The Real Utopias Project
Series editor: Erik Olin Wright

The Real Utopias Project embraces a tension between dreams and practice. It is founded on the belief that what is pragmatically possible is not fixed independently of our imaginations, but is itself shaped by our visions. The fulfillment of such a belief involves a "real utopias": utopian ideals that are grounded in the real potentials for redesigning social institutions.

In its attempt at sustaining and deepening serious discussion of radical alternatives to existing social practices, the Real Utopias Project examines various basic institutions - property rights and the market, secondary associations, the family, the welfare state, among others - and focuses on specific proposals for their fundamental redesign. The books in the series are the result of workshop conferences, at which groups of scholars are invited to respond to provocative manuscripts.

http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/OVERVIEW.html

Statement of Purpose
International Endowment for Democracy

When someone asked what he thought about Western civilization, Mahatma Gandhi replied, "I think it would be a good idea". We are only saying the same thing about American democracy—"We think it would be a good idea".

Inspired by this idea, a number of progressive American scholars, lawyers and activists have created the International Endowment for Democracy (IED) to highlight—

1. the tragic and rapidly deteriorating state of democracy in the United States;
2. the frightening hypocrisy, especially under such conditions, of our government's efforts (aided and abetted by such institutions as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)), to engage in what it calls "democratic nation building" and "democracy promotion" (See our website for DEMOCRACY LIBRARY, section I.);
3. the kind of fundamental reforms needed to make our country into a real democracy;
4. the activities of many groups and institutions in the United States who are trying to turn things around; and
5. the possibility for people outside the United States, all of whom are harmed in a number of ways by our government's policies, helping the Americans involved in this struggle (and therefore also themselves), if only in a modest way.

http://www.iefd.org/articles/statement_print.php

International Project for a Participatory Society
The International Project for a Participatory Society (IPPS) is a group of activists, writers, media producers, and others committed to the basic principles and values of solidarity, diversity, equity, self-management. Our mandate is to generate, promote, and support vision and strategy for attaining a participatory society. This site details our definition and operations and presents links for content regarding social change vision and strategy that we have generated or that we feel special regard for.

**Mission Statement, Project Definition**

The International Project for a Participatory Society (IPPS) is a group of people concerned with inspiring, facilitating, and supporting efforts to develop, share, and promote vision and strategy for attaining a new participatory society.

IPPS stands for a classless economy based on self-management and equality, for democratic and participatory politics, and for the elimination of patriarchy, racism, and all other hierarchies and oppressions.

IPPS seeks to elaborate a vision of a participatory society in order to demonstrate that there is an alternative to current race, gender, political, environmental, and other injustices.

http://zmag.org/ippsmission.html

**The Commoner – A Web Journal for Other Values**
http://commoner.org.uk/
editor@commoner.org.uk

**Self description:** This journal is about living in a world in which the doing is separated from the deed, in which this separation is extended in an increasing numbers of spheres of life, in which the revolt about this separation is ubiquitous. It is not easy to keep deed and doing separated. Struggles are everywhere, because everywhere is the realm of the commoner, and the commoners have just a simple idea in mind: end the enclosures, end the separation between the deeds and the doers, the means of existence must be free for all!

**My comments:** I have direct personal contact with the person who runs it, Massimo De Angelis. A very useful and well networked web journal of broadly autonomist Marxist analysis, bringing together discussions about autonomy, value, waged and unwaged labour. Firmly rooted in the idea that anti-capitalist relations can exist within capitalism, and that resistance and construction of alternatives are inseparable from one another.
Midnight Notes Collective
http://www.midnightnotes.org/
midnotes@aol.com

Self description: None exists

My comments: I have direct personal contact with two of the people involved, Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis. Research and written work on autonomist class struggle, unwaged struggles, struggles related to war, energy, migration and many other things. Also very well networked. As with The Commoner, it is firmly rooted in the idea that anti-capitalist relations can exist within capitalism, and that resistance and construction of alternatives are inseparable from one another.

World Council for Renewable Energy
http://wcre.org/
info@wcre.org

Self description The WCRE is the global voice for Renewable Energy. It operates independently and free of the vested interests of the present global energy system. As a nonprofit and non-governmental globally working organization it is focused on developing policies and strategies for Renewable Energy. Its mission is to bring Renewable Energy into the mainstream of world economy and lifestyle. It seeks to convince the global opinion of the potentials of Renewable Energy while showing the undesirable developments, the dangers, hidden costs and the damage to civilization, caused by conventional energy supply. It is the world’s forum for political and economic concepts that are most suitable to assist in rapidly accelerating the introduction of Renewable Energy. For achieving its objectives the WCRE’s major areas of activity encompass information, agenda setting and networking.

