

# RE-THINKING THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL IN AN AGE OF ECOLOGICAL RISK, DEMOCRATIC ESTRANGEMENT, SOCIETAL FRAGMENTATION AND PREDATORY CAPITALISM.

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## **Setting the scene**

The conference title calls for a reappraisal of the impact and characteristics of globalization since the turning point of 1989. It also reminds us that the optimism surrounding the momentous events of the early 1990s has since evaporated to be replaced by uncertainty, confusion and even fear. Much the same is true of Fukuyama's claim in 1992 that the end of the Cold War had ushered in an era of triumphant free-market liberal democracy where – among other advantages – the rapidly intensifying process of globalization would weaken the hold of nationalism and the power of nation states and propel nations towards increased collaboration. Certainly, many academics in the 1990s and early 2000s argued that the national/societal frame of reference that had dominated the social sciences - methodological nationalism in the case of sociology and the realist perspective in international relations theory in politics – were losing their explanatory validity in the face of the advancing and multiple interconnectivities wrought by globalization. Of course, the local was resilient and nothing about how this global-local interaction might pan-out was certain (Robertson 1992 and Albrow 1997). But the local would increasingly need to absorb and interact with global forces on a scale and intensity that was new. Ever more world citizens were being drawn into a *glocal* and *glocalizing* life irrespective of their wishes.

This confident and optimistic perspective was much influenced by the heady changes of those years: not just 1989-91 but also the era of world economic growth and expanding trade flows into the 2000s and up to 2008 (despite the dotcom bubble), astonishing

economic growth in China, pulling millions out of extreme poverty, economic recovery was underway in Latin America after decades of stagnation, Mandel became president of a democratic South Africa, increased economic integration was taking place in the EU, the, then, new Internet-based forms of communication were diffusing into nearly everyone's life, peaceful mass migration was increasing along with the rise of multicultural cities, and much else besides. Meanwhile, the theoretical and empirical interest into the nature and consequences of cosmopolitanism – as a driver of globality, or world consciousness, and a result of increasing cross-national interactions – grew apace (for example, Vertovec and Cohen 2002 and Cheah and Robbins 1998). In stark contrast, it is not difficult to list the many events and crises since 2000 that threw much of this optimism into disarray: 9/11 in New York and the reminder of Huntington's thesis concerning the 'clash of civilizations', 2003 and its awful repercussions across Iraq, the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath of prolonged austerity, the failed promise of the 2011 Arab Spring, including the descent of Libya and Syria into horrendous civil wars, the buzz caused worldwide by Occupy in 2014 but its rapid disintegration (Soborski 2018), and much else besides.

There were, of course, numerous movements of discontent and even outright opposition to globalization that flared up during the 1990s and early 2000s even while many scholars and politicians were extolling the virtues and potential of globalization. These localized but also globally-targeted protests fed into what has been named as the Global Justice Movement (GJM) or Anti-Globalization Movement. Much of this discontent was centred on Third World debt and the impact of the US-led Washington Consensus which had induced or compelled many countries in the Global South to open their farmlands, forests, markets and local industries to transnational corporations and neoliberal economics. But in recent years and especially across the advanced democratic countries the discontent concerning globalization has morphed into something much more potent and angry than a declining sense of optimism concerning its potential to continue linking societies and cultures together in shared projects of peace, prosperity and mutual understanding (see, for example, Cox 2017 and Glaser 2018). In particular, recent observers have pointed to and described a number of disturbing phenomena.

One concerns the diverging cultural expectations and priorities that have opened up between the cosmopolitan metropolitan class and the population who live and work in what Guilluy (2019) – writing about France - refers to as the majority 'peripheral' areas. In the

latter, he claims, most people's identity and sense of belonging remains grounded primarily around kinship and local affiliations. At the same time, such citizens display and respect nationalistic loyalties which are often closely tied into nativistic orientations: the belief that the indigenous – white - population's needs and identities should be prioritized over those of 'foreigners'. The economic frustrations and uncertainties and growing sense of diminished social respect, as described by authors such as Goodhart (2017), Collier (2018) and Guilluy (2019), probably affect nearly half of the populations of some Western countries. Second, all this, in turn, seems to be closely linked to a growing distrust of centre-mainstream politicians who are perceived as having almost entirely abandoned any attempt to take measures designed to counter many citizens' insecurities and discontents. A quote from a disillusioned Italian voter mentioned by Jon Henley in an article on the European elections in the Observer, May 12<sup>th</sup>, captures this sentiment well (Henley et al 2019). The Left, he said, had "failed to provide essentials such as jobs. They don't help the weaker people or ordinary workers - they help bankers and stronger classes".

Third, this upsurge of localist, nativist and anti-immigrant discontent is often closely aligned to a Manichaeic-Populist view of the world. Here, the legitimate needs of 'the people' and their common-sense views are said to be ignored contemptuously by intellectuals, experts, bureaucrats and political leaders. In extreme cases – as with Britain's Nigel Farage and the Brexit Party during the recent European elections – the former then become the 'enemy' who threaten the expression of the democratic will of the people and who therefore need to be by-passed and overcome. Glaser (2018: 15) refers to this anger and resentment as a form of 'anti-politics' or 'post-politics' in respect to current democratic Western political parties and electoral systems. She argues that In the case of Right-Populism, such views are also closely tied into three additional features. One concerns the open expression of overtly racist, xenophobic and anti-immigrant views: blaming foreigners, both those living at home and abroad for the people's problems. Second, some populist Right leaders – including Trump, Le Pen, Farage and Orbán - demand a return to economic nationalism and protectionism while explicitly condemning globalization as a central threat to national autonomy, sovereignty and national identity. Third, although Right Populist leaders attack political elites, 'their critique is drained of economics' (18). Indeed, they 'have co-opted a legitimate critique of money and power' but convert it 'into a vicious anti-

intellectualism' while transposing real issues around corporate power into 'an attack on politics itself'.

