
TOWARDS A COMMODIFIED WORLD? RE-READING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN WESTERN ECONOMIES

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Abstract

A recurring assumption across the social sciences is that non-market economic practices are disappearing and being replaced by commodified practices where goods and services are produced and delivered for monetized exchange by capitalist firms for profit-motivated purposes. In this paper, this commodification thesis is evaluated critically. Analyzing the volume of commodified and non-commodified work in the advanced economies, the commodified sphere is revealed to be far from hegemonic and receding rather than penetrating deeper during the last four decades. This is here explained in terms of both the prevalence of resistance cultures to market-ism and the contradictions inherent in the structural shift towards commodification. The outcome is a call to transcend the view of the commodified realm as victorious, all-powerful and hegemonic, and for greater recognition to be given to the feasibility of alternative futures beyond a commodified world.

Introduction

The idea that we live in a "capitalist" world organized around the systematic pursuit of profit in the marketplace is something commonly assumed by business leaders, journalists and academic commentators of all political persuasions. The predominant meta-narrative about economic development is that there has been a shift away from (pre-modern or traditional) non-commodified work in western economies and towards the production and delivery of goods and services for monetised exchange by capitalist firms for the purpose of profit. The starting point of this paper, however, is recognition that despite the popularity of this view about the trajectory of economic development, evidence has been rarely presented to validate this commodification thesis.

Given that the very basis of the social sciences is that any theory should be corroborated before being accepted, the aim of this paper is to subject this reading of economic development to critical scrutiny. After all, no other idea in the social sciences is accepted without detailed corroboration and there is no reason why this widely accepted notion should not be subjected to the same close scrutiny. Here, in consequence, this dominant reading of economic development that closes off the future to anything other than a commodified world is put under the spotlight. To do this, answers will be sought to a series of questions. How deeply has the commodified realm penetrated western economies? Is the trend towards ever more commodified economies? Or do non-market economic practices persist? If so, how can their persistence be explained? And what are the implications for understanding economic development and the future of work?

To answer these questions, firstly, the commodification thesis that so dominates, albeit often implicitly, social scientific enquiry is outlined and following this, the extent to which profit-motivated monetised transactions have displaced non-commodified economic practices is evaluated critically. Revealing that even in the so-called advanced "market" economies, the penetration of the market is relatively shallow and that there is little evidence of its on-going incursion, it will be argued that the non-commodified sphere can be no longer viewed as a minor vestige of some pre-capitalist past. Arguing that the persistence of non-commodified economic practices result from a combination of both the existence of cultures of resistance to market-ism and the contradictions inherent in the structural shifts associated with the pursuit of commodification, the paper thus concludes with a call to transcend the view that the market is victorious, colonizing and all-powerful and for greater recognition to be given to the possibility of alternative futures for work beyond a commodified world.

The Commodification Thesis

Every society has to produce, distribute, and allocate the goods and services that people need to live. Consequently, all societies have an economy of some type. Economies, nevertheless, can be organized in a wide variety of different ways. To depict their organization, most analyses tend to differentiate three modes of producing and delivering goods and services, namely the "market", the "state" and the "community" [Giddens, 1998; Gough, 2000; Polanyi, 1944]. Viewed through this lens, the widespread consensus is that most countries are witnessing a common trajectory so far as their trajectory of economic development is concerned. The dominant view is that the market (or what I also here call the commodified sphere) is becoming more powerful, expansive, hegemonic and totalising as it penetrates deeper into each and every corner of economic life and extends its tentacles across the globe to colonize those areas previously left untouched by its powerful force [Carruthers and Babb, 2000; Ciscel and Heath, 2001; Gudeman, 2001; Thrift, 2000; Watts, 1999].

This process of commodification, or what is sometimes referred to as "commercialism" or "marketization", where goods and services are increasingly produced by capitalist forms for a profit under conditions of market exchange [Scott, 2001], is seen to be leading to a predominantly commodified mode of economic organization where firstly, goods and services are produced for exchange, secondly, these exchanges are monetized and third and finally, monetary exchanges are driven by the profit motive. Given that the

non-commodified realm is by definition composed of work not possessing one or more these characteristics, this sphere can be here divided into three distinctive forms of work. Firstly, there is non-exchanged or subsistence work, secondly, non-monetized exchange and third and finally, monetized exchange where the motive of profit is not to the fore.

