

# From Socialism to Open Cooperativism: Convergences and Divergences in the Work of Castoriadis, Olin Wright and Bauwens & Kostakis

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## Abstract

This article attempts at integrating core socialist elements, analyzed through the prism of Castoriadis's and Wright's work, into a model of open cooperativism between Commons-based peer production, ethical market entities and a partner state, introduced by Bauwens and Kostakis. It concludes with a critical appraisal of Bauwens and Kostakis's model.

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***Index terms***— socialism, castoriadis, wright, bauwens and kostakis, open cooperativism.

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Dr. Papadimitropoulos Evangelos his paper is an attempt to rethink the content of socialism under the conditions of the neoliberal hegemony today. To this end, I begin by critically demonstrating two versions of socialism, developed by two ostensibly disparate thinkers, Cornelius Castoriadis and Erik Olin Wright. Castoriadis was a greek-french philosopher, best recognized for his articles published in the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* from the period of 1949 till 1965. His thought flourished in the midst of the French intellectual milieu marked by the currents of existentialism, phenomenology, post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, and Marxism. In the 40 issues of the journal, Castoriadis developed a radical critique of both capitalism and Marxism, resulting in the redefinition of the content of socialism as crystallized in his project of individual and collective autonomy. Later on, the evolution of his thought will culminate in his magnum opus *The Imaginary Institution of Society* and the subsequent six volumes of the *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*. Erik Olin Wright, on the other, is a contemporary social theorist whose work has developed in the aftermath of the collapse of the so-called "really existing socialism" in the Eastern bloc regimes, followed by the current expansion of neoliberal capitalism. Similarly to Castoriadis, he has articulated a critique of "orthodox" Marxism, envisioning a socialist utopia within and beyond capitalism. Despite their different conceptual and historical contexts, the work of Cornelius Castoriadis and Eric Olin Wright share a common trait: the theoretical elaboration of a socialist society. I build on Castoriadis's and Wright's work by introducing Bauwens and Kostakis's model of open cooperativism, which, I argue, integrates some core socialist elements penetrating both Castoriadis's and Wright's work. I make the case that, in comparison with Castoriadis's project and Wright's socialist transformation strategy, Bauwens and Kostakis's model of open cooperative ism carries the advantage of sketching out some more concrete pathways towards a post-capitalist society built on the premises of information and communication technologies. The Internet and free/open source software/hardware can mutatis mutandis sustain glocal mutual coordination of Commons-based peer production that has the potential to force capitalism to adjust to a Commons transition in the long run. However, Bauwens and Kostakis's model does not come without deficiencies. They seem at times to stick to a technocratic and economic vision of self-institutionalization. To address this limitation, it is crucial to give a more vibrant political spin to their technical and bio-economic rationality with the aim to reverse the current tide of individualism towards a voluntary cooperative political ecology. It is essential to reinvent the political to face the big challenges lying at the intersection of technology, economy, and society.

Castoriadis is an emblematic figure of continental philosophy, influenced by a heterogeneous current of thought, including ancient Greek philosophy, post-structuralism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and Marxism, to name just a few. He joined the communist party in Greece in 1941, but he abandoned it in 1942, accusing it of chauvinism, authoritarianism, and centralism. He then joined the Trotskyist group of Agis Stinas, but he left it also to form together with Claude Lefort an autonomous group in France, which published the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* from 1949 till 1965.

In the 40 issues of the journal, Castoriadis developed his project of individual and collective autonomy, which epitomizes his conceptualization of socialism. Castoriadis's radical approach manifests, for instance, in his article *Socialism and Autonomous Society*, published in 1979, where he emphatically argues, already in the first page, that we should abandon both the terms "communism" and "socialism", for they have become ambiguous and mystified both in the totalitarian regimes of the Eastern bloc and the so-called socialist democracies of the West. The term "socialism" seems "value-laden" since it attributes to society a substantive primacy over the individual. But, for Castoriadis, the concept of the individual is equally ambiguous. What is the individual? Castoriadis holds that the individual has been a product of heteronomy in most of history. In archaic societies, the individual is formed by the rules established by ancestors and religion. In the so-called liberal societies, a small minority of individuals exploits the vast majority of individuals while representative democracy is a semblance of democracy dominated by the rational mastery of capitalism. In the so-called socialist societies, the individual is oppressed and exploited by a Communist bureaucracy. In contrast to heteronomy, Castoriadis argues for the autonomous development of the individual, the first instance of which dates back to the birth of philosophy and democracy in ancient Greece. Thus, the individual develops in tune with a self-reflective and autonomous collectivity. Whence, the definition of socialism by Castoriadis:

What was intended by the term 'socialist society' we henceforth call autonomous society. An autonomous society implies autonomous individuals and vice versa. Autonomous society, autonomous individuals: free society, free individuals. Freedom but what is freedom? And what freedom? Freedom is neither an autonomy deriving from a moral imperative nor the unobstructed exercise of some basic liberal rights, but the equality of all in the creation of the law governing society. Freedom is the precondition of individual and collective autonomy, for it permits the participation of all citizens in the formation of the rules regulating private and public sphere.

