Ted Trainer
An Anarchism for Today
The Simpler Way
14 Jun 2018

Capitalism Nature Socialism Volume 30, 2019 — Issue 4. DOI:
10.1080/10455752.2018.1482936

theanarchistlibrary.org

An Anarchism for Today

The Simpler Way

Ted Trainer

14 Jun 2018

Contents

sition.org/the-catalan-integral-cooperative-an-organizational-study-of-a-post-capitalist-cooperative/. [Google Scholar]
Lockyer, J. 2017. "Community, Commons, and De-growth at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage." *Political Ecology* 24: 519–542. doi: 10.2458/v24i1.20890 [Crossref], [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]
Phillips, L. 2014. *Austerity Ecology and the Collapse-Porn Addicts: A Defence of Growth, Progress, Industry and Stuff*. Winchester: Zero Books. [Google Scholar]
Sharzar, G. 2012. *No Local: Why Small-scale Alternatives Won't Change the World*. Winchester: Zero Books. [Google Scholar]
Trainer, Ted. 2009. "The Spanish Anarchists." The Simpler Way. thesimplerway.info/Spanish.html. [Google Scholar]
Trainer, Ted. 2012. "Your Delightful Day." The Simpler Way. thesimplerway.info/YOURDAY.htm. [Google Scholar]
Trainer, Ted. 2015a. *Remaking Settlements: The Potential Cost Reductions Enabled by the Simpler Way*. Simplicity Institute Report 15e. http://simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Remaking-Settlements-Simplicity-Institute.pdf. [Google Scholar]
Trainer, Ted. 2015b. "The Case for Simplicity." The Simpler Way. thesimplerway.info/SIMPLICITY.htm. [Google Scholar]
Trainer, Ted. 2016. "But Can't Technical Advance Solve the Problems?" The Simpler Way. thesimplerway.info/TECHFIX.htm. [Google Scholar]
Trainer, Ted. 2017. "The Transition Process: The Simpler Way Perspective." The Simpler Way. thesimplerway.info/TRANSITION.htm. [Google Scholar]
Weidmann, T., H. Schandl, and D. Moral. 2014. "The Footprint of Using Metals: New Metrics of Consumption and Productivity." *Environmental Economics and Policy Studies*. doi:10.1007/s10018-14-0085-y. [Web of Science ®], [Google Scholar]
WWF (World Wildlife Fund). 2013. *The Living Planet Report*. Sydney: WWF and London Zoological Society. [Google Scholar]

ist can only look forward to this in the distant future, long after a conflict-ridden revolution.

This has been a fundamental challenge to radical left thinking about both the alternative to capitalism and the strategy for achieving it. My experience has been that it is not a very welcome critique, but it is a friendly one, and not that difficult for the left to take on board. Its two core challenges are, firstly, to attend much more to ecological limits and resource scarcity in thinking about the good society and how to get to it, and secondly, to recognise that it is a mistake at this stage to focus on centralisation and the taking of state power.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

Alexander, S. 2012. *Living Better on Less? Toward an Economics of Sufficiency*. Simplicity Institute Report 12c. http://simplicityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/LivingBetterOnLess5.pdf. [Google Scholar]

Avineri, S. 1968. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Crossref], [Google Scholar]

Blomqvist, L., T. Nordhaus, and M. Shellenbeger. 2015. *Nature Unbound; Decoupling for Conservation*. Oakland, CA: Breakthrough Institute. [Google Scholar]

Dafermos, G. 2017. *The Catalan Integral Cooperative: An Organizational Study of a Post-capitalist Cooperative*. Commons Transitions, Special Report, October 19. http://commonstran-

Abstract

A sustainable and just world cannot be achieved without enormous structural and cultural change. The argument presented below is that when our situation is understood in terms of resource and ecological limits, it is evident firstly that getting rid of capitalism is not sufficient. A satisfactory alternative society cannot be highly industrialised or centralised, and it must involve highly self-sufficient local economies and largely self-governing communities that prioritise cooperation and participation. Above all, there must be degrowth to a far lower GDP per capita than that exists in rich countries today, with a concomitant embracing of very frugal material "living standards." Only a basically anarchist society can meet these conditions satisfactorily. Secondly, given this goal the transition to it can only be achieved via an anarchist strategy. Both these themes point to the need for substantial rethinking of essential elements in mainstream socialist and Marxist theory.

