

I don't have the answer

Wouter Speksnijder

337743

# Table of Contents

I	Introduction	2
II	Worlds	3
III	Pollution	6
IV	Exploitation	8
V	Changing things	11
VI	Scale	12
VII	Resources	16
VIII	Incentives	17
IX	Afterword	18
X	Bibliography	20

# I Introduction

In this thesis, I present my view of how we, humans, could organize ourselves socioeconomically. In the chapter II, Worlds, I explain how our worldview is set by our environment and how we tend to make this environment small, smaller than we maybe should. Chapter III, Pollution, goes into the environmental consequences of our economic system while chapter IV, Exploitation, discusses the consequences for ourselves and why we've created the processes that cause these consequences. Chapter V, Changing things, is a follow up on this, in which I discuss what the incentives were for creating these processes. The incentives are the key here. If we want to change how we, as a global force, act, we need to incentivize people to act differently. In chapter VI, Scale, I finally present my vision. We should limit the shipping of goods by distance and only ship raw materials worldwide. We should make all development as open as possible and separate it from production. With the technologies we have, every region can produce for itself. This would allow us to successfully enforce regulations, give every region equal opportunity and allow us to cooperate more. Through regulation and less transportation we limit the environmental impact. In chapter VII, Resources, I add to this view my opinion about natural resources. With transport limited to these materials, we have the opportunity to regulate and use these in favor of the region that has them. Chapter VIII, Incentives, discusses the change we could create in the economic consequences for ourselves. By limiting transportation and detaching development from production, we limit the scale of corporations and empower the lower classes. The final chapter, Afterword, explains why I wrote this and what it has to do with art.

# II Worlds

Our society has developed to a point where we can solve almost any problem we could've imagined a 150 years ago, as Harari (2017) extensively describes.<sup>1</sup> The problem is that we don't or take a long time doing it. We've pushed ourselves into a corner where implementing solutions is very rarely considered feasible. One of the reasons that solutions are often considered unfeasible is economics, we live in a society where production has to be competitive. This primary importance of competition is part of a bigger picture. We've virtualized our view of the world and with it polluted our priorities. We're living more and more in different worlds and we're strengthening the borders of those worlds through for example social media. Noam Chomsky (1994) showed us how this was already in effect with printed media owned by big corporations during the '90s, we surround ourselves with information we agree with.<sup>2</sup> His opinion might have been a bit over the top and aimed at institutions that try not to be partial, social media don't have that same goal and our media as a whole has proven more susceptible now than they were back then. Our advances in communication technology have made it possible to communicate with people from all sorts of environments, and the fact that all these environments exist and are capable of communicating is great. The different environments create varying opinions. But the strong borders we've created around our personal environments are a problem. An opinion is only useful if it gets transmitted, in a reasonable way, to someone who doesn't share that opinion. The borders present hurdles in this transmission, limits our critical thinking, and as a consequence pollute out priorities.

I live in a welfare state, The Netherlands, and rarely am I in contact with people who claim that they cannot survive in the situation they are in. And when I am, they usually own an expensive smartphone or other things that make me doubt their statement. Of course, I hear and read about people who live in horrible situations, in other countries, but this is very abstract, from a different world. I cannot really, truly understand it. I know it exists but I don't know how it exists, in what shape, what their life is truly like. The same is true for, for example, garbage. I know I dump my garbage in a container and it gets picked up, transported, processed, some of it recycled, some of it illegally transported to Eastern Europe or Africa, etc. I know it, but beyond setting my container by the road, it's all abstract. Beyond my world, beyond my bubble. I wouldn't consider

---

1 Harari, Y. N. (2017). *Homo Deus*. Vintage.

2 Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1994). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Vintage.

illegally exporting waste a reasonable thing to do. But to the person doing it, it's not that crazy, for him it's kind of normal, a sort of necessity. The same is true for millionaires, I cannot fathom having so many resources, let alone imagining the way they perceive the world they live in.

