trials (RTC) methodology. The reservations for RTC expressed earlier only apply when failing to consider the possibility of different systems. In this case more likely the causality is the reverse of what the author claims. As the economies in certain cities flourish young people move there, which increases prices, which cause

both salary increases and forces unwilling women to enter the labor market. Unfortunately it doesn't seem to be a scholarly follow up in the article that either reinforces or disputes it's claims.

This massively negative collateral effect of second wave feminisms is not the fault of feminisms per se, it is a consequence of the systemic emerging behavior of biased selection. Of all the proposals from the many diverse feminisms, by definition, the ones who'll get enough momentum in the media and the political circles, are the ones which are compatible with the prevailing memes and ideologies, in this case, the ones of liberal competitive market-states.

One can easily think of equally plausible alternatives to allow women to access the workforce without increasing the total pool of working hours, and therefore without devaluing them. Each couple could be allocated a certain amount of hours, or even a community such a town or neighborhood could be allocated a certain amount of working hours, and leave up to them how to distribute those hours and the corresponding income. This collective based approach however would be very unlikely to gain momentum in an ecosystem of liberal memes. Even in fourth wave feminism, where the collective mindset is again gaining popularity in some of the currents, the collective thinking still tends to apply to "they". The poor, the non-whites, the under-privileged, etc. there is still an elitist blindness, that fails to think about us, the white middle upper classes, as the ones who are being hurt as well by this individualistic thinking.

### **Parallels with conservatism**

Comparing feminisms with conservatism might seem an oxymoron because contemporary feminisms have in general done a great job as branding themselves as movements for the greater good, for the advancement of all the oppressed, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation and social status.

However since we are studying the tensions that lead to social movements and their evolution it is quite useful to look at some of the parallels. Both conservatism and feminisms can be seen as reactions to the traits and consequences of liberalism (misogyny, destruction of communities), both of them rejecting some tenets while embracing most of the liberal ethos.

In the case of feminisms there have been currents that advocate for privileges for women over other genders, or for privileges of women of a certain social class. As described before, the first two waves of feminism were mostly in defense of privileged white and wealthy women. Also during the first wave, and even more famously during the second wave, labor feminists openly joined conservatives against equality to fight to preserve and increase special privileges and social status for women. Conservatives were more interested in the privileges of the affluent women and feminist in the privileges of the middle class women, but their logic was the same. They embrace the idea of a collective subject (us - women) who is competing against another collective (them - men).

In 1972 Phyllis Schlafly, a conservative leader in the fight against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) asked “Why should we trade in our special privileges and honored status for the alleged advantage of working in an office or assembly line? Most women would rather cuddle a baby than a typewriter or a factory machine.” What America Lost as Women Entered the Workforce (The Atlantic, September 19th 2016)

Schlafly’s reasonings are in the same line as feminist of the time, or the infamous SCUM manifesto that also advocated for the superiority of women above men.

In the Third and Fourth waves most authoritative sources, from scholars and erudites alike, have moved past these divisive discourses and instead advocate feminism as a tool to advance towards the greater good. And yet, even nowadays, it’s hard to look at any mundane discussion involving feminism, away from the high places of cultivated thought, and not find references that equate patriarchy with men or dispute the right of trans-women to participate in women-only events.

### **Contemporary feminist debates on elitism and consumerism**

There are some feminist authors who notice that some failures might be due to internal causes of the feminist movements and not only to external oppression.