The Global Situation

Consumer-capitalist society cannot be made ecologically sustainable or just. The accelerating global problems cannot be solved in a society driven by an obsession with high rates of production and consumption, living standards based on affluence, market forces, the profit motive and economic growth. The only solution to the problems created by such a society is via a huge and radical transition to some kind of Simpler Way.

Many on the left do not accept this basic analysis of our situation. Notable recent examples are given by Phillips (2014) and Sharzar (2012). The common belief is that when capitalism has been transcended, rational organisation will release technical advancement to enable all to rise to high material living standards. However, there is now an overwhelmingly convincing "limits-to-

growth" case stating that we have far exceeded the capacity of the planet's resources and ecosystems to sustain the present levels of production and consumption, and that there is no possibility of extending the "living standards" of the world's most affluent societies to all people.

Of central importance here is the magnitude of the overshoot, i.e. the degree to which current levels of production and consumption are unsustainable. A clear illustration is given by the World Wildlife Fund's "footprint" index. According to a report from 2013 (WWF 2013), it takes about 8 ha of productive land to provide water, energy, settlement area and food for one person living in Australia. So, if 9 billion people were to live as we do in Sydney, we would need about 72 billion ha of productive land to provide for a similar material standard of living for all of them. But that is about nine times all the available productive land on the planet. Even now footprint analyses indicate that the world is consuming resources at 1.5 times of the maximum sustainable rate.

Figures for some other items indicate much worse ratios. For instance, the top 10 iron ore and bauxite consuming nations have per capita use rates about 65 and 90 times higher, respectively, than those for all the other nations (Weidmann, Schandl, and Moral 2014). Mineral ore grades are falling. All people could not rise to present rich-world levels of mineral use. The same case can be made with respect to just about all other resources and ecosystem services, such as agricultural land, forests, fisheries, water and more. These statistics only describe the present, grossly unsustainable rich-world levels of production and consumption. But there is pressure to increase these levels of output and consumption, living standards and GDP as much as possible and without an end in sight. In other words, the supreme goal of economic activity is growth. Few seem to recognise the utterly impossible implications of this. If the expected 9 billion people were to rise to the "living standards" Australians would have in 2050 assuming an annual economic growth of 3 percent, the total global amount of production

and through the resulting realisation that these communities must start producing as much as they can for themselves. But, as noted above, a significant difference remains. If this Stage 1 of the revolution goes well, we will not have to deal with the "crude communism" Marx anticipated. We will already have spread the ideas, values and practices that will enable a direct transition to a good post-capitalist society.

It should be noted that becoming involved in local prefiguration is not the only way activists can contribute to the revolution. Some of them can contribute best by writing and working within media and educational institutions, and through raising the issues in everyday conversations. But it would seem that the most effective thing most could do is to try to influence people they are working with within the many local initiatives that have sprung up over the past two decades. The anarchist approach also holds open the possibility of the transition being relatively peaceful. If most people wanted the transition, it might occur quickly and without much violence, as they would simply move to establish the new cooperative local systems. This can be regarded as "ignoring the system to death." If this is done well enough in Stage 1, then, when Stage 2 arrives, it is conceivable that the 1 percent and those who benefit from serving them will see the writing on the wall and realise that their ways cannot continue, if only because their resource inputs and markets are drying up. Interestingly, in Spain many owners of factories joined the anarchists in helping to run them for the public good. However, there is obviously a good chance that there will be great confusion, chaos and conflict, and all will be lost in the die-off of billions. It hardly needs to be said that the prospects for a Simpler Way transition must be rated as very poor. Yet the above argument has been that it is in general the only strategy to work for. The anarchist approach to transition offers the possibility of experiencing and enjoying post-revolutionary social systems and relations here and now, if only to some extent, whereas the social-

period in which the vanguard party helps passive, materialistically inclined masses within industrialised systems to overcome their greed (Avineri's term) and phase down to eventually enjoy living simply.