The literal virtualization of our society, through the internet, strengthen the borders in certain areas while they break them down in others. This phenomenon is not new, we've been doing it for a very, very long time. We tend to surround ourselves with people with similar social status, stage of life, level of education and from a similar environment. We tend to live surrounded by people with roughly equal levels of wealth, our friends have had most likely a similar level of education, they travel the same social circles, etcetera. We do this because it's easier to identify with and relate to them. But because their experiences are so similar to ours, they also challenge us less in our opinions. Social media platforms group us with our social equals because people use them for 'fun' and being challenged in your opinions or view of the world isn't generally considered fun. With the internet came the opportunity to connect people from different social or economic worlds together directly instead of just through newspapers, books, TV and the occasional real-life meeting but the percentage of internet usage towards contact within our own social circle has grown significantly over the last decade or so. While these socially bordered environments grew, they were monetized as well. This means a closed-off corporate structure in which there is little oversight and plenty of incentives to use all possible means to make money. Cambridge Analytica is an example of one of its consequences, a company aimed at providing services to political campaigns. Its employers, subcontractors, and Cambridge Analytica itself employed morally dubious techniques to use the opaque nature of such a platform in their favor. They first used it to profile millions of people by luring them in through the opportunity to make a little money by selling not only your own profile but also those of your friends. After acquiring a large enough dataset they used targeted advertisement and "informational dominance", a technique that works through rumors and disinformation, to change someone's opinion (Cadwalladr 2018).<sup>1</sup> Polarization is the name of the game here, according to O'Connor and Weatherall's (2017) research paper *Scientific polarization* an inevitable outcome of all differing opinions.<sup>2</sup> But, I would argue this is a consequence of living within our bordered, often virtualized, worlds. Mark Twain (1869) once wrote: "Travel is

---

1 Cadwalladr, C. (2018). 'I made Steve Bannon's psychological warfare tool': meet the data war whistleblower. *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/data-war-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-faceook-nix-bannon-trump>

2 O'Connor, C., & Weatherall, J. (2017). *Scientific Polarization*. SSRN *Electronic Journal*.

<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3098608>

fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."<sup>1</sup> The internet has made it easy for us to travel social and economic circles to a certain extent but it also presented ways for us to stay in our "one little corner of the earth".

One of the things that set us, humans, apart from many of the other organisms on this planet is the scale at which we're capable of cooperating. The whole developed world depends on international cooperation, the kind that crosses different "worlds" and ideologies. The European Union sets another example where we've been able to make bridges across the canyons that separate our ideological worlds. We need to avoid polarization and focus on cooperation if we want to solve problems. However, although these goals strengthen each other, the one does not automatically include the other.

---

1 Twain, M., & Hutchinson, S. (1869). *The Innocents Abroad*.

# III Pollution

We've been polluting our planet with gasses and garbage while extracting resources at such a rate that we're destroying too much to keep it sustainable. Some scientists are already calling global warming the "sixth mass extinction" event, for example, Ceballos, Ehrlich, & Dirzo (2017).<sup>1</sup> We're extracting resources in a way that destroys habitats for organisms we need to sustain other habitats, among which our own. This process developed when our society industrialized. At that moment, the effect of our destruction was relatively limited. The AR4 report (IPCC 2007), a scientific report on climate change by a body of the United Nations, illustrates this on page 38 in the graphs that show the development of different gasses in our atmosphere.<sup>2</sup> The scale at which we worked was relatively small, not only because we were with fewer people but also because the majority of us weren't as economically wealthy as we are now.

Industrialization and democratization brought a high standard of living for the developed world. Fewer of us die young and all of us buy more. Industrialization made our production, and our survival-chances, skyrocket. This has had a large effect on the natural habitats of animals. Some species have moved and a lot of species have died off for us to be able to mine, farm and produce. Of course, a shift in animal population has been going on for as long as there have been animals on earth but according to WWF's Living Planet Index, which measures the number of vertebrates (animals with a backbone), the vertebrates-population has shrunk by approximately 60% since 1970, as mentioned in the *Living Planet Report* (WWF, 2018, pp. 7).<sup>3</sup> Having less, or different, species isn't necessarily bad for us until that change means that our own habitat is in danger. With this many species in danger, you don't need a report to tell you that there are worldwide consequences. An example of the consequences is the decline in bees and with it comes problems with pollination for farmers.