It seems clear that much of this is tied into an antipathy to globalization and a tendency to hold it responsible both in respect to its economic or trade dimensions and the cultural changes it has brought in respect to migration flows and the drift towards multiculturalism. Much of this is widely evident across the USA and EU and is demonstrated, for example, by Trump's popularity, the demands of Britain's hard-Brexit minority groups, the turn towards authoritarian nationalist governments in countries such as Poland, Hungary and Italy, the growing antipathy across Europe to the influence of the EU's institutions, and much else besides.

Mudde (2019) has shown how the rise of such Radical-Right Populist views and parties only began to increase markedly across the EU during the 2000s from a much smaller base.<sup>i</sup> Nevertheless, we need to ask how it was that in the space of little more than a decade, that widespread toleration and even support for a future of global empathy, cooperation and ever closer integration has been replaced by one of suspicion, antagonism and even outright opposition? We now take up this theme.

### **Globalization on trial: the case for the prosecution.**

I think we can agree that there are some understandable reasons why the lurch towards an often angry assertion of localism and the expression of deep resentments against immigrants, politicians, experts and cosmopolitan orientations can be partly laid at the door of globalization. They can perhaps be framed under two broad headings of 'economic marginalization' and 'socio-cultural' discontent.

**Economic marginalization.** First, globalization has involved the opening of borders to the power of abstract money and competition thereby fostering huge investment and capital flows, both strongly pushed by the US and neoliberal policies from Reagan onwards. More concretely, this has fostered the diffusion of transnational corporations across multiple borders along with their intricate global supply chains. But second, the opening of Western markets to cheap manufactured goods has contributed towards the accelerated industrialization of Pacific Asia, particularly China, as well as other regions of the Global South, thereby contributing towards some reduction in world poverty. But together,

capitalist globalization and the industrialization of much of the Global South have created a world labour market where billions of people are compelled to compete with others whose wages and working conditions are very different from their own. One further result has been the massive growth of sub-contracting and outsourcing arrangements by Western transnational corporations involving thousands of small businesses in the Global South employing poorly paid and insecure workers. One estimate suggests that by 2011 perhaps 40% of world trade was tied up with outsourcing (Bellamy Foster et al 2011: 8).

A third consequences has been that across the developed world the working classes 'have been priced out' by globalization and propelled into 'forced retirement' except in the case of the new science-based industries and professional-technical services (Guilluy 2019: 54). Cox (2017: 15) refers to the 'economic tsunami' of joblessness that has overwhelmed traditional labour in the face of China's rapid and massive industrialization and worsened by the imposition of neoliberal policies that have weakened trade unions, reduced growth and strengthened shareholder and capitalist power. Thus, in France, for example, the unemployment rate for unskilled workers is five times higher than that experienced by executives and three times that of white collar workers (56). Along with this has come not just unemployment and re-employment – often into more precarious, casualized work such as in the gig economy and low-skilled services generally - but also wage stagnation and the loss of the concentrated union strength that was possible in the huge Fordist manufacturing plants of the mid-twentieth century. The financial crisis of 2008 and the years of austerity that followed hugely aggravated the sense of being ignored by governments especially among the poorest on whom the cuts to public and welfare services fell especially hard. A direct line of causation running from the failure of governments to lay the burden of financial recovery onto the bankers and financiers who caused the crash through to the austerity imposed on the wider public and the growth of populist movements seems highly plausible.

**Cultural loss and social division.** Central to globalization processes is the diffusion of multiple, instantaneous media images and interpersonal communications. These flows have facilitated a profusion of global cultural 'scapes' – glimpses or fragments of alternative and 'imagined worlds' (Appadurai 1990: 296). These, in turn, have encouraged the 'globalization of migration flows' (Kennedy 2010: 83) whereby the mobility of people, and not just of

capital, has involved mass migration flows that encompass far more host and receiving countries than in the past. At the same time, the transplantation of numerous local/national cultures around the world has fed into the vibrancy and diversity of cultural experience in its own right. The result has been the rise of multicultural cities and towns across much of the advanced economies along with the increased and often bewildering 'divergence' (Collier 2018: 130) of personal and cultural outlooks. According to some observers this exposure to multiple migrant cultures and lifeways has also fuelled a perception on the part of the native population that not just their livelihoods but also their sense of local and national identity are being threatened by globalization. Many of these are citizens who experience what Bauman (1998: 99) called 'enforced localization'. Their lives have been opened up to a mass of incoming global influences but without their consent and with few if any advantages. Consequently their livelihoods, cultures and places of residence are exposed to influences they neither desire nor understand. But this same process simultaneously hollows out and even dissipates the once rich, local and familiar networks and cultures on which they could previously depend as bulwarks against wider hardships and insecurities.

As workplace solidarity and class confidence has dwindled along with the sense of local cultural cohesion so additional sources of disharmony and social disgruntlement have come to the fore. Collier (2018: 3) argues that in Britain it is those living in small cities and towns as well as rural areas who most strongly evince this sense of bewildered and angry estrangement. Referring to France, Guilluy (2019) refers to this phenomenon as the peripheralization of the majority population who live and work outside the fifteen largest metropolitan cities. They consist of manual workers in small firms, self-employed business people, small farmers and agricultural labours as well as the middle class of administrative and public sector employees on low and medium incomes. Since November 2018 some of these citizens have been demonstrating across France – *the Jaunes Gilets* – against years of stagnant wages, local economic decline and the relative size of their tax burden in relation to their incomes compared to the relatively low taxes paid by the better-off. In the case of Britain, Collier (2018:3) refers to those living in small and often declining industrial towns and rural areas as facing the same predicament.

