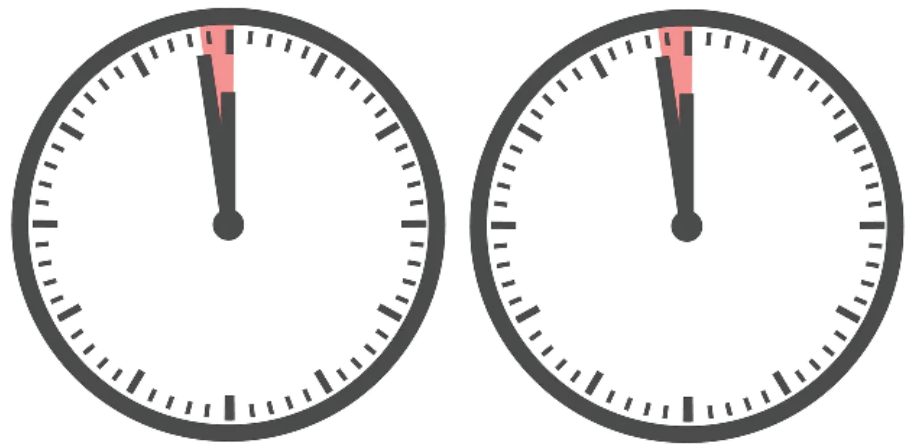


# RU PARTICIPATING

MEMBERS | NETWORK PROJECTS | SOLIDARITY

## From the Outreach and Events Team

- Conferences:**  
 We have submitted a proposal for Utopia Studies conference and RU will be represented.
- Joint Meeting (Z, PEP and RU):**  
 We evaluated the tripartite meeting and are preparing for the next meeting, scheduled for 6th of July.
- Regular events:**  
 We are discussing holding regular events that would attract new members.
- Content Generation Proposal:**  
 Lonnie is exploring software options for podcasts etc.
- Multilingual site:**  
 We are thinking about making the RU website available in other languages.
- Climate Justice Coalition:**  
 We are following the development of the Climate Justice Coalition to explore the possibility of RU joining once it launches.
- One Project:**  
 We are setting up a meeting with a representative of One Project organization with the aim of identifying common points and exploring possibilities of cooperation.
- Connecting:**  
 We are creating a list of organizations to reach out to.



Doomsday Clock

Equality Clock

There's never been a closer race!

## “Crying Out for Justice”

topaz

On the 101st anniversary of the Tulsa Massacre, I find choosing which psalmist's song speaks truth the strongest difficult; Bob Marley's 'So Much Trouble in the World,' Edwin Starr's 'War,' or Peter Tosh's 'Equal Rights.' I'd be really interested in listening to a conversation between Peter Tosh and David Rovics about the right to bear arms. While it can't be argued that the removal of fire arms from the general public would reduce gun deaths, which David recommends, the torching of Tulsa suggests that there is always another form of destruction available. Any permanent solution must include what Peter Tosh knew - Equal Rights and Justice! The ideas Bridget Meehan describes in a 'parallel universe,' include equality within a participatory economics environment, and while no one can be sure that its 'yellow brickless road,' would lead us to Oz, I imagine following any path away from neo-liberal capitalism could only lead to a better place with less flying monkeys. Eugene Nulman answers some questions about his film, *The Psychosis of Whiteness*, where several observations on movies regarding slavery are dissected, and not to spoil the ending, it wasn't the butler, because he didn't have the financial leverage. The celebration of Juneteenth is a step in the right direction for several reasons, recognition of diversity, restoration of hope, and demonstrating that education is foundational to equality. Travis Froberg is the first 'participant' in a new monthly column, *Why RU Participating?* His answers build bridges and strengthen roots. Perhaps after some reflection, Anthony Brown's 'Real' is most accurate in truth and hope, "I've only got time for the real this year."

## From the Membership Team

- Weekly Welcome Meetings and Informative sessions:**  
 We are hosting weekly Welcome meetings for new members or current members wanting a refresher on goings on. We are also hosting individually scheduled info sessions for prospective members. If you have a friend you would like to introduce to RU, let us know and we will set up a session with them.
- 1 on 1 meetings:**  
 Just to remind, we are facilitating random one on one meetings between members in order for us to get to know each other better. We are entering the seventh round of meetings and there is always a perfect time to get on board and get to meet our other members, discuss activism, politics, generally just have a nice chat or make international connections.
- Exploring time factors for participation:**  
 We are reaching out to members with the aim of finding out whether the times at which we hold events and meetings are holding some members back from participating. If it turns out that this is a significant factor we will try to suggest more appropriate solutions.
- Local chapters:**  
 Since a first local group was formed and is slowly gearing up for actions we are looking into whether we can inspire other groups of members to start up a local chapter. Once local chapters are organized, we are going to support them and facilitate an exchange of good practices between them.

# When the Shooting Ended

## David Rovics

All over the US media there are discussions taking place, as one would expect, about the slaughter of 10 people in Buffalo, New York, by a young white supremacist in body armor with a rapid-fire weapon. I have heard no discussion about the phenomenon of mass shootings in general in the US compared to other countries, in this round of discussion. Lots of discussion about the many reasons for mass shootings to happen, without any explanation for what makes the US so exceptional in this regard, aside from implied explanations that can be very misleading, whether intentionally so or not.

As the pundits try to dissect the motivations of the killer in this massacre, we hear a lot about social media misinformation, Fox News propaganda, our country's terrible history of racism, and the ongoing propagation of institutional racism today. We also hear about different gun laws, efforts at controlling the proliferation of assault weapons, the power of the gun lobby, and the sanctity of the Second Amendment. We hear about mental health, and the ongoing failure of the public health sector to basically exist in any meaningful form in this country, though they don't put it that way.

It has been mentioned that the Buffalo massacre was the 200th mass shooting in the United States so far in 2022, and it's only mid-May. What isn't mentioned is that most of the other mass shootings involved men killing their families, or men targeting women. Misogyny is so endemic, it apparently doesn't bear mentioning anymore, like the sun rising in the east.

