

Should we resist globalisation or try to reform it?

This essay argues we must resist globalisation. We need to redefine politics in a way that flourishes the creation and implementation of new economic alternatives to create economies that benefit the poorest and nature. Globalisation is intrinsically linked to expanding capitalism worldwide, exploiting people for profit in favour of the extremely rich. We must challenge globalisation because if we do not, the long decline of the global capitalist system will lead to increased inequalities, mostly stagnant growth and our link to nature will break indefinitely, leading to severe environmental disasters (Streeck, 2014, pp.42-45).

This essay will define globalisation in a way to show how it is too entrenched with the imperial capitalist project to be redeemed. The idea of 'primitive accumulation' will be a focus because it is a concept that makes it easier to understand why globalisation cannot be reformed. Stemming from an analysis of a constant 'primitive accumulation', this essay will show how people are exploited through cheap and flexible labour markets, debt and commodification of universities. This essay will show we need to resist globalisation as it allows for the stealing of resources and forces the commodification of almost all aspects of human life for profit. In addition, globalisation will continue to fracture our relationship with the environment. This will be shown through Polanyian and eco-socialist economic analysis.

Secondly, this essay will show that resistance against globalisation's main aim should be to redefine politics to find new economic possibilities with the many benefits it has given us, such as global communication networks and spaces to share ideas with others. Resistance must happen within a framework of global justice. But in different spaces and forms because neoliberal globalisation is not one thing, but many as it adapts to become hegemonic depending on the location. Reforming globalisation will not change its nature or create 'social economies' to improve the living standards of billions. We need to challenge what is deemed

possible and the idea that globalisation is inevitable and natural. This essay will explain economic alternatives that link back to the analysis of the exploitative nature of globalisation. The work of Ernst Bloch will be the starting point for resisting globalisation through creating new possibilities.

Globalisation and global capitalism are very similar concepts and we need to accept that globalisation's meaning is highly contested. There is no perfect definition. Having a broad rather than rigid definition of globalisation helps with analysing the many dimensions, complexities and effects of globalisation. Firstly, through globalisation, transnational and interregional flows are generated to create a network of activities and interactions which exercise the power of capital (Held *et al*, 1999, pp.15-16). These processes transform 'the spatial organization of social relations and transactions', connecting and expanding human activities on different spatial zones unequally (Held *et al*, 1999, pp.15-16). Globalisation is full of ever-changing processes, where capital has had to negotiate with its challenges to gain hegemonic power (Bruff, 2005, p.273). That is why globalisation has created many varieties of capitalism, which combine to make a global hybrid capitalism (Standing, 2011, p.30). The agents of globalisation, such as banks, monopolies, the finance sector and supranational economic institutions created and reinforce globalisation through their policies. From this, numerous processes of globalisation are installed.

On the other hand, globalisation is about maintaining a 'global order' of 'people over profit', for example Noam Chomsky (1999, pp.23-26) explains how neoliberal economic policies for so-called national development open up countries for unregulated capital flows, benefiting the global elite under the guise of the 'Washington Consensus'. Putting this all together, I argue globalisation processes reinforce the imperial hegemonic project of capitalism by constantly commodifying and expanding capital's reach (Held *et al*, 1999, pp.15-16).

Globalisation through capitalist ideology and policies leading to unpredictable, dynamic and

continuing processes supports a hegemonic imperial project which seeks to expand global capital through capitalist institutionalisation and through controlling the 'common sense'. 'Common sense' reflects the hegemonic power's narratives and is how the processes of globalisation are legitimised.

Through reading Ferrand Braudel's work, globalisation can be seen through centuries long processes with trade networks, slavery, religious indoctrination and other methods for enforcing imperial power (Held *et al*, 1999, p.12). Globalisation did not start with neoliberalism; it has always purposefully supported global capitalism. For Braudel, global capitalism is 'a parasitic structure' that forces itself into social processes to further its control over the accumulation of capital and production (Bakker, 2007, p.543). This essay regards capitalism as a global project. But Braudel's analysis is useful for understanding that capitalism and globalisation are not new and that they adapt to continuously accumulate, exploiting nature and people. Globalisation as Mark Rupert (2000, p.43) puts it 'is not so much a break with the past as its continuation; it represents the ongoing, if episodic, development of the capitalist organization of production and its historically associated social forms'. To resist globalisation is to challenge the longstanding hegemony of global capitalism. Globalisation is not ahistorical; it will not change its nature as it exists to serve capitalism. Reform would merely dent these processes and policies. We must redefine economic and social possibility.