Goodhart (2017) describes the British equivalent of these citizens as the 'Somewhere' people. Like the French peripheral majority they feel they have been left

behind by recent changes and that their demands are ignored by mainstream politicians and political parties. As in France and elsewhere many of these citizens have turned away from the mainstream centre political parties of Left and Right and are tending to vote for populist parties with nationalist, anti-immigrant and white nativist agendas. While 'Somewhere' people retain and highly value a strong sense of national identity and local attachments - most have never moved far from where they were born - 'Anywhere' people are successful, individualistic, socially and geographically mobile, urbanized and do not especially cultivate loyalties to particular places or 'national and ethnic attachments' (Kaufman and Harris 2014: 27). Supposedly, they also tend to be tolerant and welcoming towards immigrants especially those who are highly educated like themselves.

These observers are quite clear, however, that the new 'grievances' are not centred solely on geographical divisions with 'the regions rebelling against the metropolis; northern England versus London; the heartlands versus the coasts' (Collier 2018: 3). Rather, the widening socio-economic lines of fracture also revolve around the sharp contrast between the top twenty to perhaps twenty five percent 'upper-class' people who enjoyed access to higher education and therefore to specialized technical skills - who also increasingly come from relatively privileged backgrounds - and most of the bottom fifty per cent who never attended university or if they did this involved the less-prestigious ones. We say more about this technical 'elite' in a later section.

Evidence demonstrating that stark patterns of socio-economic bifurcation have become entrenched in some European countries, and in the USA as well, is plentiful. Collier (2018: 125), for example, observes that provincial Britain's economy was 4.3 times larger than that of London in 1997 but this ratio had shrunk to 3.3 by 2015. He also cites OECD evidence to the effect that across all high-income countries over the last 20 years the gap in productivity between the high-performing regions and the remaining majority areas has widened by 60%. In France, and despite government attempts to implement reforms designed to reduce regional economic and wealth inequalities, three quarters of new wealth creation between 2000 and 2010 occurred in the fifteen largest metropolitan areas (Guilluy 2019: 58). What is also striking in Guilluy's (25) reading of the French data - and the same pattern is certainly evident in London - is that the traditional industrial and manual working class population no longer works and lives in the most significant and wealth-creating areas,

namely, the leading great cities. The rise of industries heavily dependent on high-educational qualifications and the concentration of such people in the cities because of the advantages of scale and agglomeration have led to the gentrification of formally working class areas. Combined with a scarcity of public housing all this has pushed up rents far beyond what those on low incomes can afford.

In France, overall, a progressive separation of the majority working class population - both ethnic and native - from the upper class and elites has been taking place. It is based not just on 'geographical segregation' (67) but also on a degree of social and cultural separation that has become 'a fact of life everywhere in France today' (125). Much of this is equally applicable to the other Western economies.

### **In defence of globalization and the 'real' agents of our present woes.**

In this section we examine the two central factors that have shaped the core economic and developmental framework and the major lines of social conflict we associate with the long waves of modernization and industrialization. Clearly, here, we are talking here about technology and science on one hand and capitalism and the market economy on the other. Each has driven and/or responded to the other while operating within the orbit of state-led national modernity projects where modernization involved the goal of simultaneously re-making personal life and society in pursuit of control over nature, material improvement and the belief in a more inclusive society and polity (Berman 1982). In both cases the discussion focuses on the current era. In what follows I concentrate on the consequences for employment and socio-economic life in general of a 'new' vampire form of capitalism and the shifting nature of technology.

### **The rise of vampire capitalism since the 1970.**

Capitalist businesses are driven by an abstract process. Harvey (2011) described this as the built-in drive to accumulate capital through seeking profit and the compulsion to compete against rival firms for survival in a market economy<sup>ii</sup>. In Harvey's view it is capitalism's fundamental DNA of profit and accumulation that forms the underlying and perpetual contradiction not the dilemmas associated with any particular crisis. Since the



1930s the need to increase GDP through continuous economic growth has become the 'hegemonic concept' in 'the geopolitical world order' – that which all governments, citizens and businesses are duty bound to pursue. Yet, as Kallis (2018: 73) argues, 'growth is not the driver, it is the effect, surface appearance or "fetish" of an underlying process: capital accumulation'. Without economic growth the capitalist juggernaut would be deprived of the need, incentive and opportunity to express its DNA.

Yet, as we all know, there has never been a built-in guarantee that the profitable opportunities opened up or the new wealth generated by capitalism will serve all of humanity equally or the needs of the planet. That can only happen if additional or alternative non-economic considerations are allowed some sway. Indeed, until the 1970s a combination of forces which gathered pace from the 1890s onwards allowed governments and citizens to progressively ensure that at least some of the benefits of economic growth and technological advance were directed towards the needs of wider society. These include: the growing organizational strength of an ever more productive and numerous labour force working in large manufacturing plants; the impact of two world wars in demonstrating the need for greater income and wealth fairness but also the necessity for more state funding and investment through progressive tax systems if national unity, military security and economic autonomy were to survive; the reality of an apparently viable communist alternative to capitalism, thrown into greater relief by the 1930s depression and resulting wide unemployment and distress; and the fact that despite international trade and captive colonial economies, capitalist production, technological change, investment, markets and labour remained primarily grounded within national economies so that governments enjoyed the capacity to exercise considerable influence.

However, the last forty years or so has seen an overwhelming shift away from this once constrained and largely nationally-based capitalism towards a form demonstrating markedly vampire-like characteristics (Kennedy 2017). This is a particularly predatory, disengaged and 'unfettered' (Sandel 2016) form of capitalism (Lansley 2011, Freeland 2012 and Streek 2014). Its capacity to cream-off a large and mostly un-earned proportion of the wealth generated through established and new economic enterprise, and based, in many instances, on rent rather than entrepreneurial input (Vercellone 2010), is also extremely difficult to counter and tame precisely because it has been able to take maximum advantage

of the evolving connections and resources provided by a globalizing world economy. These include huge advances in communication and transport technologies, an era of open economies for investment, markets and outs-sourcing, the growing opportunities to harness the cheap labour and markets provided by the industrializing economies of the Global South, particularly China, along with the worldwide diffusion of off-shore banking and borrowing facilities, all of this lubricated, empowered and, legitimized by the post 1970s triumph of neoliberal ideology.