One of the people that the Buffalo killer was inspired by, according to his online rantings, was the fascist mass murderer in Norway, Anders Breivik.

As horrific as Breivik's murder spree of helpless young people confined to an island in the summer of 2011 was, the obvious question that I don't hear the media asking at all is why was that massacre in Norway in 2011 so exceptional, whereas mass shootings in the US kill more people than were killed in Utoya about every two weeks, in a "normal" month.

I have personally been deeply affected by gun violence. Two of my best friends were shot to death, and these experiences were formative for me. My father and stepmother live down the street from Newtown, Connecticut. She sang at funerals of the children killed there at Sandy Hook Elementary.

I also spend a lot of time in Europe, in countries where very few people -- especially people younger than my parents -- have had any experience at all with gun violence. Despite the 2011 massacre there, one of those countries with very little gun violence is Norway. But why the comparative lack of mass shootings -- or gun violence of any kind -- there and elsewhere in Europe? What are the fundamental differences between these societies that cause the US to have such a vastly higher rate of mass shootings, homicides, and even suicides than any other countries (that aren't having a civil war)?

There are a lot of things that make the US exceptional, but there are also a lot of things that the US has in common with the many other countries in the world that do not have a big problem with mass shootings or gun violence generally. I'd like to focus on a few of the similarities first.

When we hear about Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Charleston, El Paso -- all massacres

## From the Education & Skills Team

- **Educational events:**  
Education and Skills team organized an event with Mitchell Szczepanczyk on Key institutions of Participatory economics.
- **Real Utopia 2 book:**  
We sent out the call for Real Utopia 2 book and we invite all members to offer their contributions. (more in this newsletter)
- **Developing kinship sphere:**  
We have decided to work on developing the kinship sphere of Participatory Society. We will devote every other weekly meeting to exploring and advancing the concept, resulting in a chapter for the Real Utopia 2 book.

## Bylaws Team

- **RU Bylaws draft:**  
The Bylaws team was tasked at the start of the year to create a proposal for the Bylaws of RU which would, once adopted, introduce some formal structure into the operations of RU. The draft of the Bylaws has recently been completed and has been introduced at the Business meeting on the 26th of May. Since the Bylaws would affect the whole organization it is desired that all members read and consider the bylaws and offer their own comments, critiques and proposals for improvement. The Bylaws draft document is available at [this link](#) and every RU member is encouraged to comment.



carried out by white supremacists who set out to kill people from a particular group -- there is naturally discussion of how people develop these warped beliefs, how anyone becomes so troubled that they'd commit a massacre, what is it about our society that gave rise to people with these beliefs, and what is it that nurtures their ongoing hatred. All important questions with lots of important answers.

But when we take as a whole a collection of countries that haven't had anything like this kind of rate of mass shootings or homicides, such as the EU, how would we answer the same sorts of questions about European societies, and what do we do with that information? To briefly attempt an overview here, in terms of history there is no question: Europe is where all the white supremacists came from in the first place. When my parents were young, the US was an apartheid state, by law, and Black people were commonly terrorized by racist police and lynch mobs. By contrast, in Europe when my parents were young, a Nazi regime was systematically gassing to death millions of people for being of the wrong race, religion, national origin, or political affiliation, among other things.

In all the countries occupied by the Nazis, there were local Nazis who worked with the occupiers. There was lots of resistance, sabotage, etc., but there was also lots of collaboration. There were, and are, loads of racists all over Europe. Since the defeat of fascism in Europe, far right parties and movements have persisted, and xenophobic, openly racist rightwing governments form on a regular basis, historically, and in recent years as well.

Although the welfare state is generally much more functional in Europe than in the US, if you travel around you will find in city after city ghetto after ghetto. They are decidedly in better shape than the abandoned, burned-out neighborhoods of St. Louis or Trenton. But they are definitely ghettos, the people living in them feel like they live in a ghetto, and their governments pass laws they call things like "Ghetto Laws," an ongoing source of tremendous pain and tension in Denmark right now. In many other wealthy nations you will find ghettoized, racialized groups of people who are subjugated in many different ways. Oftentimes you'll find similar percentages cropping up -- like the percentage of Maori people in New Zealand society and the percentage of Maori inmates in New Zealand's prisons is very similar to the percentages of Black people in US society at large, and in the prisons in the US, like around 15% of the population and 60% of the inmates or thereabouts.

## From the Site Team

- Website improvements:**  
 We are continuing to improve the website. We have addressed some security concerns, updated the teams page, added call for submissions, added some content and we are working to solve problems with uploading audio content to the website.
- Anonymizing - forms:**  
 We are looking into the anonymizing of network forms.
- RU Local chapters:**  
 We are exploring how to add local chapters section to the website.
- Psychosis of Whiteness:**  
 We are discussing uploading Eugene Nulman's film The Psychosis of Whiteness to the website for safe keeping.

## Revolution Z podcast



**REVOLUTION Z**  
LIFE AFTER CAPITALISM

WITH MICHAEL ALBERT

Our own Michael Albert runs a longstanding weekly podcast on issues related to participatory theory, vision and strategy. He shares his thoughts and also has interesting guests. Definitely a podcast to follow at:  
<https://zcomm.org/revolutionz/>

We hear a lot about rightwing media bias, and proliferation of lies on social media, both being big problems. And they clearly are, but when we look across the Atlantic we will find many of the same corporations owning the media landscapes there, too, along with the same social media platforms being used by similar percentages of the populations of countries in Scandinavia, Germany, England, etc. They generally have better school systems, but their countries are also full of rightwing media tabloids and social media algorithms loaded with hate speech and disinformation.

With the extremely high rate of femicide in the US -- five women per day in the US -- once again, in Europe I see men and women interacting exactly like they do in the US. There are lots of nice, gentle people, and then there are angry, unhappy people. There are lots of happy-looking couples, and others who argue. There's lots of alcoholism in Europe. Porn is extremely popular there, too. Sadly there is a lot of male violence against women there, just like here. But so many fewer femicides.

