



REAL UTOPIAS

Emancipatory Projects, Institutional Designs, Possible Futures

107th ASA Annual Meeting
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Denver, CO



**A Sketch of the *Real Utopias* Theme and Program
for the 2012 annual meeting of the
American Sociological Association**

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The theme for the 2012 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association is “Real Utopias: emancipatory projects, institutional designs, possible futures.” Many people are drawn to sociology because of moral concerns about social conditions and injustices. Those concerns are indeed reflected in much sociological research, but usually this takes the form of the diagnosis and critique of existing institutions rather than the exploration of alternatives. A great deal of scholarship focuses on explaining the sources of social injustice and the causes and consequences of undesirable social conditions; much less explores the design of alternatives to existing institutions that would help realize moral ideals of justice and human flourishing. The idea of “real utopias” is meant to point sociology in this direction.

The expression “Real Utopias” is, of course, an oxymoron: Utopia means “nowhere” – a fantasy world of perfect harmony and social justice. When politicians want to summarily dismiss a proposal for social transformation as an impractical dream outside the limits of possibility, they call it “utopian”. Realists reject such fantasies as a distraction from the serious business of making practical improvements in existing institutions. The idea of real utopias embraces this tension between dreams and practice: “utopia” implies developing visions of alternatives to existing institutions that embody our deepest aspirations for a world in which all people have access to the conditions to live flourishing lives; “real” means taking seriously the problem of the viability of the institutions that could move us in the direction of that world. The goal is to elaborate utopian ideals that are grounded in the real potentials of humanity, utopian destinations that have accessible way stations, utopian designs of viable institutions that can inform our practical tasks of navigating a world of imperfect conditions for social change.

Exploring real utopias implies developing a sociology of the *possible*, not just of the *actual*. This is a tricky research problem, for while we can directly observe variation in what exists in the world, discussions of possibilities and limits of possibility always involve more speculative and contentious claims about what could be, not just what is. The task of a sociology of real utopias, then, is to develop strategies that enable us to make empirically and theoretically sound arguments about emancipatory possibilities.

Two primary kinds of research animate the agenda of real utopias. The first involves studying empirical cases that in one way or another seem to embody emancipatory aspirations and prefigure utopian alternatives. The task is to see how these cases work, to diagnose their limitations, dilemmas and unintended consequences, to examine their transferability and scalability, and to understand ways of developing their potential. The temptation in such research is to be a cheerleader, uncritically extolling the virtues of promising experiments. The danger is to be a cynic, seeing the flaws as the only reality and the potential as an illusion. The second kind of research involves elaborating theoretical investigations of alternatives that try to integrate philosophical understandings of core normative problems with theoretical models of institutional design. These models can vary in their degree of formalization from systematic mathematical models that try to specify institutional equilibria to more informal discursive models that lay out the core logic of institutional principles. A fully elaborated sociology of real utopias integrates both of these kinds of research.

The 2012 ASA annual meeting will explore a wide range of substantive problems connected to these kinds of empirical and theoretical real utopia agendas. A number of different kinds of sessions are being planned around this theme:

1. There will be three plenary sessions, during which nothing else is officially scheduled at the conference.
2. Twenty thematic panels are organized around specific proposals for real utopian institutional designs, with one primary speaker and one commentator. The descriptions for each of these twenty real utopia proposal sessions can be found at the end of this document.
3. Fifty thematic panels are organized around broad topics with 3-4 presentations. Many of these sessions were proposed by ASA members.
4. A special presidential panel to explore that broad problem of progressive social change in the 21st century.

Below is a brief sketch of each of these elements of the program.

1. PLENARY SESSIONS

The plenary sessions at the ASA meetings are the most visible venues for elaborating the central ideas of the annual theme. There will be three such sessions, one on Thursday evening, August 16 (the evening before the first full day of the conference), one at noon on Friday, and one at noon on Sunday.

Plenary 1. Equality

At the core of the idea of real utopias is the problem of realizing ideals of social justice, and in one way or another, these ideals are always bound up with questions about equality. Equality is also part of the normative context for one of the central preoccupations of sociology – understanding the causes and consequences of diverse forms of inequality, especially class, gender and race. This first plenary, then, will examine various issues connecting equality and real utopias.

Plenary 2. Democracy

Many real utopian institutional designs and experiments are built around the problem of deepening democracy: how to organize decision-making in organizations, in the state, and in society in such a way that ordinary people are in a position to genuinely exercise real power. This plenary will concern different aspects of the problem of deepening and radicalizing democracy.