The central and overlapping features of vampire capitalism can be simply stated. First, at its core, lies what Lansley (2011: 57) calls 'a dangerous productivity-wage gap' whereby most of the gains from existing economic resources, new economic growth and innovation accrue to the richest people in society. This capacity to extract a disproportionate share of wealth and the willingness to exploit the apparent declining influence that governments and workers can exercise over capitalism has generated levels of inequality similar to, or greater, than those pertaining in the early twentieth century and just prior to the 1929 crash (Piketty 2014: 297).<sup>iii</sup> Some observers have referred to this deepening chasm as the 'bifurcation of the world' (Freeland 2012: 4) into a majority capitalist economy, which typically faces a dwindling capacity to fund social life, promise material improvement and provide meaningful employment for most ordinary people, and a minority one run by and for a 'plutonomy', the latter 'powered by and largely consumed by the wealthy few' (Kapur et al 2005:1).

Second, since the 1980s, and accelerating in the 1990s, financial processes and products, including bonds, stock, shares and derivatives and the businesses that trade in them - dealers and brokers, pension and investment fund managers, investment banks and so on - have attained enormous significance along with the ever-present risks of over-lending, over- borrowing and rising debt. One indication is shown by the fact that the financial industry's share in overall pre-tax profits rose strongly and reached 45% by the early 2000s in the USA (Lapavitsas 2013: 211). As economies have become progressively financialized so this sector has effectively diverted economic resources from the 'real' productive economy while capturing a growing share of profits from the wider economy. Meanwhile, many non-financial firms have also acquired non-tangible financial products in addition to productive ones. In effect, capitalism has shifted from a system where returns

on investment originated mainly through the value created by productive businesses to one 'where companies are viewed as assets to be bought and sold and as vehicles for maximizing profits through financial strategies' (Batt and Appelbaum (2013: 1). This brings little advantage to the vast majority of citizens whose ownership of financial assets is extremely meagre. Thus, in 2010 the top 1% of Americans owned more than a third of the value of all private stock including mutual and trust funds, bonds, equity whereas the bottom nine-tenths of the population owned a mere 12% ( Domhoff 2016).

A third feature of vampire capitalism relates to the growth in shareholder power as the volumes of money searching for higher yields on savings and investment funds have surged across the world. As this has occurred so the previous balance sought by most companies between the proportion of their annual profits they paid out as dividends to shareholders and that which was retained for long term business growth has often moved in favour of the former. Many observers have argued that in the fierce competition to secure the favours of multiple investors, many with vast funds at their disposal, company executives have tended to give a lower priority to re-investing profits in company expansion preferring, instead, to pay out higher dividends in order to push up company share values (for example 2018: 76). This short-termism threatens long term company – and therefore macro-economic - growth while stunting employment creation and probably contributes to lagging wage growth as well. The Bank of England official recently announced that whereas in the 1970s around 10% of company profits went to shareholders the figure was between 60 and 70% in 2015 (Giugliano 2015). The increased tendency for managers themselves to be paid or given bonuses partly in terms of stock-options has almost certainly accentuated this process.

A fourth dimension of vampirism concerns the relative shift towards rent-taking as a growing proportion of the incomes and wealth that accrue to the economic elite. This occurs where rewards are based mainly on ownership rights rather than active participation in economic activity – as was the case with feudal landowners and nobles. Vercellone (2010) argues that in an earlier capitalist era the typical role played by many owner-entrepreneurs involved not only contributing some of their own funds to the enterprise but also being actively engaged in organizing, managing and perhaps introducing technical innovations – Schumpeter's classic entrepreneur. Today the situation is often very different. For one thing, in most industries knowledge of all kinds is far more significant to business productivity and

growth as we see below, for example the cumulative results of scientific research, the pre-existence of a well-trained, specialist workforce and established ICT systems and global infrastructures. However, much of this 'knowledge' is imported more or less free of charge into businesses from the sphere of public education where it is mostly funded by taxpayers and based on the shared learning activities of collaborating professionals. Such undeserved forms of rent- extraction frequently depend on political alliances forged between government officials and politicians and leading business-financial interests, or crony capitalism. In such situations the former enact policies that promote the interests of the latter often in return for substantial private contributions to political party electioneering funds.

Drawing on UNCTAD research conducted in 2015, Blankenberg and Kozul-Weight (2017) observed that non-financial corporations have become just as successful as their financial counterparts in becoming successful rent-seekers. Helped by their skill at lobbying and huge market power they have abused a number of channels enabling them to acquire vast profits with little of this reaching ordinary citizens. These channels include: privatization schemes that 'loot' public-sector resources, winning public subsidies, exploiting intellectual-property laws which further market domination but produce few innovations and manipulating market domination in order to extract super profits. Thus, the profits earned by the top world 100 public companies increased so markedly that by 2015 they enjoyed a combined market capitalization or share value that was 7,000 times larger than that of the bottom 2,000 companies compared with a difference of only 31 times in 1995. <sup>iv</sup>

Of course, little of this is new. However, globalization and financialization along with the growth in the size and weight of global corporate power have increased both the opportunities for rent-taking and the relative ease with which it can be conducted - as in the case of the vast network of tax havens and the armies of lawyers and other professionals eager to assist in concealing individual and corporate tax evasion from governments and citizens. Specific forms of rent-taking vehicles include; oligopolistic price-fixing agreements between the largest firms who control entire world markets in different industries, including pharmaceuticals, agri-business and food production; seeking government subsidies or tax privileges that smaller firms are ineligible to receive as in the case of the USA during the 1990s and 2000s (Stiglitz 2013: 48-54); and introducing licensing arrangements and the

monopoly power exercised by the media and other digital giants in the global networking economy (DeLong and Summers 2001, 2003 and Mason 2015).