There are for example second-wave feminists pushing a #MeToo backlash, pointing out how privileged women use their sexual power to gain more privilege and then hypocritically blame men for that. “If you spread your legs because he said ‘be nice to me and I’ll give you a job in a movie’ then I’m afraid that’s tantamount to consent,” second-wave feminist icon Germaine Greer remarked as the accusations about Weinstein mounted, “and it’s too late now to start whingeing about that.” Greer is regarded as one of the major voices of the radical feminist movement in the latter half of the XX century and has held academic positions both in England and in the United States. The waves of feminism, and why people keep fighting over them, explained by Constance Grady at vox.com, Jul 20th 2018

Other feminist authors are questioning the service that popular consumerist feminism, affordable by middle class women, is doing to capitalism, and how it is reinforcing the oppression to the less privileged:

The ways in which Western capitalism has attempted to co-opt liberation movements in order to demobilise these is well-documented. In the late 1990s, the discourse of ‘girl power’ was deployed by mainstream media to construct a version of girlhood which was essentially apolitical and instead placed an emphasis on meritocracy, consumerism and the autonomous individual, and which constructed women’s agency merely in terms of ‘choice’. This discourse was seized upon by both consumer capitalism and the media to essentially sell a product to young women.

Recent years have witnessed a number of highly-marketised, 'feminism-lite' books which have been criticised for being a "tepid call for women's right to make their own choices". Examples include Caitlin Moran's (2011) *How To Be A Woman* and Polly Vernon's (2015) *Hot Feminist*. There have also been numerous attempts to 'rebrand' feminism launched by women's magazines such as ELLE and Stylist in the UK and the We Are XX campaign in the US.

The key assumptions underpinning such endeavours are that, first, only the application of marketing principles within the framework of capitalism can make feminism appealing again. Second, efforts to rebrand feminism are typically focussed on its 'image problem' and characterised by attempts to dismantle stereotypes of feminists as masculine, angry and aggressive which simply reinforces the patriarchal notion that women should never be any of these things.

Thus, rebranding feminism is more about capitulating to the dominant culture rather than social change and feminism is reduced to a marketing strategy that can be capitalised upon by selling tee-shirts featuring feminist slogans or popular books.

However, **a choice is not necessarily feminist simply because a woman has made that choice, especially if it is one that impacts negatively on other women or fails to advance the collective rights of women or challenge their subordination.**

Further, notions of choice must be treated critically. We agree with social constructionists that there can be no 'authentic experience' that is disconnected from language and discourse and so our experiences, however personal and 'real' these may seem, are always constituted socially. For example, we may experience the use of make-ups 'empowering', not because of any kind of inherent properties of femininity, but because women and girls are surrounded with messages that their physical attractiveness is an important currency and that make-up enhances this.

Further, the framing of such practices by some third and fourth-wave feminists as liberating and rebellious dovetails with a desired self-conception, in line with Western, neo-liberal ideology, as independent and powerful subjects. The appeal of such cultural narratives is therefore unsurprising. The problem is that buying into these **requires very little of women in terms of confronting real male power.** Such critiques don't necessarily mean abandoning a discourse of rights such as a woman's right to choose. However, these do highlight how **the extent to which women have the freedom to choose in contemporary patriarchal, capitalist societies has been overstated. This is not benign or incidental, but politically motivated** and situated within the current (neo-liberal)

socio-political context.

Fourth-wave feminism and postfeminism: The successes and failures

Katy Day & Rebecca Wray

Notice how the authors use the common term neo-liberal to attack capitalism as if capitalism didn't emanate from classical liberal ideology.

## **Effective altruism (EA)**

Effective altruism (abbreviated EA) is a very interesting fringe movement that has three peculiar traits, which will be useful to build the strategy presented in the next book of this series.

The first one is the idea that few people, well organized, can make a big impact, even a huge impact such as avoiding premature extinction. This sets them apart from most movements that aim at recruiting as many people as possible, often exaggerating their claims and simplifying their messages to the point of being caricaturesque. EA proponents tend to do the opposite, to be very careful about the precision of their claims, the degree of uncertainty they contain, and to explain them in exquisite detail. For example, the 80.000 hours selection of 10 introductory podcast episodes to get started with Effective Altruism is a case in point: a collection of 10 interviews, +2h long each, delving into nerdy philosophical details about epistemology. They are great fun for the data-savvy and philosophically oriented, and they are at the antipodes of the incendiary tweets one usually associates with the word “movement”.