## 1 Castoriadis notes:

What is at issue is not inner freedom, but effective, social, concrete freedom, namely, to mention one primary feature, the largest possible space for movement and activity the institution of society can ensure for the individual. This freedom can exist only as dimension and mode of the institution of society [?] A free society is a society in which power is actually exercised by the collectivity, but a collectivity in which all effectively participate in equality. And this equality of effective participation, as goal to attain, must not remain a purely formal rule; it must be insured, as much as possible, by actual institutions. In contrast to the antithesis of freedom with equality in liberalism, Castoriadis considers equality as a presupposition of freedom and vice versa. He conceives equality not in a "natural" or "metaphysical" sense, but in a political sense of duties and rights equal for all. However, in Castoriadis, equality transcends the liberal rights of modernity -which he considers partial and incomplete- by expanding into the freedom of all to participate in power, that is, the capacity of "bringing someone to make/do what they would not have otherwise, in full knowledge of the relevant facts, willed to make/do". Castoriadis distinguishes between two kinds of power: the instituted power, identified as the political, and the instituting power, identified as politics. The political consists in the existing laws of society created by tradition, religion and established authorities, whereas politics signifies the freedom of the polis to constantly question and remake its laws a new through public deliberation. Politics refers to the deliberate self-institutionalization of society. Since there is necessarily power in society, inequality of power translates into inequality of freedom. To overcome this inequality, Castoriadis conceives of socialism as the self-institutionalization of society by collective management introduced first and foremost at the level of production and expanding accordingly on all levels of society. Socialism consists in the abolition of the division between directors and executants, which penetrates liberal democracy, capitalism and "orthodox" Marxism, and the expansion of individual and collective autonomy on all levels of society. Socialism is thus a form of collective management, operating in terms of individual and collective autonomy. But how can this collective management function at the level of economy and society as a whole?

To answer this question, we need first to revisit some basic points of Castoriadis's relation to Marxism, which has been thoroughly examined in a series of works thus far. Castoriadis argues that Marx was sedated by the dream of positivism to discover the eternal laws of nature and society in terms of "the rational mastery of the unlimited expansion of technology and economy on nature and society." Marx attempted to become the Newton of history by developing a "final" theory of historical materialism based on technological determinism. He reversed the Absolute Spirit of his teacher Hegel into the matter of nature, transformed by the productive forces of human species, as they develop in technoscience and apply furthermore to the industry. Consequently, he was led to narrow down enormously the field of self-institutionalization to the level of production and economy, thus leaving aside the political question, that is, the question of power itself, on the assumption that the latter will spontaneously resolve in the higher phase of communism, after the main theorem of revolution will have applied to society as a whole. Marx was equally sedated by the economism of capitalism in placing the economy at

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the center of 8 ( F ) politics, thereby adopting capitalism's model of homo oeconomicus. He failed to see, at least to a full extent, that the crisis of capitalism lies in the contradiction of production itself and not just in the ones surrounding production such as "the anarchy of the market", "overproduction" or the "falling rate of profit." 13 Marx failed to recognize that technique itself is bound with the contradictions of capitalism; that technique itself is the incarnation of the relations of production, and, therefore, infused with class struggle .Finally, Castoriadis argues that the work of later Marx took dominance over the revolutionary element of younger Marx. In the so-called socialist states of former Eastern Bloc regimes, Marx's project was transformed into the political dogma of Leninist-Stalinist Marxism.

Castoriadis holds that the basic contradiction of capitalism between capitalists and the proletariat resides on a more fundamental flaw of capitalism lying within the field of production per se in which workers are obliged to participate insofar as they do not interfere with the planning process itself. The division between directors and executants results in the alienation of labor and an enormous waste due to untapped capacities. 14 The contradiction between directors and executants expands from the economy into society as a whole. People experience their lives as alien since they cannot participate in the decision-making affecting both the public and private sphere. They are treated as mere objects, when they ought to be the sole subjects of their own lives and pursue their aspirations to the fullest. The solution to this contradiction is not the abolition of private property, the nationalization of production and the planning of economy by the State, which according to Castoriadis re-establishes a new inequality between the state and the workers, but the management of economy and society in toto by citizens themselves. 15 Socialism is not the teleological endpoint of history, crystallized in the application of a "final" sociopolitical theory represented by a party of supermen, but the unleashing of the free creative activity of the masses. The question of how such a model of socialism could be realized naturally arises.

For Castoriadis, the primary principle of socialism is direct democracy, applying first and foremost at the level of production and expanding accordingly into all spheres of society. 16 Direct democracy operates through councils established at each enterprise, in which workers equally participate after information being disseminated in a transparent and simplified manner. On conditions of global interdependence and decentralization of economy, worker councils form the base of an assembly of all councils represented by central governments. Both worker councils and governments are composed of revocable delegates, who guarantee the implementation of decisions taken at the base of each enterprise. Analogous types of councils form the center of concentric spheres, expanding from the workplace into society as a whole. Socialism establishes thus a form of centralized decentralization based on two-way information flow between centers and the base. 17 Socialism implies the abolition of the capitalist division of labor using the horizontal cooperation of experts and workers, the rotation of tasks, and, finally, the mutual coordination of work by workers themselves. 18 Thus, technology will be subordinated to human needs by a conscious and deliberate transformation intended to liberate man from toil and drudgery. Technology will be humanized to turn robotization of work into poetry. Work should not be a chore, an activity of misery, boredom, and alienation, but the outcome of creation, self-fulfillment, and cooperation. Workers should be masters of machines instead of slaves. The humanization of technology can, therefore, contribute to turning work into a meaningful and joyful activity. 19 Castoriadis notes that the real problem of society consists in abolishing the distinction between production and leisure. "The problem is to make all time a time of liberty and to allow concrete freedom to embody itself in creative activity. The problem is to put poetry into work. (Strictly speaking, poetry means creation.) Production is not something negative that has to be limited as much as possible for mankind to fulfill itself in its leisure. The instauration of autonomy is alsoand in the first placethe instauration of autonomy in work". 20 The reduction of the working day would combine with the redistribution of the social product by the abolition of the hierarchy of salaries, wages and incomes 21 , and the subsequent establishment of a truly democratic market based on the sovereignty of the consumer.