The argument could certainly be made that things are different in Europe with regards to the welfare state: that there's generally a lower level of stress in a society where people are unlikely to end up living in a tent on the sidewalk, like so many thousands of people do in every city on the west coast of the US. On the other hand, a declining standard of living is a great source of stress for people who are experiencing it, and in the US this was one of the biggest factors determining whether a voter might vote for Trump in 2016. Regardless of the starting point, there are huge numbers of Europeans experiencing a declining standard of living, feeling very stressed about this, and voting for rightwing parties, just like in the US. Another frequent talking point is the lack of adequate mental health care in the US. Sane people who support universal health care point to Europe as a place that has that, where things are better. While at this point there are some states, like Oregon, where coverage is en par with European societies, the health care situation may be one important distinction that makes the US special. But in terms of mental health care, by my personal observation, it's sometimes not such an impressive difference. I know many people in England who had the option of not more than five sessions with a counselor before they would be told the NHS-funded counseling sessions had come to an end.

So if Europe is also a place full of stressed-out people with declining incomes, rising immigration, insufficient mental health care, a burgeoning far right, ghettoized, racialized minorities, lots of fascists and racists, along with lots of violent men who abuse their partners and others who are inclined to take their own lives, what is it that makes us have such higher rates of homicide, suicide, femicide, and especially mass shootings?

When the shooting ended in the Netherlands in May, 1945, and the last of the German troops occupying the country surrendered, the Dutch people had lived through years of violent repression, some of which was carried out against Dutch people by other Dutch people. The population was full of both underground antifascist fighters and organizers, as well as lots of informants and Nazi collaborators. This situation existed in Dutch society from top to bottom. When the Dutch government-in-exile came back to power, their first priority was the disarming of society. The first thing they did was initiate a gun roundup. With society so polarized and so traumatized, the last thing the government wanted was the proliferation of deadly weapons.

I think of this often, ever since I read about it in a book about the last weeks of World War 2 in the Netherlands. I don't know whether the US today is more or less polarized than the Netherlands is today, or was back in the immediate post-war period. But we have a hell of a lot more mass shootings and homicides here. And as far as I can tell, there is one -- and only one -- over-riding difference between the two cases that really matters: in the Netherlands, they took away the guns.

# In a Parallel Universe

**Bridget Meehan**

The dark spectre of the Covid pandemic has been with us for over two years now and the virus itself is always likely to be with us. Our systems and institutions are in turmoil, our economy, our schools, our hospitals, are still reeling from what has happened, still struggling to cope as the virus continues to mutate and spread. It is fair to say that the entire experience has traumatised us individually and collectively as a species. Throughout this trauma, capitalism has not been good to us—although it has been very good to itself. As usual when things go awry, governments had to step in to provide both health and economic supports and in countries where they did not, people were left to fend for themselves.

The question is did it have to be this way?

Consider a few selected aspects of the pandemic and then consider how they might have been handled differently in a parallel universe where our economy was a *Participatory Economic* one and not capitalist.

As the first lockdown got underway in Europe and other parts of the West, there was a scramble for *personal protective equipment* (PPE)—masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, goggles. Before long, there was a shortage and in true free market style, prices rose to ridiculous levels and supply chains were disrupted. Shortages meant that medical staff and frontline workers were being put at risk because they couldn't protect themselves. For a while, these products were going to those who could afford the bloated prices. This is how the market in capitalism works. It doesn't have a conscience; it doesn't have common sense; it doesn't care about what people need or what they're going through. It has a blunt brutish approach: if you have the money to pay, you'll get the goods. If you don't, even if that product is overpriced but essential to your safety or wellbeing, you'll go without.

Lockdown rules forced all public-facing businesses to shut, apart from those considered essential, and staff able to work from home were required to do so. Employees whose workplaces closed but who could not work from home, like those in the hospitality sector, for example, were classified as furloughed workers. Employees with underlying health conditions or with caring duties that made it risky or difficult to continue to work, also needed to furlough. All of these people would have been left without income had governments not come to the rescue by part-paying their wages—yes, those pesky governments that capitalists tell us are just interference in the well-oiled capitalist machine. Additional government schemes were established to provide small businesses and the self-employed with money to stay afloat, and further government intervention made it illegal, for a time, for furloughed workers to be evicted from their



homes. Even with those interventions, tens of thousands of workers and the self-employed didn't qualify for the schemes or they found themselves out of work and depending on social security—which is typically grossly inadequate, if it exists at all.

The initial inaction on the part of capitalism didn't last long, however. It began to catch up, adapting to the new situation and soon regaining control. Unfortunately, not in a way that was going to protect workers, nurture society or fight the virus, but in a business-as-usual mercenary, profit-seeking way.

One of the first manifestations of this was in public procurement contracts to supply goods and services like PPE and tracking-and-tracing of Covid transmission. The scandals became legendary of how corporations made billions on these contracts which were handed out by governments across the *EU* and *globally* with minimum scrutiny and diligence and often to suppliers connected to public representatives. The corruption of the British government's procurement of *PPE* and *track-and-trace services*, for example, was outrageous with a fifth of all contracts reported to have signs of possible corruption. In multiple cases, the corporations who won these contracts had political links and in other cases they had no previous experience of providing similar goods or services.

Outside of public procurement we saw infamous examples of corporations exploiting the pandemic. The owners of these corporations are the *richest people in the world and they just got richer* over the course of the pandemic by taking advantage of government subsidies and the new buying habits of consumers, violating workers' rights and avoiding tax. Amazon, for instance, remained open during the pandemic and enjoyed unparalleled profits but put its *employees at risk* because in the early days of the pandemic it didn't implement Covid safety measures such as social distancing and PPE. This demonstrates yet again how capitalism exploits an emergency situation in a time of need.