The globalization of our economy has had a similar effect on our environment as industrialization. But, where industrialization was a relatively gradual development of exploitation of the earth, that's not the case with globalization. Countries that have had

---

1 Ceballos, G., Ehrlich, P. R., & Dirzo, R. (2017). Biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signaled by vertebrate population losses and declines. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(30), E6089-E6096.

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1704949114>

2 IPCC. (2007). AR4 Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar4/syr/>

3 WWF. (2018). *Living Planet Report*.

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/living-planet-report-2018>

relatively low production and economic worth get flooded with big companies wanting to move as much production into that country as possible. Because these countries don't have as much experience with industrialization, there's usually very little regulation. When there is regulation, the companies involved are usually powerful enough to enforce a change in their favor. Take for example the disaster RCA, a major electronics corporation of the last century, created in Taiwan as documented by 101 East (2015).<sup>1</sup> Or, for a less specific view, the *Top 200* report by IPS.<sup>2</sup> An institute aimed at "crafting practical strategies in support of peace, justice, and the environment", I think political activists is a better description. Aside from the pollution created by production, we're also confronted with pollution as a result of transportation from and to those countries.

Our most environmentally friendly way of transportation, by water, causes acidification which in turn breaks, among other things, coral reefs down in the seas. The lack of coral reefs, in turn, influences the amount of the CO<sub>2</sub> in the air, and CO<sub>2</sub> has an influence on global warming which in turn causes polar ice to melt and change the sea even more (WWF, 2018). While local transport with fossil fuels has a likely viable alternative with electric motors and batteries, international transport by water and through the air is less likely to be solved short-term. Besides this, batteries rely on acidic combinations which are very rarely environmentally friendly. Most batteries today are a version of lithium-ion, which is an environmentally better solution than lead-acid for example. But depending on the amount of production we need, we could run out of lithium within 15 years, as described by Hunt (2015).<sup>3</sup> Long before we run out of oil or face the worst consequences of global warming.

---

1 101 East. (2015). Taiwan's Secret Cancer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJjb3lPL7E0>

2 Institute for Policy Studies. (2000). *Top 200: The Rise of Corporate Global Power*.

[https://ips-dc.org/top\\_200\\_the\\_rise\\_of\\_corporate\\_global\\_power/](https://ips-dc.org/top_200_the_rise_of_corporate_global_power/)

3 Hunt, T. (2015). *Is There Enough Lithium to Maintain the Growth of the Lithium-Ion Battery Market?*

<https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/Is-There-Enough-Lithium-to-Maintain-the-Growth-of-the-Lithium-Ion-Battery-M>

## IV Exploitation

Capitalism has been the ruling economic force, globally. For it to work, there have to be resources to be exploited. Something that can be used to give an advantage, low wages or a cheaper way to extract a natural resource have been the usual options. It has done well for those in the developed world, and helped some of the other parts of the world develop. But it also put its main weakness on display. Without something to take advantage of available, it will create something to take advantage of.

The ideal of capitalism was once portrayed to me as one country is best in making product A and another country specializes in product B, while there's plenty of demand for both A and B in both countries. The countries would buy from each other and everyone would be better off. We've seen that this is not true. The country that cares least for its people or environment can eventually produce both products A and B the cheapest. With our markets driven by competition, we will all buy from the country that doesn't care about anything but profits, the country with the least amount of regulation.

Capitalism doesn't work in a state of stagnation or, as the Slovenian philosopher and sociologist Žižek (2018), a political (left) radical with a knack for entertaining ideas without proper argumentation, puts it: "crisis is its normal state."<sup>1</sup> It thrives in a situation where there are abandoned or unclaimed resources ready to be taken advantage of. At a certain point, there's nothing left to exploit to get a competitive edge but the employees. Amazon's warehouses are an example of this: employees within these warehouses were coerced not to take toilet breaks, as reported by for example Liao (2018).<sup>2</sup> With rising costs for transport because of regulations on fossil fuels and competition from countries with hardly any regulation, Amazon needed a new edge and this was it, or more likely one of them.