The second interesting trait of EA is a methodological cost/benefit analysis approach to altruism. EA aims to compute the amount of good achieved by a given action and therefore be able to compare effectiveness of actions in different domains such as health or education. In this way EA proponents are able to compare the amount of good achieved per unit of money invested across different domains and rank them in terms of effectiveness. They also advocate for Randomized Control Trials in experiments. Foundational RTC studies compared the impact on school performance of several interventions in Africa, buying more books for schools, hiring more teachers and deworming programs. Surprisingly they found out that more books and more teachers had negligible impact, but deworming programs were very effective, because they kept students healthier and that significantly improved school performance, which is known to dramatically improve the chances of higher income later in life.

The third one, which is a natural consequence of the previous one, is that the EA community has studied the issue of personal autonomy versus organizational efficiency. Giving money to individuals in need and relying on their autonomy to spend it wisely towards their wellbeing is very effective but occasionally there are interventions that an organization can do at a massive scale that is more effective than what individuals could do separately. The eradication of smallpox in 1973

is a historical example of such interventions that has since saved millions of lives every year, at a tiny cost. Deworming medications and malaria-preventing mosquito nets are often cited as contemporary examples of interventions more effective than cash handouts. Therefore EA is quite confident that, in the context of individuals inserted in competitive market-states, there are plenty of cases when it is more effective for an organization to intervene rather than just give cash handouts. EA researchers claim that the top charities have 5 to 10 times more impact per unit of currency donated than cash handouts.

A fourth characteristic of EA is that it has considered whether it is better to save and invest to have a bigger impact on the future or to spend all the resources available now. Reasoning about this dilemma is easier because of the combination of analytical approaches about doing good and because many of EA proponents use consequentialist ethics. It also works with non-consequential ethics, but it might not be as simple to see.

Consequential ethics translates in the belief that it is worth killing a person to save five people, or to cut down a tree to save a forest, or to sacrifice a chicken to save five chickens, etc. Non-consequentialist ethics, in contrast, claims that are actions that are dogmatically wrong and are not justifiable no matter what.

Consequential ethics might sound a bit extreme in the abstract, but for most practical purposes, most people use them. For example, most people agree that on balance it's good to have police, and even military forces. We know from 5000 years of history and recent global data confirms it that in the armed forces there are always people who abuse their power to stalk and rape women and young boys, and even to kill and torture innocent people. Still, most people do a calculation in their head and think that that's a small cost to pay compared to the alternative of not having armed forces which would potentially lead to mass criminal activities and potentially war that would, potentially, end up with many more people raped, killed and tortured.

Very few people claim in contrast that they would rather not have armed forces, that they would rather face a higher chance of being victims of violence than have their tax money used to arm and give authority to people who will, in small proportions but in all certainty, abuse it.

In contrast though, many activist projects use non-consequential ethics and feel compelled to spend all their resources now to benefit as soon as possible their cause. As a result they tend to be always short on resources, sometimes dangerously so, even putting the project at risk in the event of unexpected financial difficulties. Also, they tend to create environments that are emotionally draining, because on one hand they promote the necessity to act now and on the other hand there are no resources available to act because all of them have already been given away, or there are infinitely more potential recipients than resources available.

Consequential ethics allows us to make the calculation that saving and investing the money that we have now, and that could be used for saving one person's

life, can become more money, or more structural power, in the future, which will allow us to save many more lives. This in turn allows us to make strategies, plan accordingly, and focus the efforts on following an achievable plan, which is much less emotionally taxing than despairing about not being able to save everyone right now. Many EA proponents favor a long termist view that consists in thinking what we can do now to improve the lives of people thousands of years in the future, or even, how to reduce the chances of premature extinction so such trillions of trillions of people will get to exist at all.