Capitalism is about a never-ending project of accumulation 'as such, it recognizes neither spatial nor social boundaries' (Rupert, 2000, p.43). Globalisation allows capitalism to achieve this continuously by expanding across the globe through multiple interconnected processes (Rupert, 2000, p.43). To understand how this happens we will analyse 'Primitive accumulation'. This concerns the processes in which capitalism is forced into 'fewer and fewer hands' through violence, murder, dispossession, forced labour, privatisation and other

means (Hartsock, 2006, p.170). David Harvey (2005, p.139) claims this is because of the problem of overaccumulation, there needs to be opportunities available to make profit or else there is nowhere to invest the capital. Globalisation's duty to capitalism is to help it enter any arena where capital can be invested, taken and accumulated through naturalisation. These include non-capitalist countries, the Amazon Rainforest, the Arctic, the sea and many other spaces. If the imperial project of capitalism is not challenged, then as Wolfgang Streeck (2014, pp.42-45) explains, the free market will continue to seek complete commodification of labour, nature and money which will lead to the destruction of the world system as capitalism cannot function in a world completely capitalist.

Globalisation allows capitalism to steal from the non-capitalist world. It has developed new forms of 'primitive accumulation', also called 'accumulation by dispossession' by Harvey which in turn has made the condition of the exploited worker global. For example, the opening up of markets and how the global credit and finance systems allow for 'theft', through raiding of pension funds and corporate ponzi schemes (Harvey, 2005, p.147). 'Primitive accumulation' is the base for the accumulation of capital, starting with the expropriation of common land so workers are forced to sell their labour power as it is the only thing they can sell to live (Bakker, 2007, p.544). 'Primitive accumulation' analysed through different lenses shows that we need to resist globalisation to stop the exploitation of the lower levels of economic activity' and nature (Bakker, 2003, p.543). Globalisation serves capitalism's desire for accumulation everywhere, if it is not resisted then inequality will soar further, growth will not rise in most parts and we will rupture our relationship with nature. We need to challenge globalisation because it continues to spread an economic doctrine that exploits and dehumanises workers.

Building on Harvey's analysis of 'primitive accumulation', neoliberal globalisation has exploited workers through making work and life extremely precarious for profit.

Globalisation is about constant commodification for accumulation, creating a dependency on supply and demand on most aspects of life (Standing, 2001, p.26). For Standing (2011, p.29) this has created a global precariat becoming dehumanised because flexible labour is needed for capital to flow more freely. Globalisation can adapt rapidly to areas in the world with low wages for cheaper and efficient production (Standing 2011, p.28). The human consequences are clear to see at Foxconn in China, where the demands from multinational corporations like Apple and Microsoft for high levels of production at cheap costs means workers are used like tools (Chan, 2013), p.85). Globalisation has spread the image of workers as flexible and dispensable across the world. Therefore, physical and mental exploitation is due to the demand for cheap labour from transnational corporations and free market economics (Chan, 2013, p.85). Globalisation needs to be resisted because profit and economic growth over humans leads to death (Chan, 2013, p.95).

Through an alternative analysis of 'primitive accumulation' to Harvey and on the nature of flexible labour to Standing, Nancy Hartsock (2006) shows through a critical feminist lens this need of flexible labour is 'the feminization of work'. External and internal processes of globalisation are forcing men into flexible work, instability and are made invisible as workers, just like women have been to men in civil society for centuries because then profit can be made far easier due to less resistance from workers (Hartsock, 2006, pp.178-179).

Globalisation adapts and continues capitalism's methods of 'primitive accumulation' contrary to Marx. The 'feminisation of work' is an example of the deepening of exploitation.

Reforming globalisation will not change power structures and globalisation's unequal exploitation. There are an array of examples of economic insecurity and exploitation for profit caused by primitive accumulation and therefore globalisation. However, another that stands out is the role of debt. Because globalisation promotes commodification, increased consumption and has caused more reliance on credit as jobs have become more uncertain,

people have been encouraged to build up debts and keep on consuming until they no longer can (Standing, 2011, p.58).

Through primitive accumulation and constant commodification, we can see how globalisation exploits the majority for the few. The rise of debt has compounded global inequality through spreading structural changes associated with financialization, without stopping the decline of growth (Streeck, 2014, pp.35-36). The undemocratic use and commodification of money and debt serves to create a social power over people for commercial borrowers to gain a surplus from fees and interests by selling securitised debt packages (Roberts and Soederberg, 2014, p.662). Debt is a social power over people because it helps the rich get wealthier by helping to transfer money, such as household debt to the financial sector (Roberts and Soederberg, 2014, p.662). It reproduces 'the precariat' because people become more reliant on debt than on their labour, meaning debt is needed to survive. This benefits the global elite.