In contrast to the neoliberal mantra claiming that socialist planning is inevitable due to the practical inability of controlling dispersed information, Castoriadis argued that computers could support the overall planning of economy by breaking down essential information into a manageable set of variables. Computers can store and update all data necessary for decisions concerning management, investment, consumption, production, and so on. 22 And, indeed, this sounds true today to some extent if one considers the capacity of states and corporations to control big data through sophisticated machine learning and software mechanisms.

Given the full availability of data, discussions would be held at the assemblies of each enterprise, proposals would be submitted, and decisions would be taken in terms of majority vote. 23 Castoriadis yet emphasizes that no plan, however perfect, can be a panacea for all problems. No technical rationality can replace human imagination. The plan will provide only with a framework necessary for serving the everchanging human needs. 24 Castoriadis was also one of the first thinkers who mentioned the devastation of the environment by the capitalist economy and stressed the need for techno science to be subject to democratic and ecological deliberation. 25 His theory of direct democracy develops in contrast to liberal procedural models of democracy, which conceal the rational mastery of capitalism under the pretext of neutrality and legality. Procedures cannot but be "value-laden" by the central imaginary significations of the social-historical. Castoriadis does not dismiss procedures, but he incorporates them into the free deliberation of the anonymous collective infused with the magma of the social imaginary significations. In his later writings, democracy is supplemented with a psychoanalytical element, emphasizing the conscious self-reflective renewal of the social-historical. Democracy becomes the regime of novelty par excellence. The essential problem of democracy then is the combination of some basic rules with the most

possible diversity of cultural creation, lifestyles, and needs. 26 In this sense, Castoriadis's project is an attempt to integrate the private sphere of the individual, that is, negative freedom, into the public sphere of the demos, where the deliberation over the content of positive freedom affects both public and private sphere. Castoriadis, however, did not develop a systematic theory of democracy. This corresponds to the nonsystematic character of his magmatic logic-ontology. Nonetheless, Castoriadis's theoretical incarnation of socialism in his project of individual and collective autonomy has often been criticized as impractical given the immense complexity of contemporary societies. 27 Castoriadis, yet, was one of the first thinkers to foresee the potential of technology, that is, the very existence of computers, to facilitate rather than render infeasible a socialist project. 28 Moreover, I will show in the third section that Castoriadis's foresight on technology has developed today into a clear vision of a post-capitalist ethical economy, supported by the Internet and free and open source software/hardware. But, still, Castoriadis's project raises at least two major concerns. Hans Joas rightly claims that it is highly contestable whether citizens would consent to a redistribution of their income. 29 Therefore, the principle of the abolition of the hierarchy of salaries, incomes, and wages is problematic.

Castoriadis argues for the mutation of the current homo oeconomicus towards the values of individual and collective autonomy. It remains an issue as to how such a radical shift of mentality could occur today, especially when Castoriadis rejects the current political system as a whole, relying solely on the autonomous movements of collectivities. Castoriadis was critical towards any political reform, since he held that this would lead to the assimilation of the project of socialism by the current political system. 30 Castoriadis also abstained from articulating any concrete proposal of how this trans-mutation of individuals and collectivities could occur in contemporary societies. Therefore, the feasibility of Castoriadis's project is undermined not by the complexity of contemporary societies, but by the lack of the alternatives necessary to nurture the transformation of the central imaginary significations of society towards individual and collective autonomy. To this end, Erik Olin Wright's work can offer us some valuable insights, echoing Castoriadis's project in several respects.

The work of the sociologist Erik Olin Wright represents one of the most contemporary attempts to formulate an emancipatory social science aiming at the socialist transformation of society. The normative principle of this transformation is a radical democratic egalitarian conceptualization of justice, according to which all people should have equal access to the necessary material and social means to live flourishing lives (social justice); and the necessary means to participate in collective decisions affecting one's life as a member of a community (political justice). Freedom is the power of making decisions over one's life, and democracy is the power of participating in collective decision-making. Wright defines power as the capacity of actors to generate effects in the world. 32 He holds that freedom presupposes equality as the capacity of all people to participate in collective decision-making. Wright's egalitarian understanding of freedom is both "negative" and "positive" since the liberal ideal of freedom as non-interference combines with the capacity of all people to participate in democratic processes. 33 It becomes evident then that Wright's work bears some striking similarities with Castoriadis's project of individual and collective autonomy.

Wright has developed a systematic critique of both Marxism and capitalism, which intersects on many points and levels with Castoriadis's critique. He argues that Marx proposed a highly deterministic theory of the demise of capitalism and a relatively voluntaristic theory of the construction of its alternative. 34 Like Castoriadis, he identifies some essential problems of traditional Marxism.