Of course, these structural elements of vampire capitalism were hugely underpinned and legitimized by neoliberal policies, As is well-known, neoliberal ideology and policies since the 1980s (Harvey 2005, Žižek 2011, Stiglitz 2013, Brown 2015) prioritized shrinking the state's economic – but not its political – imprint while massively extending private enterprise into ever more spheres of public and communal activity including the contraction of welfare spending. Neoliberalism also insinuated into public discourse the belief that responding to market signals rather than social obligations and affiliations and seeking to maximize economic advantage through competition becomes the primary if not the sole life project for citizens to follow. The individual becomes a unit of human capital rather than a worker or citizen (Brown 2015).

### **Technology and changing employment and work conditions in the West.**

As capitalism evolved through various phases over time, waves of technological change operated as a spur to further advance but also emerged partly as a consequence of capitalist entrepreneurship itself. Vampire capitalism is no different. It has been accompanied by and grounded in what Perez (2009) argues is the fifth of a series of 'techno-economic paradigms' (T-E Ps) that have evolved within the wider framework of capitalism since the late eighteenth century.

Lying at the core of this latest T-E P is the much heightened role of knowledge plus design and creativity of all kinds in the creation of value, and therefore profit, across all spheres of economic life. Much of it is closely linked to science and the universities (see, for example, Collier 2018: 127-8), as in the case of biotechnology and nanotechnology and other recent science-based industries. In addition, it has been directly applied to 'traditional' industries such as energy, pharmaceuticals, transport, engineering and construction. The marriage of spiralling technical specialization and scientific development has also produced the networked cyber economy of the Internet, the social media giants, the peer-to-peer collaboration and sharing/copying/transmitting of non-material goods (for example, DeLong and Summers 2002 and Mason 2015) and mass entertainment through film and television based on digitalization. It has also contributed to the further transformation of

commercialized agriculture – with its high-energy, chemical-based but also increasingly computer-operated and video-supervised processes of automatic feeding – in addition to every kind of administrative process, logistics and transportation and fashion and design.

One way of designating this latest T-E P is to refer to it as the knowledge economy or cognitive capitalism. Its rise has spawned many key questions, not least the concern that the giant social media corporations such as Face Book have protected their economic interests through constructing monopolies built around patent rights even while their profits are based on selling the free personal information supplied by their user-clients. Another central issue revolves around the past and future impact of cognitive capitalism on employment. Rifkin (2004) showed how even decades ago technological advance – much of it assisted by computerization - and the productivity gains it was generating were rapidly eliminating huge numbers of jobs. In US steel production, for example, production rose from 75 to 102 million tonnes during the period from 1982 to 2002 but the number of steelworkers fell from 289,000 to 74,000 during the same years.

Robotization and the rise and rise of Artificial Intelligence or AI constitute two of the most obvious and increasingly pervasive dimensions of technological change associated with cognitive capitalism. In the motor industry the replacement of manual workers by robots began seriously in the 1970s but it was during the 1980s that robotization spread across many industries and was especially applicable where work involving integrated production lines. Many observers have suggested that robotization processes are set to accelerate further over the next twenty years particularly in respect to most kinds of routine manual and non-manual work (Frey and Osborne 2013). Even some non-routine work will likely also be taken over by robots in the near future because of the latter's growing mobility and their enhanced sensory and manipulative skills including machine vision (Frey and Osborne 2013: 20-22). Thus, fork-lift driving, managing hospital transport systems, some construction work, retail sales services, a good deal of office and administrative work – where it has not already been computerized as in the case of bank clerks – and some domestic employment are all examples where research by Frey and Osborne (2013) points to a vast number of occupations that are at high-risk of being replaced during the next few decades.

AI is already widely deployed in a growing range of activities including CCTV screening, assessing tiny changes in patient health patterns and the operation of 'smart' and integrated domestic appliances in people's homes. However, its capacity to detect and

process visual information along with sound effects and human speech patterns and to respond to human behaviour continues to advance rapidly. Moreover, its existing effectiveness in evaluating vast quantities of incoming data is set to accelerate rapidly in the near future. As these advances continue so AI will take over part or most of a growing number of decision-making processes that till now have been the preserve of technically proficient experts and professionals such as lawyers, doctors, bankers and even software engineers. Researchers such as Brynjolfsson and Mcfee (2014) argue that the further development of these 'thinking machines' (40), capable of working on advanced cognitive tasks, is far more significant than the production of machines that merely replace physical labour. They envisage numerous benefits. These include everything from highly specific gains in such fields as the medical diagnoses of illnesses to the more general advantage of falling costs for a range future products and services.

The impact of all this on employment opportunities, wages and working conditions since the 1980s can be summarized as follows. First, de-industrialization processes have swept across most Western economies though to different degrees - less so in Germany and Japan. As we saw earlier, globalization and the industrialization of much of the Global South further compounded this wave of de-industrialization. Second, the old industrial economies have been partly replaced by a burgeoning service economy consisting of a majority medium and low-grade sector alongside a minority, technically specialized and highly-skilled one.

