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Introduction

The State of the World: Convergent Crises

This book is an intervention at a moment when the world seems more fraught with danger than at any time in history. The all too visible signs are the converging crises concerning the global economy, the environment, the depletion of non-renewable resources, increasing violences and the breakdown of social cohesion; they threaten a perfect storm in the near future. A profusion of analyses has emerged that challenge the status quo to argue that the magnitude of the task requires drastic transformations in practices, ways of life and expectations which underlie the problems. For many, the crash of 2008 stands as the signifier forewarning of the dangers inherent in the witches brew concocted from the rapacious plunder of the earth, the degradation of the environment, the pollution of habitats, the massive increase in inequality worldwide, and the assimilation of the state within capital. The destructive consequences have brought into focus the fragility of much that the dominant orthodoxy thought solid and enduring, exposing the illusion of a triumphant and benign capitalism and foregrounding both the limits of planet-earth as well as the vulnerability of democratic institutions.

Whilst one can identify capitalism and the way of life associated with it as the underlying cause, the present study goes further by seeking to establish the linkages whereby these correlated crises can be seen to be the culmination of tendencies in process for at least two centuries. It therefore presents a genealogy of the mechanisms whereby the emergence of predatory economic systems fixated on ever increasing commodification and privatisation of all existing resources from land to knowledge and life itself has gradually intensified the iniquities and risks incipient in economies and socialities premised on dispossession and ceaseless growth and class, racial and gender oppressions. It develops arguments for breaking with these mechanisms and the discourses that authorise them; it thus clears the ground for imagining alternatives that increase the possibility of avoiding the coming of the worst.

Yet, the search for possible radical solutions is thwarted by the failure to find common ground amongst those trying to overcome the fragmentation of oppositional politics at a time when the forces maintaining existing relations of power and destructive ways of being are stronger than ever. These forces have become more organised politically, institutionally and discursively, able so far to recruit supporters across categories of class, gender and race. A worrying aspect for democratic politics is that their appeal has been particularly strong amongst many workers who have experienced the domination of global finance in the form of increasing precarisation, marginalisation and

loss of self-esteem, and for those for whom an authoritarian and exclusionary populism holds out the hope of better times to come.

The question therefore is: What analysis of the crises and what narratives of possible alternatives could break through the stuckness that makes one fear for the future? This is the question which underlies the project elaborated in *After Capital*. A central argument running through the different chapters is that if the crises are dynamically interconnected, as many believe they are, the implication suggests a call for a new perspective and a new kind of politics that would encompass both older struggles around equality and social justice and new sectional interests that currently are often divisive and disconnected. The arguments in the book propose a politics of the commons allied to a cosmopolitical project oriented towards an emancipatory goal. As I explain below, this involves a challenge to existing property regimes and asymmetrical relations of power and wealth underlying zero-sum or win/lose economies such as capitalism. It also involves promoting values of equality, liberty, conviviality and fundamental rights as the basis for ways of being that respect all creatures and the limits of the planet. Such a shift prompts an engagement with the problem of reconstituting ontological, epistemological and ethical foundations adequate for this project, as I outline in the final chapter.

In the light of the wealth of information now continuously accumulating in the public domain, the visible aspects of the crises I am highlighting have become only too familiar, as they have been widely discussed in academic writings and disseminated by dissident or oppositional movements, groups and media.¹ In spite of the divergent standpoints, one area of agreement amongst a broad spectrum of analysts is that the response to the fall-out from the crash promoted by governments and policy-makers, operated through regulatory mechanisms such as the IMF, central banks and existing inter-governmental protocols, agreements and agencies such as the WTO and NAFTA, essentially instrumentalises a strategy of transferring risks and wealth from the poorer, more vulnerable and less powerful sections of the world's populations to a rich minority.

Indeed, as I show in the next chapter, analyses developed in the aftermath of the crash have demonstrated why and how the 'neoliberal' management of the economy through the promotion of private accumulation, flexible regulation and short-term fiscal and monetary strategies primarily benefits global corporations and owners of capital.² As we know, the result has been to trigger a vicious circle of insurmountable debts, national deficits, mafia and feral economies, and increasing destitution, adding to the ongoing problems of diminishing resources, climate change and overloaded ecologies. The overriding goal of profit maximisation has even found ways of turning a crisis into a profit-generating occasion, as Mirowski in *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste* (2013), Naomi Klein in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. Climate Change* (2014), and others have described. This mindset has even instituted new forms of trading such as those relating to carbon emission and capture, typified in claims such as

one made (before Trump) by the US chief climate negotiator that ‘no one is better positioned to win big in the multi-trillion dollar low-carbon energy innovation than the United States’, a claim that attests to the interests in turning climate change into an investment opportunity.³ It must be said that matters have become more complicated with the policies which the Trump Administration has embarked upon, particularly regarding the regressive approach to the regulation of emissions, the curtailment of research into global warming, and instituting measures that further damage the lives of the precariat, and not just in the USA. But no amount of disinformation can dissolve the fact of diminishing resources, climate change and growing inequalities.

The dominant or mainstream approach to the situation has not only worsened the problems whilst extracting even more wealth from the general public through austerity programmes, as, notably, Joseph Stiglitz in *The Price of Inequality* (2013) and Mark Blyth in *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (2013) have shown: it has enabled corporations and the rich elites to ‘confiscate’ what remains of common wealth, as Stengers has starkly put it in *Aux temps des catastrophes* (2009). Her analysis finds support in Nancy MacLean’s (2017) investigation of the ‘new right’ or neocon’s well prepared stealth programme for this kind of transfer of wealth to the already very rich. This expropriation includes not only natural resources such as land, water, forests, mineral deposits, and so on but also the accumulated treasury of know-hows invested in social, cultural, educational, environmental and technological institutions and processes – mislabelled as ‘capital’ – that are regarded as ‘infrastructure’ or ‘externalities’. The opportunities for further private capital accumulation had already followed in the wake of the emergence of financial capitalism coupled to the deployment of new information technologies functioning as instruments for the capture of wealth and data; the austerity option is simply another turn of the screw in the process of pauperisation.

Yet, as I discuss in the next chapter, and as Blyth (2013) argues, the introduction of austerity measures is the consequence of the growth of institutions ‘too big to fail’, and ‘too big to bail’. He makes the point that

The cost of bailing, recapitalizing, and otherwise saving the global banking system has been ... between 3 and 13 trillion dollars. Most of that has ended up on the balance sheet of governments as they absorb the costs of the bust, which is why we mistakenly call this a sovereign debt crisis when in fact it is a transmuted and well-camouflaged banking crisis. (Blyth, 2013: 5)

This view finds support amongst many experts, notably Stiglitz (2013) or Curtis (2013), who have all established that the strategies for saving capitalism in effect have transferred the costs of bailout onto the state and the people. Besides, as I go on to show, the banking crisis has conveniently helped capital to consolidate its grip on the apparatuses of power worldwide.

