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## What, Actually, would it mean to win?

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Winning could mean a lot of things. It could mean that we won an end to a war, or to the IMF or World Bank. Or it could refer to winning higher wages, better work conditions, open information in a workplace, affirmative action for race or gender, or new ecological laws, or, of course, many other important gains.

But, I suspect the intended question is, "what, actually, would it mean to win another world?" And I suspect that by another world is meant one that leaves behind the racism, sexism, classism, authoritarianism, ecological devastation, and international violence so common to the current world, and that has various profound virtues such as promoting diversity, enhancing solidarity, attaining equity and justice, conveying self managing power to all citizens, husbanding the environment, attaining international peace, and so on.

If that's the intent of the question, then I think winning another world would mean winning a set of new institutions to replace key ones we now endure and able to accomplish necessary political, cultural, sexual, social, and economic tasks of society while furthering the positive values we aspire to.

Thus, winning another world would mean winning new ways of legislating norms, adjudicating disputes, and establishing and carrying out shared social projects: new polity.

And it would mean winning new ways of procreating and nurturing and socializing the next generation and of living in our families and other household units and enjoying our sexual and emotional potentials: new kinship.

And it would mean winning new ways of establishing, celebrating, and exploring collective identities, whether ethnic,

racial, religious, or others: new community.

And it would mean winning new ways of producing our means of life, allocating that output, and also consuming it: new economics.

About each of these realms - political, kin, cultural, and economic - we know a great deal about current relations and their authoritarian, sexist, racist, and classist flaws. We know less, however, though still a significant amount, about features that would make the new world worthy and viable. Yet, to make organizing progress, we need to know much more of the latter, and to communicate it in inspiring ways suited to orienting and guiding immediate activity.

My own work has highlighted economics and in that realm, Participatory Economics, my preferred replacement for capitalism, is built on four institutional commitments.

First, the broad structures by which people participate in economic life and decision making are nested workers and consumers councils of the sort we have seen arise throughout history when workers and consumers seek to control their own economies. As an additional feature parecon's councils incorporate self management as the logic of decision making. People influence decisions in proportion as they are in turn affected by them.

Sometimes self management could require one person one vote and majority rule. Sometimes it could require that a different tally is needed, or that only some segment of the whole populace votes, or that consensus is needed. All such options are tactics to attain self managing say for all involved actors.

Second, remuneration in a parecon is for effort and sacrifice, not output of one's property or of one's labors, and not bargaining power either. In a parecon we earn more if we work longer, if we work harder, or if we work under more harsh or harmful conditions. Remuneration is for duration, intensity, and harshness endured - not for property, power, or output.

Parecon rejects the idea that someone should earn by virtue of having a deed in his or her pocket. There is no moral

warrant for that nor is there any incentive warrant for it. Parecon also rejects a thuggish economy in which one gets what one can take, as in market exchange. And most controversially, Parecon rejects the idea that we should get back from the economy the amount we contributed to it by our personal labors. Parecon understands that our personal output depends on many factors we can't control: our having better or worse tools, or our working in a more or less productive environment, or our producing more or less valued items, or our having innate qualities that increase or fail to increase our productivity.

Third, participatory economics needs a new division of labor.

If a new economy were to remove private profit and incorporate self managing councils with remuneration for effort and sacrifice, but simultaneously retained the current corporate division of labor, its commitments would be inconsistent. Having 20% of the workforce monopolize largely empowering and more pleasurable work and leaving 80% left with more obedient, rote, stultifying, and less pleasurable work, would guarantee that the former group - I want to call them the coordinator class - ruled over the latter group, or the working class.

Even with a formal commitment to self management, the coordinators, by virtue of the work they do, would enter each decision discussion having set the agenda for it, owning the information relevant to debate, possessing the habits of communication that will inform discussion, and exuding the confidence and energy to fully participate. The workers, in contrast, having been deadened and exhausted by the work they do, would come to decision discussions only disempowered and exhausted. The coordinators would determine outcomes and seeing themselves as superior would in time choose to remunerate themselves more, to streamline meetings and decision-making by excluding those below, and to orient economic decisions in their own ruling interests.

What this view highlights, in other words, is that one kind of class that exists above workers is owners, as we all know. By having a deed to property capitalist owners dispose over means of production, including hiring and firing wage slaves. But even with this class division eliminated, with no more deeds to productive property, with no more capitalists, the lesson of the perspective is that classlessness is not

necessarily attained.

Another group that is also defined by its position in the economy, albeit differently than capitalists, can still wield virtually complete power and aggrandize itself above workers. And to avoid this type of coordinator class rule by about 20% of the workforce due to its monopolizing empowering positions and tasks we must replace the familiar corporate division of labor with a new approach to defining work roles. Parecon calls this third institutional commitment balanced job complexes.

Each of us who works at some job, in any society at all, will by definition be doing some collection of tasks. If the economy employs a corporate division of labor, however, then for about 20% of us our tasks will combine into a job that is largely empowering and very likely possesses greater than average quality of life impact, while for 80% of us our tasks will combine into a job that is largely disempowering and very likely possesses lower than average quality of life impact. The former coordinator class will be empowered and become the economy's ruling class. The latter working class will remain disempowered and remain subordinate.