This extreme exploitation is not a problem with peoples morals but a consequence of the strong borders people have around their professional world. They needed to please their bosses so they implemented impossible guidelines, hoping they turned out possible, letting the next layer of management figure out how to. If the lowest layers wouldn't be able to meet the guidelines,

---

1 Žižek, S. (2018). Capitalism and its Threats.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wvplG89lwg>

2 Liao, S. (2018). Amazon warehouse workers skip bathroom breaks to keep their jobs, says report.  
<https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/16/17243026/amazon-warehouse-jobs-worker-conditions-bathroom-breaks>

naturally there would be penalties and when you're dependent on your job, you'll do whatever it takes.

The same is true for our slow implementation of "green" technologies. In this context, I'm using green technologies as everything from solar panels, water-saving washing machines to more environmentally friendly petrol engines. Although we knew climate change was probably a man-made thing with rising certainty since the '70s, green technologies weren't competitive. The real influx in the adoption has just started and this is mostly because of subsidies. It's not that those making decisions about these kinds of things are bad people but their world is aimed at making profits. Our economic market has no morals, the only thing that matters is competitiveness while the economic market is, for the biggest part, made up out of people. The same people whose morals made sure that politicians wouldn't get re-elected if they didn't address climate change. The reason we've been unable to implement our morals in the economic market is that our companies are autocratic worlds fenced off from the real world. The priority within that autocracy is money. Without money, the autocracy has no birthright and while our daily life priorities might be different, we're in a system in which you need money. A good example of how the priority of money can overcome anyone's morals is to look at the many revolutionaries who turned into horrible dictators. Most of these people came into power with noble ideals but inherited the infrastructure from the previous regime. This infrastructure made sure that those ideals would become secondary to the flow of money needed to stay in power, as extensively described by de Mesquita & Smith (2012) in *The Dictator's Handbook*.<sup>1</sup> Our economic markets have the same kind of all-encompassing infrastructure.

The influx in the adoption of green technologies has turned global warming into another economic crisis in which capitalism can flourish. New techniques emerge and old technologies will devalue which allows refurbishment into new systems to become economically viable. However, we're still depending on countries with little regulations to produce those new technologies for us.

Meanwhile, the economy in the developed world has become more and more about creating money with money. One of the ways this has been happening is corporations buying other corporations with large amounts of borrowed money. The amount of mergers and acquisitions since the beginning of the '90s has roughly doubled while the amount of money involved has almost quadrupled, according to the IMAA (2019).<sup>2</sup> Corporations do this for their

---

1 de Mesquita, B. B., & Smith, A. (2012). *The Dictator's Handbook*.

2 The Institute for Mergers, Acquisitions and Alliances. (2019). M&A Statistics.

<https://imaa-institute.org/mergers-and-acquisitions-statistics/>

patents or because they think they can remarket it, or its products. By doing this we're creating money with no basis in reality. The money getting borrowed doesn't exist until it's been paid back, but it's getting paid back with borrowed money. Or, as the Greek economics professor and a politician with very strong convictions, Varoufakis (2018) puts it: "[The banker] pushes his hand into the future, grabs value that has not been created yet, ... brings it into the present and gives it to you. Hopefully, you do productive things and you create the value that will repay the future."<sup>1</sup> There's no actual product being created alongside the money aside from some autographs on some papers. The only people providing an actual service are the producer of the paper and the lawyers filling them with words but suddenly a lot of money has been created. During such transfers, the buyer usually extracts a patent or other virtual resources from said company before he sells it again, often for more money after some careful marketing. Making money with money in this way creates bubbles, where there's no objective way to determine its value except for the last price that has been put on it. These bubbles usually burst at some point, the dot-com boom and the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis are recent examples of this. This practice might not be as bad for our environment as actually producing a product but it also doesn't distribute resources to many people, it grows the income gap between lower and higher classes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Varoufakis, Y. (2018). Is Capitalism Devouring Democracy?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGeevtdp1WQ>

## v Changing things

To start thinking about changing things, we need to start looking at why we do things the way we do them. We need to understand what drives us, why these things became what they became. Which incentives were there for the people who had an influence on the subject?