For some reason it seems that most people feel uncomfortable trading one life that seems very easy to save for it's proximity in time and geography with many lives that may be far away at the opposite end of the world or even thousands of years in the future. That's probably part of the reason why EA remains such a fringe ideology. If you are comfortable with such trade-offs hopefully you'll enjoy the strategy proposed in the next book of this series.

One last concept developed by EA that will be useful to elaborate a long-termist strategy is the concept of career capital. This concept helps answer the question of what is the best career that a person can choose in order to contribute as much good as possible to the world. And the answer is to pick one, within their abilities and motivations, that offers the best combination of disposable money, networking with influential people, chances to be well positioned in think tanks or government, etc. all those resources combined are called career capital.

### **Limitations of the Effective Altruism movement**

The theoretical foundations of EA and many of their theoretical works are very sound. For example they have done an enormous effort to avoid the mistake of locking-in on one particular worldview or ideology to avoid falling into fundamentalism. And yet, ironically, the leadership of the movement seem rather fundamentalist in their strict adherence to Enlightenment liberalism principles.

They discuss maximizing utility like other's utility was different, and even occasionally competing, with one's own utility. From this perspective one gets easily confused. For example one can wonder whether it is ethical to indulge in a fancy dinner for oneself rather than devoting the money to a charity instead.

Instead, if one thinks of ethics from the perspective that practicing generosity and gratitude are fundamental for one's happiness, then maximizing utility doesn't lead to such conundrums. It seems much more plausible to invest one's resources in helping others, which will produce utility for both, the ones that are helping and the ones helped. Also if one is aware of the dangers of stress and burnout, then it follows that is perfectly ethical to invest in one's wellbeing, in activities that help relax and improve mental health, since that will make it easier to help others afterwards.

In general it seems that the Effective Altruism crowd missed the constructionist boat. Is rather weird that they have discussions about humanity in 10.000 or

100.000 years in the future that are around competitive nation states. Conversations address topics such as how to make it less likely that big powers go to an all-out war that destroys humanity instead of thinking that such constructions are not useful at all and focusing on how to move to a world with more useful structures than competing nation states.

Similarly EA seems to direct the focus of their interventions to individuals, rather than thinking in terms of collectives such as race, social groups, or local communities. They seem to miss the potentially huge multiplying factor of creating and empowering communities rather than addressing isolated individuals.

## **More Democracy**

Let's group with the term More Democracy the collection of movements, and factions within movements, that believe that the overall social structure created from Enlightenment Liberalism is mostly adequate. I.e. a competitive global market-state system ruled through representative democracy. Also, at the same time, they believe that for circumstantial reasons, usually corruption and ignorance, is failing to deliver it's true potential.

In recent history probably the most salient example is the Occupy Movement in 2011, also named the Outraged Movement in Spain, which managed to get some new political parties into positions of power both in Greece and Spain.

With the same denomination we can also label factions within movements that work on education, health, the environment, animal welfare, etc. that believe that surely, if our societies were more democratic, their causes would be better served. Surely if it wasn't for corruption society would devote a bigger portion of resources to education. Surely if it wasn't for corruption all doctors would prescribe safe medication against covid, such as Ivermectin, which has proven both in large RTC clinical studies as well as field deployments in Chile and India to be more effective and safer than vaccines, surely if the government was run democratically the general population's feelings about the environment and animals would be reflected in laws that would prioritize those over greedy corporation's profits, etc.

It is factually true that the current implementation of representative democracy is biased by design to avoid being too democratic. It is designed instead to promote and protect a duopoly of political parties which, in turn, get more incentivised in protecting their quotas of power than in serving the general population. Major parties need funding from private interests to fund campaigns so that they can remain in power. At the same time, it is very difficult for smaller parties to even get a voice to challenge the duopoly due to minimum quotas to get a seat, the law d'Hondt which gives more weight to the votes of the bigger parties, winner-takes-all votes, etc. The argument for such a system is that stability is more desirable than democracy, but that crucial point from Enlightenment Liberalism hasn't really been elaborated philosophically in a convincing way.

