Abstract

Taking a Marxist methodological approach, this paper starts by arguing that the currently exacerbating economic and ecological crisis indicates a failure of both conventional approaches to sustainable development and all attempts (policies) aiming at eco-regulation and sustainability. Subsequently, and after a critical evaluation of O’Connor’s conception of ‘two contradictions’, an attempt will be made to articulate an ecologically informed interpretation of crisis. On these grounds, we will explore capital’s strategic response to crisis within the emerging new stage of capitalism, stressing in particular the significance of an expanding primitive accumulation of capital and arguing that this strategic response cannot actually ensure ecological and social sustainability, and more importantly the requirements of a socially acceptable human development. In an attempt to draw the ‘broad contours’ of an alternative, communist outlook in overcoming the (twin) crisis, we will more specifically examine the relation between tactical or partial reforms and a strategic
transformation of society. It will be argued that such a strategy cannot but be based on a working class struggle aiming at a smashing of state power and capitalist sovereignty, combined with a revolutionary, even if occasionally stepwise, transformation of education, science, technology and production organization, advancing a new socialization of production and new forms of association in production and society at large.

1. Introduction

The longstanding and variant manifestations of economic and ecological crisis over the last few decades (especially since the 1970s) and the current exacerbation of these crises pose crucial questions regarding both social and ecological sustainability. Some of these questions are extremely important both theoretically and politically. What are the root causes of these two forms of crisis, and what is the relationship between these two (economic and ecological crisis) are just two relevant questions. Moreover, insofar as capitalism proves both socially and ecologically unsustainable, what are the preconditions and prospects of a sustainable society beyond capitalism?

In the second section of this paper I will briefly explore the theoretical underpinnings of economic and ecological crisis, focusing on some of the main theoretical explanations and some of the problems arising with these explanations. In the following third section, an ecologically informed interpretation of economic crisis will be suggested, and this will serve as a basis for a dialectical conception of the relationship between economic and ecological crisis. There will be also an attempt to explain how this new conception could offer a more adequate answer to some problems raised in the relevant literature. Subsequently, in section 4, an attempt will be made to more specifically analyze capital’s strategic response to crisis during recent decades, arguing that the relevant restructuring of capitalism tends to give rise to a new, though still emergent, and highly contingent stage of capitalism. In section 5, I will consider a communist outlook and a comprehensive transformation as a means for effectively overcoming both economic and ecological crisis. In the final, sixth section, a brief outline will be offered of the immediate tasks of such a transformation, which would tend to integrate into a revolutionary reorganization of
production and social life at large, ensuring an equitable and sustainable development of society, and an ecologically compatible co-evolution with nature.

2. Theoretical underpinnings of the economic and ecological crisis

The recently exacerbated economic crisis facing world capitalism has given rise to an extensive debate and various interpretations of this crisis, engaging both orthodox and Marxist economists. Most orthodox economists, as well as some Marxists, would conclude that the current crisis is essentially a financial crisis, which of course has a serious impact on the so-called ‘real economy’. On the other hand, several Marxists have extensively analyzed the ‘financialization’ of contemporary capitalism, whereas most researchers following a Marxist approach would stress that the root causes of the current crisis go beyond a mere ‘financialization’ of capitalism and concern its inherent tendency towards overaccumulation of capital (see Brenner 2009, Carchedi 2009, Kotz 2009, Lapavitsas 2009, McNally 2009, M. Smith 2010). Elsewhere, I have also attempted to offer a dialectical interpretation of this crisis, emphasizing the intimate relation between the financial sphere and the fundamental structure concerning the conditions of capitalist valorization (Liodakis 2010: ch.7). Apart from overcoming a reductionist and mechanistic explanation, the aim of this interpretation is to dialectically integrate the material-ecological conditions of production into a comprehensive interpretation of crisis.