Note the significant problem Marxist theory has here. Marx argues convincingly that the development of capitalism produces various institutions and practices that will be important elements in the post-capitalist synthesis, but willing acceptance of frugality, which, from the perspective of The Simpler Way is the most crucial now, is not one of them. He could not have been expected to see how supreme this requirement has become, given that he wrote long before resource scarcity and ecological limits were seen to be such overriding determinants. Any "revolution" that got us to a "crude communism" in which most people remained as fiercely obsessed with wealth and gain as they are now would either not be likely to survive very long, or would set an urgent and gargantuan "educational" task for the vanguard party.

The Simpler Way account of the required alternative society and the transition to it does not involve this problem. Firstly, it explains that, yes, the new dispositions and institutions must be built before significant change at the level of capitalism becomes possible, but it also holds that when they have been built, a fully fledged "communism" will be possible, with no need for a distinction or delay between taking power and achieving the cultural goal. Of course, this assumes that those psychological and social changes can be achieved, within a few decades, and this is such a historically gigantic revolution that it is not at all likely to be achieved. The point, however, is that ecological limits and resource scarcity leave us no option but to try to do it.

It could be argued that the path capitalism is now taking is in fact beginning to produce acceptance and practice of frugality, cooperation and non-material satisfaction. In The Simpler Way strategic vision these will emerge from and be produced by late capitalism, through its increasing failure to provide for communities

and consumption going on would be about 30 times as great as it is now. To provide that quantity of natural resources sustainably we would need to harvest them from about 45 Earths.

Why analyse in terms of nine billion people trying to live as we in rich countries do? The approximately two billion rich people can sustain their affluent ways only if they go on consuming most of the planet's dwindling resources. This is likely to be a recipe for rapid security deterioration. If it continued to be their goal, they would be well advised to remain heavily armed, given the certainty of intensifying resource wars. Conventional wisdom has taught the rest that to "develop" is to rise to rich-world affluence, so, whether we like it or not, we will have to think about the quest for a world of nine billion living as we do.

The common retort to this kind of analysis, as argued by Phillips (2014), and especially by Blomqvist, Nordhaus, and Shellenbeger (2015), is that technical advance can solve the problems. The extreme implausibility of this belief is explained in detail in Trainer 2016. The faith in technofixes assumes that global GDP can grow to three to four times its present levels by 2050, while resource use can be cut to around one-tenth or less of present volumes. Suffice it to say here that among the many relevant studies there seem to be none that provide any support for the core tech-fix assumption, i.e. that economic growth and resource demand can be "decoupled." For all intents and purposes, economic growth is closely correlated with growth in resource use. Yet the tech-fix faith expects us to believe that the ratio can be reduced by a factor in excess of 30 by 2050.

The enormous magnitude of the overshoot must be the overriding determinant of thinking about a viable alternative society. It is difficult to see how anyone aware of these basic numbers could avoid accepting that the rich countries must transition to far simpler and less resource-expensive lifestyles and economies. As has been indicated above, the per capita decreases in resource use in those countries might have to be around 90 percent, so they could

not be achieved without dramatic reductions in the amount of production and consumption, and therefore, the economic activity taking place. Needless to say, this cannot be done in a capitalist society, but it is equally obvious that far more must be done than merely replacing capitalism with some kind of socialism.