Marx's law of the falling tendency of the rate of profit seems inadequate since crises within capitalism do not appear to have an inherent tendency to become ever more intense over time. On more theoretical grounds, the labor theory of value, on which Marx's theory of crisis intensification is based, seems no longer sustainable, at least in full extent. "While the idea of labor as the source of value may be a useful device for illustrating the idea of the exploitation of labor, there is no persuasive reason for believing that labor and labor alone causally generates value". 35 Thus, for the moment there is no good reason to hold that the internal contradictions of capitalism make it unsustainable in the long run. 36 Class structures have become more complex over time, rather than being simplified through a process of homogenizing proletarianization. 37 What we are witnessing today is the differentiation of the working class, evidenced by the growth of freelancers, selfemployed and small employers. Most importantly, managers and supervisors attain properties of both capitalists and workers, thus reproducing anew the basic contradiction of capitalism epitomized by Castoriadis in terms of the division between directors and executors. Therefore, the collective capacity of the working class to challenge capitalism seems to decline within mature capitalist societies. 38 Ruptural strategies of social transformation, even if they were capable of overthrowing the capitalist state, do not seem to provide a social-political setting for sustaining democratic experimentalism. In agreement with Castoriadis, Wright holds that the empirical cases of ruptures with capitalism (e.g., the Eastern bloc regimes) have resulted in authoritarian state-bureaucratic forms of an economic organization rather than a truly democratic regime. 39 Wright agrees with Castoriadis that the relations of domination within capitalist workplaces constitute pervasive restrictions on individual autonomy and selfdirection, thus blocking the full realization and exercise of human potentials. Exploitation, alienation of labor, large economic inequalities, the uncontrolled social externalities of technological change and profitmaximizing competition perpetuate eliminable forms of human suffering, thus impeding the universalization of conditions for expansive human flourishing. 40 Wright differentiates from Castoriadis when he employs a liberal egalitarian critique of capitalism. He argues that capitalism is fundamentally incompatible with a strong notion of equality of opportunity related to "brute lack", meaning risks that are beyond one's control and therefore over which one

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bears no moral responsibility. 41 Wright locates six sources of inefficiency in capitalism: (1) the underproduction of public goods;

(2) the underpricing of natural resources; (3) negative externalities; (4) monitoring and enforcing market contracts; (5) pathologies of intellectual property rights; (6) the costs of inequality. 42 Like Castoriadis, he criticizes consumerism with regards both to moral and environmental issues. 43 Wright argues that capitalist commodification threatens human values such as child care, product safety, the arts, community, religion, and spirituality. Last but not least, he points out that capitalism fuels militarism and imperialism and limits democracy. 44 In agreement with Castoriadis, he holds that representative democracy is rigged by corporate influence. 45 In contrast to both capitalism and traditional Marxism, Wright develops a socialist transformation strategy. He initially distinguishes between three forms of power: economic power based on the control over economic resources, state power based on rule making and rule enforcing over territory, social power based on voluntary collective action. He then assigns these three powers to capitalism, statism, and socialism respectively. 46 Of particular importance is the distinction Wright makes between the terms "power" and "ownership". He attributes "ownership" to the right over property and surplus, and "power" to the capacity to direct the means of production. Capitalism, statism, and socialism are differentiated according to the ownership over means of production and the type of power exerted over economic activities. 47 But capitalism, statism, and socialism can also combine according to multiple settings of ownership and power over the means of production and economic activities.

In contrast to traditional statist versions of socialism, Wright's socialist transformation strategy is grounded on the distinction between state and social power, state and social ownership, and the possibility of partnerships between the market and socially owned and controlled enterprises. 48 Therefore, capitalism, statism, and socialism should be considered as coordinating variables of socialist transformation. 49 Wright's socialist transformation strategy is geared towards three principle directions: (1) social empowerment over the way the state affects economic activity; (2) social empowerment over the way capitalism shapes economic activity; (3) social empowerment directly over economic activity. In short, socialism points to the social empowerment of the civil society over the state and the market. (5) with the mission to jointly organize the production of various goods and services. The state is more pervasive by directly getting involved in the organization and production of economic activity. Social power expands from its participation in representative democracy into the productive activity itself.

Similarly to Castoriadis, Wright advocates a pluralistic and heterogeneous socialist transformation grounded on a centrally-coordinated decentralization of power. But contrary to Castoriadis who was against any type of state or market-driven reformism, Wright's socialist transformation strategy is premised on the radical democratization of both the state and economy by civil society. Four of the seven pathways to socialism involve the state. But for socialism to be fully realized, Wright holds that state and economic power have to be subordinated to social power on the model of economic democracy. 51 As regards the social empowerment over the state, Wright advocates a combination of pathways (1), (2), (4) and (7). In contrast to Castoriadis, Wright claims that a radical egalitarian democracy does not identify with direct democracy replacing representative democracy, but with the deepening of democracy in all three varieties of democratic governance (direct democracy, representative and associational). 52 He introduces participatory forms of direct democracy that could create countervailing power against the ordinarily powerful groups and elites influencing state governance.