At the same time, and along an increasing environmental degradation and crisis over the last few decades, a growing ecological awareness and environmental movement have also led to important debates regarding the environmental/ecological issue. Most conventional interpretations would consider this ecological degradation and crisis as, largely, a result of particular behavioural patterns and external (non-systemic) factors, including both natural causes and institutional structures. It was only the rapid exacerbation of ecological crisis and the drastic changes in the climate over the last two decades that led several researchers and international Organizations to a recognition that we have essentially to do with anthropogenetic changes, changes brought about by a human impact. But again, the specifically capitalist causes of these changes are out of focus for most researchers, including many radical ones. On the other hand, Marxist interpretations, though recognizing that these phenomena of
ecological degradation are not peculiar to the capitalist mode of production (CMP), stress the fact that the unprecedented scale of ecological crisis is largely the outcome of the immanent features of capitalism (see Burkett 1999, 2006, Foster 2000a, Liodakis 2001, 2010: ch.6). Among these features, we should include the role of private property which largely shapes the relation of capital to nature, the fact that the CMP aims at a maximum production of exchange values instead of a production of use-values meeting real social needs, the role of capitalist valorization governed by a law of value specific to capitalism (which ignores or grossly understates nature’s contribution), the intrinsically contradictory (agonistic) character of capitalist production, which implies a growing externalization of production costs, and the specific capitalist shaping of technology which serves capitalist profitability at the expense of an over-exhaustion of the two fundamental sources of all wealth, human labor and nature (see, in particular, Liodakis 2010: 109-110).

Most conventional treatments consider environmental degradation as a problem distinct and largely un-related with economic crisis, though it might be recognized that, at the end, economic and ecological crisis may influence one another. But even some Marxists have tended to consider economic and ecological crisis in a fragmented way, as largely distinct and socially separate phenomena. Among them, J. O’Connor (1990, 1998), influenced by the recent fragmentation of social movements (development of an environmental movement independent from a working class labour movement), and despite his valuable contribution to a materialist understanding of the relation between society and nature, has rather misleadingly identified two fundamental contradictions characterizing capitalism. The first of these concerns the capital-labour contradiction inherent in the accumulation process, while the second distinctly concerns the contradiction between society, or capital more specifically, and nature. This theoretical proposal, however, has been subject to a considerable critique (see Lebowitz 1992, Spence 2000, Foster 2002). Apart from O’Connor’s underconsumptionist interpretation of the first (capital-labour) contradiction, it can be argued that he misconceives Marx’s own approach, charging him of neglecting the ‘second contradiction’ which tends to, directly or indirectly, undermine capitalist conditions of production. While one should not ignore the significance of this contradiction concerning the external or natural conditions of production, the point is that ‘there is a danger that we will develop a Marxist analysis
of ecological problems that is too economistic, too narrow, too functionalist, and too prone to economic dualism – and of course undialectical – to allow us to explore the full scale of the ecological contradiction that capitalism presents’ (Foster 2002: 13-14). Moreover, it has been argued that, while O’Connor successfully deploys the concept of ‘second nature’ to analyze the natural conditions of production, he fails to adequately grasp the dynamic and specifically capitalist character of these conditions, and that he conflates class and social movement, failing to recognize the working class as the sole or dominant agency of progressive social change (Spence 2000). Thus, he contributes, on a theoretical level, to the reproduction of a continuing fragmentation of a social movement aiming at a radical social change.