The Alternative Must Be a Simpler Way

The magnitude of the overshoot means that the required alternative society will contradict some of the core assumptions that have been taken for granted by many left theorists. A sustainable and just society cannot be affluent, energy-intensive or heavily industrialised. It cannot have a growth economy, nor, as will shortly be explained, can it be run by a central state. Above all, present rich-world per capita resource consumption rates must be more or less decimated. This cannot be done unless there is a transition to some kind of Simpler Way embodying the following principles:

- *Simpler lifestyles with far less production and consumption per capita or concern with luxury, affluence, possessions and wealth, and much more concern with non-material sources of life satisfaction.* An individual's quality of life will be a function of public resources and conditions, not of personal savings or property. A sustainable society cannot be achieved unless there is a profound cultural change away from individualistic, competitive acquisitiveness.
- *Mostly small, highly self-sufficient local economies*, largely independent of the (remnant) global economy, devoting local resources to meeting local needs, with little regional, let alone intranational or international, trade. As petroleum becomes scarce and materials become expensive there will be no choice about this.

a Simpler Way platform was elected, then long before it had 51 percent of the votes, millions of people would have been building the new systems! That is, the taking of state power by a party committed to The Simpler Way could not occur unless there had first been a Stage 1 process in which the society had gone a long way down the path to new settlements, economies, communities, polities and values. In other words, in this revolution, there can be no alternative to a basically anarchist, bottom-up, prefigurative transition process. Again, the task for revolutionaries here and now is to plunge into the building of local community alternatives, in order to (a) begin creating the new systems; (b) be in the best position to help people see the need to work for the degrowth transition, and eventually for those Stage 2 goals.

A fundamental difference between the anarchist approach and that of Marx is evident in the (very few) things he said about post-capitalist society. Avineri (1968) discusses the distinction Marx made between the first and second stages of post-capitalist society. The first involved only a "crude communism" in which people would still hold unsatisfactory attitudes and ideas regarding property, work, bosses, income and acquisitiveness. In effect, society would have become the capitalist, the owner of the means of production, and workers would still receive wages, experience division of labour, obey bosses, not seek participation and power in the running of the factory, suffer and accept alienation, and most importantly for this revolution, would still be focused on competition and acquiring property and material wealth. Marx thought that only later, at the second stage, would these dispositions have been overcome via a transformation of mentality/culture. But because of the unique nature of the new revolution, due to the advent of scarcity and limits, within the next few decades large numbers of people must become capable of running local communities focused on willing acceptance of cooperation, participation, citizen responsibility and control, and of frugal lifestyles. There will not be sufficient resources to sustain a long

People will then quickly push the big structural changes through and convert the national economy towards supporting communities within a zero-growth economy that is not determined by market forces etc. These state-level changes, especially the transfer of state power to the town assemblies, are best seen as *consequences* of the revolution.

Probably the most inspiring illustration of these points regarding the transition process comes from the remarkable achievements of the Spanish anarchists in the 1930s. During the civil war they were able to reorganise areas mostly around Barcelona inhabited by about a million people, rapidly carrying out major improvements in living conditions, the treatment of women, equality, justice, education, health care, leisure and culture, etc. Health clinics and hospitals, and even a university, were set up. Workers ran their own factories. They did these things via voluntary committees and citizen assemblies of ordinary people, deliberately refusing to have any politicians or paid bureaucracy. But this would not have been possible had there not been within people a deep commitment to anarchist ideas and values. These had been well established long before by their peasant village origins and by the work of anarchists since a visit by Bakunin decades earlier (Trainer 2009).

It can be argued that the remarkable emergence since 2010 of the Catalan Integral Cooperative is a continuation of the achievements of the 1930s (Dafermos 2017). The aspect of this movement most relevant here is its explicit repudiation of both capitalism and the state. The enthusiastic, collective, voluntary, citizen-led initiatives make what should be the obvious point that the new ideas and values have to come first.