It is this situation of state-assisted dispossession that has increased support for the view that the transformations necessary to prevent the coming of the worst require a break with existing economies and the apparatuses

and discourses that sustain them, notably, the primacy of the model of growth as 'the arrow of time' exemplified in the process of modernisation as 'development' which today is driven by global competition for profit maximisation heedless of the accumulation of problems (Stengers, 2009: 9–11). It requires a break also with the prioritisation of private property and private interest over the general interest and common good. The implications mean that critiques of capitalism must target existing ways of life, socialities, subjectivities and the unequal relations of power inscribed in and sustained through them.

There are other reasons for advocating radical transformations in the way we live. This is because, since the emergence of industrial capitalism some two centuries ago, the same forces driving incessant accumulation and growth have so transformed the planet and its systems that many scientists argue it is appropriate to think about the effects in terms of the (problematic) concept of Anthropocene, which they claim signals the start of a new geological age (Zalasiewicz et al., 2017; see also Crutzen, 2002; see Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*, 2015, for a critique of the relation between capitalism and Anthropocene through concepts such as Capitalocene; also Claire Colebrook, *Death of the PostHuman*, 2014). There are clearly many significant transformations of the planet which require analysis in terms of enduring any long-term impact. For instance, amongst the signs of epochal change Sam Wong (2016) picks out the following as key markers: global warming and its effects, such as the fact that 'global sea levels are higher than at any point in the last 115,000 years' (Wong, 2016: 14); carbon emission rates due to fossil fuel burning which are 'higher than in the preceding 65 million years' (Wong, 2016: 14); the production of materials previously unknown in their elemental form has proliferated, particularly aluminium, 500 million tons of which have now been produced, and plastics, the annual production of which is 500 million tons, to which one should add the billions of tons of concrete produced so far; the increase in levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in soils which has doubled in the last hundred years due to intensive farming; the geological changes resulting from deforestation, farming, drilling, mining, landfills, dam-building and coastal reclamation; radioactive isotopes produced in the development of nuclear weapons; and evidence of the extinction of many species due to all the above. Recently, evidence identifying the formation of new minerals (208 crystalline compounds catalogued by Robert Hazen) further supports the recognition of geological change due to human activity (cited in Whyte, 2017, referencing a paper in *American Mineralogy*) – though it must be said that the question of an Anthropocene age remains open. Equally, one should include the destructive consequences due to the massive amount of other chemical and biochemical pollutants provoking diseases as well as altering the biome, resulting in such phenomena as loss of biodiversity, bee colony collapse and severe decline in other pollinators, notably, flying insects (Hallmann et al., 2017), with adverse effects for food production.

In addition, it is crucial to highlight the effects of plastics since researchers have added the notion of ‘Plasticene’ to draw attention to the biophysical mutations due to the effects of plastics on rocks and particularly the oceans where an estimated 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic weighing over 260,000 tonnes float at sea; more recent estimates multiply these figures depending on the measuring techniques. The evidence shows that a new ecosystem – a ‘plastisphere’ – which passes into the food chain through fish, and can have pathogenic as well as epigenetic consequences (Reed, 2015: 28; see also Gabrys et al., 2013, *Accumulation: The Material Politics of Plastics*). The point to note is that the addition of the concept of Plasticene alongside that of Anthropocene makes visible our total dependence on a carbon economy, that is, not just oil and gas but the mass of polymers and polycarbonates which the petrochemical industry derives as by-products of oil, particularly the many forms of plastic and their ubiquitous presence and manifold uses, both good (e.g. medical equipments) and bad (e.g. packaging), in the world we have made. The point about these anthropogenic effects is not that human activity is having transformative consequences for the planet and its ecological and geophysical systems, since all living things do so and have done so for millennia, but the scale and speed of these transformations, outpacing the ability of many species to cope, as many scientists are arguing. A striking study that demonstrates the complex intertwinement of natural and human ecologies with economic, political and cultural processes is that of Anna Tsing’s account of the travels and travails of the Matsutake mushroom in *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015). It is a story of the manifold feed-back and feed-forward loops and intersections across geographies and habitats that make vividly concrete the network of correlations and effects, including destructive ones, that bind all creatures and the planet in the web of life.

Of course, the crucial dimension of the crises in the public’s mind, apart from growing inequalities, concerns climate change now that all the main indicators of global average temperature show that a rise of 1°C had already been reached at the end of 2015 (Le Page, 2015a: 8; see also Wadhams’ *A Farewell to Ice*, 2016). This stage in global warming supports the agreement amongst scientists that global surface temperatures will likely rise more than 2°C before the end of the century, since such a rise is already locked in due to current greenhouse gas emissions (GHG – carbon dioxide and methane, though there are more destructive but under-reported ones such as HFC-23), and that new targets for reductions in GHG are about ways of possibly keeping the increase to this figure rather than the more likely higher figure (the details are examined in Chapter 2).

We know too that the COP 21 climate conference in Paris in December 2015 optimistically agreed to limit global warming to less than 2°C above pre-industrial times, ideally targeting a rise of 1.5°C. But many scientists argue that actions proposed at COP 21 do not go far enough to achieve this target since ‘the emissions cuts promised by countries are still wholly insufficient’ (Le Quere, cited by Le Page, 2015a: 8). The Trump Administration’s

abandonment of the Clean Power Plan and its rejection of the anthropogenic explanation simply adds to this prognostic, especially given that the USA is responsible for 25% of world emission since the industrial revolution. Indeed, to achieve the 1.5°C target, there would need to be zero emissions after 2050 as well as a massive programme of carbon capture, or 'negative emissions' amounting to 500 giga tons by 2100, using a variety of technologies. This goal would require the development of a 'whole new industry' which is yet to emerge (Pearce, 2016: 30–33), prompting the view that only a revolutionary shift in how power is generated, distributed and used would avoid increases beyond 2°C by the end of the century (Le Page, 2015a). Indeed, some analysts suggest 1.5°C will be reached in the next 10 years unless effective action is taken now, especially by the big emitters (Holmes, 2017). Given that the main emitters are cars, coal and cows (the 3Cs) – and I would add another C, namely, capitalism – the enormity of the task becomes evident.