3. **An ecologically informed interpretation of crisis**

It becomes obvious from above that there is a need for a more pertinent approach, both methodologically and politically, towards a more integrated (unified) explanation of economic and ecological crisis. As already noted, we have taken a first step in this direction in our attempt to interpret the long-term overaccumulation crisis which has, starting in the early 1970s and through some fluctuations and a number of successive bubbles, culminated with the extremely severe recession of the world economy in the last couple of years (see Liodakis 2010: ch.7). This explanation is largely based on a dialectical interpretation of the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (TRPF) presented by Marx (1967, III: ch. XIII-XV), taking into account all counteracting tendencies, as well as the dialectical relation between production and exchange, and the relation between production and realization of surplus value more specifically. Within this context, the real movement of the average profit rate becomes highly contingent, depending on the evolution of all relevant factors. In this sense and more relevant to our purposes here, I have also stressed three factors that largely determine the rising tendency of the organic composition of capital, which are closely associated with some immanent imperatives of the CMP. The first of these factors concerns the appropriation of nature, and insofar as capital can appropriate natural resources freely, as a ‘free gift of nature to capital’ (Marx 1967, III: 745, Burkett 1999: ch.6, Liodakis 2001), or grossly undervalued, this appropriation will proceed with no restriction, despite any ecological implications. This appropriation is crucial since natural
resources are necessary for the materialization of value and surplus value in the process of production and even more significant when these resources are crystallized in means of production facilitating the exploitation of labour power. It is intimately associated with the imperative for a maximal throughput of material and energy resources. ‘This (use-value) aspect lays bare the ecological foundations and at the same time the external limits of capitalist production and accumulation’ (Liodakis 2010: 142). The second factor or imperative relates to the need for a greater discipline and exploitation of labour in production, which necessitates an increasing mechanization and automation of production, while the third concerns the inherently competitive character of capitalist production, which implies the need of a cost-reducing increase in labour productivity and requires a continual modernization, mechanization and automation of production, leading again to a rising organic composition of capital (C/V).

Taking a few steps further, we should start from the first factor noted above, namely the appropriation of nature and the ecological impact of production, considering briefly the implications of the debate regarding the so-called ‘de-materialization’ of production and the putative ‘decoupling’ of capitalist production (and growth) from its detrimental ecological impact. All this debate relates to the economic as well as the ecological implications of an increasing substitution of natural resources with technological means and human or produced resources, the expansion of the presumably ‘immaterial production’ (mainly the sector of services) at the expense of industrial production which is material resources and energy intensive, the controversial increase of net output of production compared to relevant energy requirements, and the dissociation of economic growth from its negative environmental impact by means of improved – ecologically friendly – technological solutions (see Trainer 2001, Wiener 2001, Næss and Høyer 2009, Shahid Alam 2009). According to a certain definition, ‘Dematerialization is a joint concept including both eco-efficiency and substitution and refers to a decoupling of economic growth from resource consumption and negative environmental impacts’ (Næss and Høyer 2009: 74-75).

It would seem indeed that a potential ‘dematerialization’ or some short of ‘decoupling’ might have a dual beneficial effect on the profitability and sustainability of capitalist production, as well as on the ecological environment. On the one hand,
‘dematerialization’ may decrease, or reduce the rate of increase of the organic composition of capital (OCC), thus relaxing the pressure on the rates of profit and the accumulation of capital. On the other hand, ‘dematerialization’ and ‘decoupling’ might directly or indirectly reduce resource depletion and the negative impact on the environment. However, though there are serious reservations regarding the conventional ‘limits to growth’ argument, we should rather agree with Trainer that ‘there are persuasive reasons for concluding that concerns about the “limits to growth” are not satisfactorily countered by the dematerialization thesis’ (2001: 512). More broadly, we could argue that all these processes (dematerialization, decoupling, etc.), even if they exist, cannot constitute an effective countertendency to the TRPF and/or an effective mechanism of environmental protection and encountering the ecological crisis.