At this point the socialist is likely to say, "But if we had state power the whole process could be sped up by efforts to educate." However, consider the logical error here. Nothing would be achieved if by some miracle any of the presently existing socialist parties took state power by winning an election, because none of them is committed to The Simpler Way. If a party committed to

- *Mostly cooperative and participatory ways*, enabling people in small communities to take collective control of their own development, in order to include and provide for all. In the coming era of scarcity, it will be obvious that communities must cooperate to ensure that collective needs are met. This will involve local commons, committees, working bees (voluntary work parties), as well as town assemblies and referenda-making and implementation of the important decisions about local development and administration. Most of the governance will have to be carried out by citizens via highly participatory arrangements, partly because large and expensive centralised states will not be sustainable, but mainly because they could not govern the settlements indicated. Only the people who live within local economies and have to maintain them are in a position to make and carry out the right decisions pertaining to them. The viability of the new systems will depend largely on the level of conscientiousness, community solidarity, sense of empowerment and control, and the experienced satisfaction. These crucial "spiritual" qualities can only thrive in small, cooperative and largely self-governing communities in control of their own fate.

Given these arrangements, in the long run relatively little will be left for centralised state or national governments to do, although their functions will be important, e.g. in coordinating national rail, communications, legal and other systems, and locating industries so that all towns can contribute to the production of items towns cannot produce for themselves. Very few steel mills, mines and heavier industries will be needed. The eventual goal (Stage 2 described below) is for these remnant "states" to have no autonomous power, but to derive all authority from the town assemblies through classically anarchist principles of federation and delegation.

A new economic system, one that is a small fraction of the size of the present economy, is not driven by profit or market forces, produces much less than the present economy, does not grow at all, and focuses on needs, rights, justice, welfare and ecological sustainability. The core unit of this arrangement will be the local economy. It might have many small private firms and markets, but there must be basic (participatory, democratic, open and local) social control over what is developed, what is produced and how it is distributed, in order to make sure needs are addressed first. Most economic activity will be geared to maximising the quality of life of all in the region. A top concern must be to ensure that all are provided for (especially via access to a livelihood enabling a valuable and respected contribution to be made), that none are unemployed, poor or excluded, and that individual, collective and ecological needs are prioritised.

The concern of The Simpler Way project is to show how workable and attractive this general alternative could be, how it could defuse global problems and how easily it could be established, if the intention was there. An illustration of how only integrated localism can dramatically reduce resource demand is given by egg production. The present commercial-industrial method of egg production involve global networks of agribusiness farms, factories, chemicals, ships, trucks, battery chicken sheds, supermarkets, computers, satellites, pollution flows, soil damaging agribusiness feed production, people with degrees, advertising, packaging, soil nutrient loss, necessity of removal of chicken manure as "waste" and more. All of this generates huge energy, material, environmental and talent costs. But eggs produced in backyard chicken pens or neighbourhood co-ops involve almost none of those costs (quantitative documentation is given in the *Remaking Settlements* study; see Trainer 2015a). The same is true of many other goods and services that can be produced in highly integrated community economies. Localism and small scale enable high levels of integration of functions, and these in turn enable huge savings. For instance, manure

as everyone having an equal say, citizens taking responsibility for their collective fate, and ensuring that need and not profit determines what happens in communities.

Stage 1 involves what anarchists refer to as "prefiguring," that is, building elements of the post-revolutionary society here and now within the old. Whereas, the Marxist or Socialist view is that it is necessary to put all energies into fighting against and eventually defeating and getting rid of capitalism before it will be possible to start building the new society, The Simpler Way strategy involves beginning to create, live in and enjoy elements of it long before the revolution has come to a head. This increases the existence and capacity to operate the new systems, but, more importantly, it is the most effective way to help people see their indispensability and merits, and thus to develop the crucial new culture. It is not assumed here that just building more and more alternative things, such as community gardens, will eventually and automatically result in a radically new society having been built (this assumption is a major fault in the Transition Towns movement). As has been explained, there will eventually have to be a Stage 2 in which quite different goals become focal. This second, much later stage will be about making the huge and difficult structural changes beyond the town, at the level of the national economy and the state. But they cannot be made unless powerful and widespread grassroots support for them has developed first, and that's what must be built during Stage 1.