One of the most worrying and disturbing aspects of this commodification thesis that western economies are "capitalist" societies organized around the systematic pursuit of profit in the marketplace is that despite its overwhelming predominance, hardly any evidence is ever brought to the fore by its exponents either to show that commodification is occurring or even to indicate the extent, pace or unevenness of the penetration of the commodified sphere. For example, the pronouncements by Rifkin [2000: p.3] that "The marketplace is a pervasive force in our lives", Ciscel and Heath [2001: p. 401] that capitalism is transforming "every human interaction into a transient market exchange" and Gudeman [2001: p.144] that "markets are subsuming greater portions of everyday life" are made with no supporting evidence. Similarly, the assertion by Carruthers and Babb [2000: p.4] that there has been "the near-complete penetration of market relations into our modern economic lives" is justified by nothing more than the statement that "markets enter our lives today in many ways 'too numerous to be mentioned'" and the spurious and fuzzy notion that the spread of commodified *ways of viewing* particular spheres of life portray how commodification has stretched its tentacles ever deeper into daily life. Watts [1999: p. 312], in the same vein, supports his assertion that although "commodification is not complete ...the reality of capitalism is that ever more of social life is mediated through and by the market" merely by avowing that subsistence economies are increasingly rare.

This depiction of the thin evidence offered by these commentators is by no means exceptional. On the whole, there is little, if any, attempt by commentators to move beyond what Martin and Sunley [2001: p.152] in another context term "vague theory and thin empirics". Perhaps if this was some insignificant process or just "academic" theory in the most derogatory sense of the word (i.e., of little or no importance), it might not matter that corroboration is not provided. However, the commodification thesis is seemingly the major driving force underpinning the current policy thrust to restructure both "transition" economies and the "third world" towards a commodified system. It also underpins the focus upon the market in economic development policies throughout the western economies. It is thus crucial that this key issue is analyzed. Without corroboration, one will not know whether the current emphasis in economic policy on the market realm is built on firm foundations or not.

Until now, however, the only issues investigated have been the unevenness of its penetration [Gough, 2000; Lee, 2000; Thrift, 2000; Watts, 1999] or the deleterious social consequences of its incursion into everyday life [Byrne et al, 1998; Slater and Tonkiss, 2001]. Few have questioned whether commodification is actually taking place. Even those recognizing that there exist both commodified and non-commodified economic practices do not question whether the trajectory is towards a commodified world [Cornelieau, 2002; Kovel, 2002; Slater and Tonkiss, 2001]. Here, therefore, an attempt is made to move beyond this recognition that non-commodified economic practices persist in "market economies" and to evaluate whether the market realm has penetrated wider and deeper over time.

Towards a Commodified World? a critical evaluation

To assess whether the colonizing commodified sphere is over time displacing the non-commodified sphere, the component parts of the commodification thesis will be here investigated. If this thesis is correct, then firstly, monetised exchange should be expanding relative to non-exchanged work and non-monetised exchange and secondly, this monetised exchange should be conducted for profit-motivated purposes.

Non-exchanged work

To estimate the volume of non-exchanged work relative to paid work, in theory, the volume and/or value of the inputs or outputs of each form of work could be estimated [Goldschmidt-Clermond, 1982; Luxton, 1997]. In practice, however, it is the volume and value of the inputs that have been measured using time-budget diaries [Gershuny, 2000; Murgatroyd and Neuburger, 1997; Robinson and Godbey, 1997]. Respondents fill in diaries listing the activities in which they engage in each segment of the day and from this, the time spent on various types of work is calculated.

Analyzing the reported results of time-budget studies in twenty countries, Table 1 reveals that non-exchanged work (or what is more commonly referred to as unpaid domestic work) occupies 44.7 per cent of total working time. It appears, therefore, that the reach of the market is rather more limited than so far imagined by exponents of the commodification thesis. Non-exchanged work, so long considered a marginal "other", is only slightly smaller than paid work, measured in terms of the amount of time spent on it. Indeed, in some countries (e.g., Canada, France, Netherlands, UK, USA), more time is spent in non-exchanged work than paid work.