The urgency is driven by the fact that the epochal effects of climate change – though denied or downplayed by powerful forces, as MacLean (2017) and Monbiot (2017) have revealed – are now well understood, such as extreme weather, the melting of polar ice, the warming of oceans and the rise in sea levels, the diminishing availability of arable land, the growth of unsustainable habitat and a mass of other anthropogenic changes affecting the ecology and geology of the earth (detailed in Chapter 2). It is not an anti-science attitude alone that motivates this denial, but what the abandonment of fossil fuels would mean for the now dominant economies and for existing ways of life. Indeed, to take one obvious example, how would armies manage without oil, i.e. without fuel for aircrafts, bombers, tanks, armoured vehicles, etc.? Thus, without transformations in current technologies and the way we live, including prevailing relations of power and property, it is increasingly argued by many that the world would experience the beginning of a 'sixth great mass extinction', possibly including humans.⁴

These issues are examined in Chapter 2 where I develop a political economy of climate change in line with my argument that all the developments I have noted are interconnected and that capitalism as a specific form of a market economy is at the root of the merging of crises. It is therefore necessary to uncover these linkages as a key step towards establishing the basis for transcending our toxic socio-economic systems and the underlying values and assumptions, and to propose instead a politics grounded in the idea of postcapitalist commons. It is important to stress that the question of commons or the common is more than just a matter of transformations in the processes of production, for it involves fundamental changes touching every aspect of society and how we relate to each other. Basically, the shift in perspective expresses the view that the politics of the common implies a challenge not only to existing regimes of power and property and to the category of things that can be privately owned, but, as I have noted, it primarily involves developing the ontological, epistemological and ethical

standpoints that could inform postcapitalist alternatives that would prioritise values of solidarity, conviviality, generosity, and propose a fundamental rethink of the place of humans in the scheme of things (established in Chapter 6).

Obstacles to change

The main problem when one turns to the question of alternatives is the extent to which the structural, institutional, technological, discursive, 'ideological' and subjective dimensions of the issues that arise act as so many and complex barriers at the level of practical action. To start with, we are faced with the fact that, in spite of all the signs indicating that 'the gods have failed' (Elliott and Atkinson, 2008), decision-makers across the world share with the pervasive 'neoliberal orthodoxy' (Glyn, 2007) the conviction that not only is capitalism not broken but that it is the only rational system we have, and that, once mended, a new improved and more careful capitalism will emerge from the crisis able to provide solutions to all the environmental, resource, economic and social problems. This conviction, or excuse, has dictated that the approach to current crises must rely on market fixes such as austerity programmes, front-loading debt on the state and ordinary citizens, and market-based or purely technical 'solutions' to climate change. As critics of market fixes have been proclaiming, the slashing of expenditure on social protection and welfare, programmes of 'liberalisation', the 'offshoring' of production, financial transactions, and capital-holding corporations (Urry, 2014a), and the off-loading of risks and responsibilities to less powerful or compliant nations are intensifying inequalities and endangering the basis of democracy. Besides, the same forces promoting reliance on the rationality of the market also account for the failure so far to implement effective and binding action to tackle climate change and global environmental destruction.

The process of systematic dispossession is being achieved through stratagems such as harvesting tangible and intangible assets of public sectors on the mythical grounds of the greater efficiency of the private sector; securing new forms of enclosures, typically of land and raw materials in the poorer countries, particularly in Africa through the operation of what Burgis (2015) calls 'the looting machine'. Transnational corporations and sovereign capital holders routinely participate in this new scramble for Africa. In many ways, and as I show in Chapter 3, it is the continuation by other means of strategies of wealth capture put in place in the period of colonialism and that provided conditions for the consolidation of capitalism (see also Williams, 1964 [1944]; Amin, 1977; Braudel, 1986; Gilroy, 1993; Arrighi, 1994; Venn, 2006a, amongst a long list of those who have explored the connections binding colonialism and capitalism). Today the strategies operate through geo-politico-economic and technical dispositifs of military power, soft power, client states, structural adjustments, technological transfer and so on which have built upon previously established colonial regimes (Venn, 2006a).

Furthermore, sovereignty now operates through stratagems that target the control of territory not through colonial appropriation but through various means, that include purchase, licensing agreements for extracting minerals, corrupt dealings with politicians and officials, inciting fear amongst indigenous inhabitants as in the Amazon basin, and so on (see also, Stuart Elden's 2009 wider analysis of the spatial dimension of power in *Terror and Territory*). I will argue in the next chapter that these mechanisms ensuring the transfer of wealth have become hard-wired in finance capitalism, notably through flows of money and assets that further institutionalise the role of debt in the process. They are part of the neoliberal approach for managing the global economy which is applied across nations, for instance, exemplified in the measures forced upon Greece by the Troika of the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the IMF.

The pervasive character of the mindset framing these approaches is neatly summarised by Dardot and Laval (2010: 5, 6) in *La nouvelle raison du monde* when they argue that 'neoliberalism' has succeeded in securing a grip on the forms of our existence, operating

sometimes in its political form (the conquest of power by neoliberal forces), sometimes in its economic form (the expansion of global financial capitalism), sometimes in its social form (the individualisation of social relations at the expense of collective solidarities, the extreme polarisation between rich and poor), sometimes in its subjective form (the emergence of a new subject, the development of new psychic pathologies).

One should add the manufacture of consent through the manipulation of information by governments and most media outlets, mostly owned by conglomerates keen to foster ignorance and myths serving existing regimes of property and power.

This understanding of neoliberalism as a mobile form of governance emphasises its strategic and pragmatic character. Besides, the attitudes, values and understandings inscribed in the discourse of neoliberalism are revealed in its watchwords such as value for money, competition, targets, audit, 'the market', compliance, resilience and other incantations of management-speak. These values have been disseminated not just through the economy and the political system, but underlie interventions targeting all aspects of society: the conduct of citizens, social and educational policy, the administration of law, the approach to environmental and resource problems, new techniques for producing a docile workforce through precarisation, the economisation of knowledge, invasive techniques of surveillance, the suppression of dissent, and so on. As Foucault has explained, these areas, namely, 'population, technology, training and education, the legal system, the availability of land, climate' (Foucault, 2008: 141), are precisely those targeted in the neoliberal strategy aiming to construct the framework that ensures that a market economy founded in principle on competition can intervene with efficacy to establish a neo-biopolitical governmentality supporting the general economisation of society benefiting capital.

In the background of such strategies one finds the necessity by corporations and financial institutions to reduce risks whilst pursuing accumulation, a condition for which is the acquisition of material and intangible assets and collateral by any means necessary. This stratagem helps to sustain the exponential growth in the value of money-capital, an escalation driven by the trade in derivatives and other rent-seeking mechanisms operating through informational and cybernetic technologies, as I will explain in Chapter 1. Of course, the kind of strategic decisions I am summarising would not have been possible without the unequal relations of power that have become embedded in state and quasi-state institutions operating across the globe to authorise and legitimise them.