In a participatory economy, in contrast, we combine tasks into jobs so that for each participant the overall quality of life and empowerment effect of his or her job is like the overall quality of life and empowerment effect of every other person's job. Everyone has an average balanced job complex. We don't have managers and assemblers, editors and secretaries, surgeons and nurses. The functions these actors now fulfill persist in a parecon, of course, but the labor is divided up differently.

So some people do surgery while most don't, but those who take scalpel to brains also clean bed pans, sweep floors, or assist with other hospital functions. The total empowerment and pleasure the surgeon's job affords is altered by remixing tasks. She now has a balanced job complex conveying the same total empowerment and probably also roughly the same pleasure as the new job of the person who previously only cleaned up.

The domination of what I call the coordinator class over all other workers is removed not by eliminating empowering tasks, or by everyone doing the same things, both of which

scenarios are not only irrational but impossible, nor by merely extolling rote work as important, which is possible to do and is even familiar historically, but which is structurally nearly vacuous -- but by distributing empowering and rote work so that all economic actors are able to participate in self managed decision making without advantage or disadvantage due to their economic roles.

Finally, fourth, what if we have lots of workplaces and communities that are all committed to having workers and consumers councils, to using self managed decision making procedures, to having balanced job complexes, and to remunerating for effort and sacrifice, but, in addition to these features, we opt for central planning or for markets for economic allocation? Would this constitute a worthy vision?

With central planning the central planners would be distinguished by the conceptual and design character of their labor, and no doubt by their academic or other credentials. They would seek to have agents in each workplace with whom they could interact and who would be responsible for enforcing the central plan, people who held similar credentials to the central planners and were vested with similar dominating rights.

The dynamics of central planning are down go instructions up comes information about the possibility of fulfilling them, down go altered instructions up comes more information, down go final instructions up comes obedience. This command structure is authoritarian and its class implications are to resurrect the coordinator/worker distinction in each workplace and in the whole economy, in turn violating equitable remuneration and self management, as well. Even cursory analysis of central planning predicts that it would undo our other innovations, as does a look at its history, and so central planning must be rejected as unfit for desirable allocation.

Markets are similar in their unworthiness, and the case is even more important because markets have so much more support around the world and even on the left. I hate to do the ills of markets the injustice of a summary, but offering more about markets in a short essay like this would be an injustice too, misleadingly implying comprehensiveness that couldn't be present without much more attention given. In sum, markets misprice everything due to taking account only of buyers and sellers but not of others affected by transactions.

Markets create a rat race environment that breeds anti sociality thereby obliterating solidarity. In market exchanges nice guys finish last. Markets make violating the environment not only highly likely due to markets not properly accounting for environmental effects, but makes it inevitable, as sellers are forced to seek means to raise profits and ensure market share in a context where avoiding the costs of ecological damage rears up as one very effective route to that end.

Markets also require inside workplaces vicious cost cutting to generate sufficient surpluses to avoid being out competed, which in turn requires a sector of the workforce who decides the cost cutting policies, which sector to do a good job needs to be immune to the pains induced by cost cutting and schooled in making such decisions aggressively despite the human suffering the decisions impose. All this leads to the coordinator class being reinvigorated.

Rejected for all these reasons and more, what can we incorporate to replace markets and central planning as a component of participatory economics? The answer is participatory planning, a method of workers and consumers councils collectively and cooperatively negotiating inputs and outputs in accord with true and full social costs and benefits and in accord with each actor having self managing say.

Space forbids a full presentation of the structures, logic, and motivations of participatory planning, and many such descriptions exist online and in books in any case. The bottom line claim for participatory economics, however, is that combining workers and consumers councils, self managed decision making, remuneration for effort and sacrifice, balanced job complexes, and also participatory planning, not only attains classlessness but also propels solidarity, diversity, and equity. More, to the extent possible and with no recurring biases, participatory planning apportions to each worker and consumer about each economic decision self managing influence.

In sum, Parecon doesn't reduce productivity but instead provides adequate and proper incentives to work. It doesn't bias toward longer hours but allows free choice of work versus leisure. It doesn't pursue what is most profitable regardless of impact on workers, on the ecology, and even on consumers, but it reorients output toward what is truly beneficial in light of

full social and environmental costs and benefits.

Parecon doesn't waste the human talents of people now doing surgery, or composing music, or otherwise engaging in difficult and skilled labor by requiring that they do offsetting less empowering labor as well, but by this requirement instead surfaces a gargantuan reservoir of previously untapped talents throughout the populace while apportioning both fulfilling and onerous and empowering and rote labor not only justly, but in accord with true and full self management and classlessness.

Parecon doesn't assume sociable much less divine citizens but instead creates an institutional context in which to get ahead in their economic engagements even people who grow up entirely self seeking and anti-social must be concerned for the general social good and the well being of others.

For these reasons and many more I think parecon is part of what it will mean to win a new world, and I hope that before long we can fill out our broad understanding of our goals with comparably defined visions for polity, culture, and kinship, thereby answering compellingly and inspiringly the question "what do you want," and thereby putting to rest the widespread despair-mongering fear that there is no better alternative." I believe such accomplishments can set us on the road not to hypothetically answering the question "what would it mean to win," but to actually winning, and then seeing what doing so would mean with our own eyes.