My comments: I have had direct personal contact. One of the most interesting global organizations promoting non-commercial technology transfer of renewable energy. The General Chairman, Hermann Scheer, is a Member of the Bundestag for the German Socialist Party. He has a strong critique of the world economy and market based in a good analysis of the global commodity chains associated with energy, and the conflicts which are necessary to promote “energy autonomy”. Seems very receptive to anticapitalist perspectives and wider confrontation, though works with industrial sectors and “official” policy makers to a considerable degree.
Money Network Alliance
info@monneta.org

Self description: MonNetA is a non-profit organisation of Lebensgarten Steyerberg e.V.
- to widely disseminate to growing circles of interested people - the possibilities and contribution of complementary currencies to achieve regional development, particularly in overcoming economic problems, social polarities, unemployment and environmental degradation
- to publish, connect together and support the experiences of projects and new initiatives at home and abroad
- to introduce and test new monetary tools towards pro-active management in the context of the restructuring of the regional economy

These goals are to be achieved through:
- creation of networks, and support for concrete projects that are implementing complementary currencies
- publication of books, articles in electronic and printed form that support MonNetA goals
- organisation of conferences and workshops to disseminate the information and train multipliers
- dissemination of MonNetA concepts and knowledge through professional lectures and seminars
- creation of a web site opened to all interested with links to other relevant web sites
- fundraising within the public and private sectors
- research and development of the above mentioned concepts

My comments: I have no direct experience with this organization, though have heard good things about them from several people whose judgement I trust. I have read a book by one of the main people in this organization, Margrit Kennedy and found it interesting and useful. Critical of capital, but also has some high up capitalists involved, such as officials from the European Central Bank. Seems interesting, but perhaps approach cautiously.
Self description: The Alternative Regionalisms programme is being jointly initiated by the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE)-Brazil, Alternative Information and Development Center (AIDC)-South Africa, Focus on the Global South – Thailand and the Transnational Institute. Currently the programme is developed in three main focus areas: South Regionalisms: Focused on Mercosur, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and ASEAN/SAARC, the programme aims to monitor and analyse the political and economic trends within and between these regions. In the simultaneously regionalised-and-globalised world economy, the political and economic regrouping and mutual strengthening of neighbouring countries of the South has become a survival imperative. But these regions face contradictory forces in the unilateral, bi-lateral, plurilateral regional strategies from the United States and the European Union that threaten and undermine the alternative developmental potential in these regions and the creation of more effective bases from which to deal together with the global economic system and regime.

Peoples Dialogues: In the face of the global trade regime, the programme facilitates popular organisations within the actual and potential strategic developmental regions of the South to launch Peoples Dialogues within and between their regions to share information and formulate joint strategies to build up popular campaigns and alternatives for South-South development. Likewise South-North dialogues and campaigns are developing to counter the strategies of the major powers from within as well as from without. It is essential for us all that we create and campaign for 'de-globalised' strategies appropriate for our communities and countries and our respective regions, and diverse and sustainable regional alternatives.

Policy Alternatives: The programme aims to strengthen cross regional exchanges linking social movements, peoples organisations, campaigners, researchers and political analysts in the development of policy alternatives specifically in the areas of trade, investment and socio-economic development, water and energy privatisation, sustainable environment and security and peace.

My Comments: A mix of some very interesting analysis and some quite reformistic approaches to state led integration. A friend of mine who is doing very good analysis on the EU has recently got involved, and I think this might have played a role in radicalizing their discourse. Interesting, but handle cautiously.
Self description: LRAN is the Land Research Action Network (LRAN), or Red de Investigación-Acción sobre la Tierra, which brings together activist researchers working on land and resource access issues, to network them with one another and with grassroots movements struggling for land and other productive resources. It’s members are committed, activist researchers, their organizations, and social movements fighting for access to land, for true agrarian reform, and for access to other productive resources.

LRAN is a response to a gap in research/analysis support for grassroots movements around the world who are engaged in struggles over access to land and other resources, even as various forms of so-called "land reform" are back on the policy agenda. For example, while institutions like the World Bank, which is actively promoting questionable ‘market-led reform’ policies have ample support from the researchers and scholars they have on staff or that they fund in order to make their case to governments, the movements who come up against these policies are often without reliable analyses meeting their needs for engaging effectively in policy debates.

The purpose of LRAN, then, is to network researchers and analysts whose research and analysis would be useful to these movements, both with each other and with the movements themselves, and provide a mechanism of feedback so that their analyses address the needs of the movements, and are made available to them in a usable form.

LRAN was founded by, and is coordinated by, Food First/The Institute for Food and Development Policy, based in the USA, Focus on the Global South, based in Thailand, the Social Network for Justice and Human Rights (Rede Social de Justiça e Direitos Humanos), based in Brazil, and the National Land Committee, in South Africa.