Consumers are exploited through primitive accumulation as they are integrated into debt collection structures that privilege finance over people (Roberts and Soederberg, 2014, pp.664-666). Globalisation makes the poor dependent on abstract money and on the speculation of corporations who own their debt (Roberts and Soederberg, 2014, p.664). To link it all together, it is all protected by the US government's army, allowing for multiple means for 'primitive accumulation' through state violence and coercion (Roberts and Soederberg, 2014, p.664). Globalisation developed a global system to spread dependency on debt and finance worldwide, creating economic and social instability to further the global control of capital and elites (Roberts and Soederberg, 2014, p.665). A continuation of low growth, rising inequality and huge amounts of debt are unsustainable; therefore, we need to challenge globalisation to change the economic direction away from neoliberal destruction (Streeck, 2014, pp.36-37). These are unstable and uneven processes, so they are very much contestable.

The commodification of universities to steal profit through primitive means from education for the few can be seen across the world. Globalisation has created a network of universities and thus lots of choice and opportunities to learn and connect with others. But universities are expected to first and foremost contribute to economic productivity. They are promoters of neoliberal 'common sense'. Maisuria and Cole (2017, p.607) note that, 'the Latin term *universitas* means 'fuller' and 'wholeness' to describe a process that broadens horizons', but now universities are profit-focused and worker creating machines, stimulating 'pointless' unfulfilling jobs for the global economy. Universities' success is judged through statistics for 'proof' that students are ready for the working world (Maisuria and Cole, 2017, p.605).

Through an alternative but complementing analysis, Walter Mignolo (2003, p.99) explains this has coincided with the reproduction of neoliberal values and principles within education through 'global colonicity', showing how globalisation spreads the reach of capitalist imperialism through economic indoctrination. For example, the principle of quality assurance demands universities across the globe teach students Western 'competitive spirit' and entrepreneurialism to be believers in the 'natural' free market (Maisuria and Cole, 2017, p.605). Whilst critical learning is still very important in universities, their focus is on how to benefit the economy, not the students. Therefore, 'blunt quantitative measures take precedence over any qualitative experiences, feelings and interactions, where personalized, meaningful, rich and transformational journeys cannot be easily captured' (Maisuria and Cole, 2017, p.605). Education should always be about empowering students to learn, not forcing them to think in terms of the neoliberal 'common sense', like productivity and what path will provide plenty of money. Examining universities shows the dangers of having an economy serving itself and the lengths capitalism will go to accumulate constantly, making clear its unredeemable exploitative nature.

The neoliberal 'common sense' idea that money equals what you deserve has been globalised into universities. You must be well-off to study abroad in the UK because fees are normally double home student costs, for example an undergraduate medical degree can cost £58,600, meaning only a certain few have the opportunity to study abroad (The Student). Secondly, the University of Manchester's Living Cost Support Fund is a great example of how universities do not act in favour of students but exploit them instead (UoM LCSF page). The rhetoric of the fund is that everyone who needs help will get it because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, yet this is not true. One of the principles of the fund is that students start their course with 'enough' money, being the very arbitrary amount of £13,257 (UoM living costs page). If you are deemed to have started the course with insufficient funds, then it is deemed your personal fault and this principle is held above the recognition from the university that you need financial help. Universities are happy to take your money with no income checks, yet when it comes to providing financial help, there are financial checks galore. As globalisation has commodified higher education, it has become a privilege for those who can afford it as it is a commodity not a right. Globalisation has made market reputation central to universities at the benefit of global capitalism. Resistance against university machines can stop the exploitation of students' ambitions and interests, putting people first in the economy. This essay will return later to universities as a site of resistance against globalisation.

Finally, the ramifications of these global processes of 'primitive accumulation', commodification and exploitation of the worker is constantly destroying our link to nature. If we keep thinking of the economy in how people and nature can benefit the economy, John Barry (2016, p.304) argues we will use up all our natural resources and inequality will continue to rise through globalisation. Both consequences will lead to greater environmental breakdown. In Polanyian terms, if the global economy is disembedded from society and nature and governs through its own norms and values, there will be environmental and

societal destruction because we rely on our environment to live (Devine *et al*, 2003, pp.259-260). We need to resist globalisation because it promotes against much needed 'social' economies.