Plenary 3. Sustainability

Few problems pose a bigger challenge to contemporary capitalist societies than environmental sustainability. Global warming looms as potentially catastrophic, and there are good arguments that capitalism as a political-economic system is not only incapable of effectively dealing with this impending crisis, but is itself one of the core causal processes generating the problem. Yet,

there is relatively little public discussion of rigorously argued real-utopian institutional designs for dealing effectively with climate change and other aspects of environmental sustainability. This will be the theme of the third plenary.

PLENARY SESSIONS		
Topic	Speaker	Affiliation
Plenary I. Equality		
1. Class	Philippe van Parijs	Louvain-le-Neuve, Belgium
2. Gender	Judith Lorber	CUNY Graduate center
3. Race	Kimberle Crenshaw	UCLA Law
Plenary II. Democracy		
1. A Democratic Media System	Bob McChesney	U. Illinois
2. Experiments in direct democracy	Hilary Wainwright	Red Pepper magazine, London
3. The Citizenship Agenda	Bruce Ackerman	Yale Law School
4. Democratizing democracy	Boaventura Santos	Coimbra University, Portugal
Plenary III. Sustainability		
1. Uniting the physical and social sciences in pursuit of sustainability	Paul Ehrlich	Stanford University
2. Prosperity without Growth	Tim Jackson	University of Surrey
3. Real Utopian Foodsheds	Harriet Friedmann	U. Toronto

2. REAL UTOPIA PROPOSALS SESSIONS

Each of these sessions will revolve around a proposal for a real utopian institutional design to resolve some domain of problems. Examples would include such things as: unconditional basic income, market socialism, equality-sustaining parental leaves, participatory budgets, random-selection democratic assemblies, worker cooperatives, stakeholder corporations, solidarity finance, democratic media, etc. For each of these sessions there will be an anchor person who has worked extensively on formulating such real utopia designs (rather than simply a person who has thought critically about the theme) and is prepared to write an essay laying out the rationale and core elements of the institutional proposal.

These institutional proposal sessions will be organized as follows:

- There will be a dedicated interactive website for these sessions.
- The person who anchors these sessions will prepare an elaborated proposal for institutional designs on their topic which will be posted online by early 2012. While of course these essays will include some discussion of what is wrong with existing structures and institutions, the goal is for the essay to sketch the central contours of alternatives. This does not generally mean a detailed “institutional blueprint”, but rather a careful elaboration of the core principles of an institutional proposal. The expectation is that these will be in the 8,000-10,000 word range, although some could be longer.
- In some sessions there could be two competing or contrasting proposals. Having two different proposals could make for a very lively session for some topics. We will discuss with the anchor for the session whether such a counter-point proposal would be a good approach to the session.
- The website will allow for comments and dialogue so that these proposals can be part of a discussion prior to the meeting. This website will be set up by the ASA and will be widely advertised in the ASA Newsletter (*Footnotes*), the ASA homepage, and the Annual Meeting homepage.
- At the session there will be a brief – around 20 minutes – presentation of the proposal by the anchor person and one other presentation. This can be a commentary, a critique, or, if appropriate, a contrasting proposal. We want these panels to have lots of time for debate and discussion from the floor, so we want to limit the presentations, but we also want some kind of intellectual tension in the sessions. We will discuss with the anchor person for the session what specific format would be most interesting. If the anchor person would like to have two commentators, we can also accommodate that.
- In *Footnotes*, section newsletters, and other modes of information dissemination we will encourage people to look at the proposals before the meeting and to come to sessions with issues they want to raise. While of course we want to avoid long-winded speeches from the floor, somewhat longer than usual interventions from the audience could be constructive.

Some of these Real Utopias proposals (eg. unconditional basic income) will also be presented in plenary sessions planned for the conference. When this happens we plan to have a complementary thematic session in which the proposal will also be discussed, since at the plenary sessions there is not generally much time for serious discussion.