This argument can run along the following lines: (a) Dematerialization and the so-called ‘weightless economy’ is largely a myth. First, because all labour and production processes have a material background and some crucial material aspects. Second, because material resources and energy are absolutely necessary for the use-value aspect of the valorization of labour (and capital). And third, because, even the service sector presumably constituting a large part of the ‘weightless economy’ is in general energy-intensive (see Huws 1999, Trainer 2001, Lessa 2006, Liodakis 2010: 15-18). Any ‘dematerialization’ trends, therefore, could not possibly offset the imperatives leading to an increasing OCC as noted above. (b) Dematerialization trends are commonly assessed by measuring and comparing output in GDP terms with materials and energy requirements, but the former is systematically overestimated, while the latter is grossly underestimated insofar as a great part of production and energy cost is disregarded as it is externalized to the ecological environment (see Trainer 2001). (c) Environmental limits cannot be relaxed and decoupling of capitalist production (and growth) from its ecological impact cannot be effective because technology is dominantly shaped by the imperative of capitalist profitability, and this cannot substantially change under capitalism. Among else, because there are powerful mechanisms of economic and institutional lock-in, which put serious barriers to a development of alternative technologies or sources of energy (see Unruh 2000, Davis 2010). This is amply demonstrated even in countries, such as the Scandinavian ones, with a long tradition and a considerable ecological culture (see Næss and Høyen 2009).
It becomes clear from our preceding discussion that capitalist production encounters both internal and external limits, and it is the over-passing of these limits that leads to a deepening economic and ecological crisis. The internal limits have more to do with the conditions of profitability and accumulation (capitalist valorization), as well as the balance of class struggle, while the external limits have to do more with the social and especially the natural conditions of production. But these natural conditions of production are not fixed, an external immutable nature and a finite amount of natural resources, as neo-Malthusians usually conceive natural limits. A production of a ‘second nature’ (see Castree 1995, O’Connor 1998, Spence 2000, Liodakis 2010: 103-104) and, moreover, the real subsumption of labour, nature and science under capital in contemporary conditions (see Liodakis 2010: 25) give a radically different, very dynamic and to a considerable extent social shaping to these ‘external limits’. These limits, whether social or natural, are largely manifested through the processes of valorization of labour and natural resources, and especially though the imperatives lying behind the OCC increase, as well as through the imperative of an increasing labour exploitation, which again meets certain social and biological (natural) limits. It is evident that the exploitation of both nature and labour power lies behind these limits, and there is ample historical evidence that capitalism is capable of temporarily overcoming these limits and ameliorating material shortages or the growing rift in the society – nature metabolism through a series of successive shifts in major technologies and/or the utilization of new resources (see Marx 1967, III: 110, 118-119, Burkett 1999: 116, Moore 2000, Clark and York 2008). It is also revealing that, it is not low but rather high productivity that lies behind the overaccumulation crisis of capitalism and this has also serious ecological implications. As stressed by R. Smith (2010), ‘when, as under capitalism, the whole point of using resources efficiently is just to use the saved resources to produce even more commodities, to accelerate the conversion of even more natural resources into products … capitalist efficiency turns into its opposite’. This point is clearly associated with the so-called Jevon’s paradox, which should be good lesson for those upholding a naïve belief that social (and ecological) problems can be successfully tackled by technological means, or that an essential decoupling of capitalist production from its ecological impact could ever be achieved (see also Foster 2000b, Castro 2004, Burkett 2006: 269-70, Liodakis 2010: 116-117). In a certain sense, of course, a more efficient use of resources by means of ‘eco-efficiency’ and ‘dematerialization’ may be important, even under capitalism, ‘because it can give us
breathing space to carry out more fundamental changes. However, it cannot be a substitute for those changes’ (Næss and Høyer 2009: 95).

It should be noted here that the debate concerning ‘dematerialization’ is intimately related to the issue, often presented within a neo-Malthusian frame, regarding the matter-energy (entropy) content of any production process, and the work of N. Georgescu-Roegen and H. Daly more specifically. Although this issue goes beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that, apart from any reservations, this type of thermodynamic analysis generally supports our argument against the ‘dematerialization’ hypothesis. However, it should be stressed that, when dealing with such issues, we ought to keep clearly in mind the dialectical relation between the social character of production and the materiality of production (the natural aspect), without bending to or overstressing one side at the expense of the other (see Foster and Burkett 2004, Burkett 2005a).