The biggest travesty of all, however, lay with the

pharmaceuticals and the production of the vaccine which, in the capitalist system, was ripe for abuse and profit extraction. When a vaccine was finally developed nearly a year into the pandemic, Big Pharma got the knives out. Despite having received *public funding* to help develop a vaccine, Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca—the latter of which ironically boasted a “non-profit” model—made billions from sales, often charging governments exorbitant prices. *Pfizer’s revenues* doubled in 2021 and they expect 2022 to be even better. The pharmaceuticals have also been accused of not sharing the research for their vaccines, something which would enable drug-makers in the Global South to manufacture cheaper versions. In fact, the Global North did little to help our fellow human beings below the equator, and a form of vaccine apartheid took place whereby countries in the Global South received a mere 2% of vaccine doses. Allowing Big Pharma to prevent the Global South from getting access to the vaccines was criminal.

The result was preventable deaths and illnesses across the Global South. The profiteering of the pharmaceuticals was and is so bad that the *British Medical Journal* called it a human rights violation that must be investigated. The BMJ has gone as far as to say that these deaths have been caused by free market profiteering aided by patent and intellectual property law. Considering we can’t achieve anything like herd immunity, in any ethical or safe way, without at least 60% to 98% of the world’s population being vaccinated, it means that we will struggle to get Covid under control. So, regarding the health of humanity as compared to the profit of the few, it didn’t make sense to restrict distribution of the vaccine and actually ensuring the Global South was vaccinated too was the most promising way out of the pandemic. Restricting distribution of the vaccine only makes sense if profit is the goal.

As we are forced to move on from Covid, with the call from governments and mainstream media that the pandemic is over and normal business must be resumed, and with the removal of precautionary measures such as social distancing, mask-wearing, hand sanitising, self-isolation, tracking-and-tracing or testing, capitalism is failing people once again. Any governmental financial supports for Covid that were put in place for furloughed workers or those on low incomes have been stripped away. And now we’re facing a global cost of living crisis with the prices of essentials such as food, housing, fuel, energy and utilities rising beyond what already low incomes can support. Inflation is reaching highs not seen in decades. The war in Ukraine is being used as an excuse to increase energy prices, in spite of many energy companies making huge profits. In the early months of the lockdown, reduced demand for energy brought about a *global decline* in energy consumption. Around the same time, prices were dropping due to a *price war* between Russia and Saudi Arabia. Both factors meant that oil and gas companies experienced losses. It seems that now they intend to make up for those losses, while at the same time, continuing to receive enormous government subsidies.

All of this is a lot for society to deal with, on top of the normal pressures of life in a capitalist society, world events such as the war in Ukraine and the perpetual threat of ecological catastrophe. What’s most depressing, frustrating even, is that it doesn’t have to be like this. Capitalism is not our only option. There are better alternatives. One such alternative is Participatory Economics or Parecon, also called Participatory Socialism. Under Parecon, the pandemic and its aftermath could have been so much different.

Parecon is an economic model that promotes economic democracy, economic justice and ecological sustainability. It replaces private ownership of the means of production with non-ownership or the social ownership of the productive commons. It removes the capitalist class and the coordinator class and, with them, economic hierarchy and authoritarianism. In their place is a “full employment” economy with non-hierarchical workplaces self-managed by worker councils. In Parecon, the corporate division of labour, in which about 20% of employees monopolise empowering tasks and 80% are left with rote, obedient, disempowering tasks is no longer the means by which work is apportioned. Rather, workers have what Parecon calls balanced job complexes where each worker does a fair mix of rote and empowering work. Instead of being based on reward for how much productive property or “human capital”, you have income is based on effort and sacrifice or on how hard and long you work, and on the onerousness of the conditions under which you work. Implementing these practices nurtures cooperativism and solidarity in Parecon workplaces. In addition, the annual participatory planning procedure in Parecon (which is discussed below) also requires workers and consumers to consider the full personal, social and ecological costs of producing goods and services, and incorporate what economists call “externalities” that are ignored in market prices.

Nothing about Parecon stifles creativity or freedom. The opposite is true. Workers have more scope for creativity because their work gives them a mix of rote and empowering tasks and because they self-manage in the workplace. Workers no longer have to take orders from owners or coordinators. They negotiate working conditions with their fellow workers. All of this allows for greater freedom and creativity in the workplace.

Cooperativism and solidarity would naturally permeate to the international level so that internationalism takes primacy over war-mongering. Under Parecon, we would also have universal social provision of public healthcare and third level education. Everyone would have the opportunity to develop their preferred skills and talents. Those unable to work would get a full average societal income.

A primary function of any economy is allocation which involves: distribution of resources, labour and intermediate goods among producers; and distribution of final goods and services among consumers. In capitalism, allocation

is facilitated by market exchange that is dominated by those who have the most bargaining power. Markets foster competition and division by forcing consumers to buy cheap and producers to sell dear. Markets force producers to sell as much as they can which means inducing consumer dissatisfaction to encourage excessive and unnecessary consumption. Markets compel business owners to cut costs any way they can, for example, by reducing wages and benefits to workers and avoiding the costs of environmental protections.

Market prices only consider the immediate buyers and sellers involved in direct market exchanges, and don't take into consideration the broader social and environmental costs, i.e. the externalities, of goods and services. And markets are highly inefficient. They produce goods and provide services that don't always have social value. They waste resources by building in obsolescence. They disregard the potential skills and talents of about 80% of the population by forcing them into rote and disempowering jobs. Ultimately, markets lead to ever worsening social and ecological outcomes.

Despite the harm the market inflicts, we are so indoctrinated into the belief that the market is irreplaceable that it can be difficult to imagine an economy without one, never mind an economy that might be better without one. But in Parecon, we are asked to do just that: envisage an economy without a market. Allocation in Parecon takes place through an annual participatory planning procedure that results in the creation of a production and consumption plan where scarce productive resources are used efficiently. This is achieved through an "iterative" planning procedure in which worker councils, neighbourhood consumer councils, and federations of councils participate by making "self-activity" proposals in response to ever more accurate estimates of the full social and ecological costs of producing and the full social and ecological benefits of consuming different goods and services. In this way, participatory planning arrives at indicative pricing that reflects the true costs of products. Under standard assumptions economists make about preferences and technologies, it has been proved that the procedure will yield ever more accurate estimates of social and ecological costs and benefits.