Website in English, Spanish, Portuguese

My comments: I don’t have direct experience with the organization, but one of their researchers is a good friend of mine, who is very closely linked to different peasant organizations around the world, has written and organized a lot on anti-capitalist food related struggles and also works closely with Phil McMichael.
Public Sector International Research Unit
http://www.psiru.org/
psiru@gre.ac.uk or
psiru@psiru.org

Self description: PSIRU was set up in 1998 to carry out empirical research into privatisation, public services, and globalisation. It is based in the Business School, University of Greenwich, UK. PSIRU's research is based on the maintenance of an extensive database of information on the economic, political, financial, social and technical experience with privatisations of public services worldwide. The core work is funded by Public Services International (PSI), the global confederation of public service trade unions.

The principal focus of PSIRU’s work is on water, energy, waste management and healthcare, but it also addresses the general questions of the role and structure of public services, both in the EU and in developing countries; the role of multinational companies in globalisation; and the role of the international financial institutions, especially the World Bank. The work of the PSIRU touches on a number of issues, including: corruption, public enterprise, multinationals' labour relations policies, public-private partnerships, political and economic effects of long-term private financing or PFI, pension funds and corporate governance, use of internet and databases for sharing information internationally, social network analysis.

The core work of the PSIRU centres around the following functions:

1. Maintaining a database on multinational companies involved in privatisation of public sector activities. This includes monitoring of takeover and merger activities, financial and political developments, and developments in the sectors, covering issues such as concentration of ownership, performance, pricing, financing, employment, political relations, and corruption.

2. Maintaining a website at www.psiru.org which allows online access to the database including information on companies, recent news, and PSIRU reports and publications.

3. Producing and publishing commissioned and other reports, based on the empirical data collected by PSIRU. These include surveys of developments by region and/or sector eg water in Latin America or Africa, venture capital in healthcare worldwide, electricity regulation in the UK, energy privatisation in central and eastern Europe, corruption and procurement, EU policy initiatives on public services, critiques of World Bank policies, patterns of ownership in a sector, reports on specific companies eg Enron. PSIRU reports can be accessed at www.psiru.org/publicationsindex.asp. Some reports are available in languages other than English, notably Spanish.

4. Long-term research projects: PSIRU is the leading institute in a 3-year Europe-wide research project, Watertime, examining the decision-making in water systems, funded by the European Commission under the 5th framework programme. It is a partner in a research project funded by the European Commission’s regional policy division, DG Regio, on the impact of services of general economic interest on social and territorial cohesion throughout the EU. Previous projects include a project on corruption, funded for 2 years by the Wallace Global Foundation.

5. Other research projects: specific projects are commissioned by various bodies including the ILO, UNRISD, The Work Foundation, European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), NGOs (eg War on Want, Intermediate Technology Development Group, Action Aid), individual trade unions eg in Italy, Austria, Canada.

6. PSIRU is also involved in the development of linked databases and research centres in European and developing countries, including specific projects with researchers in Spain, Brazil, India and Philippines. PSIRU is constantly exploring opportunities to develop its research, and is looking at collaborating with a group of European universities in research on public services in Europe.

PSIRU staff present to meetings of a number of international organisations, including the World Bank, the United Nations, the European Parliament, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as national institutions in various countries. In addition to PSIRU’s own reports on our website, which are widely read, PSIRU staff publish papers in academic and other journals eg on energy policy, healthcare, corruption, water privatisation, privatisation and democracy.

Papers are regularly presented at academic conferences, such as the Stockholm Water Symposium, the Development Studies Association, and specific conferences in water, energy, healthcare and other fields. PSIRU staff have made presentations to academic, institutional and trade union conferences on privatisation and related issues all over the world, including in Austria,
Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Honduras, India, Iran, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, Uruguay, USA, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.

**My comments:** I have no direct experience with the organization, but use their articles all the time. Very informed and internationally networked about contemporary struggles over ownership, involving defense of different forms of public and collective ownership (e.g., state, municipal, worker, cooperative, consumer, communal) though not very sharp on anti-capitalist analysis.
Grassroots Economic Organizing – The Newsletter for Democratic Workplaces and Globalization from Below
http://www.geo.coop/

**Self description:** GEO (Grassroots Economic Organizing) Newsletter is a bimonthly publication that reports on worker cooperatives and community-based economies in the U.S. and worldwide, and their development through local cooperative action. GEO also provides a global forum for the cooperative movement.

GEO covers crucial issues such as creating solid jobs for everyone, revitalizing communities that face economic and ecological decay, and combining diverse community, labor and environmental priorities.

GEO provides news and a bi-monthly forum on grassroots organizing to build and finance worker-owned, democratically run, community based, ecologically sustainable enterprises. GEO promotes networking to encourage the growth of a self-conscious movement for economic democracy.

**My comments:** No direct experience, read a pamphlet and attended a workshop given by one of the members, and was impressed.