We're in an economic system where you basically cannot survive without money, and to get money you need a job. Aside from the status attached to some jobs, there are jobs that pay more and there are jobs that pay less. In general, we're after more money and better status. That status usually comes with more power which can be used to generate more money. Of course, other things also play a role when choosing a job or field to work in but these are less important when it comes to incentivizing people to act a certain way in certain positions.

You keep your function within a system by keeping those that allow you to keep your function, happy. Most jobs are in an autocratic system but there are some democratic systems. A democratic system functions by letting those that act in accordance with what the majority wants, to keep their function. In an autocracy, it's usually a very small group of people with large powers, usually potential competition, that let the autocrat stay in power. This difference in structure means that in a democracy you're incentivized to act beneficiary to as many as possible while in an autocracy you only need to take care of a few (de Mesquita & Smith 2012).<sup>1</sup> Of course, this statement presumes a "perfect" democracy and an almost-perfect autocracy. In a democracy, votes can be manipulated in many ways while in an autocracy, the autocrat could've made those on who he depends loyal to him in different ways.

Most companies are autocratic systems, the leader stays in power by rewarding a select few that let him stay in power. In the bigger companies, those select few are usually the ones with a large investment in it, in the form of stock shares. They expect a return on their investment and as such the main incentive for the executive is to make a profit. Most, if not all, employees share this; money is our main incentive. To change how we incentivize people, or make our economy more moral, we need to rethink our economy. I don't think we can change the way we use money in an oversee-able time-frame, we built our economy around it. The concept of ownership, borrowing, and rent is an integral part of it.

---

1 de Mesquita, B. B., & Smith, A. (2012). *The Dictator's Handbook*.

## vi Scale

Globalization has done a lot for the economy, increasing the speed at which it and its products developed. But it also means, as I've described before, that production is done in the worst circumstances and a lot of transport is needed. With the level of technology we've got today, this is unnecessary. We're capable of 3D printing houses, we're capable of 3D printing 3D-printers. The circuit boards in our electronics are made by fully automated machines, there's only some assembly required, like with Ikea, and sometimes not even that. We can't go fully Star-Trek yet and render food out of molecules but we're a lot closer than when Star-Trek was written.

At the moment, a lot of our global economy is dominated by a few large companies for each respective industry. Those few companies have a grip on the market and effectively decide which products and services are available. Of course, the concentration of production produced industry of scale which gave us affordable products and faster development in some cases but, with the technology we currently possess, we don't need industries of scale anymore. Varoufakis (2018) takes this a bit further and states that "economies of scale are dying because of what capitalism has created"<sup>1</sup>, referring to 3D printing and other new technologies already forming serious competition. Because of these new technologies, we don't need to distribute the product, we can create the product (almost) anywhere on earth. And not every region needs the same products. We need distribution of knowledge and designs, and we've got that too. The internet was developed as a way for universities and the military to share knowledge and although it has become much more than that, it still functions as a platform to share knowledge.

Our sharing of knowledge is what made the human race survive. We're, compared to other animals, very fragile and weak but we developed the capability to transmit ideas through images, speech and, much later, text. We're able to collaborate because of this. Our collaboration is what probably made the Neanderthal go extinct according to a study by Gilpin, Feldman, & Aoki (2016).<sup>2</sup> Now we need to collaborate to survive global warming and other dystopias. Sharing and cooperating in developing knowledge so we can all, not just the developed world, make our economy environmentally sustainable should be our goal.