On the contrary, it seems rather hard to argue in favor of the duopoly of ruling parties which quite naturally tends to benefit the private interest of small wealthy groups over the interests of the general population. Therefore it is quite easy to understand the appeal of such More Democracy movements. Typically such movements fight for improvements and transparency in funding of political parties and for having ranked voting systems instead of single vote systems. They also tend to favor removing quotas for accessing representative seats, reduction in the layers of government and more direct procedures, like referendums, for citizens to express their preferences, etc.

Sometimes also such movements argue that smaller countries have more democratic governments because their elected officials are closer to the population, with fewer layers in between. That supposedly translates to better welfare for their citizens and more autonomy in the international arena. They point at Switzerland, Iceland, and the Nordics as examples.

Such claims however are not so clear-cut. While Switzerland and Iceland have indeed shown some remarkable autonomy, the Nordics often seem to act as puppets of North-American interests. Take for example the case of Jon Lech Johansen whose house in Norway was raided in the year 2000 by the local police responding to a USA request. Johansen had released the famous DeCSS code which allowed Linux users to watch encrypted DVDs which annoyed the major movie studios because, as a side effect, it facilitated unauthorized copying. More recently, between 2012 and 2019 Sweden prosecutors fabricated cases of sexual harassment against Julian Assange to try extradite him from the UK, so that he could be handed over to the USA from Sweden. The attempt failed.

Regarding the social benefits, it's worth pointing out that those countries benefit from cheap imports from poor economies, often still facilitated by former colonial ties. It is not so clear that they would be able to provide such a level of social welfare in a globally fair economy. Even in a globally unfair economy, it is also dubious that they will be able to preserve their historically generous welfare programs as they are being integrated more and more into the global economy and are feeling pressured to be more competitive.

The darker side of the More Democracy movements is their tendency to complain that people vote wrongly. They tend to do that when elected officials promote illiberal policies such as tariffs on international trade or international movement of capital, or nationalization of sectors of the economy. They tend to make a lot more noise about when governments attack reproductive rights, immigrants or the LGBT communities, but a cynic would say that they are secretly more concerned about the freedom of the market than the freedom of women and minorities. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be data-rich studies on the motivations for the "people vote wrong" claims. In any case, it is rather ironic that at the same time people are asking for more democracy and for excluding a certain part of the population from voting. It would be much more ethical to aim at improving the level of education and reasoning in the electorate.

Ultimately though, the More Democracy movements tend to miss the point about diversity. People who truly embrace democracy and people's autonomy and freedom should be willing to accept that some communities will want to promote patriarchy, heteronormativity, white supremacy, and protectionist economic measures. Or some random combination of those. Instead of decrying the communities that do so, true impartial data-minded people should welcome the chance of experimenting with such combinations and seeing which ones produce better results, in terms of happiness or other KPIs, and even being willing to consider that maybe a choice of diverse communities with different values is the best since different people might flourish under different circumstances. As long as people who don't feel comfortable with such values can easily and practically opt-out from those communities and join others more aligned with their values, there shouldn't be ethical concerns.

Unfortunately More Democracy supporters tend to be blinded by the social construction of nationalism and see the only possible scope for a community as the existing national virtual communities. A recent historical case in point was the Californian Secessionist movement after Trump's election. The rationale was that Californians wouldn't be able to coexist in a United States led by a misogynistic, patriarchal, homophobic white supremacist. However, after a few initial weeks of anger and euphoria, the nationalistic nature of Californians kicked-in and the secessionist support quickly faded.

For some reason when there are discussions in the public spheres about giving more democracy and more autonomy to small local communities the fears of regressive values are often mentioned, but the opportunities for improved ethical outcomes are neglected. In a similar fashion one could imagine empowering communities that have values much above the society's average, with a greater degree of equity between genders, sexual orientations, races, etc. and which would favor local, organic, environmentally friendly over consumptions of environmentally damaging goods produced far away under political regimes that encourage discrimination. Such communities could even ban the trade of such products.