Table 1
The trajectory of economic development: unpaid domestic work as a % of total work time, 1960 - Present

Country	1960-73	1974-84	1985- Present	Trend
Canada	56.9	55.4	54.2	Monetisation
Denmark	41.4	-	43.3	De-monetisation
France ^a	52.0	55.5	57.5	De-monetisation
Netherlands	-	55.9	57.9	De-monetisation
Norway	57.1	55.4	-	Monetisation
UK	52.1	49.7	53.9	De-monetisation
USA ^b	56.9	57.6	58.4	De-monetisation
Hungary	53.6	46.8	-	Monetisation
Finland	-	51.8	54.5	De-monetisation
20 Countries	43.4	42.7	44.7	De-monetisation

Sources:

a. Chadeau and Fouquet (1981), Roy (1991), Dumontier and Pan Ke Shon (1999)

b. Robinson and Godbey (1997)

Other countries derived from Gershuny (2000: Tables 7.6, 7.12, 7.16)

This finding is perhaps not surprising. When Polanyi [1944] depicted "the great transformation" from a non-market to a market society, he went to great lengths to emphasize that this was merely a shift in the market/non-market balance. He never asserted that it would be total. Even if some, especially of a political economy persuasion [Harvey, 1982, 1989], have since depicted commodification as rather more complete than Polanyi ever wished to portray, the above evidence clearly demonstrates that he was quite correct not to exaggerate its reach.

Table 1 denotes that it might be also presumptuous to talk of an expansive and colonizing commodified realm. The shift of work from the unpaid domestic sphere to the paid sphere has not only stalled over the past forty years but in some nations, it has even gone into reverse. In countries such as Denmark, Finland, France, the UK and the USA, unpaid domestic work now occupies a greater share of people's total working time than it did four decades ago. It is important to note, nevertheless, that this is not due to an absolute growth in the time spent on such work. It is because the time spent in paid work has decreased faster than the time spent in unpaid domestic work.

One reading of these shifts in time allocation is that over the past four decades a so far unidentified second "great transformation" has begun to occur whereby the paid/unpaid work balance has started to shift back towards the unpaid domestic sphere. An alternative interpretation, looking wider than these shifts in work, is that the growing time spent on non-work activities, such as recreation and leisure, coupled with the on-going commodification of such consumption, displays the advent of a market-based consumer culture. However these data are interpreted, the important point here is that working life is not becoming more market-orientated, as propounded by exponents of the commodification thesis.

Indeed, the data in Table 1 is likely to be over-estimating the degree to which working life is now commodified. Firstly, this is because time-budget studies exaggerate the time spent in paid work. Not only is participation in education often included under this heading in time-budget studies but respondents also frequently count the time spent in activity associated with the employment-place as paid work, including meal- and coffee-breaks, associated travel and socializing [Gershuny, 2000]. Secondly, it is because unpaid domestic work is often under-estimated in time-budget studies. Time spent both planning and managing one's own and others' activities [Haicault, 1984] and participating in emotional and affective activity, as well as non-monetised exchange, is often not counted as unpaid domestic work but as leisure and socializing [Chabaud-Richter and Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, 1985]. The

third and final reason that the paid/unpaid balance identified by these time-budget studies cannot represent a proxy of the extent or pace of commodification, as will be discussed below, is that not all forms of monetised exchange are conducted under market-like relations for profit-motivated purposes.

Non-monetised exchange

For exponents of the commodification thesis such as Harvey [1982: p. 373], "Monetary relations have penetrated every nook and cranny of the world and into almost every aspect of social, even private life", or as Rifkin [1990: p. 30] puts it, "What we have lived through in the rich world has been the accelerating passage of non-monetised activity into the formal economy, its colonization by market transactions". Is it the case, in consequence, that non-monetised exchange has all but disappeared in "market" societies?