REAL UTOPIAS PROPOSAL SESSIONS		
(The abstracts for these sessions are at the end of this memo)		
Topic	Author of anchor essay	Affiliation
1. Unconditional Basic Income	Philippe van Parijs	University of Louvain, Belgium
2. Designs for a Real Utopia Media System (two proposals)	Robert McChesney Bill Gamson	U. Illinois Boston College
3. The Public University as a Real Utopia	Michael Burawoy	U.C. Berkeley
4. Utopias “for Real”: contours of racial utopia	Eduard Bonilla-Silva	Duke University
5. Philanthropy and Real Utopia	Rob Reich	Stanford University
6. Parecon (participatory economics)	Michael Albert	Z-magazine
7. Democratizing finance	Fred Block	U.C. Davis
8. Reviving Democratic Citizenship	Bruce Ackerman	Yale Law School
9. Making Direct Democracy Deliberative through Random Assemblies	John Gastil	Penn State
10. Reimagining the Corporation	Gerald Davis	U. Michigan
11. Designs and Dilemmas of Participatory budgeting	Gianpaolo Baiocchi	Brown University
12. Work-Family Reconciliation Policies and Gender Equality	Janet Gornick	CUNY Grad Center
13. A World Beyond Gender	Judith Lorber & Barbara Risman	CUNY Grad. Center University of Illinois-Chicago
14. Real Utopian Foodshed Governance	Harriet Friedmann	U. Toronto
15. From a Transparent State to a Transparent Society	Archon Fung	JFK School, Harvard
16. Productive Democracy	Joel Rogers	U. Wisconsin
17. A Democratic-egalitarian System of Public Education (two proposals)	Harry Brighouse Michael Fielding and Peter Moss	U. Wisconsin Institute of Education, London
18. Postfossil Conversion and Free Public Transport	Mario Candeias	Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation, Berlin
19. Practical Anarchism in Networked Society	Yochai Benkler	Harvard Law School
20. Corporations with Worker-Ownership and Profit-Sharing	Joseph Blasi	Rutgers University
21. Lessons from the Israeli Kibbutzim	Uriel Leviatan	Western Gallile College, Israel

3. THEMATIC PANELS AROUND BROAD TOPICS

The second group of thematic panels will be organized around topics rather than proposals. The idea here is still to explore these topics in a way linked to the agenda of real utopias, but there is no expectation that the discussions will involve detailed proposals for new institutions. These sessions are an opportunity to explore the normative dimensions of various topics, critiques of existing social arrangements and institutions, the directions for social change implied by those critiques and social struggles for the creation of alternatives. Some of these sessions will explore methodological issues around developing a sociology of the possible and the history of utopian thinking within sociology. These sessions will also include many of the thematic panels proposed directly by ASA members.

In terms of format, I would generally like these sessions to have three presentations (rather than the typical four or five) so that there will be ample time for discussion. In general I also prefer panels without official “discussants” – my experience is that it is usually more interesting to have discussion from the floor unless the discussant is really engaged in a debate with a specific argument (as in the proposal sessions). Nevertheless, if the organizer of the session has other preferences, this is fine.

List of topics for general thematic sessions (session organizers in parentheses)

1. Beyond Consumerism: the emergence of sustainable consumption cultures (Juliet Schor)
2. Workers’ search for utopia (Howard Kimmeldorf and Barry Eidlin)
3. Reforming Carework (Nancy Folbre)
4. Worker-Owned Cooperatives: Transformative possibilities and constraints (Marta Soler, Barcelona, and Ofer Sharone, United States)
5. Marxism and Real Utopias (Rhonda Levine)
6. Global Warming and the Prospects for Real Utopia (Robert Bruelle)
7. Utopia and the Future of the family (Judith Treas, UC-Irvine)
8. Exploring Sexual Possibilities (Virginia Rutter)
9. Real Utopian Childhood (Karin Martin)
10. Sustainable Cities (Michael Goldman)
11. Race and Racial Justice (Sandra Smith)
12. Utopian Visions, Surprising Consequences (Mamie Goldman)
13. Alternatives to Contemporary Agro-Food Systems (Isidor Wallimann)
14. Peer-to-Peer Collaborative Production Systems (Denise Anthony)
15. Real Utopias Data Systems and Performance Metrics (Jerry Jacobs)
16. Democratizing Global Governance (Christopher Chase-Dunn)
17. Borderless World (John Urrey)
18. Creating Workplace Gender Equality (William Bielby)
19. Is Marriage part of a Utopian Future? (Pepper Schwartz)
20. Religion and Utopia: a contradiction in terms? (Orit Avishai)
21. Post-Globalization Paths: Emergence, Possibility, and Unthinkability (Philip McMichael)
22. Building a Better K-12 Education System (Jennifer Jennings)
23. Visions of Feminist Academy (Joey Sprague)