Third, although the deteriorating employment chances, bargaining power, economic security and working conditions faced by a growing number of citizens in the advanced economies is tied into the catch-all term de-industrialization, and much of this can and has been laid at the door of vampire capitalism and globalization, the shift to a fundamentally different T-E P, constructed mostly around cognitive capitalism requires far more emphasis as an explanation that it often receives. Thus, cognitive capitalism requires the double input of graduates and individuals who also possess highly specialized technical skills – particularly in maths, science and engineering and finance. As one recent writer observes, (Collier 2018: 3) 'the newly successful are neither capitalists nor ordinary workers: they are the well-educated with new skills'. The same author continues by arguing that much of the 'spectacular economic growth' that has taken place in recent decades has been based on advancing technological complexity and therefore the increased demand for 'more

specialist skills' (50). Inevitably, this also engendered 'an unprecedented expansion of higher education' (50).

Given their specialized skills, 'scientific' background and key role as technical innovators – and unlike the peripheralized majority of citizens – this highly educated upper class of technocrats have become each nation's leading wealth producers whose products are highly demanded across the world. They tend to live and work in the wealthiest metropolitan areas. At the same time they benefit from the inflow of migrants who are mostly employed in low-waged service work, transport, catering, domestic work, and so on, that can't be exported overseas. Indeed, the well-off and successful who live in the leading metropolitan areas need the contribution of the immigrants to replace the labour once performed by the white working class who have now mostly moved.

In marked contrast, Goodhart (2017) argues that the left-behind 'Somewhere' people are aware that in the new economy their skills are no longer of much relevance. They also know that their country is run by financial, technical and cultural elites though knowing all this doesn't curb their resentment or their sense of living as citizens with a reduced social status compared to forty years ago. Writing about skilled manual workers Sennett (2006: 86) described how the transition to the new economy meant that employers now required skills with a short shelf-life and workers who can demonstrate 'mental superficiality' rather than skills that have taken years to acquire. In this situation 'the spectre of uselessness' confronts highly skilled workers especially older ones, but perhaps everyone else, too. Returning to Brynjolfsson and Mcfee (2014: 11) although their message applies especially to the near future their wider argument could hardly be clearer:

'[T]here's never been a better time to be a worker with special skills or the right education, because these people can use technology to create and capture value. However, there's never been a worse time to be a worker with only 'ordinary' skills and abilities to offer, because computers, robots, and other digital technologies are acquiring these skills and abilities at an extraordinary rate.'

## **Globalization in theory and practice: a re-appraisal.**



There are strong substantive grounds for believing that although globalization processes were intrinsic to the changes responsible for transforming the recent lives of nearly everyone in the West, they are more sensibly regarded as contributory and dependent factors. Further, part of the dilemma stems from the intrinsic difficulties involved in theorizing the content and trajectory of globalization and its relation to other variables and historical processes, in particular modernity and industrialization. Two issues are especially salient, here.

Albrow's (1996) clarity in this regard remains valid. For more than 200 years the project of modernity has dominated the aspirations of people across the world. Modernity fundamentally involved achieving the goal of material progress by bringing together applied science and bureaucratic organization in the pursuit of industrialization. But it was led by the political elites who dominated nation states. As such, economic modernity was state-led including the willingness of aristocratic and other elites to pass laws and take actions designed to assist as well as free the market and incipient capitalist enterprises from traditional customary restrictions on business including the abolition of permanent, customary land rights. The whole project was driven by the desire to defend and expand the nation's influence in a world of internationally competing states. In this scenario it was and remains national governments and capitalism, aided by science, that have been the key drivers of the cumulative and long-term process of global economic development and globalization – though obviously, today's transnational corporations, plutocrats, financial institutions, IGOs and elite think tanks, such as the Davos Economic Forum, exercise a huge impact in shaping the world economy and public opinion partly independently of national governments. In fact, through the revolving door phenomenon, the ability of wealth to buy political support, the apparent universal endorsement of neoliberalism, business ownership of much of the media and various other linkages, some theorists (for example Robinson 2002) argue that transnational capitalism and government are now so wedded together that we need to talk about the transnational state which exists to serve the interests of global and not just national capital.

Nevertheless, Albrow's argument is a strong one. Thus, in stark contrast to the long history of state-led modernization and industrialization projects, and at least until very recently and possibly still, 'globality' has not been the 'project' (1996: 95) of any particular

agents or set of agents. Instead it should be regarded as a condition: the mostly unplanned and unintended cumulative and massively complex end result of centuries of escalating actions taken by a multiplicity of agents each pursuing their own agendas and needs. It follows that globalization is perhaps best understood as a series of vehicles, directions of travel and resources through which nation-states, global capitalism, people's associations and movements weave their private and still partly separate spheres. Certainly, this unchartered and uncertain condition has left us with an inescapable 'global logic' where everything seems possible but nothing is yet resolved. Meanwhile, the long-standing core makers of our world today, capitalism and the international system of competing states, remain powerful and at the centre – as the current manoeuvres by China, Russia and the USA to gain access to and control over the Arctic's reserves of fossil fuels amply and terrifyingly demonstrates. Except that now their projects and interests must take account of the cumulative networks, processes, interconnections, counter movements and dilemmas of globalization that their own previous actions created and still do.

A second issue concerns the very terminology, concept and typologies commonplace in global studies that can easily slip into conjuring a binary divide between the so-called 'global' and 'local'. What may follow is the construction of presumed contrasting characteristics in which according to Gibson-Graham (1996), Escobar (2001), Ley (2004), and others, the global becomes hegemonic and is regarded as , 'inherently spatial and as naturally stronger' (Gibson-Graham 1996: 125) as well as technologically dynamic and cosmopolitan. In this predominantly discursive set of formulations, the local becomes marginal while those who struggle to engage in place-making activities in everyday life, are all too readily seen as doomed to become victims. Alternatively, their needs and views are relegated to a marginal position. What is at stake here is the question of how resilient we believe the local to be in the face of incoming global flows and crucially how we choose to define its scope and content. Do we assume as Giddens seems to have done (1990: 140) that incoming globalization processes have so swamped and reconstituted place that it makes sense to regard it as more 'phantasmagoric' than real?