From this very brief overview, it is clear that Parecon is a radical alternative to capitalism. With that established, let's enter our parallel universe and imagine what the pandemic might have been like under Parecon. Keep in mind that while Parecon has a solid theoretical underpinning, it should be seen as a scaffold and not a blueprint worked out to the nth degree. The scaffold is enough to provide a vision of an alternative to capitalism but it will be up to each individual region or country to decide on the implementation details that take into consideration their particular needs and circumstances at a particular point in time.

From the outset, it is debatable whether the pandemic would have happened at all had Parecon been in place. There is

*strong evidence* to suggest that the excessive deforestation done in the name of capitalism created the conditions that incubated the virus, and that the Covid pandemic is only the first of many more to come. When we consider the importance of ecological sustainability in Parecon, the absence of profit as a motivating factor, and the emphasis in participatory planning on accurately reflecting the true ecological costs of products and the implications of those costs, it is unlikely that deforestation would be deemed acceptable.

But, we can put that aside and start from the position that the pandemic has happened in our parallel Parecon universe and the demand for PPE has skyrocketed. At this early stage in the pandemic, this extra demand may have caused no shortage of PPE because the public healthcare system—now not driven by profit or existing in a market economy—would have been free to stockpile PPE and other medical goods for the eventuality of a virus outbreak. However in the case of a shortage of PPE, given the nature of participatory planning, the consumer councils at national level would immediately increase their demand for PPE, as well as tracking-and-tracing and testing products. Since the increase in production of these medical goods and services would require a shifting of resources out of production of private goods into more production of these medical "public goods", that would happen by an adjustment in the annual production and consumption plan for the year. Most importantly, these medical goods and services would be supplied free of charge using medical triage criteria to prioritise who was served first, not who had the most of the money to pay. In such a system, there simply couldn't be any profit-seeking or denial of essential medical goods or services to anybody.

Once the lockdown descended and it became apparent that some workers had to furlough, in Parecon no one would feel the threat of destitution. Because Parecon is a full-employment economy, furloughed workers would continue to draw down their full income and avail of universal services such as healthcare. Some furloughed workers might decide to transfer temporarily to other sectors struggling to meet demand, for instance, essential services or the production of medical goods. And because people would continue to receive their full income, the threat of being evicted would not exist.

Then there's public procurement. The practice of public procurement as we know it today would look very different under Parecon. Sure, the government would still need to procure goods and services but that would happen according to participatory planning rules and not via markets. Corruption in the allocation of contracts for PPE, tracking-and-tracing or testing, through excessive pricing, would not happen because participatory planning removes the ability to amass profits. But profiteering is also pointless since participatory planning prevents anybody from spending excessive amounts of money without revealing their having stolen it; however, that's a story for another day.

With private ownership a thing of the past, there would be no capitalist getting rich off the misery of the pandemic. Individual workers would not unfairly or excessively gain financially because each worker is paid a socially equitable income that is a function of their effort and sacrifice and that is not dependent on how much is produced but instead on their work being socially valued which in turn derives from what is required by consumption proposals. Further, the notion that any workplace would put its workers at risk or violate their rights by not introducing Covid safety measures would be highly unlikely because workplaces would be self-managed by workers themselves. They would decide collectively what safeguards were needed and apply them accordingly.

Most crucially, the development and rollout of the vaccine, a medical good, would be based on need, not on maximisation of revenues as there is no such thing as maximising revenues. Under Parecon, there would be no patents or intellectual property. The vaccine research would be part of the intellectual commons and accessible by all countries. Of course, the scientists who invented the vaccines would be lauded and recognised but they wouldn't be in any position to hold the population to ransom and deny life-saving medication just so they could maximise profits. Profits simply do not exist in a Parecon. With participatory planning, the necessary amount of vaccines would be produced and the vaccine would be made available, free, to everyone across the globe. That doesn't mean it would have no costs, but the costs would be handled socially in each country, like the costs of education and healthcare, and so on.

And as Parecon is a full employment economy, producing more vaccines and Covid-related medical goods and services would require producing less of other goods and in turn would mean shifting resources. That would happen by adjusting the annual production and consumption plan during the year when Covid struck. In the following year, the national consumer council would begin with a much bigger order for vaccines and medical services for Covid patients, and the budget for the public health service would presumably be larger. Shifting resources also means not over-working hospital staff but adding additional personnel as needed.

This leads to another point: the vaccine apartheid witnessed during the pandemic has meant we have yet to build up herd immunity to resist the virus and reduce the prospect of future mutations. In all probability, the opposite would be true under Parecon. Leaving aside the anti-vaxxers—who are unlikely to even exist in Parecon because their anger is probably stemming from issues that Parecon eradicates such as poverty, inequality and authoritarianism and not the vaccine per se—the free availability of the vaccine to all would have us in a position where herd immunity has been achieved.

And with Parecon informing our decisions, in the aftermath of the pandemic would there be the same pressure to simply



move on and forget the virus exists? Without the profit motive in the driving seat, and with the financial security and universal services inherent in Parecon, workers could rationally determine what a return to work would look like and what safety measures were still needed. Universal healthcare would ensure that free tracking-and-tracing and testing continued.

That a pandemic is followed by a cost of living crisis would not happen in Parecon. To start with, under Parecon, there would be no unemployment or business closures that would result in reduced, inadequate incomes. Further, much of the increase in living costs can be attributed to rising energy costs which in turn are caused by our current over-dependence on fossil fuels. Since Parecon achieves ecological sustainability through the need to balance the social and ecological costs and benefits of products and services, it is reasonable to assume that high environmental costs that risk our natural world—such as the extraction and burning of fossil fuels—will have meant the long-ago rejection of fossil fuels. Under Parecon, we will have made the transition from fossil fuels to renewable, non-fossil fuel sources of energy, as well as energy efficiency and conservation measures, and our dependence on fossil fuels would no longer exist.