---

1 Varoufakis, Y. (2018). Is Capitalism Devouring Democracy?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGeevtdp1WQ>

2 Gilpin, W., Feldman, M. W., & Aoki, K. (2016). An ecocultural model predicts Neanderthal extinction through competition with modern humans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(8), 2134-2139.  
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1524861113>

In our economy, a lot of development is done by companies and universities. Some of the knowledge developed by universities becomes publicly accessible, for example through Open Access<sup>1</sup>, but almost all of the knowledge developed by companies stays relatively secret. The companies need this secret to have an advantage in the market. The knowledge they develop makes the money, not the product they make. This is not a system of collaboration. You could call this a system of competition and this competition might prevent stagnation in development but this doesn't take into account the jobs of the people who developed the knowledge. Those people don't suddenly stop being the developer, at least they probably don't want to. What we need is a system in which knowledge can be openly accessible while development is still profitable.

As Žižek (2018) states, in online development, this development is not "classic profit and exploitation", we basically rent the product through different structures.<sup>2</sup> These are platforms that, before the internet was invented, were considered "the commons". And while plenty of platforms, Bitcoin and Android are two very successful ones, have found ways to present a working model while staying open, most platforms have chosen to adopt a classical business structure to attract investments. This classical structure is not a system of cooperation and I would argue that the choice for such a system is out of fear but enforces that belief afterward by presenting an infrastructure that needs a certain money-flow as I've described in the chapter Exploitation. This fear is equal to the fear investors have. Investors being "too terrified to invest it into the productive activities that can generate the incomes from which we can extinguish the mountain of debts", as Varoufakis (2016) put it.<sup>3</sup>

But we've already got have a system that protects knowledge in the form of patents and copyright, and although this a very broken system at the moment, we could use this system to incentivize development without the need to produce a product. Upon selling a product that uses a certain patent, the developer is rewarded for its efforts. Just like part of the current system works, we just need to open up its accessibility and regulate it properly.

By making knowledge and product designs open, we break the grip major corporations have over product development. When we open the market to production companies that are smaller but just as capable because they have access to the same knowledge, we open it

---

1 Open Access. (n.d.).

<https://www.openaccess.nl/en>

2 Žižek, S. (2018). Capitalism and its Threats.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wvplG89lwg>

3 Varoufakis, Y. (2016). Capitalism will eat democracy -- unless we speak up.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GB4s5b9NL3I>

to people who are living in a different "world", not used to the massive amounts of resources those major corporations have; companies that have a different political structure.

Once we've separated development from production, we can restrict the shipping of goods. By producing locally, we can truly enforce regulations that benefit the environment and ourselves. By producing locally, poor countries are less likely to be bullied by corporations that have more money than them into holding back on regulations that might benefit their citizens or the environment. By only transporting raw materials over longer distances, we decrease the amount of shipping needed per product and the amount of packaging, both of which amount to less pollution. By producing locally, we create corporations that are more in contact with their environment and employees. By having a smaller market, they are easier to incentivize to behave well instead of behaving in the interest of the ones in control of the politics at the higher levels. By having more locally produced goods, we increase the percentage of money made with products versus money made with money in the western world.

An example of how public knowledge can change the way we produce is the Precious Plastic initiative by Dave Hakkens. He designed affordable machines to recycle plastic and made them open source. As a result, these designs have been used around the globe to recycle plastic locally into all kinds of different products.<sup>1</sup>

How this limitation of product distribution could work with virtual products and services is not clear to me but I think it should apply here as well, or maybe the separation of development would help in this case. The tech-giants like Google, Facebook and Microsoft have been fined multi-million dollar fines for their bad behavior but their behavior rarely changed, they usually get bigger fines the next year and even than their behavior remains profitable for them. Their scale allows them to interpret these fines as cost-of-doing-business. Besides the environmental reasons to limit the distribution of physical goods, we should use this limitation to limit the size of a company so we can effectively use regulations.

However, we cannot just restrict the distribution of goods without giving undeveloped countries the resources to start producing more. With the technologies we currently have, this is mostly feasible. Imagine the poorest African countries suddenly having to produce their own clothing instead of importing cheap Chinese clothes, this would create a working economy in those countries instead of being exploited for the little they can be competitive within the global market. But they need access to the knowledge

---

<sup>1</sup> Precious Plastic. (n.d.).  
<https://preciousplastic.com/>

about how to make the tools with which they can produce for themselves. We need to give every region the same opportunity.