The design principles of this countervailing power are the following: bottom-up participation, pragmatic orientation, deliberation, state-centered decentralization to local units of action such as neighborhood councils, local school councils, workplace councils, and so on. Participatory democracy differs from spontaneous activist efforts or projects led by nongovernmental organizations or social movement groups, for it aims to change the central procedures of state power rather than occasionally influencing them. Wright cites as an example of participatory democracy the municipal participatory budgeting applied in the case of Porto Alegre in Brazil. Finally, Wright argues that direct democracy cannot stand alone, but it needs to connect to representative democracy and associational democracy. 53 To enhance the democratic quality of representative democracy, Wright introduces proposals for egalitarian public financing of politics, and randomly selected citizen assemblies. He also claims that political institutions can be designed in such a way as to enable secondary associations - labor unions, business associations, organizations or civic groups - to play a positive role in deepening democracy. Centralized administrations are good at imposing uniform rules over homogeneous contexts, but when it comes to heterogeneous economic and social conditions, centralized command and control process is much less effective. 54 One-size-fits-all regulations are rarely satisfactory for example in the context of environment and workplace safety, given that ecologies and workplaces are diverse and complex. Associations could solve this problem and complement public regulatory efforts by gathering local information, monitoring behavior and promoting cooperation among private actors. Instead of associations simply providing external pressure by lobbying politicians and agencies for specific rules, they would thus be included systematically in the central tasks of governance: policyformation, coordination of economic activities, and monitoring, administering and enforcing regulations.

The possibilities of an expanded and deepened associative democracy are not limited to the role of encompassing associations in neo-corporatist peaklevel public policy formation. Associative democracy can also function at the local and regional level to solve problems and to design and implement detailed rules and standards of various

sorts. Associations must be relatively encompassing, representing a substantial proportion of the relevant social category; second, the association leadership must be accountable to membership through meaningful internal democratic processes; and third, the associations must have significant powers to sanction members. Wright cites the example of the Quebec in Canada, which illustrates an exemplary showcase of deepening the associational dimension of democracy in the domains of skill formation within regional labor markets, habitat conservation for endangered species, child and elderly care, cooperative housing, education, energy production, and many more. 55 As regards the social empowerment over the economy, Wright envisages a sort of market socialism developing in a combination of pathways (4), ( ??), ( ??) and (7). 56 He employs the term "social economy" to specify economic activities rooted in the associational life of civil society. Two prominent examples are the Wikipedia and the Quebec social economy. Concerning the Quebec experience, Wright suggests four institutional designs to enhance social empowerment:

(1) state subsidies targeted to the social economy (2) development of social economy investment funds (3) governance through associational democracy (4) participatory democratic forms of organization. With the term "social capitalism" he refers to a wide range of institutional mechanisms and social processes directly impinging on the exercise of capitalist power. Some examples he mentions are labor solidarity funds and share-levy wage earner funds, both pushing capitalism towards a structural hybrid within which social power has greater weight. Finally, a cooperative market economy consists of an association of worker-owned firms such as Mondragon in Spain.

Wright conceives of the state, capitalism and civil society as coordinating variables of his socialist transformation, since society as a whole is a hybrid structure comprised of potentially interchangeable overarching powers: economic, state and social. While it is analytically useful to distinguish capitalism, statism, and socialism according to the power dominant each time, neither of them constitute purely independent powers. The same applies to all units of analysis within each power, be it a firm, a government, a labor union, an association, a cooperative, and so on, where complex configurations of capitalist, statist and socialist elements combine. Thus, Wright notes: This has critical implications for our understanding of the problem of transformation: emancipatory transformation should not be viewed mainly as a binary shift from one system to another, but rather as a shift in the configuration of the power relations that constitute a hybrid. 57 Wright's central thesis is that the realization of a radical egalitarian democracy presupposes the social empowerment of the civil society over the state and the economy. To achieve this, he introduces a flexible strategic pluralism based on multiple pathways of social empowerment, embodied in a variety of structural transformations: participatory forms of direct democracy, egalitarian public financing of politics, randomly selected citizen assemblies, associations, organizations, the Quebec social economy, unconditional basic income, labor solidarity funds, share-levy wage earner funds, worker-owned firms. In short, the social empowerment of the civil society over the state and the economy is reminiscent of Castoriadis's politics as the deliberate self-institutionalization of society.

Wright acknowledges himself a number of potential critiques of his transformation strategy, similar to those of Castoriadis. 58 An initial point of criticism is that models of participatory democracy are nonfunctional, since people are too apathetic, ignorant or busy to participate. Secondly, a multitude of associations, networks, and communities does not guarantee for the creation of the social power necessary to effectively control the state and economy. On the contrary, this could lead to conflicts of interest or, as conservative critics of socialism have argued, to the tyranny of the majority. Thirdly, according to the critique posed by the revolutionary socialists, it is not possible to be dominated by capitalism. Any socialist transformation will sooner or later confront the problem of competition with the capitalist economy, and the dependency of the social economy on capitalism for financial resources. And, indeed, this seems to be by large the case in the cooperative market economy where 90% of coops are coops in name only, meaning that the main owners are not workers themselves. Even in worker-owned cooperatives, workers are often not co-op members. Therefore, many co-ops are co-ops in name only. They are market entities that have adopted capitalist practices since their main interest is to get a higher selling price or lower buying price in the market. 59 To address these criticisms, Wright argues that moving along the pathways of a social empowerment is not a guarantee of success, but a more favorable terrain of struggle. 60 He conceives of the predictions of the revolutionary socialists as pessimistic. They exaggerate the power of capital and they underestimate the social spaces available for social innovation. 61 He also claims that there is empirical evidence showing that when there are opportunities for people to get involved in decisionmaking directly affecting their lives, they do participate in substantial numbers. ??2 And, indeed, both these claims contain considerable grains of truth, since, despite its current dominance, capitalism is not a fixed economic system, but it carries cracks inherent to its operational logic, which can potentially lead to alternative economic and societal patterns. Wright's seven pathways to socialism provide a rough map of the direction of social empowerment, which is highly dependent on the historical settings. Bauwens and Kostak are neither philosophers nor sociologists. They both come from a business management environment highly shaped by information and communication technologies. They do not intend to develop a normative political theory akin to the ones of Castoriadis and Wright. Rather their goal is to offer a more techno-pragmatic pathway towards a postcapitalist economy supported by information and communication technologies. They build on the work of Yochai Benkler who first coined the term Commonsbased peer production to describe the effect of the Internet and free/open source software on the flourishing of a nonmarket sector of information and cultural production, which is not treated as private property, but as a mode of social production based on open sharing and cooperation. 63 Social production is not limited to public goods