It would be nice to think that in a parallel Parecon universe, other versions of us are living this kinder, more just existence and that a global health pandemic would be a very different experience, or maybe wouldn't even happen. Back in our own universe, we're left with the pain and suffering that capitalism rains down on a daily basis, with crisis after crisis that we have nothing to throw at only hopelessness and anger. Arguably even worse, set aside the current crises and make believe capitalism wouldn't generate them at all. Life would still be restricted because capitalism would continue to offer, as best case, business as usual, class division, subordination of the many, rat-race anti-sociality, commercial homogenisation, vast inequity, and ecological degradation instead of Parecon's classlessness, self-management by all, solidarity, diversity, equity, and sustainability.

That this is the reality of our world, it is worth remembering: capitalism isn't the best we can hope for and Parecon doesn't have to be a fantasy of science fiction. It can be ours.



# Why RU Participating, Travis?

**Travis Froberg**

Hi, I'm Travis Froberg, but I go by Will Froberg for some of my activist and creative projects. I was born in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and grew up there. My town had around 3,000 people in it. It was a nice place to be a kid, as my brothers and I were always doing creative projects outside: building tree forts, snow forts, "jacuzzis" in the river, etc. It wasn't a particularly great place to be an adolescent though. There was an extreme lack of diversity in all areas of life; for example, there was no music scene in my area. The only activity we really had was sports, so I played basketball and ran cross-country and track.

I was always confused at why the adults in my area didn't ever seem to really talk about issues that I saw as the important things in life. There was plenty of gossip, and people took sports way too seriously, but they didn't seem to care about what was going on in the world outside of our little town, and they didn't seem to be interested in deep thinking about life - what I would later realize was called philosophy.

After a while of seeing that people didn't care about these topics, I kind of stopped thinking about them deeply. It was an insidious process, but over time I just conformed to what those around me were interested in. I felt like I wasn't being my authentic self. That, in combination with all of the anxiety of feeling like there was no good option for me after high school (if I went to college I would be in a ton of debt and if I went into a trade I would probably be doing mechanical work that I wasn't interested in at all), my brain became very foggy and I was kind of numb emotionally. Music helped me a lot because it allowed me to feel something and also distract myself from my college courses which I felt were pedantic and pointless. I mostly listen to sad folk music, and this is the type of music I make also. My biggest inspirations have been Conor Oberst, Elliot Smith, Bob Dylan, Hank Williams Sr., the Mountain Goats, Townes Van Zandt, and Daniel Johnston. Movies were a similar escape for me. Some of my favorites are the Royal Tenenbaums, Good Will Hunting, Fight Club, Donnie Darko, American Psycho, etc.: typical cult classics.

My interest in social issues was reawakened by two main things: Bernie's run for president in 2016 and my discovery of Noam Chomsky. Bernie inspired me because he was running on issues that actually mattered. Up until that point, politics made absolutely no sense to me. Why did the politicians literally never do anything useful? Reading Noam's books, notably *Manufacturing Consent*, and listening to his lectures on YouTube helped me

understand why this is the case and offered me a host of other insights.

From that point on, I slowly started to feel like I knew who I was. I began reading about social issues constantly, listening to podcasts, etc. Just realizing there were other people out there who were interested in the same things as me and thought in similar ways helped me feel more relaxed. My brain fog slowly went away, I started to feel more deeply, and I became much more creative. Since then, I have found a lot of peace understanding what my interests are: I mainly enjoy doing creative projects, particularly those that relate to activism.

Currently, I live right outside Detroit and work as a Data Scientist. I am particularly interested in computer simulations of social phenomena. For the most part, my time right now is split between work and doing as much activist activities as I can. What drew me into RU was an interview that Michael Albert did for Ben Burgess's podcast GTAA. Since learning about socialism, I had been trying to figure out what socialist's wanted to replace capitalism with. I was amazed that people didn't seem to have an answer. I'll be honest, when I first became an activist I kind of assumed more experienced activists had some sort of vision, but that I just didn't understand it. I tried figuring out what the whole "to each according to need" thing meant but couldn't figure it out (I still have no idea). I eventually realized that most leftists didn't have a good vision. When Michael described *parecon*, his arguments made a lot of sense to me. I didn't quite get all of the details, but he seemed like the most logical leftist I had ever heard talk. He was answering the questions that I thought all activists should have been asking. I think he mentioned his podcast *RevolutionZ* in the interview, so I listened to that and shortly after joined RU.

Besides RU, I have been involved with Detroit DSA for a while. Honestly, I never felt very welcome, and kind of still don't. Right now, my main focus in DSA is trying to create a more open culture and get them to at least think about vision.

My hope for RU and the left generally is to move to a totally new society. The one we live in is not only morally ridiculous, but also illogical on every front. I am very optimistic about the future. Looking back on leftist history, it kind of makes sense that we haven't won in replacing capitalism. What would we have replaced it with? I am excited to see what happens when people have some sort of agreement about where we want to get to.

# Psychosis of Whiteness

**Collective 20** interviewing **Eugene Nulman**

The Psychosis of Whiteness is a full length documentary film made in 2018-19, directed by Eugene Nulman. The film explores society's perceptions of race and racism by investigating cinematic representations of the slave trade, taking an in-depth look at three big budget movies that focus on the transatlantic slave trade. It argues that these depictions are metaphoric hallucinations about race. Rather than blaming the powerful institutions that are responsible for slavery, these films rewrite history by praising those same institutions for abolishing the slave trade. Below is an interview with Eugene Nulman about the making of The Psychosis of Whiteness and its relationship to social justice activism.

## **Is this your first film?**

Yes, I've never made a film before so it was a bit of an experiment. I've played around with editing software before and always had a big passion for film and filmmaking but never had any formal training. So it was a learning process.

## **Are you a full time filmmaker?**

I wouldn't even say that I'm a part-time filmmaker, but it was a project I enjoyed working on and something I would certainly like to do again. I'm a sociologist working at Birmingham City University and my research focuses on social movements. Recently my research has gone in the direction of understanding the media's impact on our political consciousness.