It takes little more than a moment's reflection to recognize that such activity persists. Throughout western economies, people continue to engage in voluntary work and unpaid community exchange or mutual aid. Take, for example, the UK. A 2001 UK government survey [Prime et al, 2002] reports that some 3.7 billion hours of volunteering took place in the previous 12 months. This is the equivalent in hours to the total work of just over 2 million people employed on a full-time basis (i.e., at 35 hours per week). Put another way, for every 14 hours worked in formal employment in the UK (assuming 27 million people working an average of 35 hours), approximately one hour is spent engaged in non-monetised work. Given that this represents some 7 per cent of the total time spent in formal employment, such work is thus far from some marginal leftover, especially and as will be shown in the next section, given that not all paid work is commodified work.

It is similarly the case in other western economies. In South Australia in 2000, Ironmonger [2002] reports that volunteers donated the equivalent of an additional 11.5 per cent of Gross State Product (GSP) to other households, both directly and through organizations and groups. These donations are additional to actual cash donations made directly to other households or through charitable organizations. If total volunteer time is measured in relation to the total wages earned by South Australian employees, meanwhile, such non-monetised activity represents an additional 21.7 per cent of the total value of the wages paid to employees in employment in South Australia in 2000.

There is little evidence furthermore, that non-monetised exchange is declining over time. As Table 2 displays, South Australian volunteering represented the equivalent of an additional 7.8 per cent of GSP (Gross State Product) in 1992 but an extra 11.5 per cent of GSP in 2000. Put another way, total volunteer time

was equivalent to an additional 14.1 per cent of the total value of the wages paid to employees in employment in South Australia in 1992 and 21.7 per cent in 2000.

Table 2
Total value of volunteer work in South Australia, 1992-2000

Volunteering	1992	1995	1997	2000	% Change 1992-97	% Change 1995- 2000
Organized (\$m)	566	948	1,272	1,810	124%	91%
Unorganised (\$m)	1,325	1,650	1,931	2,356	46%	43%
Travel (\$m)	465	575	670	814	44%	42%
Total value	2,357	3,174	3,873	4,980	64%	57%
Gross State product (\$b)	30.3	34.6	37.9	43.3	25%	25%
Compensation of employees (\$b)	14.8	16.9	18.4	20.35	24%	20%

Source: Ironmonger (2002: Table 5)

Akin to the sphere of non-exchanged work, therefore, the realm of non-monetary exchange appears to be growing relative to the market sphere. On these two counts, therefore, it is difficult to accept the core tenet of the commodification thesis that the market economy is penetrating deeper and wider.

Not-for-profit monetary exchanges

The notion that the only type of monetary exchange is that which is profit-motivated runs deep across economic discourses ranging from neo-classical to Marxist thought. As Jessop [2002] stresses, reading monetary exchange as always profit-motivated serves the interests of both neo-liberals whose belief is that this must be met with open arms and radical theorists who use this as a call to arms to resist its further encroachment. The result is a perpetuation of this crude view of monetized exchange. This is reinforced by a formalist anthropological tradition that sees exchange mechanisms in advanced economies as less embedded, thinner, less loaded with social meaning and less symbolic than in pre-industrial societies [Mauss, 1966]. As Crewe and Gregson [1998: p. 39-54] so incisively note, however, "the major defect of such market-based models of exchange is simply

that they do not convey the richness and messiness of the exchange experience" in western economies.

Recently, therefore, the profit-motivated view of monetized exchange has started to be contested by a range of commentators. Drawing upon the earlier work of Polanyi [1944], the formalist anthropology approach that read profit-motivated markets to be the universal economic mechanism in western economies has been challenged from a "substantivist" anthropological position which argues that economic relations are always socially embedded [Crang, 1996; Crewe and Gregson, 1998; Lee, 2000; Zelizer, 1994]. Numerous studies interrogating what Leyshon *et al* [2003] term "alternative economic spaces" such as car boot sales [Crewe and Gregson, 1998], nearly new sales and classified advertisements [Clarke, 1998], second-hand and informal retail channels [Williams and Paddock, 2003], inflation-free local currency experiments such as Local Exchange and Trading Schemes [Lee, 1996; Williams et al, 2001], sweat-equity money projects such as time dollars [Cahn, 2000; Seyfang and Smith, 2002] and gift-giving [Carrier, 1990] have uncovered that monetary exchanges are not always and necessarily imbued with the profit-motive.