Following from this, and third, there has been a temptation to endow the global and globalization processes with causal powers they do not possess, to over-code (Marston et al, 2007) their dynamic and reach in relation to the construction of concrete happenings and in

respect to the way they apparently shape the subjective orientations of social actors. This is especially crucial in regard to the multiple dimensions that continue to constitute the 'local' (Kennedy 2010: 144- 162). One of these concerns the continuing particularities of concrete places, or localities, and despite the rush of incoming global influences: their minute and precise blend of ecological, geographical, climatic, historical, linguistic political, economic / occupational characteristics and cluster of unique social networks. As embodied creatures and by virtue of our corporeality and therefore continuous physical as well as other needs we cannot escape the need for emplacement. As Bourdieu (2000: 135) noted, if we do not have a place in which to live out our physical existence we 'lack social existence'. Then there are the pressing and inescapable demands of everyday life pulling us inwards towards its many attractions and compulsions: going to work, taking the children to school, fighting for a place on the morning train or in the super market queue, getting on with our neighbours, taking the dog for its walk, remembering mother's birthday and much else besides. Thirdly, there are what Hannerz (2003) defined as the repeated, routinized interpersonal cultural 'forms of life' that are imprinted from childhood, embedded in memory and locked into the shared affiliations that surround households, neighbourhoods and work places.<sup>v</sup> These influences are 'massively present and for most people they provide the 'formative experience of early life' (69) which remain with nearly all individuals as they move through their life course.

Given all this, the resilience of the local for virtually all citizens in the face of vast globalizing processes should not surprise us. Being bound into the 'local' is normal, ubiquitous, unavoidable and essential. Nor should we be surprised by the anger expressed by those who have benefitted little if at all from recent economic transformations, including globalization, and for whom the survival and vibrancy of the local remains their central resource and refuge in the face of the vast forces seemingly ranged against their needs and way of lives. We return to thoughts concerning the resilience and significance of the local in the final section.

### **Where do we go from here? The power of localism.**

I have argued that some globalization theorist underplayed the resilience of local identities and lifeways and overplayed the hegemonic role of global forces in supposedly

subordinating and absorbing the local in all its many manifestations - whether as place, everyday life or kinship and ethnos. Focussing on this central point I believe that several important themes need to be kept carefully in mind when we think about globalization processes and their impact.

First it is crucial to remember that the current outpouring of populist sentiments and views represent only one form of localism, albeit a form that carries certain dangers for democracy. It also seems highly unlikely to heal the very social divisions, fractures and frustrations which contributed to the rise of populism in the first place.

Second, diverging social class interests and orientations in respect to globalization are frequently a direct result of each social group's particular need for and cultural preference in respect to localism as well as their understanding of it. Thus, in France, while 'globalism' is 'overwhelmingly endorsed by the upper classes' – with their metropolitan outlook and attachments, gentrified properties and multiple advantages derived from being able to sell their skills on the world market – 'a clear majority of the working class is committed to sovereignty... as a counterbalance to globalization' (Guilluy 2019: 118). Along with this comes an enduring attachment to concrete places and to the same 'national flag' as that revered by parents and ancestors. Writing about the UK Collier (2018: 59), too, emphasizes the urgent need for governments to recognize the continuing and perhaps strengthening desire of the less well-off and those hurt by globalization and technological change for a restored sense of belonging to place. 'People' he claims, 'have a fundamental need to *belong*' and to identify 'with some place as *home*'. Intellectuals and the new upper class must somehow enact policies and foster a public space which recognizes the power of national identity and accepts how little most ordinary citizens care or understand about global obligations and the idea of becoming citizens of the world. Nations must find viable strategies for 'rebuilding shared identity that is compatible with modernity' but which avoids the 'the myth of ethnic purity' and white nationalism (64).

Third, equally we should bear in mind Guilluy's point that even France's immigrants living in the urban banlieues on the outskirts of the cities are as much attached to those places where they live as the white populist-native majority who are often suspicious or even hostile to immigrants. But this represents only one aspect of the immigrant experience in respect to localism. Thus, there is a vast anthropological literature which explores the more recent immigrant flows from the Global South into the EU and North America and

which contrasts them with the European migrants in the nineteenth century who went to America, Canada, Brazil and so on. Although the latter retained their family and cultural connections to their homelands for several generations most intended to seek full assimilation to their host countries and eventually did so despite retaining some sense of thinned-down cultural identity in respect to their homelands. While today's immigrants from the Global South certainly aim or hope to achieve full citizenship rights, most have no intention of relinquishing their feelings of national identity and concrete involvement with their country of origin. Consequently, researchers describe how immigrants' construct transnational social networks spanning continents – and sometimes involving multiple countries in the case of diasporic links – and which centre on their continuing ties to families and villages, remitting money back home, retaining a concern with land rights and political-religious conflicts and much else besides. Instead of 'melting pot' societies today, then, we find a 'salad bowl' society of cultural pluralism.

Of course, this is precisely one of the objections to immigrants frequently articulated by ordinary native people, certain journalists and populist leaders. It is also a major cause of the anxiety concerning multiculturalism articulated by many. But in respect to the power of localism – both as a defence against insecurity and as a 'normal' aspect of everyday life on the part of both native and immigrant populations – what we are seeing here is two sides of the same coin. Especially in an era of economic and cultural uncertainty we find white native citizens claiming, asserting and needing their localism - whether in respect to immigrants or as a bulwark against the vicissitudes of everyday life - while the latter's own attachment to local identity is equally strong but is drawn both towards the host-society niche they have constructed and their continuing, valued transnational affiliation to a distant homeland.