Reaching or overshooting social and natural limits obviously implies an exacerbation of economic and ecological crisis, and this is evident during the last few decades. It is moreover evident that there is a remarkable synergy, one might say, or a close dialectical interaction between economic and ecological crisis. Environmental degradation and ecological crisis has a clear and often far-reaching impact on the cost of production and hence on economic crisis. This impact has been treated by several Marxists (see O’Connor 1998, Vlachou 2002), and the implications are, either that ecological crisis (the second contradiction) can be the cause of economic crisis, or that capitalist adjustment and market regulation encompassing increasing production cost may ensure a reproduction of capital, without any severe crisis. On the other hand, an exacerbated economic crisis, as that faced today, should be expected to feed, in a variety of different ways, a deepening ecological crisis. Here, one could stress, among else, the intensified competition which probably leads to an over-extraction and use of natural resources and an extensive externalization of production costs, while undermining a pro-active solidarity in taking measures for ecological protection, the debt-induced reductions of infrastructure investments, the default of major projects promoting renewable energy, and a governmental relaxation of carbon-emissions caps (see Davis 2010). Apart from this close interaction, however, and contrary to the conception of two separate contradictions, our analysis above shows that these contradictions and ultimately the two forms of crisis are inextricably related, and that a
unified theoretical frame is in fact required to adequately treat all relevant issues. It follows from this, furthermore, that the working class is the single most relevant social agent capable of effectively tackling both economic and ecological crisis, and that a unified working class movement is in effect required to seriously challenge the twin alienation of labour and nature.

At variance with our preceding interpretation of crisis, several researchers tend to approach natural limits, as already noted, in an absolute and cumbersome manner, and this leads to variant forms of neo-Malthusianism. All these approaches do not dare question the existing CMP and, implausibly assuming that the market is the most efficient mechanism for the allocation of resources, end up to pose the scale of production (and economic growth) as the most relevant issue concerning the deepening environmental and ecological crisis, blaming also overpopulation for this crisis. As a corollary, various theoretical proposals are submitted for tackling the severe ecological crisis faced on a planetary level, including a ‘steady state economy’, zero- or de-growth approaches, a ‘simple way’ or localized production and economic restructuring, etc. (see Daly 1996, Trainer 2001, Latouche 2007, Jackson 2009). However, as growth is an inherent tendency of the CMP, capitalism without growth cannot be sustained and there are scanty any chances that such policy proposals can be accepted and implemented. For these reasons, all these proposals have been subject to critique and rejected (see Burkett 2006, Fotopoulos 2007, R. Smith 2010). As R. Smith (2010) correctly points out, referring to these approaches, ‘all they actually offer us are unworkable, warm and fuzzy capitalist utopias, with no plausible means of escaping the iron cage of consumerism or the “growthmania” of the market’.

It is therefore clear that all the approaches considered above (‘dematerialization’, ‘decoupling’, de-growth, etc) cannot actually ensure the conditions for the economic and ecological sustainability of capitalist production (see also Perelman 2003). But what is really at stake is not simply the sustainability of capitalist profitability, of capitalist economic growth, or of the natural environment per se. More crucial are rather the conditions for a sustainable human development which the crumbling capitalist system can barely meet (see Marx 1967, III: 250, Burkett 2005b, 2006: 265). It is important, however, to explore how capital itself has responded to the deepening economic and ecological crisis over the last few decades and what are the prospects for its potential restructuring and viability.
4. Capital’s strategic response to crisis and the formation of the new stage of capitalism

Facing a deepening and occasionally aggravated economic crisis since the 1970s, as well as a systematic exacerbation of ecological crisis, capitalism worldwide has deployed a contradictory and multifaceted strategy to cope with this twin crisis and ensure its viability and a sustainable growth. Along with its immanent trend towards globalization and transnational development that has acquired a great momentum during recent decades, this strategic response of capital encompasses the deployment of neoliberal policy at a global level, a drastic reorganization and intensification of labour exploitation, deep institutional changes, and a rapid and thorough reform of state and transnational regulation. Recently, an attempt towards a ‘green’ re-development of capitalism, though deployed as a vehicle to boost the economy out of recession, has rather poor results on both the economic and ecological plane (see Wallis 2008, Næss and Høyer 2009). At the core of the fundamental restructuring of capitalism lie a process of an expanding and deepening ‘primitive accumulation’ and a strategy of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (see Harvey 2003, Liodakis 2010: 32-34), as well as a trend towards a total, or indeed universal, subsumption of labour, science and nature under capital. This accumulation through dispossession entails an extending enclosure and privatization of the commons (all common natural and social resources) by various means including an expansive protection of intellectual property rights (see Bollier 2002, Johnston 2003). As it should be clear, these changes have profound, not only social, but also ecological implications.