Of course, by studying only small spaces viewed as existing on the "margins" of the mainstream economy, these studies fail to provide any significant challenge to those who view monetary transactions as imbued with the profit motive. Such spaces where the profit motive is absent can be explained away as minor, trivial or marginal practices existing beyond the mainstream commodity economy, and labeled "peripheral" or even "superfluous" spaces [Martin and Sunley, 2001]. To more forcefully challenge the supposedly inextricable relationship between monetary transactions and the profit motive, in consequence, some of the larger spaces of paid work need to be unraveled. Here, therefore, three spheres of activity are briefly analyzed: the public sector; the not-for-profit sector, and mainstream private sector enterprises.

The State. If goods and services were increasingly delivered by the state that by definition is not orientated towards profit, then it could be concluded that monetary exchange is not ever more dominated by the profit motive. However, this is not the case. Privatization and quasi-privatization of the public sphere, the contracting out of goods and services previously provided by the state directly, and various public-private finance initiatives [Tickell, 2001] all suggest a transfer in the mode of delivery of goods and services from the state to the market. They intimate that the relationship between monetized exchange and the profit motive is becoming stronger.

However, some caution is required. Just because the state provides fewer

goods and services on a direct basis does not necessarily mean that profit-motivated exchange is becoming more dominant. Not all of these goods and services are being provided by the private sector. Many are being transferred to not-for-profit organizations [Amin et al, 2002; Birchall, 2001] and this suggests a weaker relationship between the profit motive and monetized exchange. And even when they are provided by the private sector, it is by no means certain that profit is the sole motive in attendance.

The not-for-profit sector. The not-for-profit sector is here defined as organizations that are private, not profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary in that membership in them is not legally required and they attract some level of voluntary contribution of time or money. Using this common definition, the John Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project, has provided a baseline assessment of its size and nature in 26 countries [Salamon *et al*, 1998].

The findings provide strong evidence that this sector is not some insignificant backwater but is in fact a major "third prong" in the mixed economies that constitute western nations. In the 26 countries studied, they identify that the transactions of non-profit organizations represented 4.6 per cent of GDP on average across these nations, and comprised some 31 million full-time equivalent workers (or 6.8 per cent of the non-agricultural workforce) including 19.7 million full-time equivalent paid workers and 11.3 million full-time equivalent volunteer workers. The not-for-profit sector, in consequence, is a large non-commodified sphere that cannot be dismissed as of marginal importance and nor can it be assumed that the transfer of responsibility for delivering goods and services away from the state has resulted in a universal shift to the market rather than the not-for-profit sector. Indeed, this sector is growing relative to the wider formal economy over time. Examining the changes in non-profit sector full-time equivalent (FTE) employment relative to overall employment, Table 3 displays that in all eight nations analyzed (with the exception of Israel), not-for-profit sector job growth has outstripped total job growth.

Table 3
Changes in non-profit sector FTE employment, by country, 1990-1995

Country	Non-profit sector 1990-95 change		Total economy* 1990-95 change	
	Net (000s)	as % of 1990 level	Net (000s)	as % of 1990 level
France	157	20%	-329	- 2%
Germany	422	42%	2163	8%
Hungary	12	37%	-25	-1%

Israel	19	15%	395	33%
Japan	450	27%	7525	14%
Netherlands	41	7%	240	5%
UK**	119	28%	-202	-1%
USA	1360	20%	8080	8%
EU total/ av. 4 countries	740	24%	1872	3%
Other total/ av. 4 countries	1842	25%	15976	14%
Total/Average	2583	24%	17848	8%

* Total non-agricultural employment

** Excluding sport and recreation, unions and parts of education

Source: John Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project
(www.jhu.edu/~cnp/compdata.html)

In the US, for example, although there was an overall increase in FTE employment of 8 per cent between 1990 and 1995, the growth in FTE employment in the not-for-profit sector was 20 per cent. In the four EU nations considered (France, Germany, the UK and Netherlands), meanwhile, the 24 per growth in overall FTE employment in the not-for-profit sector far outstripped the 3 per cent growth in the economy as a whole, thus accounting for 40 per cent of total employment growth (3.8 million new FTE jobs). In the three other developed countries for which there were employment data (Israel, Japan and the US), the increase averaged 21 per cent, though this accounted for a somewhat smaller 11 per cent of the 16 million new FTE jobs.