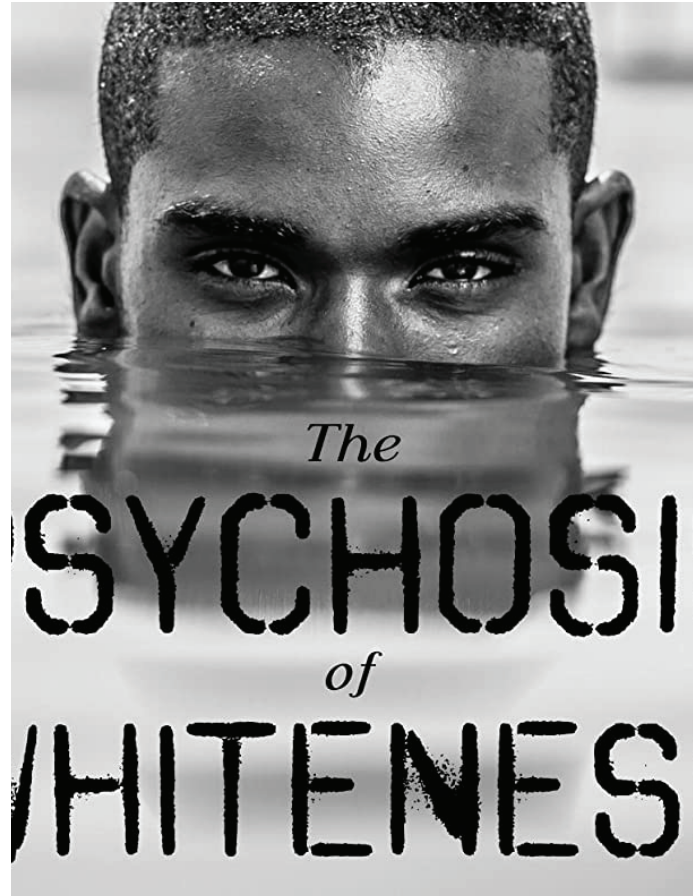
## **What attracted you to filmmaking? Why not write an academic paper or a book on the topic instead?**

I was very interested in getting academic information out there to a wider audience and in a way that is entertaining and interesting, which I hope I was able to do with the documentary. Where an article might have hundreds of views, the documentary has had thousands and most of the academics who would read the article might not do very much about it, but when it gets out to the wider public, conversations can start happening and it can help to inform activists.

## **What is the film's background? From where did the idea originate?**

The film is actually based on an academic paper written by a colleague of mine, Kehinde Andrews, Professor in Black Studies. The paper looks at the representations of the transatlantic slave trade in two British movies, Belle and Amazing Grace. I expanded this analysis in the film to include Steven Spielberg's Amistad and identified some of the key themes we can see across all three films.

Part of the motivation for making this film was to



experiment in bringing academic work that is often hard to access and often couched in complex language into a medium that is easier to consume and attracts a wider audience.

## **The film has a very interesting title. How did you come up with that? I assume you are not saying that all white people are crazy, that you are using psychosis and whiteness in some special sense or specific way.**

The film title is based on the paper and yes, it doesn't mean that all white people are crazy. The film defines whiteness as "a worldview that produces privilege for those who are labelled white in a specific society at a specific time." Whiteness is a system of constructing a hierarchy and this system produces a metaphorical psychosis – a blindness that prevents us from seeing the truth, the extent of racial oppression that not only built the West but continues the cycle of capitalist accumulation on the backs of the third world, countries whose populations are not accidentally brown and black.

## **Why are you interested in the history of the slave**

**trade? Why do you think it is important to get it right? What would you say to people who say that slavery is all in the past, let's move on.**

The psychosis of whiteness is about more than just media representation or the way we think about history, but the film uses both of these ideas as examples of how the psychosis of whiteness works. The films show how the history of slavery is wrapped up into a feel-good story of white saviourism. All the films show how the institutions that did the most to develop and sustain the slave trade for more than 200 years should be valorized for ending the slave trade, rather than portrayed as the problem. Each film tries to show how parliament or the courts intervene to stop the slave trade and restore a moral system, but when looking closer we see how these events actually did very little. These films like to tell a story about the transition from one terrible system to our current enlightened system. A transition from slavery to 'freedom'. But no such transition really happened. As we can see from reporting coming out of the US on police shootings, mass incarceration, racist hiring and banking practices, voter suppression, and forced vasectomies there was simply a shift from one type of oppressive system to another. Actual slavery turned into wage slavery while racial prejudice was used to fuel animosity within the working class, pitting them against each other.

**How can people see the film? Are there ways in which people can engage with the ideas presented in the film?**

We first started off by asking people to host screenings so that conversations could happen after they saw the film. That stopped once the COVID lockdowns occurred so we moved the film online where anyone is able to view it for free. Just go to the website [psychosisofwhiteness.com](http://psychosisofwhiteness.com)

**I notice that you give 50% of all donations made by viewers of the film to the Black Visions Collective. Could you say something about why you do that and why you chose that particular organisation to support?**

The plan was to donate to Black Visions Collective but they haven't been taking any more donations so 50% of what we receive now goes to Black Lives Matter. Black Visions Collective was one of the groups that initiated protests in Minnesota following the killing of George Floyd. Black Lives Matter – as an organisation – supports a wide range of local groups who organize communities in a variety of ways.

**Do you have any other film projects in the pipeline for people to look out for?**

Sadly I've had to put any potential film projects on hold while I do my day job but I am working on a book that argues that film and television have failed to provide us with visions of alternatives to capitalism and the state which has subsequently prevented people – including many on the left – from imagining an alternative and actually believing that something better than capitalism and the state can exist. The book is a culmination of my analysis of over 400 TV series and films.

## Dear RU Network members!

The Education & Skills Team is calling on RU members and friends to contribute to a new edited collection. This book will be made up of chapters, stories, poems, comics, drawings, etc.... about participatory theory, vision, and strategy, including examples of movements and campaigns that prefigure or contribute to participatory vision. Submissions can be theoretical, practical, or both; they can be artistic, creative or a standard book chapter. Here are some examples that might inspire your own ideas:

- **Chapter: "Parsoc - why is it necessary now more than ever"**
- **Poem on complementary holism**
- **Chapter: "Beyond ACAB: Participatory Politics and the Police"**

- **Comic about participatory strategy**
- **Chapter: "Cooperative housing in Slovenia"**
- **Song lyrics about parecon**
- **Chapter: "Inside Real Utopia: what RU is doing and why it's different"**

We hope this book will bring a new audience to the ideas of participatory theory and to Real Utopia as an organization. To make a submission, please send a short description/abstract of your proposed contribution, or a draft of the contribution to: [eugenenuzman@gmail.com](mailto:eugenenuzman@gmail.com).