Elsewhere we have argued that this deep restructuring of capitalism since the 1970s gives rise to an emerging new stage in the development of capitalism, which we have called *totalitarian capitalism* (Liodakis 2005, 2010). This new structure of capitalism under constitution tends to be much more authoritarian and exploitative, regarding both labour and nature, and this becomes evident especially in the context of the extreme aggravation of crisis during the last couple of years. Through this strategic restructuring and a number of successive bubbles, capitalism has been able to partly mitigate or displace crisis in time and place, but it also tends to exhaust both its social and ecological limits. This becomes particularly obvious with the working
and living conditions faced by the working class majority, as well as the acute ecological problems manifested, among other things, with a growing depletion of natural resources, a dramatic loss of biodiversity, an impending impasse in the energy sector, a dramatic climatic change, and a failure, due to the contradictory and competitive character of capitalism, of any coordinated attempt at an international level to face these climatic changes (see Unruh 2000, Li 2008, Davis 2010, and the failure of the relevant Copenhagen accord).

Under these conditions, class struggle becomes absolutely crucial and this makes the outcome of the strategic restructuring of capitalism and the potential consolidation of its new stage of development highly contingent. As all concerted efforts, at both a national and transnational level, to re-establish and ensure the conditions for the economic and ecological sustainability of capitalism, let alone the conditions for a decent life and a sustainable human development, tend to a tragic failure (see Castro 2004, Redclift 2005, Liodakis 2003, 2010: 121-134), a growing number of people and social agents begin to question capitalism and search for an alternative beyond it.

5. A communist outlook of overcoming the crisis

The severe exacerbation of both economic and ecological crisis and the blatant failure to ensure the conditions of a sustainable development of capitalism apparently imply the need of a radical transformation and reorganization of production and social life. Despite the defame of communism with the degeneration and collapse of the regimes of the so-called ‘existing socialism’, there is again under present conditions a growing interest and search for new revolutionary developments in a communist direction (see Lebowitz 2006, Swyngedouw 2009, Liodakis 2010: ch.7). As the dis-embeddedment of the capitalist economy from society and nature has arguably a large part of the blame for the economic and ecological crisis we face today, there is a need according to some researchers to reinstitute, under social control, the (re)embeddedment of the economy in society, which itself is a necessary condition for embedding society and the economy in nature (Adaman, Devine and Ozkaynak 2003).

There is obviously a need to historically transcend private property as a basic institution of capitalism, as well as the market as a social coordinating mechanism and
commodity production altogether, including the commodification of labour power. These changes, along with the supersession of state power and of power relations in general, would tend towards a development of a classless society. But it is important to consider communism, not as an ideal structure (or model) to be implemented under appropriate conditions sometime in a distant future, but rather as Marx famously stressed, namely as a struggle and revolutionary movement challenging the sovereignty of capital and the existing social order. It should moreover be stressed that, as the exploitation of labour and the appropriation of nature take place along definite class lines in the prevailing capitalist conditions, the social forces arising from these processes and the struggle challenging this order of things will necessarily have a corresponding class character. It should also be expected that the current restructuring of capitalism, encompassing both the exploitation of labour and the appropriation of nature, will have specific ramifications on the configuration of class relations and hence on the political alliances of those forces undertaking the revolutionary task of overturning and superseding the prevailing capitalist social order.