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or limited access Commons, which are necessarily self-managed by stable communities of individuals interacting on a regular basis and knowing each other. 64 Social production expands into the digital Commons on the model of peer production, which is considered to enhance individual and collective autonomy by establishing a more participatory political system, a critical culture, and social justice. 65 Benkler mentions two basic forms of digital Commons: distributing computing (e.g., Wikipedia, Open Directory Project, Slashdot) and file-sharing (e.g., Gnutella, Project Gutenberg). 66 Bauwens and Kostakis combine Benkler's theorization of the digital Commons with the natural Commons scrutinized by Elinor Ostrom, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009 for analyzing numerous successful cases of self-managed limited access Commons such as forests, fisheries, oil fields, grazing lands, and irrigation systems. Limited access Commons are neither public nor private, but they are managed collectively on the basis of, among others, three interlinked principles: a well-defined shared resource, a community of peer-to-peer producers creating value on the premises of the resource, and certain rules regarding the sharing of value, and the imposing of sanctions on free-riders. 67 Bauwens and Kostakis define Commons-based peer production as a third mode that differs from forprofit or state production in that it produces value through the free cooperation of users having access to distributed "fixed" capital or common property regimes. 68 By "fixed capital" they refer basically to computers and software/hardware. The architecture of Internet has allowed for autonomous communication between multiple computer users, while the development of the free software by Richard Stallman in 1983 has disrupted one of the main pillars of capitalism, that is, private intellectual property. Stallman, in cooperation with other software programmers, created an operating system called GNU, made up of free software consisting of open code that could be accessed, ran, modified and distributed freely under the General Public License (GPL). 69 What the General Public or "copy left" License allows for is the freedom of anyone to access, run, modify and distribute the program under the same terms. The GPL is an inversion of traditional copyright law, aiming to protect collective forms of ownership alongside individual ones. In other words, the GPL ensures that the free software cannot be privatized.

Jeremy Rifkin rightly argues that the General Public License could be considered a digital version of the regulation of the limited access Commons, inasmuch as it incorporates many of the Ostrom's design principles, such as the conditions of inclusion, the restrictions of exclusion, the rights governing access and withdrawal, enhancement and stewardship of the resources, etc. 70 The Internet and the free software/hardware are pivotal to the development of the Commons, since they allow for the autonomy of distributed networks that are not controlled by hubs, that is, centralized choke-points. On that basis, peer production is developed in terms of equipotentiality, holoptism, and stigmergy. Equipotentiality opens up equal opportunities for everyone to participate according to his/her skills. Participation is conditioned a posteriori by the process of production itself, where skills are verified and communally validated in real-time. Holoptism contrasts panopticism that penetrates the modern systems of power 71 in that it allows participants free access to all information necessary for the accomplishment of the project in question. Holoptism allows for stigmergic processes of mutual coordination where the participants can match their contributions to the needs of the system. 72 Stigmergy is thus a form of self-organization based on indirect coordination.

Commons-based peer production is neither a hierarchy?less nor structure?less mode, but a rather mixed form of hierarchy, cooperation, and autonomy. For instance, Wikipedia is a mixed form of democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy. Democratic voting concerning the content is accompanied by the aristocracy of the most reliable users and the monarchy of the founder/leader in cases when neither democracy nor aristocracy works.

In contrast to capitalism, Commons-based peer production favours, in principle, decentralisation over central control, democratic self-management over hierarchical management, access over ownership, transparency over privacy, and environmental sustainability over growth at all costs. Profit is not central, but peripheral to the social and environmental Local Commons refer to autonomous peer-to-peer projects developed by resilient communities in ways that resemble Wright's pathway of social economy. Some striking examples are the Quebec economy, degrowth ecological and permaculture movements, Transition Towns, the Bologna project, car sharing, interest-free banks, autonomous energy production, and many more 73 But, despite the empowerment of the local governance and the optimization of local assets and infrastructures, Bauwens and Kostakis recognize that local Commons seem more like centripetal lifeboat strategies that cannot but conform in the long run to the capitalist mainstream. For this reason, they attempt to connect local peer-to-peer production with global Commons. 74 The key factor in the development of global Commons is free software/hardware that has disrupted capitalism in the last decades. Whereas the latter is based on profit maximization and top-down management, the former can sustain a peer production aiming at the distribution of value through hybrid forms of governance where hierarchy, autonomy, and cooperation coexist on different degrees and levels. 75 Some examples of global(digital) Commons are Wikipedia, Wikispeed, Open Source Ecology, LibreOffice, Linux, Goteo, Farm Hack, Arduino, Espiral, Loomio, Sensorica, etc. 76 Blockchain technology 77 ??0 , thus allowing for everyone to become a manufacturer and producer, whether an individual, a community or an enterprise. Global (digital) Commons can connect with local Commons via Transition Towns, decentralized communities and fablabs/makerspaces based on free/open source software/hardware and renewable energy systems distributed through micro grids on the Internet of Things. Thus, the DG-ML model introduces an on-demand distributed mode of production that can significantly lower production and transaction costs, while reducing the environmental impact of production through the use of readily available supplies and the recycling of waste material. The DG-ML technologies promote openness, sharing, and abundance of resources, bottom-up innovation, creativity, sustainability, resilience, and the global