The only conclusion that can be reached is that the not-for-profit sector is a large and growing sphere of activity. Indeed, the inference is that the relationship between monetised exchange and the profit motive might well be growing weaker rather than stronger.

The Private Sector. Is it the case that whenever the private sector engages in monetary transactions, the motive of profit is to the fore? To deconstruct this belief so as to deprive capitalism of its solid coherent identity, numerous studies have displayed recently that private sector enterprises are not all, and always, driven by a common imperative of profit. There is now a vast literature that displays that the motive of profit is by no means always to the fore in private sector businesses. Other goals that might be pursued include growth of sales, securing control over a field of transactions, maximizing their own management payments, such as expense accounts and superior accommodation, or preserving corporate reputation [Lee, 2000; Morel, 2003; O'Neill and Gibson-Graham, 1999; Schoenberger, 1998].

To take just one case study, O'Neill and Gibson-Graham [1999] explore how competing discourses of management shape the fluid entity that is unproblematically represented as "the capitalist firm". Examining an Australian minerals and steel multinational, they produce a disruptive reading that displays the de-centered and disorganized actions taken in response to multiple logics circulating within and outside the corporation. Their analysis portrays the firm as an unpredictable and potentially open site, rather than as a set of practices unified by a predictable logic of profit maximization. No longer tethered to such a pre-ordained economic logic, the enterprise then becomes recognizable as an ordinary social institution; one that often fails to enact its will and realize its goals or even fails to come to a coherent conception of what these might be.

Hence, even in the commercial sphere, so dominantly perceived as the embodiment of the profit motive, enterprises are not always tethered to the motive of profit and profit alone.

Explaining the Persistence of Non-Commodified Work

Given the sheer size of the non-commodified sphere in western economies and its apparent growth rather than decline relative to the commodified realm, it is here necessary to explain the persistence and even expansion of this sphere.

One option is to read its growth to be the result of a new post-Fordist regime of accumulation that has off-loaded social reproduction functions from the market sphere back onto the non-commodified realm [Castells and Portes, 1989; Portes, 1994]. In this reading, the breakdown of the post-war economic regulations and welfare states through a trend of deregulation and flexibilisation of social relations of production and the transferring of social services to private and communal hands has resulted in a practice of de-commodification. Non-commodified relations are re-colonizing spaces of production (and reproduction) previously covered by the market and state.

In this economic explanation, it is the contradictions inherent in the process of commodification that has led to the de-commodification of some spheres of social reproduction. To compete in the global marketplace in realms where goods and services can generate external income, western economies have reduced social costs by re-imposing activities associated with social reproduction onto the non-commodified sphere. This is reflected in the decrease in expenditure on social protection as a percentage of GDP throughout the 1990s, even in a region such as the European Union that is comparatively supportive of comprehensive formal welfare provision [European Commission, 2001]. Those no longer of use to capitalism, in this reading, are therefore being off-loaded onto the non-market

sphere to eke out their living.

However, can all non-market activity be interpreted in such a manner? As the distribution of non-commodified work has been unpacked and the rationales underpinning these economic practice unraveled, it has become apparent that this is a necessary but insufficient explanation. Numerous studies display that although affluent populations lead more commodified lifestyles, their volume of non-market activity is actually greater [Williams and Windebank, 2003]. For less affluent populations, engagement in non-market work tends to be confined to routine, monotonous and unrewarding work whilst for affluent populations, it is more orientated towards non-routine, creative and rewarding activities. Unraveling their contrasting motives, furthermore, the finding is that although deprived populations engage in such activity mostly out of economic necessity, for affluent populations it is more a matter of choice. As such, although the above economistic discourse appears to ring true so far as less affluent populations are concerned, it appears that this needs to be complemented with more agency-oriented narratives to fully explain this sphere.