24. Improving America: lessons from the civilized world (Salvatore Babones)
25. Alternatives Communities for the Aging (Natalia Sarkisian)
26. Real Utopias behind Prison Walls (Michael Jacobson)
27. Alternative Approaches to Punishment (Katherine Beckett)
28. Contemporary LGBT Sexualities and Social Justice (Mignon Moore)
29. Alternative Currencies: economic empowerment and community building from the grassroots (Ed Collom)
30. Fair Trade: institutionalizing real utopias in global commodity networks (Laura Reynolds)
31. Real Utopian Visions of Health Care (Suzanne Gordon)
32. The Social and Solidarity Economy: Perspectives from Quebec, Europe, Latin America and East Asia (Marguerite Mendell)
33. The future of reproduction (Frances Kissling)
34. Real Utopian Lessons from the 20th century (Jess Gilbert)
35. Democracy's Blueprints: the Globalization of Participatory Budgeting (Ernesto Ganuza)
36. Islamic Utopias (Charles Kurzman)
37. Another World is Possible: The Utopian Vision of the World Social Forum (Lauren Langman)
38. Art's New Promise: emancipation, empowerment, enlightenment, or it is just economics? (Karen Coleman)
39. Dystopian and Unreal Utopias (George Steinmetz)
40. Undoing Gender: is it possible? Is it desirable? (Kristen Schilt)
41. Creating real utopias for Persons with disabilities (Jeffrey Houser)
42. Virtual utopias and dystopias (A. Aneesh)
43. High Road Capitalism (Andrew Shrank and Josh Whitford)
44. Assessing the Impact of Social Networking and Mobile Internet Access (Barry Wellman)
45. Practicing Freedom in the classroom: toward a sociology of critical pedagogy (Patricia Hill Collins)
46. Design, Architecture and Real Utopia (Damian White)
47. Robust Empowerment and grassroots activism (John Gaventa)
48. Caregiving for the Elderly: a vision for the future (Christine Himes)
49. New Ways to Organize: recent successes for Direct Care Workers (Heidi Hartman)
50. 50th Anniversary of the Port Huron Statement (Richard Flacks)

4. SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL PANEL

There will be one featured Presidential Panel on the broad theme “What does it mean to be a progressive in the 21st century?” This discussion will not be specifically framed in terms of real utopias, but will explore the broader political and philosophical issues involved in the idea of progress and progressive social change. The panel will have three speakers: Claus Offe, Göran Therborn and Fran Piven.

Real Utopia Proposal Sessions Abstracts

1. Unconditional Basic Income

Proposal Essay:

Philippe Van Parijs, Philosophy, University of Louvain. vanparijs@etes.ucl.ac.be

An unconditional basic income is an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test no work requirement. This simple idea is now inspiring debates, struggles and reforms throughout the world. But does globalization not make it more utopian than ever? Doesn't the threat of selective immigration and emigration make it unsustainable economically? And doesn't the cultural heterogeneity fed by migration make it increasingly unsustainable politically? These are serious challenges for an unconditional basic income as it is for all those components of our welfare states that go beyond social insurance. But the most appropriate strategies for addressing these challenges give the proposal of an unconditional basic income an unprecedented relevance.

2. A Democratic Media System

Proposal Essay:

Bob McChesny, Communications, University of Illinois, rwmcchesney@gmail.com

Discussant:

William Hoynes, Media Studies, Vassar College, wihoynes@vassar.edu

Communication and media systems are undergoing dramatic changes, precisely as their importance to society is escalating. On the one hand, new technologies are revolutionizing the nature of communication and discombobulating existing institutional practices. On the other hand, traditional journalism is struggling to survive due to technological and commercial pressures. The capacity to have credible democratic governance hangs in the balance. All nations are to varying degrees in the midst of crucial media policy debates over how best to develop the new technologies and determine what role the market and commercial values should play. Likewise all democratic nations to varying degrees are wrestling with the matter of how to create institutions to generate independent journalism.

This session will discuss a proposal for how to address these policy matters. What would be the best possible communication system in view of the existing technologies and economic possibilities? The author will argue that the foundation for a free and democratic society is a communication system, and, in particular, a news media system, largely removed from the capital accumulation process and with mechanisms to provide competition and political independence. The author will demonstrate that this is a realistic utopia, as there are numerous historical and contemporary examples from which to draw. Most important, it is part of a burgeoning international movement for media reform.

3. The Public University as a Real Utopia

Proposal Essay:

Michael Burawoy, Sociology, U.C. Berkeley, burawoy@berkeley.edu

Discussant: TBA

The university is in crisis in almost all places across the planet. The ideals of academic freedom and university autonomy are under threat from two sets of inter-connected pressures -- regulation through audit and marketization through commodification. In the face of these twin forces that often work in concert, we need to reformulate the meaning of the public university that is accountable to publics in civil society and not just to states and markets. I develop a model that recognizes four functions of the university -- professional, policy, critical and public -- based on two questions: "Knowledge for whom?" and "Knowledge for what?". I examine the internal contradictions of such a model and then show how it works itself out in different national contexts with a view to providing a vision of what a public university could be.

4. Utopias "For Real": the Contours of Racial Utopia

Proposal Essay:

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Sociology, Duke University, ubs@soc.duke.edu

Discussants:

Tyrone Forman, Emory University, TFORMAN@emory.edu

Kimberle Crenshaw, UCLA Law, crenshaw@law.ucla.edu

Utopia will not be "for real" here or elsewhere unless racial matters are included and addressed in a forthright manner. Accordingly, in this paper I do four things to advance utopias for real. First, I provide a friendly critique of the "real utopias" project as currently conceived. Second, I suggest the urgent need for mental emancipation (a la Bob Marley) from the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual tentacles of white supremacy as the foundation for any utopian process. Third, I outline a number of individual and collective freedom practices needed to move towards utopia. Albeit my discussion is broad, I tackle some practices we need to exercise in academia. Lastly, I advance, with lots of trepidation given the collective nature of the struggle for utopia, the contours of racial utopia. I conclude with a short dream of how I, as an Am-e-Rican, hope America and the world look like in 2050.