scaling up of small group dynamics through glocal governance. Some illustrative case studies have been examined by the literature so far, such as L'Atelier Paysan, Farm Hack, Ability Mate, Wikihouse, RepRap, Osvehicle, Open Bionics. 81 To enhance Commons-based peer production, Bauwens and Kostakis integrate the DG-ML model into a broader model of open co-operativism between a partner state and ethical market entities 82 (3) the for-benefit association supporting both the glocal community and the entrepreneurial coalition (see Figure 1).

The productive community consists of all members, users, and contributors of Commons-based peer production, who produce the shareable resource either paid or volunteering. The Commons-oriented entrepreneurial coalition consists of generative enterprises that add value to the scarce common resources. Generative enterprises contrast extractive enterprises in that they do not seek to maximize profits without sufficiently re-investing surplus in the maintenance of the productive communities (see Figure ??). The best example of the difference between Volume XVIII Issue IV Version I ( F )

extractive and generative enterprises is industrial agriculture and permaculture respectively. Whereas in the first case the soil becomes poorer and less healthy, in the latter it becomes richer and healthier. Some striking examples of extractive corporations are Facebook, Uber and Airbnb, which do not share any profits with the co-creating communities they depend on for their value creation and sustenance. 83 In the best of cases, generative enterprises identify with the productive community which forms a meta-economic network based on the transition from community-oriented business to business-enhanced communities. Some prominent examples are the Catalanian Integral Cooperative or CIC (Catalonia Spain), The Mutual Aid Network (Madison, Wisconsin USA) and Enspiral (New Zealand). 85 The third institution that binds together productive communities and commons-oriented enterprises is the for-benefit association, which supports the infrastructures of Commons-based peer production. In contrast to traditional non-governmental and nonprofit organizations that operate on conditions of scarcity, forbenefit associations operate on conditions of abundance. Whereas the former identify a problem and provide a solution for that, the latter maintain an infrastructure of cooperation between productive communities and commons-oriented enterprises, protect the commons through licenses, manage conflicts, fundraise, etc. 86 At the macro-level, the three institutions of productive communities, entrepreneurial coalitions and the for-benefit associations could apply to the evolution of the civil society, the market entities and the state respectively (see Figure 3). The for-benefit association could be presently considered as a snapshot of a future partner state, which could facilitate the Commons-based peer production of civil society and ethical market entities. 87 Figure 2: The differences between extractive and generative ownership 88

## 2 ( F )

A partner state could boost the transition from capitalism to Commons-based peer production through a de-bureaucratization and commonification of the public sector on the basis of a bottom-up selfmanagement, establishing an open co-operativism between the Commons and ethical market entities willing to minimize negative social and environmental externalities. To this end, taxation of social/ environmental entrepreneurship, ethical investing and productive labor could be minimized, whereas taxation of speculative unproductive investments, unproductive rental income and negative social and environmental externalities could be increased. 89 Also, education and publicly funded research and innovation could be aligned with the Commons-oriented economic model. 90 Early examples of the partner state approach can be found in the Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons or the Barcelona En Comú citizen platform. 91 Bauwens and Kostakis hold that the model of open cooperativism should scale up from regional to national and transnational level to establish a hegemonic counter-power against and beyond predatory capitalism and neoliberalism. To this end, they advocate the creation of three additional institutions operating at a translocal and transnational level: Castoriadis's project of individual and collective autonomy has exerted a pervasive influence over political thought in the last century, and it still resonates within collectivities and movements across the globe. One of its main shortcomings is that Castoriadis was against any state or market-driven reformism in fear of socialism being assimilated by the political system. Castoriadis's postulate of the abolition of the hierarchy of salaries, incomes and wages is highly inapplicable today, at least as a general rule. Castoriadis also concentrated in his later writings on more philosophical issues, thus abstaining from introducing any concrete proposals of how his project could materialize in contemporary societies.

Wright's and Bauwens and Kostakis's work could offer some corrections to these deficiencies by introducing some proposals that could render Castoriadis's project somewhat feasible under the conditions of the current expansion of neoliberal capitalism globally.

## 3 Volume XVIII Issue IV Version I ( F )

One of the major problems of social change is how to reverse the current tide of individualism towards a voluntary cooperative political ecology. This amounts to the need already stressed by Castoriadis to alter the central imaginary significations of contemporary societies by creating a novel anthropological type not driven by self-interest and profit maximization. This goal, however, stumbles upon its own foundations. The collaborative economy illustrated by Bauwens and Kostakis is still in its infancy and faces numerous barriers and contradictions owing to the global dominance of a neoliberal capitalism colonizing democracy. To put it simply, there are no easy exits from already existing capitalism.