One option in this regard is to read the continuing prevalence of non-market work to be a result of the existence of cultures of resistance to commodification [Byrne et al, 1998; Community Economies collective, 2001; Crang, 1996; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Lee, 2000; Zelizer, 1994]. Seen through this lens, the persistence and growth of non-market work displays how the increasing dissatisfaction with formal employment is resulting in participation in non-market activity as people search for alternative sources of work satisfaction and pleasure due to its absence in their employment [Gorz, 1999; Williams and Windebank, 2003], thus reinforcing the view of Urry [2000: p.146] that "a largely unintended effect of a highly individualized and marketized society has been the intensification of social practices which systematically 'evade the edicts of exchange value and the logic of the market'" . Certainly, this reading of non-commodified economic practices as "spaces of hope" [Harvey, 2000] is important for explaining such work amongst affluent populations, even if the view of them as "spaces of despair" continues to have more resonance for deprived populations.

Discussion and Conclusions

Until now, the widely held view in economic development has been that there is only one development path and it is towards a commodified world. Consider, for example, how the world is conventionally divided up into a first, second and third world. The first world, composed of the supposedly advanced 'market' economies of the west, are so defined because they have supposedly undergone the transformation from non-market to market modes of production to

the greatest extent. Based on the assumption that commodification is a natural and inevitable trajectory of economic development that all nations will and must follow, these first world nations are thus placed at the front of the queue in this linear and uni-dimensional vision of economic development while those nations in the second and third world are positioned behind them in the queue due to their slower progression towards the hegemony of the market.

Indeed, so dominant is this depiction of a universal trajectory of economic development towards commodification that the countries comprising the second world of central and east Europe are now commonly referred to as 'transition' economies because they are seen to be undergoing a transformation from a state-oriented economic system to one in which the market becomes more hegemonic. The way in which economies more grounded in non-exchanged work are labeled 'backward' compared with economic systems that are market-oriented, meanwhile, is nowhere better seen than in those countries aggregated together under the banner of the third world. Labeled 'developing', 'undeveloped' or 'underdeveloped' countries precisely due to their slowness in moving towards commodification, these name-tags denote that there is only one possible trajectory available to them and a singular route to progress, and it is towards a commodified world.

The outcome of such a commodification discourse, therefore, is that the future is closed. There is only one future so far as the story of economic development is concerned and it is one in which economies pursue a linear and unidimensional development path towards a commodified world. Based on this view, governments of western nations have tended to concentrate on developing this commodified sphere and viewed the non-commodified realm as at best, playing a supportive role and at worst, deleterious to development and something to be commodified so as to allow the trajectory of economic development to be implemented.

Indeed, there is now a widespread view that "the pervasive reach of exchange-value society makes it ever more difficult to imagine and legitimate non-market forms of organization and provision" (Amin et al, 2002: 60). In this paper, however, the identification of a large non-commodified realm that for the past four decades has been growing rather than contracting relative to the commodified sphere has begun to raise doubts not only about whether the market is so victorious, colonizing and all-powerful as this dominant discourse intimates but also about whether the future is as closed as commentators such as Amin et al (2002) imagine.

It appears that advocates of commodification, by allowing capitalist

imperatives to colonize their imagination, have not only obfuscated the economic plurality that characterizes advanced economies but also failed to recognize that at the heart of this supposedly commodified world - in the advanced economies - there is a process of de-commodification taking place. In this concluding section, therefore, I wish to explore some of the implications of this finding for economic development thought and action.

Given that the market appears to be receding relative to the non-market sphere in the advanced economies, it no longer appears that the future is cast in the straitjacket of an ever wider and deeper encroachment of the market. Instead, it seems that the future is much more open and full of possibilities than many previously assumed. Here, therefore, I wish to review various policy options available to advanced economies so far as the pursuit of economic development is concerned.

To do this, three possible policy approaches towards the non-commodified sphere are briefly evaluated, namely pursuing the commodification of this non-market realm, doing nothing about such work and cultivating it. The first option of commodifying non-market practices (e.g., by encouraging the use of commodified labor in the realms of child-care, routine housework, home improvement and maintenance), as intimated above, might not be either feasible or desirable. There seems to be a commodified/non-commodified balance beyond the limits of which populations either cannot, or do not wish to, pass. Put another way, there exist 'blockages' to further commodification. This is displayed, on the one hand, by the fact that non-market practices persist amongst affluent populations who refuse to accept the further encroachment of commodification into their lives. They engage, for example, in 'do-it-yourself' activity in home improvement or maintenance work rather than using commodified labor to get tasks completed as part of a search for work satisfaction beyond their commodified work. On the other hand, such blockages to commodification amongst more marginalized populations tend to be purely economic; such populations simply cannot afford to commodify many activities. Whether the cause is cultures of resistance or economic constraints, therefore, it seems that blockages prevent the advent of an ever more commodified world. These now require much fuller investigation than has so far been the case.