5. Philanthropy and Real Utopia

Proposal Essay:

Rob Reich, Political Science, Stanford University, Reich@Stanford.edu

Discussant:

Kieran Healy, Sociology, Duke, kjhealy@gmail.com

People have been giving away their money, property, and time to others for millennia. What's novel about the contemporary practice of philanthropy is the availability of tax incentives to give money away. Such incentives are built into tax systems in nearly all developed and many developing democracies. More generally, laws govern the creation of foundations and nonprofit organizations, and they spell out the rules under which these organizations may operate. Laws set up special tax exemptions for philanthropic and nonprofit organizations, and they frequently permit tax concessions for individual and corporate donations of money and property to qualifying non-governmental organizations. In this sense, philanthropy is not an invention of the state but ought to be viewed today as an artifact of the state; we can be certain that philanthropy would not have the form it currently does in the absence of the various laws that structure it and tax incentives that encourage it. This session specifies and assesses three possible justifications for the existence of tax incentives for charitable giving, identifies a distinctive role for philanthropy in democracies, and argues for a fundamental re-design of the current legal framework governing philanthropy.

6. Parecon (Participatory Economics)

Proposal Essay:

Michael Albert, zcommunications, sysop@zmag.org

A real utopia will have an economy that accomplishes needed production and consumption, that meets needs and develops potentials consistent with favored values, and that is classless. Participatory economy does the job, advancing self management, solidarity, diversity, and equity and removing all structural bases for class division. This session will summarize parecon's features and explore some implications for contemporary efforts at change. It will also compare parecon to other proposed visions for a better economic future, including market socialism and centrally planned socialism. And finally, it will report on projects around the world aimed at attaining both participatory economics, and a broader participatory society, as well.

7. Democratizing Finance

Proposal Essay:

Fred Block, Sociology, University of California at Davis, flblock@ucdavis.edu

Discussant:

Greta Krippner, Sociology, University of Michigan, krippner@umich.edu

The Bush-Obama rescue of major financial institutions in 2008-2009 aptly demonstrated the extraordinarily privileged role of the financial sector in contemporary societies. These institutions are “too big to fail”, their managers and owners receive compensation at unprecedented magnitudes, and their decisions as to how to allocate credit among diverse claimants have huge consequences. As we see in the ongoing battles over government spending around the world, finance is now the antithesis of democracy—at times forcing governments to reverse commitments arrived at through democratic deliberations.

But there are powerful structural reasons why a reversal that subordinates finance to democratic politics is both feasible and economically advantageous. To be sure, any reasonable mechanism for allocating credit requires technical skills and expertise, but the criteria of creditworthiness are historically variable and can be socially redefined. This paper will suggest alternative criteria of creditworthiness and sketch an institutional design that would allocate credit in ways consistent with the deepening of democracy.

8. Reviving Democratic Citizenship

Proposal Essay:

Bruce Ackerman, Yale Law School, bruce.ackerman@yale.edu

Discussant:

John Gastil, The Pennsylvania State University, jgastil@psu.edu

Many of our inherited civic institutions are dead or dying. Besides the formal act of voting, the most significant act of citizenship is to show your passport at the border, and thereby gain re-admission to the country. But it is quite possible to live in America today without regularly dealing with others as fellow citizens – fellow workers or professionals, yes; fellow religionists, yes; but fellow citizens, focusing on our common predicament as Americans?

The “citizenship agenda” aims to create new sociological contexts for the exercise of meaningful citizenship in ordinary life. This is the unifying theme of a series of books: *Voting with Dollars* (with Ian Ayres), granting each voter 50 “democracy dollars” to give to his favorite candidate or political party, *Deliberation Day* (with James Fishkin) proposing a new national holiday before each election at which citizens deliberate on the merits of rival candidates, and *The Decline and Fall of the American Republic*, proposing a system of electronic news-vouchers to rejuvenate professional journalism in the age of the internet. I will be emphasizing the synergistic relationships between these initiatives.