An example of how the processes of globalisation have made us forget about our crucial link to nature and is destroying our environment for profit is the economic status of 'women's work'. 'Women's work', such as care and human development jobs are left out of the 'malestream' economy (Mellor, 2017, p.90). Instead, 'Women's work' is exploited by the economy and is deemed an inconvenience to it despite 'women's work' being a necessity to human life and social reproduction (Mellor, 2017, pp.89-90). Globalisation exploits and accumulates in multiple overlapping processes. To examine the true damage of globalisation we need to use numerous analytical frameworks, such as eco-feminism to examine why globalisation cannot be reformed.

Processes of globalisation have unnaturally commodified labour, money and nature. For Polanyi, a fully self-regulating market is impossible, however capitalism through globalisation will always strive for one and there will always be resistance to it (Devine *et al*, 2003, p.357). We need to resist globalisation to gain greater social regulation over the economy and to reintegrate it with society and nature. It is not in capitalism's nature to put people's and society's interests, as seen with flexible labour, debt and education as priorities above accumulation. Reforming globalisation to protect the environment would mean policies like pollution taxes and 'marketable permits' that only slowly cut down on environmental damage, ultimately allowing globalisation processes to continue exploiting nature for accumulation (Devine *et al*, 2003, p.261-264).

In his theses on Feuerbach, Marx (1845) states, 'philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it'. Critical theory should be about how we

can practically change the world, not just analysis of how bad it is. The analysis of globalisation and why reform will not create needed change so far is not enough without looking at why resistance will create change. If globalisation is inherently unequal and exploitative, why not use that analysis to inspire creation of economic alternatives?

Arguments for reform do not understand the nature of globalisation as inherently exploitative, working for a self-destructing capitalism and underestimate our capacity for change. They believe the market will sort things out and will re-establish our link to nature. As argued before, this is against capitalism's nature. Conceptualising globalisation as non-rigid and dynamic processes aids us in comprehending how change happens better. Through postcolonial theory, we can understand better how social processes and discourse are not fixed but unstable and complex, allowing space for resistance (Kapoor, 2002). The coloniser, just like the man must continuously repeat discourse to be dominant (Kapoor, 2002, p.652). This is the same in how globalisation processes continuously reinforce neoliberalism. It is crucial to resist globalisation not only because it will continue to exploit people and nature, but because resistance through plural ideas and global social justice causes change.

We need to resist globalisation not just to stop 'primitive accumulation' and the commodification of all life, but to install belief in new alternatives. Capitalism and its global relations were created by humans so they can be destroyed by humans like anything else human made (Held *et al*, 1999, p.273). But as globalisation consists of uneven and dynamic relations, we cannot oppose it with one rigid blueprint, instead we need multiple contestations. There could be a focus on postcolonial resistance here, but to truly contest globalisation, we need focus not just on discourse but on economic alternatives and concrete belief that they are realisable.

Ernst Bloch's concept of 'educated hope' is a good start for why and how we need to resist globalisation and the global capitalist project. Bloch (1986, p.195) believed in 'educated

hope', the idea that society can be taught a new consciousness to believe in new possibilities.

Bloch wants us to understand the world as a process of the 'Not-Yet Become',

Bloch suggests that we must not only understand its emergences from and attachments to the past, but also attempt to grasp its leading edges and open possibilities; everything real has not only a history, but also a horizon (Weeks, 2011, p.189).

We can understand this process 'as an open possibility' through our 'Not-Yet Conscious', the 'capacity for thinking and wanting the future' by different practices of imagining future possibilities (Weeks, 2011, p.190). This is about going beyond the accepted and pushing the boundaries for what we believe and what we are told is possible. This 'educated hope' will lead to a belief in new possibilities, allowing us to go beyond the neoliberal 'common sense' that legitimises exploitation (Bloch, 1986, p.xxxii). We can then share, develop and coordinate alternatives through 'utopian thinking' in different spaces.

Kathi Weeks (2011, pp.224-225) explains that this 'utopian thinking' is best understood as a process not as an endpoint, one that open-up new insights and realities through critical thinking. We need to elicit new ways of thinking beyond the accepted order of things to imagine new practical socio-economic alternatives. That is why we need resistance. These processes can act as resistance in multiple spaces against the powerful forces of globalisation. Bloch and Weeks show us a framework in how we can think about resisting globalisation. They explain we must resist because we need to believe in better to create a more equal world, to empower ourselves and not be stuck in the structures that tell us nothing will change. From the analysis earlier on, we know that the global project of capitalism will end somehow but the how and what comes after is uncertain.