Thus, it should be clear why Simpler Way anarchists think it is a mistake to focus here and now on trying to take state power. Obviously, the ultimate goal of the revolution is communities running themselves without state authority, and people in full control of the few remnant "state" level agencies. But that situation cannot come to be unless there has first been a long process whereby people have come to embrace the prerequisite ideas and values, and enabling this is the core revolutionary task to be worked on immediately. If that is achieved, then *the revolution effectively has occurred.*

ing the French Revolution and the Paris Commune, and how it led to the resort to violence.

Of course eventually "state power" will (have to) be taken, primarily because the national economy will have to be radically reorganised so that its primary purpose becomes to provide the towns with the relatively few inputs they need. In The Simpler Way view of transition this comprises Stage 2 of the revolution, where the macro-structural changes must be made, including scrapping growth and the market (at least as the key driver of the economy), cutting down on industrialisation and trade, assisting with the relocation of people and firms, and distributing (a few) factories to all towns. But (a) Stage 2 cannot even begin unless Stage 1 has been very effective in developing the required consciousness and establishing new ways such as participatory town meetings; (b) working for the Stage 1 goals described above is the best way to contribute to that consciousness and those social processes and (c) when that has been done well, a radical restructuring at the level of the state will probably be carried out easily (greatly assisted by the increasing failure of the present system). In general, people will only push these Stage 2 changes through if and when they have come to see that their towns cannot survive, let alone thrive, in an era of severe and lasting global resource scarcity unless the national economy is geared to serving the towns. They will then move beyond requesting or demanding to initiating them. For instance, early on people will begin to realise that their towns need grain and dairy products and bicycle tyres, so they will begin to organise their own more distant regional co-ops and community-owned farms, factories and supply chains. This will soon lead to pressure on governments to facilitate and prioritise these initiatives, to divert scarce resources from frivolous industries, to rezone bankrupt farms for cooperative use, to regulate steel production towards producing the hardware needed by town handymen, etc. But none of this can happen unless people have first come to regard as normal the social values and processes such

can be quickly moved to compost heaps and fish ponds, whereas the waste generated by industrial systems is typically a long way from the fields that grew the feed, and thus create energy, transport and other problems. Kitchen scraps can go directly to chickens, eliminating the need for a feed production chain that can have global roots. Small pens with access to free range feeding reduces if not entirely eliminates the need for a chemical industry producing drugs to control disease in intensive battery shed production. Free ranging in orchards keeps fruit fly larvae infestations down. Chickens and other animals add to the locality's free leisure resources. Familiarity among participants in these non-monetised and non-commodified economies enables problem identification and subsequent spontaneous action. All of the dollar and other costs generated by the industrial system's logistics, management and operations can thus be avoided. The conditions and processes that proximity and integration make possible are the key to the enormous resource and environmental gains that can only come via small, highly self-sufficient and self-governing communities.

The *Remaking Settlements* study shows how these practices would enable normal outer Sydney suburbs to be made highly self-sufficient while possibly cutting dollar and energy costs by an order of magnitude. It assumes suburbs crammed with "edible landscapes," i.e. gardens, commons containing orchards and woodlots, poultry, fish ponds and mini-farms. These would enable all nutrients to be recycled back to the soil through animal pens, compost heaps and methane digesters, eliminating the need for most of the fertiliser industry, sewer systems and animal waste disposal. Ordinary suburbs could contain fishing industries involving small backyard tanks and small farms recycling nutrient-rich waters through aquaponic systems. Bulk supply of a few items, notably grain and dairy products, would need to be brought in from areas as close to towns as possible. Meat consumption would be greatly reduced but could mostly come from small animals such as poultry, rabbits and fish, rather than cattle. Food quality would

be much higher than it is now. There would be almost no need for food packaging, long-distance transport, dealing with "waste," fertilisers, pesticides or marketing, and little need for fridges, given the proximity to fresh food. The *Remaking Settlements* study found that normal outer Sydney suburbs could meet most of their food needs from within their boundaries.