An important dimension of these developments is not only the widespread recognition that the toxic mix I am describing has bankrupted many states, seriously damaged environments and increased suffering worldwide: it is the fact that they have created an oligarchy of transnational corporations that exercise control over the levers of power through 'the nexus between economics and politics' (Stiglitz, 2013: lvi). In his analysis, Stiglitz shows why the current crisis is the direct consequence of political and economic forces and mechanisms working together in the interest '(O)f the 1%, for the 1%, by the 1%' (2013: xxxix). And recently Naomi Klein and her team, in *This Changes Everything*, have produced a mountain of evidence that backs up the kind of points I have signalled, powerfully arguing for the linkages between climate change, 'market fundamentalism', 'deregulation of the corporate sector', and the 'stranglehold over our economy, our political process, and most of our major media outlets' by an elite minority 'enjoying more unfettered political, cultural, and intellectual power than at any point since the 1920s' (2014: 18).⁵

How they do so is well worth a closer look, for it reveals the insidious, highly organised, yet flexible manner in which global relations of economic and geopolitical power operate. Basically, power is exercised by means of interconnecting 'small-world networks' of decision-makers, think-tanks, and conglomerates linking finance, industry, and media, operating as a hub of elites. A crucial property of small-world networks is that they have a high degree of connectivity amongst the hubs or nodes, enabling information to be exchanged quickly between two or more unconnected points whilst minimising intermediate points, thus minimising noise and energy expenditure (for example and for similar reasons, the brain operates according to a small-world network – Tsonis and Tsonis, 2004).⁶ In the case of corporate power, the networks form a 'super entity' of highly connected corporations that control global finance and circumscribe decision-making across business sectors, as Coghlan and MacKenzie (2011) report, summarising a study by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology. This study shows that just 147 corporations control 40% of the 43,060 corporations surveyed, doing so through interlocking directorates, share ownership in each other, agenda setting, and so on, and by way of establishing the decision-making framework, that is, by setting the rules of the game and the agenda shaping

business activity across all sectors. The fact that 40% of the megacorporations are mostly financial institutions adds weight to the argument that the outstanding feature of the new economic order is the creation of new rent-seeking mechanisms and a (related) debt society to feed the accumulative machine at the cost of the radical erosion of liberty and democracy.

Besides, the interconnections are characterised by complexity, requiring the kind of management that relies on cybernetic systems, as I examine in the next chapter by reference to Lyotard's analysis in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984 [1979]). It also requires the establishment of systems for the control of information as a central feature of the 'relationship between the politics of information and the practices of capital accumulation' (Gilroy, 1993: 7). Today this relationship is instrumentalised in the form of 'big data', metrics and social media, and through the ownership of data and software by very few 'providers', and increasingly through the extension of the latter's activities into marketing and sales.

Regarding the strategies whereby this kind of power is maintained, we are witnessing a tighter correlation between the vertical top down organisation of political power, the vertical distribution of wealth, and the horizontal integration of what Deleuze and Guattari called 'apparatuses of capture' (1998: 437–448); today the latter include the central role of the debt economy and the control of information as I will show in Chapter 1. I would point out also that the verticality of power is de-territorialised and mobile, being globally organised as I noted above. It is clear therefore that these transformations are not reducible to a simple reiteration of established hierarchies, but institute quite new strategies for the capture of wealth-power operating in the interest of an elite of individuals and corporations. They announce a new form of sovereignty which is essentially anti-democratic and totalitarian in orientation.

The concentration of power which this analysis and those of Stiglitz and Klein describe points to the deep-seated roots of the obstacles to change. They are the built-in resistance relating to the fact that many institutional and political structures, and economic, legal, informational and geopolitical assemblages and arrangements have been set up precisely to preserve dominant economic and political relations of power. Thus, on the one hand, it is easy to understand the hostility to change on the part of those who benefit most from the existing composition of economic and political power, for example, through cashing in on the lucrative contracts and initiatives generated by the 'liberalisation' of the apparatuses of social security and the welfare state that today we associate with austerity programmes and the shrinking of the state. One could note also the new opportunities to profit from commodity shortages and the fall-out due to climate change (Mirowski, 2013; Klein, 2014: 9, amongst others). The beneficiaries are the same corporations, expert advisers, and holders of capital for whom 'disaster capitalism' (Klein, 2008) and the 'war economy' (Marazzi, 2008) are occasions for profit and accumulation. Geopolitical interests are a crucial dimension of these reconstitutions of politico-economic power.⁷

Yet, on the other hand, one must also recognise that the reluctance of ordinary people to break with existing lifestyles and socio-political and economic systems relates to several factors operating in various combinations: the fears arising from increasing precarity and insecurity due to the structural effects of financial capitalism; the subjective attachments invested in existing ways of living, and a feeling of ontological security embedded in the familiar; a mixture of acquiescence, ignorance and resignation feeding into the sense that the room for manoeuvre for individuals and disparate groups is limited; and the adoption of coping strategies that displace the problem onto oneself by assuming responsibility for one's poverty. The subjective aspects of these strategies are revealed in Arlie Hochschild's studies of the coping mechanisms and the emotional responses to insecuritisation and the pressures arising from the deterioration of working conditions due to corporate search for profit maximisation (Hochschild, 2012 [1983]). More recently, her analysis of precarisation and its connection to the rise of the new Right is instructive in pointing to what she calls 'magical' thinking on the part of those who have lost out in the fall-out, for instance, those who are tempted to put their trust in a strong leader promising the return of good times (Hochschild, 2016).

Today the 'apparatuses of capture' include the manufacture of distrust, suspicion and disorientation, for example 'fake news', the denigration of scientists or expert knowledge, as well as the deployment of stealth tactics to try to garner support for policies that actually further disadvantage the specific constituencies targeted for 'capture' by New Right projects (see MacLean, 2017; Monbiot, 2017). It would appear therefore that the goal of private accumulation as overriding value has presided over the formation and recruitment of pliable subjectivities and the mobilisation of key developments such as information technologies and the internet, to serve a neo-biopolitics of population that supports the infernal machine for the dispossession of liberties, rights and common wealth, apparently operating beyond democratic control. Resistance to these forces has taken many forms, sometimes regressive, such as the rise of authoritarian populisms, but also the resurgence of emancipatory politics.

In addition to resistances in the context of these politico-economic relations of power and interests, the problem of change has to contend with the fact that specific contradictions and temporal, spatial and scalar disjunctures and conflicts have emerged with the new phase of transnational corporate capitalism that have significantly reduced the scope of governments and international bodies to take effective action to address global problems such as the confluence of crises I am examining. The temporal disjuncture arises from the fact that the objectives of these corporations are driven primarily by their interest in the maximisation of profit over the short term and in maintaining or improving market share, an objective bound up with the workings of the stock market by which even their longer-term investments must abide. Yet, measures to tackle problems such as climate change, environmental degradation, and increasing inequalities,

and initiatives to transform the agricultural and manufacturing bases to serve 'sustainability', as well as the need to effect necessary changes in attitudes and values, all require the reconstitution over the long term of capabilities, institutions, subjectivities, processes of decision-making and so on. The spatial or territorial disjuncture concerns the fact that corporations and conglomerates operate on a global scale with scant regard for the better interest of any particular country, whilst infrastructure investments in capabilities and know-hows and all the things which equip a people for particular ways of life, that is, much of what can be called enlarged or expanded commons, have been and require the accumulation of collective resources and assets at the level of every state (developed in Chapter 5; see also Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's *The Quality of Life*, 1993). It should be said that some infrastructural projects in poorer and weaker countries are funded by global or sovereign capital as part of the strategy of soft power aiming to secure trading advantages and the control of mineral and other resources.