9. Making Direct Democracy Deliberative through Random Assemblies

Proposal Essay:

John Gastil, Department of Communication Arts and Sciences, The Pennsylvania State University, jgastil@psu.edu

Discussant:

Archon Fung, JFK School, Harvard, archon_fung@harvard.edu

Abstract: Too many critics continue to view deliberative democracy as a theoretical proposition, rather than a real body of practice. After decades of practical experiments in modern deliberative democracy, not to mention centuries of refinement of the jury system, there now exist powerful deliberative models. Two of the most important officially-sanctioned efforts come from the northwestern corner of North America--the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly and the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review. British Columbia showed that a randomly-selected body of 150 citizens can draft first-rate legislation, which then won 57% support in a province-wide referendum election. Oregon showed that a small representative panel of 24 citizens can produce one-page analyses of ballot initiatives that influence the knowledge and judgment of the wider electorate when placed in the official Voters' Guide. Taken together, these cases show the clear potential for infusing direct democratic institutions with a deliberative impulse.

10. Reimagining the Corporation

Proposal Essay:

Jerry Davis, Sociology, U of Michigan, gfdavis@umich.edu

Discussant:

William Roy, Sociology, UCLA, billroy@soc.ucla.edu

From the merger wave at the turn of the 20th century that created them until the bust-up takeover wave of the 1980s that disassembled them, publicly traded corporations were the dominant social institution of the American economy. They provided long-term employment and social welfare benefits that were provided by states in other industrialized economies, and they shaped the currents of politics and trade in innumerable ways. But the shareholder value movement and the disaggregation of contemporary methods of production and exchange have inadvertently driven the corporation into retreat in the US. The concentration of assets and employment have been in decline for three decades, and there are now half as many public corporations as there were in 1997. Moreover, ferment in both laws and feasible organizing methods suggest that we are on the verge of a substantial re-imagining of the structures organizing the economy. This session contemplates how changes in law, information and communication technologies, and productive technologies open up new possibilities for (sociologically-informed) democratic governance of our post-corporate economy.

11. Designs and Dilemmas of Participatory Budgeting

Proposal Essay:

Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Sociology, Brown University, gianpaolo_baiocchi@brown.edu

Discussant:

Michael Kennedy, Sociology, Brown University, Michael_Kennedy@brown.edu

This paper considers the travel, translation, and adoption of Participatory Budgeting (PB) as a policy instrument first originating among social movements linked to Brazil's Workers' Party in the late 1980s and then traveling along various routes to arrive in the most varied places by the late 2000s. This paper discusses institutional dilemmas (such as those related to scale and those related to interfaces with non-deliberative institutions) faced by adopters as well as recurring controversies (such as the discussion over the legitimate representatives of 'the people') in the process of its adoption. It argues that PB has the potential to both politicize as well as de-politicize claims for inclusion as well as to promote or hinder redistribution.

12. Work-Family Reconciliation Policies and Gender Equality

Proposal Essay:

Janet Gornick, PoliticalScience, City University of New York, JGornick@gc.cuny.edu

Discussant:

Harry Brighouse, Philosophy, University of Wisconsin, mhbrigho@wisc.edu

In this essay, we draw on feminist welfare state scholarship to outline an institutional arrangement that would support an earner–carer society — that is, a social arrangement in which women and men engage symmetrically in paid work and unpaid caregiving and where young children have ample time with their parents. We present a blueprint for work–family reconciliation policies in three areas — paid family-leave provisions, working-time regulations, and early childhood education and care — and we identify key policy design principles. We describe and assess these work–family reconciliation policies as they operate in six European countries widely considered to be policy exemplars: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and France. We close with an analysis of potential barriers to achievability.

13. A World Beyond Gender

Proposal essay:

Barbara J. Risman, Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago, brisman@uic.edu

Judith Lorber, Sociology, Graduate Center and Brooklyn College, CUNY, jlorber@rcn.com

Discussant:

Michael Kimmel, Sociology, State University of New York, Stony Brook

The women's movement has waved through societies across the globe for more than a century, and yet inequality between women and men still stubbornly remains. In many ways and in many places, feminist-inspired change has been dramatic. Today, there are women leaders in many venues, but other women are at the bottom of the economic scale. All women are vulnerable to misogyny, rape, and sexual violence. Another continued area of gender inequality is the unequal division of domestic labor that still burdens heterosexual women with children living in committed relationships. How do we create a less gendered and more equal social structure? We argue we must move beyond categorizing people by sex category for any significant purpose beyond actual biological differences. We suggest a vision for such a society and social policies that might implement such a utopian vision.