Considering in turn economic and ecological crisis from a communist perspective does not mean viewing crisis simply from the standpoint of a future communist society. Although such a retrospective account may be necessary, it also means looking back in order to utilize cultures of collective action or reclaim the commons privatized (enclosed, or plundered) during the neoliberal assault of recent decades. More importantly, it further means looking into the presently unfolding struggles to defend or expand the commons, to develop new forms of collective action and self-management, and new institutions for the satisfaction of real social needs while simultaneously protecting the ecological environment, which all tend to go beyond the existing capitalist framework, revealing at the same time the limitations of these transformations within a capitalist context. As pointed out, ‘[t]he communist hypothesis … prefigures the end of the coercive state as we know it and its replacement by forms of self-organization and self-management. Thinking through the relations between emancipatory struggles and the transformation of forms of governing the commons is indeed an urgent task’ (Swyngedouw 2009: 303). It is also noted that
Communism as an idea manifests itself concretely each time people come together in common, not only to demand equality, to demand their place within the edifice of state and society, but also to stage their capacity for self-organization and self-management, and to enact the democratic promise, thereby changing the frame of what is considered possible and revolutionizing the very parameters of state and government, while putting new organizational forms in their place (Ibid: 316).

And as is further stated, ‘Communism is radically about foregrounding the commons and the abolition of the exclusive private property of the commons upon which contemporary capitalism rests’ (Ibid: 312).

There is also a remarkable trend in contemporary capitalism to encompass and extensively utilize some forms of common resources, without formal privatization, and the forces struggling for communism need to short this complicated process out (see Johnston 2003). At the same time, there is an extensive contemporary literature, often following an institutionalist approach, which demonstrates the efficiency and viability of common property regimes, as well as their capacity in problem-solving and in meeting the requirements of sustainable development (see Swaney 1990, Ostrom 2000, Agrawal 2001, O’Neill 2001, 2007, Vatn 2007). This research, along with other theoretical contributions in other areas, and most importantly the experience acquired through the participation in everyday struggles are certainly crucial for foregrounding the transformation process going beyond capitalism. The working people in struggle learn how to self-organize and develop their cooperation, and are often painfully taught of the impasses of capitalism and the necessity for its radical supersession.

In this sense, considering crisis from a communist perspective also implies looking into a communist future, which is to come largely as an outgrowth from the current struggles and the anti-capitalist institutions already developed within capitalism itself (see Wallis 2008). The specific social and institutional configuration of such a communist society will safely proceed through a cohesive integration of all these revolutionary struggles and the newly constituted forms of social organization and cooperation. This transformation process and the new communist society emerging from it will be on safe grounds only when and insofar as it ensures the prerequisites for a sustainable and decent human development, as well as an ecologically compatible organization of social production and a society released from
crisis. Such a communist perspective, however, presupposes that we immediately undertake the more specific tasks of this revolutionary transformation beyond capitalism.

6. The immediate tasks of transformation

It would be certainly wrong to wait for all necessary transformations to be realized after some (magic) momentary revolutionary event. On the contrary, there is an urgent need for immediate action in a number of crucial areas which include the following:

- A radical change in the character, the content and direction of education, science and technology. As all these areas of human endeavour are far from neutral and presently geared to serve the profitability and accumulation of capital, there is an immediate need to reinstitute and reorient them so as to serve real human needs and facilitate the necessary transformation in a communist direction.

- New institutions need to be developed for a socially rational and sustainable utilization and protection of natural resources, facing effectively the problems of energy and climate change.

- New forms of association and socialization of production need to be developed, including the expansion of the production of public goods meeting social needs.

- A radical reorganization of urban life and geographical space is also urgently required (see Davis 2010).

Complementing the urge expressed at the beginning of this section, it should be noted that it would be equally wrong to simply focus on a stepwise process of change and some fragmented areas of transformation (or anti-institutions), without connecting these struggles with a social movement integrating all these struggles and capable to totally confront bourgeois state power and the CMP.
References