These temporal and spatial disjunctures correlate with geographies and temporalities of power (Elden, 2007); they feed into each other and inscribe conflicting values and goals at the level of the state. Furthermore, new informational technologies, by speeding up the global circulation of communications and money (amongst other flows) have introduced a new scale in the speed and location of events and transactions; they have thus intensified the indeterminacies inherent in the inter-dependent systems. Together, the temporal, spatial/territorial and scalar dimensions of the problems add to the already complicated set of inter-dependencies and feed-back loops characterising phenomena such as growing inequalities and destitution or complex systems such as the climate and biomes. They further impede radical change, evidenced for example in the difficulties encountered in achieving binding and effective protocols amongst nations at the various climate summits since the Kyoto Protocol (1992). These obstacles account for the inadequate progress made by states to address the range of problems I have identified at the start or those underlined in many IPCC Reports and countless scientific assessments of the plight of the environment and resources. These hazards and problems are well known, having been widely disseminated for some time in a massive literature.⁸

The question of obstacles to change depends also on the fact that the dynamics of complexity and inter-dependencies are poorly understood because of the dominance of mechanistic or piecemeal approaches that individualise the systems and processes involved instead of foregrounding perspectives that are grounded in concepts of relationalities, metastability and associated milieu.⁹ The advantage of anti-mechanistic approaches is that they are consistent with the standpoint of a post-anthropocentric cosmopolitics that extends our understanding of the co-constitution of humans and the world by recognising the effects of all creatures on the habitats we all co-habit.¹⁰ And so, besides resistances to change that are ingrained in the economic relations of power and in habits of thought, the

indeterminacies and messiness relating to the complexity of the processes involved in the convergence of crises mitigate against radical interventions and provide an opportunistic excuse for maintaining the status quo. The result is the piecemeal approach to the problems of systemic crisis that turn out to be counter-productive because of unintended consequences, for example, the development of biofuels for energy generation that uses up land needed for crops (Le Page, 2015a: 11), or the case of GMO crops produced by agribusiness that damage habitats and biomes due to the systemic use of pesticides and insecticides, and that adversely affect biodiversity, as the analysis in Isabelle Stengers shows (2009: 50ff). Not surprisingly, these risky experiments are generally tried out first in the 'postcolony' and weak states and are driven by corporations whose primary goal is the protection and pursuit of their own interests rather than those of ordinary farmers and consumers, for example, preventing farmers from re-using seeds from their GM crops.

Elements for a postcapitalist agenda

Yet many studies, even from the point of view of a possible reform of capitalism, have started to demonstrate the intimate connections binding the range of systems noted above into a complex whole. They thus make visible the apparatuses and relays that pragmatically and efficaciously join together the parts. Increasingly, such studies identify neoliberal capitalism as the source of developments that have in recent decades aggravated the intrinsic fragility of things. A notable example is that of Donovan and Hudson whose influential heterodox analysis, *From Red to Green?* (2011) emphasises the 'symbiotic relationship' binding resource depletion, ecosystem damage, and the financial market. They conclude from this basis that the ransacking of global resources to support the financial sector is producing what they describe as an environmental 'credit crunch' that will be as destructive as the economic one.

Donovan and Hudson's prognostic is echoed by Amy Larkin in *Environment Debt* (2013) where she argues that capitalism's free-loading on natural resources, whilst passing the costs onto the public in the form of 'externalities', is creating a mounting environmental crisis that will bankrupt existing economic systems. Earlier, but in the same vein, Tim Jackson (2009) in *Prosperity without Growth* had attributed the underlying cause of growing scarcity, ecological degradation, and increasing levels of inequality to the model of ceaseless economic growth and its mistaken association with greater prosperity. A radical ecological and wider standpoint is developed by Isabelle Stengers in *Au temps des catastrophes* (2009: 9–15) to make similar points about the irresponsibility of the growth imperative 'identified with progress' and driven by a particular view of 'development' as the 'arrow of time', a perspective which is pushing the world towards barbarity (2009: 17). The effects of

the imperative of competition and accumulation on the drive for growth, and the consequences for pauperisation, climate change and resource depletion, are an important dimension of those prognoses that I will discuss in Chapters 1 and 2.

What is interesting about these analyses from a variety of disciplines is not just the now ubiquitous indictment of rapacious capitalism, but the vocabulary signalling a standpoint that radically decentres and relocates the human with respect to the world, informed by concepts such as symbiosis, reciprocity, contingency, compossibility, commonalities, and generally, a sense of 'continuities between humans and non-humans' in the form of 'associated bodies' (Naess, 1993; Venn, 2010; Descola, 2011: 82). Such a vocabulary rhymes with the concept of life which is founded on the ontology that understands being to be essentially being-with and being-more-than-one. This standpoint opens towards different and postcapitalist foundations for principles of social justice and ethical conduct, allied to a politics of the common which the obstacles I have summarised prevent from emerging (established in Chapters 5 and 6 that elaborate my earlier analyses in Venn, 2010, 2014). A fundamentally different basis for approaching what is at stake in the convergence of crises is implicated in this shift.

It follows from the arguments I have been outlining that the issue of finding long-term solutions must pass through the critique of the discourses and the relations of force which have authorised the practices, the beliefs and values, the laws and institutions, which over the course of the 'long twentieth century' (Arrighi, 1994) have naturalised capitalism and the mythical 'free market' economy as the most efficient, rational and sensible system for the allocation, distribution, development and evaluation of human, technical and natural resources (on the free market as myth, see Chang, Thing 1 in *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism*, 2010). Indeed, the mechanisms put in place within a neoliberal framework to escalate the unequal distribution of wealth and resources nationally and globally – through what could be called the Great Disinheritance – have now become hard-wired into technical, legal, economic, political, military, geo-politico-economic and discursive dispositifs that, through their aggregate effects nationally and globally, have secured the autonomisation of the process of accumulation. This mobile assemblage functions as scaffolding upholding the current varieties of capitalisms, including sometimes uneven combinations of neo-feudal, dynastic, 'traditionalist' and 'modern' social orders: capitalism is nothing if not pragmatically versatile with respect to relations of power.

So, how do we challenge or break with existing relations of power and forms of life that have become dominant or 'hegemonic', that is, taken for granted because their contingent and constructed character has become invisible, thus making them function as common sense in everyday discourse?

We could start by recognising that the authority of this dominant social order and the regime of truth that underwrites it derive not only from the

institutional, discursive and subjective supports put in place within the framework shaped by neoliberal thought: it is the result of the sustained effort by think-tanks and pressure groups such as the Mont Pelerin Society, the Heritage Foundation, the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Adam Smith Institute, the Ayn Rand Institute, and many others whose prime objectives have been to disseminate neoliberal and neo-classical political economy and their regime of truth in 'mainstream' economic teaching and across policy-making bodies in governments worldwide. Opposing its doctrine requires a gestalt switch.