Voluntary working bees can carry out much cooperative production and maintenance, such as fruit tree pruning and harvesting, road repair and building. Consider the abundant time now being devoted to watching screens that could be given to such activities. The *Remaking Settlements* study found that if most adult residents of the suburb gave 2 hours a week it would be equivalent to the work done by 150 full-time council employees. The implications for the reduction of existing bureaucracies are glaring.

Many eco-villages illustrate the way the need for large numbers of middlemen, professionals, bureaucrats, transport and infrastructures can be eliminated when these kinds of cooperative local processes are adopted. Especially important is the way good citizens spontaneously attend to problems and needs (in mostly low-tech systems) as soon as they become apparent, without having to refer them to professionals or officials.

Because most people could be getting to local workplaces on foot or bicycle, and far fewer goods would need to be imported to settlements, with far less need for transport. Therefore, many roads could be dug up, greatly increasing land areas available for community gardens, etc. Neighbourhood workshops, ideally recycled petrol stations, would include meeting places, craft rooms, art galleries, recycling racks, tool libraries and surplus exchanges. Local sources of leisure, along with leisure committees, would greatly reduce travel for entertainment and holidays.

An important element would be the many commons developed throughout neighbourhoods, the community orchards, herb beds, clay pits, sheds, craft rooms, windmills, ponds, animal pens, woodlots and forest gardens providing free food, materials and leisure re-

worldview has been decisively invalidated by the advent of the era of limits and scarcity, and the goal now has to be a society which not only has no growth but functions at a much lower level of GDP, industrialisation, trade, production and consumption. This revolution is far more complex than just replacing capitalist control of the affluence machine. It is a revolution quite different from any that came before it. The biggest and most problematic element in it is not even economic or political, but rather the cultural reversal it necessitates. This revolution cannot get far unless interest in material gain is generally abandoned and life purpose and satisfaction are identified with other-than-material goals. Thus, the essence of this revolution is the development of such ideas and values.

This was a core principle in the thinking of some of the most important anarchists, notably Kropotkin and Tolstoy. They realised that there is no point in trying to get state power in order to establish an anarchist society if people in general are not interested in governing themselves. We can add now that there must also be a willingness to live frugally and self-sufficiently in the new settlements described above. If a vanguard took state power tomorrow, it could not force or entice or bribe people to do these things. They could only build and run the kinds of economies and communities discussed above if and when they have become strongly committed to The Simpler Way ideas and values. We are at present a very long way from that situation, so the task for revolutionaries here and now is not to take state power but to work as long as it takes to build the world view consistent with new values. This comprises Stage 1 of the revolution before us. Avineri (1968) explains that this is in fact close to Marx's position. Marx's theory of the historical development of society focused on the way crucial new structures and institutions that will sustain post-revolutionary society emerge within and are produced by the old society, and nothing can be achieved by trying to take power and to force the new ways if the required new ways have not yet emerged. He pointed to how this mistake was evident in various revolutionary attempts, includ-

The Transition Process and Strategy

If the goal must be a Simpler Way society, then there are major and novel implications for thinking about the process of transition to it. It will be argued that most previous thinking about transition strategy has been mistaken, including much socialist/left thinking, and that the path that has to be taken is basically an anarchist one. Marxists and anarchists have quite similar ideas about the form that society will take in the long term, i.e. a "communism" in which there are no classes and no domination of some by the others, no relations of power or privilege, no state power, and in which things are done cooperatively, everyone is cared for, and there is no "alienation." But they differ sharply on how to get to such a goal.