## vii Resources

When we change international trade from mostly products to mostly raw materials, it gives us the opportunity to reflect on how we view the raw materials the earth gives us. There are raw materials from all over the world in most of the products you'll find in the stores. Most of these raw materials are extracted without direct compensation to the people who live, will live or lived on that land, for the amount extracted from the earth.

We live in countries, which are basically just groups of people calling themselves a country. As a country, we try to take care of the people in this group and the land we live on. Just like a family takes care of their household together. If I would like to have a certain object from that house, which isn't owned by a certain individual in that household, I'd find it strange if the deal I'd make for that object would be with just one individual. I think we should look at the resources the earth gives us in the same way. We own these resources together. If a company wants to extract those resources, we should all be compensated.

What can we do with the compensation we receive? Alaska has had a system in place since 1982 that sends that money to its citizens yearly, without any conditions, under the name Alaska Permanent Fund. This makes it essentially a Universal Basic Income, or UBI. Although I'm all for such a thing to make money less important and make work more about self-development, purpose and social cohesion, the money should first be used to limit any possible environmental impact of the extraction and second to make sure the resources are as sustainable as possible. But these matters are also the responsibility for the party that does the extraction. We live on this planet together, with this planet. Any harm to this planet is harm to our habitat and we're just like other animals, dependent on what our habitat provides us. Environmental problems like global warming aren't issues for the planet or life itself, it's a problem for fragile creations like ourselves who require, if you look at what we know about other planets, a very specific habitat.

## VIII Incentives

As I've said in the previous chapter, something like a Universal Basic Income could make our work-life more about fulfillment and less about money. A separation between development and production could go hand in hand with a form of universal income. One of the advantages of a universal basic income is that one could stop one's career to pursue another that would need studying. Development works in the same way; during development, it won't produce any income while the developed product could very well be worthwhile. We should incentivize development in the same way we incentivize education. The education system in Western Europe is very good, education at any level is accessible to, or universal to, anyone who's intellectually capable of that level.

By limiting the scale of companies, we limit the separation between its highest and lowest levels. This can help in making companies act more democratic, the incentive for an executive to act in the interest of more people is bigger because the distance between the executive and lower-level employees is smaller. His position of power is more easily distorted by its employees than in a larger company with more layers of management, where the executives generally act in the interest of their own position. Add to this something like UBI, with which its employees could easily change their career, and the incentive for the executive branch to act in the larger interest might balance the interests of investors.

One of the often claimed down-sides of a UBI is that it would limit the incentive to work at all but it's in our DNA to be competitive. Our society translates this competition into status. This concept of status will always be attached to how we spend our days. A UBI will not change the view of status attached to an important job. Besides competition, there's also the need to feel wanted embedded in our DNA. This takes multiple forms in our daily lives. The way we explore relationships is coupled to both these fundamental properties of ours. Another way to feel wanted is by having a sense of purpose. Jobs provide this sense.

## ix Afterword

This might sound like restricting freedoms and countering globalization, but that's not what I mean with this. Our world is much more than economics although most of our lives are heavily involved in it. We should restrict this small thing of production of goods for the good of ourselves and our environment, and further any other kind of globalization. I'm not against capitalism either, I'm as much against capitalism as I am against communism. Capitalism has many downsides but communism has just as many, if not more. Communism has the natural tendency to consolidate power, to be able to distribute everything equally, everything first has to meet at one point. Consolidated power, for example in large companies, has the tendency to corrupt, or distort priorities.

If I were to market this idea, I'd call it decentralized development and production. Through breaking apart the connection between development and production, we can harvest our species greatest power, the power to cooperate, to tackle problems we seem to be having a lot of issues with. Some of these problems are the unfair exploitation of human labor and environmental pollution. But I'm not marketing this idea, I'm writing this as my thesis in art academy. So what does this have to do with art? The art I make is generally slightly critical about how we use things or organize ourselves, this text is no different. In my work, I use whichever tool is accessible to me, this accessibility is a consequence of the current state of economics.