A recent, practical and scary consequence of this idea that people wrote wrongly has been the massive support and consequent implementation of censorship about covid in the main social networks. The obsession about voters being stupid and having to be protected from complicated discussions has led to fanaticism in the topic of covid. A polarized discourse has emerged where vaccines, masks, distancing and so forth are seen as sacred goods and any questioning is seen as evil. Renown scientists have seen their online accounts banned when they have voiced a desire for more balanced policies, that take in account the negative effects as well as positive effects of each intervention and limit interventions to the cohorts where there is a positive balance. They have pointed out that in young populations, by some accounts, the dangers from social isolation and vaccine side effects are worse than the dangers of covid. Even when linking to papers published in high impact journals the media has treated them as unscientific

heretics. Even more concerning is such outspoken scientists being banned from participating in science. For example, in October 2021 the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) blocked Dr. Robert Malone, a pioneer in mRNA technology, from its website.

Besides all these considerations, the main problem with the More Democracy perspective is that it focuses solely on improving the quality of the processes and neglects improving the quality of the voters. The movement generally adheres to the liberal beliefs that humans are separated individuals who naturally fight for their self-interest, and that is a good thing to promote such competition. In the first book we made the case that such ideas are not backed up by science, that the human mind is a collective experience, and that humans flourish when they feel attachment with others and actively practice generosity and gratitude towards each other. Without focusing on improving the quality of the voters at the same time as improving the quality of democracy it might lead to relatively few gains. It is hard to imagine how people voting, thinking how they can benefit the most from the elections, rather than thinking on what outcome of the elections would provide more good in the world, would lead to many desirable outcomes.

Even the feasibility of achieving serious gains in the quality of democracy in the current competitive context is dubious. Societies that encourage selfishness and idolise the mega-rich, as the ultimate winners, are quite vulnerable to interferences from economic interests that gravitate around such mega-rich people. It doesn't seem feasible to restrict in any meaningful way money interfering in democracy. Sometimes such interferences are as blatant as asking workers to support tax cuts for the rich. For example, on October 14th 2011, The Intercept reported that Verizon, who has enjoyed a negative tax rate for years, asked workers in the USA to fight against the removal of Trump-era tax cuts.

## Social Democracy

Let's call Social Democracy the political model of the European nordic countries. This model is often touted as an ideal compromise between a lassair-fair liberal market and a totalitarian socialist state that aims for communism. The results obtained by this model are rather impressive indeed: the Nordics consistently show up on the top in global happiness surveys. They have such a level of social cohesion and trust that it is not uncommon for parents to leave the kids alone in the park napping, something that in the rest of the world, even in the most advanced economies, would be commonly regarded as criminal behavior.

There are a lot of cultural and political traits that seem very desirable and conducive to these good outcomes. Wealth is distributed more equally than in other political systems, the gap between the less and the more well off in society is much smaller. There is a culture of prioritizing family and social life over working long hours for money. The education system makes serious efforts to

apply leading pedagogical insights to teach kids emotional and critical thinking competencies rather than trying to mold them into an obedient workforce. The judiciary and penitentiary institutions also make a commendable effort into offering wrong-doers the tools to become contributing members of society rather than focusing on punishment.

Indeed they excel compared to other market-state systems. Therefore is logical that in a context where there is a choice between flavors of market-state system one would favor the Social Democracy one.

However, there are compelling reasons to not consider it as a final destination, but just as an interim tendency which will help in widening the window of opportunity to build an even better, more utopical in the good sense of the word, society. Also to increase the constituency that would help into such transition. The more people are happy and feel secure about their basic needs being met, the more inclined they are to contribute their resources towards a better world.