Weeks (2011, p.225) builds on ‘utopian thinking’ by assessing how ideas like universal basic income or eliminating all ‘third world’ debt can act as ‘mechanisms by which to advance critical thinking, inspire political imagination, and incite collective action’. For example, one of Erik Olin Wright’s (2005) ‘Real Utopias’, a UBI can help stimulate our minds to think about what needs should be provided to live a decent life and to think about ways in which the global economy exploits us. In practice, a UBI would help towards reorientating the economy towards society to move towards a ‘social economy’ where the economy is built around society’s needs, not the global free market (Wright, 2005). This essay argues a UBI is not reform because it challenges principles of capitalism and would be one of many ideas that can push us towards a ‘social economy’, thus confronting processes of globalisation (Wright, 2005). A UBI would aid in the decommodification of labour and would be part of the process of reorientating the economy towards societal needs rather than the goal of maximising profit (Wright, 2005). We need to not aim for a rigid destination but focus on our principles of justice and belief in new possibilities by combining the incredible ‘social power’ that keeps capitalism in check, such as the Occupy or Black Lives Matter movements with belief in economic alternatives and imagining new ideas (Wright, 2005).

Resistance needs take multiple forms in different spaces and should make use of global ‘social power’ networks. It is argued that we need to make sure these processes of ‘utopian thinking’ and resistance happen within a framework of global justice because these are global issues that require global cooperation. We need to take the decentralised framework and benefits that globalisation has provided and continue to use it for resistance against agents of globalisation (Löwy, 2016, pp.193). Michael Löwy (2016, pp.192-193) is right that for successful resistance we need a combination of a ‘radical feeling of refusal’ against agents of globalisation, like the IMF and WTO, concrete and realisable socio-economic alternatives and utopian belief in another world to inspire us in searching for new possibilities. Blochian

‘utopian thinking’ allows us to use our imagination to create new possibilities and go beyond the expected. We need a world with a plurality of worlds. This is against the idea of creating an equal world through a rigid plan from above because local and practical knowledge cannot all be learned by a centralised government and people need to feel empowered and create the journey themselves to move towards real equality.

An economic alternative that can be a part of global justice is world basic income, where everyone would receive an amount to see a massive reduction in extreme poverty (Bannister, 2020). It could be funded by taxing carbon extraction of large companies and putting the money into a sovereign wealth fund for fair distribution (Bannister, 2020). Its functions would be to redistribute money and reintegrate the economy with society and nature. It is argued here that a WBI would be beneficial because it would reorientate the global economy towards society. It is argued that this is not reform but resistance because it directly challenges the capitalist power structures maintained by globalisation processes.

Another alternative that can resist globalisation is to challenge the neoliberal model of universities in favour of a model that focuses on students learning for themselves, changing the university’s focus to the learning and well-being of their students and surrounding local communities (Mignolo, 2003, p.114). This is an economic alternative to the globalised neoliberal commodification of education, but from a postcolonial perspective, it also challenges reproduced knowledge via globalisation processes (Mignolo, 2003). For example, the Universidad Intercultural is an example of this model, where universal and indigenous sciences were taught (Mignolo, 2003, pp.101-102). The university made the ‘Student as Producer’, where students can go on an intellectual journey to discover themselves (Maisuria and Cole, 2017, p.614). This model reconceptualises the university as a ‘social institution’ and re-establishes the importance of indigenous learning that acts as resistance to ‘natural’ and ‘rational’ Western globalised knowledge (Mignolo, 2003, pp.114-115). This analysis

combines socio-economic resistance with postcolonial resistance, showing how analytical structures can complement each other in challenging globalisation. Economic alternatives conceptualised through ‘utopian thinking’ can act as resistance against globalisation whether implemented in practice or discussed to generate critical thinking. These alternatives address how to resolve different aspects as to why we should resist globalisation, from the commodification of education to social control through debt. We should resist globalisation to challenge social processes that reinforce power structures of capital and to create a more equal world.

Globalisation through global capitalist policies leading to overlapping processes supports the imperial capitalist project which seeks to expand capital’s power and reach through ‘primitive accumulation’, increasing the commodification of labour, nature and money causing the exploitation of people, society and nature for the few. Reforming globalisation will not change its nature, it will continue to expand capitalism for greater and constant accumulation until we entirely destroy our link to the environment. Resisting globalisation through critical ‘utopian thinking’, imagining and realising new socio-economic ideas through a global social justice framework in grassroot bottom-up structures can move us towards creating ‘social economies’. Globalisation has given us many benefits, like social media to create global communities, but it has always served global capitalism and always will. We need economies that revolve around society and nature, not one that exploits the many for the global elite and the imperial capitalist project.

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