The deadline for proposals is **30th June**. Please note, you only need to have an idea for what you want to contribute by this time, not the completed submission.

Best wishes,  
**Education & Skills Team**

# Member's Picks

## Board games

### Co-opoly: The Game of Cooperatives

Co-opoly is a game of skill and solidarity, where everyone wins - or everyone loses! Designed for families and friends who want to play together instead of competing against each other, and groups thinking about starting a cooperative or improving skills as collaborators.

## Classwar

Has Monopoly night lost its charm? Do your friends head for the door when you reach for the 12-sided die? Ever play Magic: The Gathering and think, "If only, instead of tapping mana, I could tap the righteous anger of the proletariat"? Workers and capitalists battle for the future of society in an entertaining new game.

## Articles

### Social Ills of (Global) Capitalism under Scrutiny in American Literature Classes: "Teaching to Transgress"\*, Lilijana Burcar

The article foregrounds the importance of honing critical literacy through socially engaged literature. Dealing with literature in an engaged and critical way can help students to develop critical thinking skills and a systemic understanding of burning social issues that inform their own living realities. Critical literary pedagogy and socially engaged literature play a key role in developing students' understanding of why and how institutional racism and institutional patriarchy constitute key operating mechanisms of capitalist social relations, which is why constructs of race and gender should never be looked upon as mere add-ons, let alone as a matter of mere culture and hence individual prejudice.

## Books

### Persepolis Marjane Satrapi

In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. The intelligent and outspoken only child of committed Marxists and the great-granddaughter of one of Iran's last emperors, Marjane bears witness to a childhood uniquely entwined with the history of the country.

### Gramsci's Politics of Language Peter Ives

Antonio Gramsci and his concept of hegemony have permeated social and political theory, cultural studies, education studies, literary criticism, international relations, and post-colonial theory. The centrality of language and linguistics to Gramsci's thought, however, has been wholly neglected. In Gramsci's Politics of Language, Peter Ives argues that a university education in linguistics and a preoccupation with Italian language politics were integral to the theorist's thought. Ives explores how the



combination of Marxism and linguistics produced a unique and intellectually powerful approach to social and political analysis.

## Poetic Phonetics

Poetic Phonetics is a series of poetry and essays, exploring how sound affects our lives. The books are about how the calm is considered weak, how the humble are considered cowards, and how roots are considered simple. In the beginning was the word.

## Participatory Planning App

In the presentation that Mitchell Szczepanczyk carried out on 28th of May he revealed that he created software that simulates the workings of the Iteration Facilitation Board (IFB). IFB is the institution that carries out the task of economic allocation, replacing the functions of a market or of central planning within the Participatory Economics framework. Since the functions are highly technical and the current software only intelligible or useable by a programmer he expressed the wish to develop software to the point where a regular person can run their own simulations. He would welcome any help with the software or creating new versions and is inviting any programmer willing to help to contact him at: [mitchell@szcz.org](mailto:mitchell@szcz.org)

Further information at: <http://www.szcz.org>  
[www.github.com/msszczep](http://www.github.com/msszczep)  
<https://github.com/msszczep/pequod-cljs>

# RU Serious?

... it's memeing time.



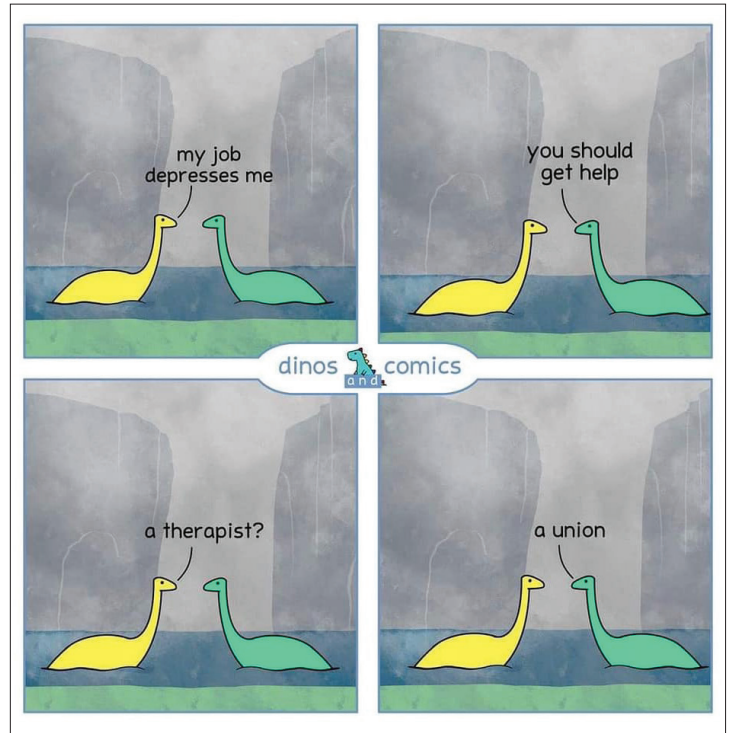
**Peter H. Diamandis, MD** @PeterDiamandis

Elon Musk is giving \$100 million to anyone who can find a way to pull carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere or oceans and sequester it durably and sustainably. Personally, I think \$100 million is a bargain.

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**Ken Tremendous** @KenTremendous

This is a tree. This is what trees do.



**Simon Harris - #LovelyBitOfSquirrel** @simonharris\_mbd

The Queen's Speech needs to announce a new law stating that if you can afford £1100 a month for rent for twelve months in a row, banks must acknowledge that you can afford a mortgage of £750 a month, mainly because £1100 is more than £750.