The implication for critique is the formulations of a new conceptual framework that starts by establishing why the co-constitutive, co-dependent, symbiotic, complex and fragile character of all living things should be the foundation for grounding more equitable ways of life consistent with the limits that the planet imposes, and with an ethics that could provide common ground for a postcapitalist world, key elements of which are trailed in Jeremy Gilbert's *Common Ground* (2014), Dardot and Laval's *Commun* (2014), and Venn (2010). The issues are fundamental and go to the heart of what is at stake in postcapitalist alternatives. The approach I shall develop foregrounds the view that organisms and entities form complex interactive and inter-dependent ecosystems that reach provisional and fragile states of stability, depending on the particular composition of their conditions of possibility; in other words, they are metastable. It is in the light of this perspective that I have argued that a postcapitalist project must involve a radical reconstitution not only of economies, socialities and technologies, but equally of the subjectivities that now are imbricated in ways of being and their material, institutional and discursive supports, including attitudes to the earth and to non-human animals, that tie humans in social relations that close off post-anthropocentric and post-solipsistic alternatives. The question of subjective change is perhaps the most intractable and intransigent of the problems because of the investments people make in the familiar and the habitual, in what appears safe, or in divisive identity politics. So, adding to the task of critique, one needs to recognise the long and difficult process of technical and subjective reconstitution, difficult because it will take generations and requires that we question so much of what we have come to take for granted as 'natural', inevitable, efficient, 'modern', 'progressive', desirable, or right.

However, incipient aspects of alternative ontologies that support more convivial relationships concerning humans and the living world generally already exist amongst a number of indigenous people in many parts of the world. Though they have their limitations from the point of view of a new politics of commons, they point to the longevity of counter-hegemonic values and they signal attitudes to the earth that extend the scope of conviviality. Of course such indigenous communities are ever under threat from agribusiness, big landowners, the extractive industries, and technologies that favour accumulation. Nevertheless resistance to the forces of capital have led to initiatives promoted by movements such as the Landless Workers Movement (MST from 1984) in Brazil (now with over a million members),

the Landless Peoples' Movement in South Africa and elsewhere from 2001, the Via Campesina Movement from 1993, now spreading across continents, that seek land reform and sustainable agriculture which could at least in principle be harnessed within a broad postcapitalist standpoint. Issues of land ownership, co-operative production and a decolonial politics deriving from a different perspective of the human/nature relationship, for example in the analyses of Walter Mignolo (2011), Philippe Descola, and others, are foremost in such contestations. Clearly, a postcapitalist politics of commons involves much more, as I show in Chapters 5 and 6.

The problems noted above prompt us to establish a new political and economic agenda around basic questions such as: Who owns, and who should own, the earth? What could replace existing regimes of property? How would one reconstitute or reappropriate commons and extend commons and 'common pool resources' (CPRs, investigated in Elinor Ostrom's work, *Governing the Commons*, 1990); how should the commoners organise their management at the different scales of the local, the national and the transnational? It is worth noting here that, besides Ostrom's critique of Garrett Hardin's 'Tragedy of the commons' (1968), the research on CPRs that she describes and synthesises covers thousands of cases, thus showing that collective forms of owning, maintaining and collaboratively managing the large varieties of commons studied already thrive in many parts of the world, though they mostly do not threaten capitalism and are largely ignored in mainstream/orthodox economic analyses. Notable examples include Denmark where 'three quarters of wind turbines are co-owned by local communities' (Lawrence, 2017: 32). Lawrence notes also that in Germany some local municipalities are buying back their local grids, so that these local communities now own and profit from the renewable energy infrastructure. These thriving commons point to the potentialities for similar developments across the world.

Examples of other initiatives within the scope of enlarging commonly held resources include the idea of a Library of Things, such as those in Toronto, Sacramento and in London; they can be expanded to include other necessities that can be shared. Another initiative that resonates with ideas of creative commons and CPRs is the case of the Viome factory in Greece where a group of workers took over a production plant whose parent company had gone bankrupt in the wake of the economic crisis in Greece and decided to relaunch production but within a non-hierarchical organisational structure of decision-making and work practices. They have organised themselves as a democratic collective, and have operated successfully with support from the local community (Chakraborty, 2017: 29). One could note also that remnants of post-Enclosures commons have survived even in Europe, for example, in the Fells of the Lake District in England which James Rebanks (2015) describes in his enlightening account of shepherds' work and lives there. The existence of such commons recalls the open field system of cultivation that had existed in England for centuries before Norman dispossession and the Enclosures. What is striking about this and many other cases, for instance involving indigenous

practices, is the implicit or tacit ecological understanding of the fragile and mobile relationship between habitats, farming and human lives which the collectives or commoners share, and that is enacted in their evolving collaborative practice as they adapt to new conditions and knowledges.

Of course, in many places collectively owned resources are increasingly under threat because of misappropriations by corporations and kleptocracies – a neo-colonial manoeuvre clearly evident in new forms of enclosure spreading across Africa and South America, often accompanied by campaigns of intimidation and terror (see for instance Elden's analysis of territory and terror, 2007 and also Gilbert's analysis of commons and appropriation, 2014: 164, 165; and Dardot and Laval's *Commun*, 2014, which have affinities with the perspective I develop in Chapter 6). These acts of dispossession are underwritten by technocratic epistemologies that serve exploitation, and regimes of truth that deride or commandeer indigenous and customary knowledges through biopiracy (Shiva, 2002, and what Mignolo, 2011, calls 'epistemicide').

Clearly, the answers to the questions I am posing are eminently practical, though guided by the kind of fundamental principles I have sketched. The reason is that, on the one hand, the problems which now confront us regarding the growing chasm between the superrich and the rest as well as impending scarcities of land, water, minerals, spaces for living, and so on, arising from the effects of global financial capitalism, climate change, global warming and the exhaustion of essential resources are unprecedented and require unprecedented responses. Thus we should be inventing new methods for producing food and the necessities of life, for instance, by deploying energy technologies based on ambient energy sources (examined in Chapter 6 by reference to the future as ambient). Equally, we would need to draw from new knowledges about materials, biological activity, ecologies, bodies and so on in order to invent renewable means and conditions of existence. An implication is likely to be the emergence of new ways of living in relatively self-sufficient commons, but as part of networked and collaborative polities functioning within wider webs of support activities and services. The fact is that the probable breakdown of existing political systems when the tipping points are reached by mid-century will require creative approaches to regulatory systems, at both the local and the global levels, that, optimistically, would be experimental, self-reliant, democratic, inclusive and flexible within the context of a politics of commons and the guardianship of the earth. The alternative, as many fear, is a descent into barbarity.

On the other hand, collaboration amongst diverse communities and polities, both local and transnational, would be fraught with obstacles without a broad agreement on a number of fundamental principles that could operate as the framework for what one could call the regulative idea of a cosmopolitical commonality, that is, an idea of the common that refuses zero-sum economies as well as the exclusions and inequalities legitimated on the basis of differences of one kind or another (Derrida, 1997a; Venn, 2002, 2006a: 161–171, and 2014; also Latour, 2005). None of this would

be possible without all of the world's accumulated stock of knowledge and know-how being considered as part of a common inheritance, since most knowledges are collaboratively produced (Strathern, 2004) or depend on disciplinary fields established through the effort of countless contributors over time.¹¹ Deployed in education and training, this common stock would be essential for equipping a people for the processes of adaptation, adoption, invention, research, sharing and protection of the world's living and non-living resources that will be necessary for survival in hostile conditions.