The virtue of Bauwens and Kostakis's work is that they have introduced a model of a radical selfinstitutionalization of civil society, comprising both state and market mechanisms along democratic, ethical and ecological lines. They advocate an open, decentralized and flexible cooperativism facilitated by information and communication technologies. Their model, however, requires a more vibrant political spin to form an intercompatible strategy aiming to engage a critical mass in the collaborative economy. Human-computer interaction and digital platform design deal with complex concepts of political theory, already embedded in algorithmic design, the examination of which is still nascent both empirically and normatively. The research on how social relations are shaped by information and communication technologies, and how the latter relate to our social systems and institutions is still preliminary. Some of the big challenges lying ahead in the collaborative economy are how to tackle issues of concentration of power and conflict; how to reconcile individuality and pluralism with community and unity; how to combine hierarchy and competition with selfmanagement and cooperation; how to analyze the interweaving of meanings and practices cross-cutting diverse social imaginaries; how to coordinate dispersed, peer-to-peer initiatives; and how to relate to established social systems and power relations in the market, the state and civil society at large. Therefore, it is essential to reinvent the political, to face the challenges lying in the intersection of technology, society, and economy. This article examined the potential of integrating core socialist elements, analyzed through the prism of Castoriadis's and Wright's work, into a model of open cooperativism, introduced by Bauwens and Kostakis. Castoriadis's project of individual and collective autonomy has been enormously influential over political thought in the last century, and still resonates within movements and collectivities getting active in the emerging collaborative economy. But Castoriadis was highly skeptical of any state or market-driven reformism in fear of socialism being co-opted by the political system. In addition, he abstained from articulating any concrete proposal of how his project could be realized in contemporary societies.

In contrast to Castoriadis being skeptical of reformism, Wright introduces a flexible strategic pluralism based on seven pathways of social empowerment, employing both state and market mechanisms. Thus, the advantage of Bauwens and Kostakis's model of open cooperativism over Castoriadis's and Wright's work is the concrete demonstration of a postcapitalist society built on the premises of information and communication technologies that can mutatis mutandis promote self-governance, cooperation, creativity, sustainability and distribution of value. But Bauwens and Kostakis's model of open cooperativism is also to some degree limited. Despite them attempting to avoid any form of techno-determinism or technofetishism, they stick at times to a technocratic and economistic vision of self-institutionalization. They intend to beat capitalism on its own ground by competing in terms of self-management fostered by technological and economic hacks, which might indeed develop into a plausible strategy. Bauwens and Kostakis's project combines a bio-techno-economic rationality with a concrete plan and strategy. Yet this is not enough. model should be given a political spin that would push towards the examination of the complex social relations embedded in the algorithmic design of information and communication technologies, and the relation of the latter to social systems and institutions in general. I argued for the reinvention of the political on a mission to transform the current anthropological type of homo oeconomicus into a homo cooperans.

## 4 Notes

Productive community	Linux	Mozilla	GNU	Wikipedia	Wordpress
Entrepreneurial coalition	e.g. Linux Professional Institute, Canonical	e.g. Mozilla corporation	e.g. Red Hat, Endless, SUSE	e.g. Wikia company	e.g. Automatic company
For-benefit association	Linux Foundation	Mozilla Foundation	Free Software Foundation	Wikimedia Foundation	Wordpress Foundation

Figure 1:

1 2 3

<sup>1</sup>© 2018 Global Journals

<sup>2</sup>From Socialism to Open Cooperativism: Convergences and Divergences in the Work of Castoriadis, Olin Wright and Bauwens & Kostakis

<sup>3</sup>Manuel Ortega, The Block chain is a Threat to the Distributed Future of the Internet. Retrieved May 18, 2016, <https://english.lasindias.com/blockchain-is-a-threat-to-the-distributed-future-of-the-internet>, 2016.

EXTRACTIVE OWNERSHIP	GENERATIVE OWNERSHIP
<b>1. Financial Purpose:</b> maximizing profits in the short term	<b>1. Living Purpose:</b> creating the conditions for life over the long term
<b>2. Absentee Membership:</b> ownership disconnected from the life of the enterprise	<b>2. Rooted Membership:</b> ownership in human hands
<b>3. Governance by Markets:</b> control by capital markets on autopilot	<b>3. Mission-Controlled Governance:</b> control by those dedicated to social mission
<b>4. Casino Finance:</b> capital as master	<b>4. Stakeholder Finance:</b> capital as friend
<b>5. Commodity Networks:</b> trading focused solely on price and profits	<b>5. Ethical Networks:</b> collective support for ecological and social norms

13

Figure 2: 13 From

CBPP	Productive Community	Entrepreneurial Coalitions	For-benefit association
SOCIAL LIFE	Civil Society	Market entities	State

Figure 3:

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potentially foster the Commons development inasmuch as it can provide decentralized and transparent self-management of eco-systemic networks (holoptism), operating through mutual coordination (equipotentiality and stigmergy) on the basis of open design, open manufacturing, accounting, open supply chains, open finance, etc. Blockchain technology already supports platform cooperativism on the Internet and mobile applications through photographers, farmers, designers, programmers, teachers, researchers, innovators, investors, web developers, etc

can  
 open distribution, open book  
 which several groups (taxi drivers,

Figure 4:



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