If the commodification of much non-market work does not appear achievable, then another option is to pursue a *laissez-faire* approach towards the non-commodified sphere. The problem with this policy option, however, and as indicated above, seems to be that those cast adrift from the commodified realm in the advanced economies are also those least able to eke out a living in the non-commodified sphere. As such, a strategy of doing nothing does not appear feasible. Such an approach would serve merely to perpetuate the current inequalities where

those marginalized from the commodified realm are also least able to draw upon non-commodified work as a means of meeting their needs and wants.

The third and final policy approach is therefore to nurture non-commodified work. This could be pursued in a variety of different ways. On the one hand, such work could be cultivated either as an alternative or complement to commodified work and on the other hand, it could be nurtured either amongst the whole population or solely amongst populations marginalised from the commodified realm. Each option would have very different consequences. Developing such work as an alternative to commodified work amongst marginalised populations, for example, would almost certainly result in the creation of a dual society (i.e., a polarization of society into those who find their work in the commodified realm and those marginalized from the commodified sphere). Fostering non-market work as a complement to the market sphere amongst the whole population, meanwhile, is unlikely to result in the creation of a dual society, especially if it is combined with an attempt to redistribute commodified work such as through working time regulations. Instead, it is more likely to facilitate a range of alternative means of livelihood for populations to draw upon to meet their needs and wants. The positive and deleterious consequences of pursuing each of the above economic development options, therefore, require far greater consideration than has so far been the case.

It is not only the consequences of pursuing different development paths that needs serious consideration. Until now, little thought has been given to how non-market work might be cultivated. Here, therefore, and to show how this might occur in practice, a few initiatives that might be used to foster non-market cultures and altruism in economic development programs are outlined. In the realm of developing self-provisioning or non-exchanged work, for instance, both bottom-up and top-down policy initiatives could be created. Bottom-up initiatives might include the provision of neighborhood tool-banks where people can go to borrow the equipment needed to engage in non-exchanged work that they would otherwise be unable to undertake. Top-down programs, meanwhile, might include the recognition and valuing of non-exchanged work, such as parental child-care, in tax credit programs. A parent who decides to be the primary care-worker for a pre-school child, for example, might be recognized as engaged in 'work' and provided with payment for this work in the form of a new 'parental tax credit', just as employees engaged in commodified labor receive a guaranteed minimum income for their work.

To cultivate non-monetised exchange and not-for-profit monetised exchange, meanwhile, a range of both bottom-up and top-down initiatives could again be pursued. Bottom-up initiatives might include for example, time dollar

schemes (Cahn, 2000) and local exchange and trading schemes (Williams et al, 2001) that store, record and reward instances where people help others (see Williams, forthcoming). Top-down initiatives to facilitate such work, meanwhile, might include the 'civilization' of New Deal whereby it would be extended to enable people to engage in forms of community-based work of their choosing. It might also involve the creation of 'active citizens credits' that recognize and reward those engaged in not-for-profit work in their communities. One way of achieving this is to extend tax credits beyond what is currently a 'labor market participation' tax credit program to include the provision of a guaranteed minimum income (via tax credits) for 'active citizens' who engage in full-time work for the good of their community, such as those running community-based organizations (see Williams and Windebank, 2003). Of course, there are doubtless many more initiatives that could be used to nurture non-commodified work once it is recognized and valued. Until now, however, little thought has been given to this issue since it has been widely believed that economic development is and should be achieved by stimulating market rather than non-market work.

In sum, having identified the persistence and growth of non-commodified work in the advanced economies in this paper, the trajectory of work has been opened up. It is now necessary to engage in a detailed mapping of the range of alternative options and possibilities available for economic development along with their positive as well as deleterious consequences. If this paper therefore begins to open up such a discussion and debate about the range of economic development options available to advanced economies and their multifarious consequences, then it will have achieved its objective.

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