In view of these points, other questions appear, such as: What accounting practice and system of valuation can one invent to take proper account of common resources and the value of socio-cultural and environmental goods now mismeasured according to capitalist accounting practices and normally bracketed as so-called 'externalities' by firms – the critical accounting perspectives developed by authors such as Miranda Joseph (2014) are examined in the next chapter. What is to happen to the state, or how are common interests to be reorganised and secured in new forms of democratic institutions? And, given the global character of the crises, what transnational agreements, regulatory systems, institutions and principles can be put into place to secure effective action? What are the implications for forms of governance grounded on the absolute guarantee of liberty, positive freedoms and respect for all creatures? What technologies and their management are appropriate for new ways of life that manage existence within the limits of the planet and with regard to the ecological entanglement and plasticity of all living things? What are the implications of a post-anthropocentric ontology? And, the question underlying all the other questions: what does it mean to 'live well with and for others in just institutions' (Ricoeur, 1992: 351).¹² Finally, what system of values and what ways of life allow for the incalculable, i.e. the affective, spiritual or noological, and aesthetic dimensions of existence that make life worth living?

The analysis in the book will show that what is at stake is not only opposed visions of a just society, but quite incommensurable understandings of what it means to be human at all, implying a struggle over conflicting perceptions of what is possible and what is equitable, thus a struggle over disjunct political philosophies and imaginaries. Equally, it is a struggle about defending hard-won political spaces and protecting socio-cultural common wealth such as free public libraries and spaces, as well as about opening up new spaces for inventing ways of being which have not and, indeed, could not have existed before, since the technical, environmental and cultural conditions of possibility for such a future were absent.

But before the more philosophical issues can be addressed, the chapters that follow will examine in greater detail the nature of the problems trailed in this Introduction and establish the grounds for decoupling ideas of well-being, prosperity and the just society from capitalism and its logic of growth, as well as from other exploitative and unethical forms of society. A longer historical, or *longue durée*, approach, will be deployed to reveal the role played by liberal political economy, biopolitical governmentality,

colonialism, historically specific property regimes, and an economic environmental politics in the formation of the ensemble of apparatuses whereby political, economic and psychological strategies and forces have managed to maintain existing relations of power, secure a hold on the minds and purses of the majority of people, and provoke the crises we are addressing. Equally, the task involves the problematisation or recuperation of a whole range of concepts such as those of liberty, freedom, fundamental rights, value, ownership, democracy, the social bond and 'sustainability' that had historically served dissident struggles as part of radical democratic agendas but that today, in their corrupted or in their mediatised forms, are often mobilised to prop up capital.

Outline of chapters

In the Introduction, I have tried to show that the current conjuncture of crises linking the economy to environmental damage, climate change, resource depletion, and rising destitution across continents is the culmination of a long history of dispossession and exploitation against a background of struggles for equality, liberty and social justice. The dynamics at play have now brought the world to a point of unpredictable transition in which democratic institutions and values are the stakes. An argument outlined here and developed throughout the book points to the worsening of stressors brought about by the ascendancy of neoliberalism and its prioritisation of corporate interests and private accumulation at the expense of the common good. Related to this, I noted that finance capitalism, supported by cybernetic technologies, has been central to the developments that have accelerated the ravages of the planet and deepened the unequal relations of power between capital and labour worldwide. A longer history of capitalism is signalled to highlight the model of unending growth as a crucial element installed at the heart of the linkages. The key role which colonialism and its contemporary legacies have played in sustaining both capitalism and liberal governmentality from the time of the industrial revolution is underlined; today, new mechanisms of dispossession reiterate this process of wealth transfer from the poor and the subjugated to a rich elite globally and locally. I have suggested that the most likely scenario for a liveable future is that of a politics of commons or the common that radically challenges existing zero-sum economies and existing property regimes and forms of governance, and that dethrones the anthropocentric and phallogo-ethnocentric privileges that are complicit with existing systems of oppression. The implications of this narrative are elaborated in the chapters that follow; this includes in the final, more theoretical, chapter the alternative ontological, epistemological and ethical standpoints that could serve as the basis for the transformations that would inform ways of life that respect the limits of the planet and relocate the place of the human in the scheme of things.

Chapter 1 – New Mechanisms of Dispossession: Property, Inequality and the Debt Society – starts by examining the changes in the global economy which underlie the 2008 crash in order to point to the systematic and complex character of the stressors leading up to it. It identifies capitalism in terms of its distinct property regime according to which everything can be commodified, a process whose dominant aim is the private accumulation of wealth. It shows how recent shifts in the relationship between the state and capital, correlated to shifts in the relation of power and wealth between owners and non-owners of capital, private interest and general or common interests and goods, have hardened the domination of capital. It establishes that the key mechanism inscribing these shifts is the emergence of a debt society nourished by rent-seeking devices, and characterised by a recomposition of the relation between finance, debt and capital assets, facilitated by information technologies. The debt economy, through its informationalisation and circulation in financial circuits of capital, alongside fiscal and monetary policies, has the effect of autonomising the transfer of wealth from the majority of people to a rich minority. This point is further elaborated by making visible the decisive mutations in apparatuses or dispositifs of dispossession whereby forms of general equivalence founded on information, money and the market have intensified the process of appropriation through the distortion of value introduced by derivatives, and through the emergence of a debt society. It highlights the role of the state in facilitating this process, and thus points to the extent to which the interests of capital have become so commanding that they now determine policy across all sectors of society.

An important aspect of the analytical apparatus is the argument that the consolidation of neoliberalism as the political arm of financial and corporate capitalism has been legitimated through a neo-biopolitical governmentality that institutes a realignment of the population into the us/them, friend/enemy divide underlying the pathologisation of the ‘losers’ and the militarisation of society; such a shift undermines the idea of the common good. The chapter points to the claim, developed across several chapters, that the elimination of the ethical basis of ‘good government’ in favour of a utilitarian and amoral management of population and resources to suit the interests of transnational corporations and geopolitical forces has fundamentally eroded the basis of democratic polities.

Chapter 2 – In the Shadow of Tipping Points: The Political Economy of Climate Change – summarises key evidence showing the anthropogenic character of global warming and climate change. It reviews ongoing plans by the extractive industries that are bound to accelerate the destruction of habitats, increase pollution and lead to further geophysical transformations worldwide, accompanied by species extinction, land grabs and conflicts, most visibly in Africa, South America and parts of Asia. These developments illustrate the essential connection binding capitalism, neoliberal political economy, climate change and the model of ceaseless growth; they have contributed to the intensification in the convergent crises the book examines.