14. Real Utopian Foodsheds

Proposal essay:

Harriet Friedmann, Sociology, University of Toronto, harriet.friedmann@utoronto.ca

Discussant:

Neva Hassanein, Environmental Studies, University of Montana

Carolyn Steel calls the efforts to (re)link cities with food *sitopia* --- from the ancient Greek words *sitos* (food) and *topos* (place). Re-embedding human communities in their habitats (from watersheds to the biosphere) is beyond the ken of agencies (and ideas) organized as agriculture, health, social services, and since the 1970s, environment. Food movement praxis can be understood as territorial and institutional shifts towards *foodsheds*, and therefore profound reorganizations of governance. This paper takes up Steel's challenge to find "partial and attainable" ways to "scale up" growing recognition of the central role of food in society "...to the point where it affects not just our daily habits, but our socio-economic structures, cross-cultural understanding, and value systems — our very conception of what it means to dwell on Earth." Acting as *facilitator of reflection*, I will articulate understandings based on conversations organized for this purpose with participants the Southern Ontario Community of Food Practice, whom I acknowledge as co-creators.

15. From a Transparent State to a Transparent Society

Proposal essay:

Archon Fung, Kennedy School, Harvard University, archon_fung@harvard.edu

Discussant: tba

Large organizations in society — especially corporations but also governments and civic organizations — should be more transparent than they currently are. A transparent society is one in which large organizations reveal much more information about their decisions, operations, actions, and outputs. Such organizational transparency would complement traditional legal and regulatory state efforts to regulate the externalities that such large organizations produce. The first contribution of a more thorough-going transparency is to better enable individuals to protect themselves against risks that they incur when they interact with large organizations by, for example, receiving a mortgage, buying a car, going to a hospital, or eating sprouts. Transparency would enable individuals to better assess the risks they face and make choices accordingly. Second, and more significantly, such transparency would enable a kind of social regulation that would normative, political, and financial pressure on organizations that appear to violate standards of social responsibility. Imagine, for example, widespread identification and vilification of the banks with the lowest mortgage work-out and highest foreclosure rates, the food manufacturers and restaurants with the worst hygienic practices, and health insurance companies with the highest claim denial rates.

16. Productive Democracy

Proposal Essay:

Joel Rogers, Sociology and Law, University of Wisconsin – Madison. jrogers60@gmail.com

Discussant:

Claus Offe, Hertie School of Business, Berlin, Germany. offe@hertie-school.org

Democratic egalitarianism need not be defeated by internationalization, environmental catastrophe, present lack of confidence in government, or decay of the social base of traditional social democracy. But it does require different institutions. Productive democracy, an alternative to both neoliberalism and traditional social democracy, would focus on those that encouraged wide contribution to developing the total factor productivity (including human, physical, and natural capital) of well-organized places, with shared local capture of its benefits. These places would compete on the dynamic efficiency of their governing institutions and public goods, and cooperate on joint gains to same. Governing institutions would be designed for resilience (i.e., learning and adaptive capacity) and enlistment of free citizen contribution to this project, which requires sustained and cooperative experiment and problem-solving. Practical material equality would be achieved by cost-reducing public goods, asset equalization (“property owning democracy”), and transfers and insurance tied closely to society-wide productivity. Within places, the social contract between governing institutions and citizens — preparation for social contribution, expectation of its provision — would rest on the traditional radical democratic conviction that, given fair terms, ordinary people are both able and willing to govern themselves and contribute to a society (and global order) fit to live in.

17. Towards a Democratic Egalitarian System of Public Education

Proposal 1: Radical democratic education

Proposal essay:

Michael Fielding and Peter Moss, Institute of Education, University of London, UK.

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The essay will critique the institution of public education, offering ‘radical democratic education’ as an alternative. Section 1 will discuss what is wrong with much contemporary public education and schooling and consider the meaning of and rationale for the proposed alternative. Section 2 will explore our design of radical democratic education and will set out 10 principles that provide its core features, offering concrete examples or cases that ground and extend our advocacy and capture something of its animating intellectual and existential energy. Integral to our argument will be the democratic necessity of a ‘common school’. At the heart of Section 3 lie questions, not just of sustainability, but of strategic leverage and emancipatory development. Here we draw heavily on Erik Olin Wright (waystations) and Roberto Mangabeira Unger (democratic experimentalism) and further develop an account of prefigurative practice that has educational resonance and wider generic significance.

Proposal 2: Envisioning Educational Justice

Proposal essay:

Harry Brighouse, Philosophy, University of Wisconsin. mhbrigho@wisc.edu

Developing a real utopian design for education faces two barriers. First, how educational opportunities should be distributed depends partly on whether, and in what ways, the surrounding society is just or not. Second, within different unjust countries, even contemporary wealthy democracies, the educational infrastructures are quite different and face different problems. I shall argue for the urgency of a principle that public educational resources be distributed to the long-run benefit of the least advantaged, and shall make proposals designed for US and the UK, under the assumption that the surrounding societies will not enjoy radical improvements. The proposals address three features of the educational infrastructure: how resources are distributed among schools, how schools should interact with other agencies, and what governance and accountability systems might create a more ideal system.