While my works are generally slightly critical, they are to me, mostly reflective. This reflection also links it to economics, most of our lives are heavily influenced by or completely integrated into economics. I've made a few works about how we use smartphones for example, they were reflections on how I use my smartphone most of all. One of these works was in the context of rituals and consisted of a torso with antennas around its arms which generated sound out of whatever it would receive, based on my ritual to grab my phone when getting in and out of bed, looking for contact with people. Through a monetized platform. Another was an installation that turned waving with your phone in your hand into individual sounds for each participant, inspired by how, when I'm waiting for my train while looking at my phone, I miss the opportunity to see and wave at someone I know at another platform. Just like waving at someone doesn't work when the other doesn't see you, this work needed another participant with who you could cooperate in making it interesting. Another work is a performance where Angelos Messios and I built a raft in the south of Rotterdam and crossed the water to 'a better world'. Aside from the link to

refugees, it was also an embodiment of the income-gap between the south and north of Rotterdam.

Art can influence society in ways that allow it to be extreme. prejudice about a subject isn't necessarily bad or as influential as it is with other ways of communication. Art is an open platform in a way. Its content is faster internalized and reflected to one's own experiences than a text like this. This text is less of a reflection and more of a statement, a context in which, if realized, my work would be less useful. But luckily this is all very ideological and will never work in the real world. Therefore, I declare it art.

# x Bibliography

101 East. (2015).

Taiwan's Secret Cancer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJjb3lPL7E0>

Cadwalladr, C. (2018).

'I made Steve Bannon's psychological warfare tool': meet the data war whistleblower. *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/data-war-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-faceook-nix-bannon-trump>

Ceballos, G., Ehrlich, P. R., & Dirzo, R. (2017).

Biological annihilation via the ongoing sixth mass extinction signaled by vertebrate population losses and declines. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(30), E6089–E6096.

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1704949114>

O'Connor, C., & Weatherall, J. (2017).

Scientific Polarization. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3098608>

Gilpin, W., Feldman, M. W., & Aoki, K. (2016).

An ecocultural model predicts Neanderthal extinction through competition with modern humans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(8), 2134–2139.

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1524861113>

Harari, Y. N. (2017).

*Homo Deus*. Vintage.

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1994).

*Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Vintage.

Hunt, T. (2015).

Is There Enough Lithium to Maintain the Growth of the Lithium-Ion Battery Market?

<https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/Is-There-Enough-Lithium-to-Maintain-the-Growth-of-the-Lithium-Ion-Battery-M>

- Institute for Policy Studies. (2000).  
Top 200: The Rise of Corporate Global Power.  
[https://ips-dc.org/top\\_200\\_the\\_rise\\_of\\_corporate\\_global\\_power/](https://ips-dc.org/top_200_the_rise_of_corporate_global_power/)
- The Institute for Mergers, Acquisitions and Alliances. (2019).  
M&A Statistics.  
<https://imaa-institute.org/mergers-and-acquisitions-statistics/>
- IPCC. (2007).  
AR4 Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report.  
<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar4/syr/>
- Liao, S. (2018).  
Amazon warehouse workers skip bathroom breaks to keep their jobs, says report.  
<https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/16/17243026/amazon-warehouse-jobs-worker-conditions-bathroom-breaks>
- de Mesquita, B. B., & Smith, A. (2012).  
*The Dictator's Handbook*.
- Open Access. (n.d.).  
<https://www.openaccess.nl/en>
- Precious Plastic. (n.d.).  
<https://preciousplastic.com/>
- Twain, M., & Hutchinson, S. (1869).  
*The Innocents Abroad*.
- Varoufakis, Y. (2016).  
Capitalism will eat democracy -- unless we speak up.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GB4s5b9NL3I>
- Varoufakis, Y. (2018).  
Is Capitalism Devouring Democracy?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGeevtdp1WQ>

WWF. (2018).

*Living Planet Report.*

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/living-planet-report-2018>

Žižek, S. (2018).

Capitalism and its Threats.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wvpLG89lwg>