Chapter 3 – Colonialism, Dispossession and Capitalist Accumulation: A Decolonial History of the Present – begins with an overview of the present state of the world in terms of the features that underlie both the confluence of crises and the inability or reluctance of governments to take effective action to implement the changes necessary to tackle the problems. It argues for a longer genealogy of capitalism in order to uncover the less visible and often neglected processes that have been instrumental in producing the current state of affairs. The vital role which colonialism and its contemporary legacies have played in sustaining both capitalism and liberal and now post-liberal governmentalities from the time of the industrial revolution is underlined. Today, the strategies of dispossession operate through different agencies and instruments to reconstitute the process of the expropriation and uphold global inequalities of wealth and power. Foucault's concept of 'the discourse of race war' is deployed to analyse the discourses that have historically legitimated subjugation and dispossession and the violences intrinsic to them.

A key argument is that such discourses are inscribed in liberal and neoliberal political economy and philosophy and have served to underpin (varieties of) capitalism and their respective governmentalities. The historical analysis goes on to show that the us/them divide underlying forms of subjugation is ingrained in the biopolitics of population which these governmentalities institute in the form of imperial governance or coloniality of power. An important inference is that coloniality as the model of the oppressive form of power that enables exploitation and servitude is the exemplary embodiment of this divide. The chapter makes the case that the neoliberal prioritisation of generalised competition as a ruling idea promotes this form of power and thus universalises the militaristic logic that today shapes geopolitico-economic relations; this logic of power thus reiterates and generalises colonial relations of domination.

Chapter 4 – From Liberalism to Neoliberalism: A Dissident Genealogy – develops an account that brings to light the differences in value inscribed in social and economic policy that divided 'radical' liberal reformers in the 19th century from utilitarian liberals in terms of a moral economy that sought a balance between private interests and the general interest or common good, and in terms of the essential role of the state in ensuring this balance. The analysis of the post-Enlightenment and emancipatory ambition that motivated the enduring conflicts encompassing class, gender and race struggles helps to pinpoint what was at stake politically and ethically, and what neoliberalism breaks with by reference to a politics of the present and with regard to its abnegation of responsibility for the vulnerable. This is elaborated in the section, 'From Adam Smith to Milton Friedman: Alas poor Beveridge'.

Chapter 5 – Towards a World in Common – proposes the idea of enlarged or postcapitalist commons as counter to capitalism and its property regime and system of values. In the period of liberal governmentality, the state undertook to construct and reorganise 'infrastructures' as a central component of the strategy for improving the productivity of resources,

including labour. The resultant public works encompassed social and environmental policies, affecting health, hygiene, reproduction, education, training, urban redevelopment, transport, land management, public amenities and services. Though primarily intended to benefit business interests and meet reason of state, such public works and amenities were the aggregate product of a whole community's labour, paid for by means of general taxation, and should be regarded as forms of common pool resources, enhancing the capabilities of the people as a whole and conditioning the wellbeing of all. Their status as common wealth, that is, as collectively held goods and resources, should grant them the quality of an inalienable inheritance. Their increasing privatisation in neoliberal times is thus a process of disinheritance that impoverishes everyone.

Chapter 6 – New Foundations for Postcapitalist Worlds – addresses the philosophical and theoretical issues concerning the foundations which could inform postcapitalist societies. It presents perspectives which support a post-anthropocentric ontology by reframing the relationship of self/other, the human and the world, and mind/body/world, in terms of the essential co-implication and co-constitution of all forms of life in sustaining existence in common. This ontology asserts the idea of being as fundamentally being-with and as relational; it thus prioritises a position that decentres the human in relation to non-human beings and world. It is argued that such a standpoint is consistent with an ethics that recomposes ideas of solidarity and conviviality to include all creatures. The chapter draws out the implications for an epistemology that rejects the claim of the autonomous unitary subject as the privileged and rational agent of history and knowledge. It displaces the question of agency onto the terrain of an ethics of responsibility for the other that foregrounds the problem of answerability with respect to individual action, or the 'who' of action. This standpoint avoids the pitfalls of a 'flat ontology' and the confusions associated with the 'posthuman'. The chapter underlines the argument that responsibility is beholden to a history of responsibility, a view that implicates an apprenticeship in learning to live in convivial ways of being. Together these arguments support postcapitalist economies and socialities based on commons and ecologically grounded technologies within the scope of the collective and democratic management of the planet's resources. The book is thus located in the conceptual space of a 'to come' that holds out the hope of avoiding the coming of despotisms and inhuman socialities and that promotes the possibility of ways of life that enable one to live well with and for others in just societies.

Notes

- 1 For example, the many radical websites such as Antipode, Soundings, the Canary, openDemocracy, and many more, and examined in a growing archive of new forms of resistance, for example, in Graeber (2011); Conio (2015); Hessel (2010); Mason (2012).

- 2 Indicatively, Stengers, 2009; Tett, 2010; Roubini and Mihm, 2010; Stiglitz, 2010 and 2013; Curtis, 2013; Dardot and Laval, 2014; Atkinson, 2015.
- 3 'Upfront' in *New Scientist*, 3045, 31 October 2015.
- 4 Report of a study at Stanford, Princeton and Berkeley, June 2015; see also Stengers, 2009; Colebrook, 2014; Kolbert, 2014; Moore, 2015.
- 5 The USA has been at the forefront of this reconstitution of capital, as Panitch and Gindin (2013) have shown.
- 6 Or, more likely, according to a fractal web of nested small-world networks, i.e., a galaxy.
- 7 The emergence of a 'super entity' of global corporations, though subject to complex and uneven dynamics, and the dominance of informationalised financial capitalism which allows global capital to circulate more freely and faster explain why notions of so-called 'free trade' and the 'free market' are no longer operative for capitalism; they were never 'free' anyway (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]) though they remain useful in political rhetoric. Competition too needs to be similarly rethought in terms of discourses that cover over the actual machinery of capital accumulation, as I examine in Chapter 1.
- 8 For example, apart from IPCC Reports, the Brundtland Commission 1987, regarding climate change, and Wilkinson and Pickett (2009, 2010) regarding the effects of poverty and inequality.
- 9 Metastability is understood as a property of complex systems characterised by the fact that their point of equilibrium is altered whenever any element of the complex whole is changed or a new organism inserted into it. See also the work of Bateson (1980), Simondon (2005), Stiegler (2007), and others which I discussed in Venn (2010).
- 10 See, for example, Latour (2003); Stengers (2009); Haraway (2016), and the 'deep ecology' perspective.
- 11 The problems of the 'ownership' of knowledge, whether generated by research and development or inscribed in indigenous knowledges are dealt with in Chapters 5 and 6 where the notion of commons that I develop goes beyond the limitations of the concept of 'general intellect' tied to production (Marx, Grundrisse) or the idea of 'cognitive capitalism' (Hardt and Negri, 2011) which neglects craft and tacit knowledges of all kinds, and knowledge of how to live embedded in a culture.
- 12 From a different point of view, this question invokes principles and a politics committed to keeping clear and wide the margin between the human and the inhuman, particularly since the latter is immanent in the former, as Lyotard claims in *The Inhuman* (1993), but it's a margin that's eroded in times of social turbulence.