18. Postfossil Conversion and Free Public Transport

Proposal Essay:

Mario Candeias, Senior Research Fellow for Critique of Capitalism and Social Analysis,
Institute for Critical Social Analysis, Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, Berlin.

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Discussant:

Lian Hurst Mann, the Labour Community Strategy Center, Los Angeles

The crisis seems to be over. Car sales jump record highs. Car manufacturers achieve to double production and boost exports. And the rising competitors from China and India have the same goals. Notorious overcapacities are not reduced, while competition is increased. Global players like Daimler or VW are successful in this global game of crowding out, but at 'home' all are reducing employment or transforming regular jobs into precarious ones. Of course all manufacturers want to go green now - with the electric car. The idea is a technological solution without changing the business plan or the social mode of individual mobility. Does this really solve the problems? If countries like China or India catch up on a similar level of automobilisation the climate will collapse - even when 10 percent of the cars would be e-cars. Meanwhile megacities like Mumbai, Shanghai or Istanbul experience daily traffic infarct. Nothing is changed concerning the problems and structures of individual mobility, of the high amount of dead and injured in traffic, the fast rinsing traffic concentration, the sealing of soil, the increasing use of rare and often highly toxic resources like Lithium. So what could be a strategy for a socio-ecological conversion? What are entry projects for alternatives of a postfossil and public mobility? What problems and contradictions do we have to face? This session will presents concepts and struggles for ecological conversion of the car industry, and a just transition to free public transport, combining interstitial, symbiotic and ruptural strategies.

19. Practical Anarchism in Networked Societies

Proposal Essay:

Yochai Benkler, Harvard Law School, ybenkler@law.harvard.edu

Discussant:

Eben Moglen, Columbia Law School, moglen@columbia.edu

The networked information economy is typified by radical decentralization of the core capital inputs into the highest-added-value economic activities of the most advanced economies. Computation, communications, storage, and sensing are widely distributed in the population of the wealthier economies, and in gradually growing parts of the middle classes of less wealthy economies; while human insight, knowledge, inventiveness, and creativity have always been individually embodied. As a result, effective decentralized cooperation relying on neither the state nor hierarchical firms has become an increasingly significant and reliable form of self-organized action. Wikipedia we all know. But user-owned wifi networks, free software, and distributed storage/server models are providing examples of self-organized production of basic infrastructure. Decentralized finance suggests shades of Proudhon's bank. The networked fourth estate suggests an increasing role for radically decentralized reporting as an important counterweight to commercial media. The paper explores possibilities and limitations for practical anarchism in networked capitalism.

20. Corporations with Worker Ownership and Profit-Sharing

Proposal Essay:

Joseph Blasi, Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations. blasi@smlr.rutgers.edu

Discussant:

Douglas Kruse, Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relation. kruse@smlr.rutgers.edu

There will be a brief overview of what is wrong with current corporate institutions where ownership of stock and income from capital tend to be highly concentrated mainly in the top 1% of employees in most corporations with an emphasis on several areas of the corporate sector where the distribution of ownership and income from capital is substantially more broad-based. There will be a summary of research indicating that the more broad-based worker ownership and profit sharing sectors represent a workable and efficient way to organize the economy. Lastly, practical legislative and executive branch proposals to facilitate the transformation to more broad-based ownership and profit sharing by citizens of large and small corporations will be presented including changes to the tax system, the banking system, and the system of higher education required to facilitate this transformation. The proposals will be framed with the idea that societies organized as republics require generally broad distribution of property in order to assure that each individual has the independence to participate in democratic discourse.

21. Lessons from the Kibbutz as a Real Utopia

Proposal essay:

Uri Leviatan, Western Galilee College, Israel (leviatan@soc.haifa.ac.i)

Discussant: tba

For many decades the kibbutzim in Israel aspired to embody principles of a Utopian community: members live in such community out of their free will with knowledge of other life options and the possibility to leave whenever they wish; all members of that community satisfy in a sustainable way (for the present, the near future, and for the distant future) all their needs; they maximize the expression of their human potential and live in a community of equality among the members according to their unique human needs and potentials, in solidarity, in collaboration and fraternity, and in cooperation; and the community actively uses its resources in spreading these values and characteristics into the larger society. However, starting at the end of the 80's, the kibbutzim experienced a deep economic and ideological crisis. Two major outcomes of that crisis signaled the beginning of the demise of the kibbutz phenomenon: (1) a large wave of emigration – leaving kibbutzim for other ways of life – by members, particularly the young; and, (2) abandonment by most kibbutzim (and their members – those who stayed) of the basic principles of conduct, that stemmed from the kibbutz values described earlier. In this session we will explore the causal processes that undermined the kibbutz model and draw lessons for the sustainability of real utopian intentional communities.