Fourth, and turning to a very different dimension of the global-local situation, we cannot avoid discussing the most serious and threatening of all the issues facing not just the Western countries but the world as a whole: namely, climate change, diminishing biodiversity, soil erosion, and so on. Perhaps the most urgent question relating to the environment currently being debated by ecologists, scientists, politicians and others revolves around the issue of whether human societies can continue to pursue economic prosperity through further economic growth while averting planetary collapse at the same time. In respect to global warming the IPCC's Report in 2014 (cited in Stern 2007: 260) suggested that the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of nearly 32 gigatons in 2011 needs to fall to around 18

gigatons per year by 2050 in order to keep global temperature from rising above the 2C level and given the cumulative emissions so far. Indeed, it would be preferable to cut annual emissions below this level. Starting with these figures Jackson (2017: 99-101) calculated the emission reductions that would be necessary in order for the world to meet various different future scenarios. Taking into account current average rates of population growth and the amount by which all the world's regions would need to 'catch up' to the high income levels enjoyed by the West today, he argued that the global economy in 2050 would be around 11 times larger than it is at present. But taking into account the enormous rise in CO emissions this would produce and the absolute necessity to cut these current emissions by around 95 per cent it would be necessary to lower the carbon intensity of each unit of output so that it was 200 times lower than the average carbon intensity in the global economy today (100). Jackson described as 'heroic' (2017: 99) the expectations – or burdens – being placed on the various technological 'fixes' that some believe can enable humanity to achieve these goals.

Confronted with the awesome risks of climate change and the corresponding volume of rapid socio-economic changes that are necessary in order to overcome them, a growing number of observers are suggesting that what is needed, perhaps, is some kind of post-growth economy (Jackson 2017, Latouche 2009 and Kallis 2018). This would involve at least a partial de-materialization of current production processes on a vast scale or a decoupling of the global economy from the environment. Jackson defines relative decoupling as 'doing more with less' (87). Absolute decoupling, on the other hand, requires a scenario where economic growth is entirely separated from the 'growth in inputs to the economy' (Trainer 2014: 56) and is far more difficult and problematic.

However, we may think about these questions of environmental risk and the need to confront them they bring additional and indeed vital elements to the fore in the debate concerning globalization processes and the relationship between the local-global. Thus, it seems obvious that only concerted cooperative endeavour on the part of scientists – as in the past – and collaborative agreements by governments can resolve the scale and all-encompassing nature of environmental risk. Yet at the other extreme, reaching some kind of post-growth society would need to be based on simultaneously scaling down material expectations but also the fostering of far more self-reliance and therefore the re-localization of much production. Whether or not this transformation in the organization of economic

and social life occurred gradually or quite fast and whether it took place within or alongside a shrinking capitalist economy or in complete separation from it, cooperative endeavour and a far greater use and sharing of common resources would become central. Moreover, the measure of human well-being would require that the expectation of constantly growing per capita GDP increasingly took second rather than first place. Clearly, in this scenario the local and localism become re-established as the central basis of socio-economic life. A major shift takes place.

Yet, the global also takes on a new significance and indeed becomes essential for the revival and success of local living within the context of environmental sustainability. For one thing, there is every reason to suppose that information technology and the resources of the digital world, with their cost-cutting advantage for facilitating communication, networking possibilities and peer-to-peer opportunities for sharing immediate knowledge and cost-free resources, will remain crucial for localized and de-centralized societies (Rifkin 2014, Mason 2015 and Kostakis and Bauwens 2014). At the same time, the interconnectivity provided by globalization and bolstered by digitalization would become a vehicle for achieving not just the exchange of ideas and the sharing of some limited physical resources but also for seeking and perhaps guaranteeing mutual protection. This form of globalization would be both essential as a resource for allowing new localised cooperative economies to flourish but also as a safeguard against slides towards authoritarian and nativist localism. Bauwens and Kostakis (2017: 33) also suggest that particularly given the ‘changing cultural expectations of millennial and post-millennial generations among the young and their requirement for meaningful engagements and work which are hardly met by the current regime’ the number of people who could provide the basis for the transition to commons-based local and cooperative society is growing rapidly. But they go further and envisage ‘assemblies’ of affiliated commons-based groups being held at the regional level as well as the formation of transnational coalitions which can build ““counter-hegemonic”” (32) power at the global level capable of holding states and capitalism to account. In this future environmentally safer world the local would be stronger and more encompassing than perhaps it is now but the potential for the global to remain vital to its very survival will, if anything, become more evident and necessary.

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<sup>i</sup> In the same article (*The Guardian*, May 14<sup>th</sup>) Mudde also argues that the decline in working class support for social democratic parties began earlier, during the early 1990s, and then accelerated from the late 1990s onwards. In other words, the diminishing support for the Centre-Left parties preceded the rise of Right-Populism and was primarily due to the 'transformation of an industry-based economy into a service-based economy' (10). We take up a very similar argument later in the paper.

<sup>ii</sup> But see the final paragraph in this section on rent seeking.

<sup>iii</sup> Oxfam International reported in January 2018 that more than four-fifths (82%) of all new wealth created during the previous year went to the top 1% or wealthiest people while the bottom 3.7 billion population gained no additional wealth. It added that since 2010 the wealth of the world's billionaires had risen by an average of 13% each year which was around 6 times greater than any rise in wages enjoyed by wage workers.  
<https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2018-18-01-22/richest-1-percent-bagged-82-percent-wealth-created-last-year>.

<sup>iv</sup> 'The rentiers are here': <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/rise-of-rentier-capitalism-by-stephanie-blankenburg-2-and-richard-kozul-wright-2017-09>.

<sup>v</sup> Even highly educated cosmopolitan travellers also need to put down roots wherever they find themselves. Moreover, on their travels they seek co-presence and need to 'flock together' in boardrooms, professional meetings, city bars, hotels and restaurants (Boden and Molotch 1994: 272).