The main reason is that it seems that the Social Democracy model is not extensible to the whole world but it depends on the exploitation of humans and ecosystems outside their borders. Their governments make seemingly serious environmental commitments but their scope is limited to the pollution generated within their borders, they don't consider the impact of the pollution that has been generated in creating the goods they consume, since typically factories are outside their borders. Those pollution-generation factories include the ones that produce the equipment that allow the Social Democrats to claim they are using environmentally friendly technology such as solar panels, windmills to generate electricity, electrical cars, and so on. Furthermore, in the international arena, the social democratic countries don't seem to be pushing for a better global environment. They don't seem to be pushing for example on import taxes for products generated with dirty energy for example. An analogous reasoning can be made for the labor conditions for building the products that they consume. Many come from areas with little or none labor protections, with outright slavery, debt-peonage, chronic poverty, assassination of union leaders, routine raping of workers, etc. also in this area, social democratic governments don't seem interested in using their power to influence better labor conditions beyond their borders.

It is probably not a coincidence that the Extinction Rebellion, an environmentalist faction that is questioning the sustainability of a growth-based economy and of the whole capitalist system, was started by Greta Thunberg precisely in Sweden. The combination of being wealthy enough to have time to reflect on your contribution to the future and being part of a system that threatens to destroy the future is a pretty powerful motivator. The Swedes that engaged in such introspection spared by Thunberg didn't arrive at the conclusion that they should export Social Democracy to the rest of the world. They arrived at the conclusion that they should export opposition to capitalism in all its forms, even in the most benign shape of Social Democracy.

A second powerful reason, this one more selfish, is that the amount of work that most of the population has to do is still much much bigger than what would be expected for a society that has XXI century technology. One should expect that the amount of work needed to keep oneself fed, clothed, healthy and protected from the weather would amount to a few days of work a year, at most. And yet, most people in those societies still are expected to work 5 days a week for 5 to 8 hours a day. Sure, people might want to voluntarily work more to get newer gadgets and luxuries, but the point is that people are still compelled to remain employed and work regularly on a daily basis to have their bare necessities covered. Granted they also get extra to spend for fun, but they lack the freedom to work less and still, the proportion of their salaries that goes to cover their essential needs is totally disproportionate with today's technological level.

Is not clear where all that huge amount of excess wealth goes. Probably a lot of it is spent in systemic inefficiencies: corporate and government bureaucracies, planned obsolescence and so on. Another part probably goes away into international markets through profits for transnational corporations with foreign stakeholders, which masks the inequalities generated.

A third reason is that despite the propaganda that Social Democracy is able to tame the for-profit markets, and make them work largely for the benefit of the general population, in reality the markets are far from tamed and continue with their emerging behaviors of concentration of power. For example, at the geographical level, economic power tends to concentrate around the biggest cities. The governments try to compensate for that by owning most of the housing in the bigger cities, and setting rents at a similar level than the rest of the country, but that doesn't stop the most powerful firms from placing their most desirable jobs in the biggest cities. As a result on one hand people can spend many years, even decades, on a waiting list for housing near their desired workplace. Or resort to the black market. Simultaneously firms threaten the governments to pull out of their countries because would-be workers are refusing contracts since they can't find housing near their offices. In more liberal cities this is not a problem since the higher paid workers displace the lesser well off to the suburbs or ghettos. With powerful transnational corporations threatening the Social Democratic governments it is unclear how long this apparent oasis will last.

Finally, this often praised model of Social Democracy is a variant referred as Statist Individualism. In this ideology the state replaces the roles that communities have traditionally provided. The individual relates directly to the state without any collective intermediary. As a result the individuals enjoy a similar level of autonomy typical from ancient communist societies without the emotional and practical interdependence with their peers. From the theoretical model advanced in the first book of this series we could expect a tendency towards emotional and spiritual emptiness. This criticism has been indeed done, and even made into a full feature film, the 2015 docu-essay "The Swedish Theory of Love" by Erik Gandini.