Those who identify as Marxists (but who might be more accurately labelled Leninists) believe that getting rid of capitalism requires the leadership of a strong, centralised and determined revolutionary group, and that it will involve violence because dominant classes never voluntarily give up their privileges (see Avineri 1968, among others, for an argument that this is not Marx's position). This is a plausible claim, and these theorists criticise anarchists for failing to accept the need for direct confrontation, to see that it will be necessary to be ruthless and violent, and to accept that strong top-down rule will be essential to establish the new ways. "Marxists" and "socialists" today generally believe that a leadership group must take state power and push through the radical changes, but that in the long run, when people have come to see that the new ways are better, then state power can be wound back and people will be capable of self-government, with little or no role for the state as we know it. The argument below is that this puts the cart before the horse. It might have been the right order of events in past revolutions, in which the goal was to take control of an existing socio-economic system basically geared to producing increasing wealth, and then to run that same economy for the benefit of all, more efficiently and productively. But that

sources. These would be built and maintained by co-operatives and the voluntary community working bees, which would also carry out many services such as helping to care for older people, minding children, assisting teachers, and maintaining the parks and the (few remaining) roads. These arrangements would attend to many of the functions councils now carry out. There would, therefore, be a need for far fewer professional, bureaucratic or paid services, greatly reducing the amount of income that would be needed to pay taxes. Involvement in these activities would contribute to community solidarity and cohesion, volunteering, giving, generosity and care for the public good.

Unlike present dormitory suburbs, settlements would be leisure-rich, housing familiar people, small businesses, common projects, drama clubs, animals, arts and crafts, gardens, farms, forests, ponds, ornamental architecture and alternative technologies. Ordinary neighbourhoods have abundant unused potential cultural and leisure resources, including amateur comedians, actors, artists, musicians, playwrights, acrobats, jugglers and dancers presently sidelined by corporate media need for only a few mega-stars. In revised settlements people would be much less inclined to travel for leisure or go away for holidays, dramatically reducing energy consumption. A leisure committee would organise concerts, festivals, celebrations, mystery tours, visiting speakers and other leisure and educational activities. Towns and suburbs would be able to completely eliminate unemployment, poverty and homelessness simply by setting up small firms, cooperative gardens and workshops, enabling all to contribute to producing the goods and services the town needs.

A top priority would be to ensure that everyone has a valued and satisfying livelihood. Most people would need to work for money only one or two days a week. They would not need to buy much because many of the things they need would be free (such as fruit from the commons) or could be paid for by contributions to community working bees. Most significant here is the capacity to build a

small, well-insulated, fireproof, unique and beautiful dwelling from earth, for under $(A)10,000 (see Trainer 2015a for cost estimates). As Thoreau emphasised, these simper ways of meeting needs free up time for living. People in eco-villages can spend the other five or six days working/playing around the neighbourhood.

Surrounding the town or suburban economy there would be a regional economy in which more elaborate items would be produced, such as shoes, appliances, hardware and tools. Few items, including steel, would be moved long distances from big, centralised factories. Very little would need to be transported from overseas.

Contrary to the common "socialist" assumption, most of the small firms and farms could (and, in my view, should) remain as privately owned ventures or co-operatives, so long as their goals did not include profit maximisation or growth. These family and cooperative businesses would give people the satisfaction of running their own little joinery, bakery or farm in their preferred ways. They would of course have to operate within strict guidelines set by town assemblies. These activities would be seen as ways people could earn a stable income while being appreciated for helping to provide items the town needs. Obviously, in a zero-growth economy it must be possible for some firms to compete to take more sales and business and become rich, driving others into bankruptcy. The town will have the (possibly difficult) task of managing these matters, for instance, working out the best restructuring if one baker is more efficient than the others, to maximise the welfare of all concerned. In the longer term it would become clear whether it made sense to retain this "free enterprise" sector or to move to a fully cooperative economy; this need not be decided now. The town would have a "business incubator" made up of experienced people, tasked with helping firms become and remain viable. If a firm was struggling, or no longer needed, the incubator would help it work out how best to reallocate the premises and people (the Spanish Mondragon venture provides one of many examples).

It is not that these requirements assume impossibly saintly human beings. It is not surprising that the intolerable conditions oppressive societies force people to endure cause bad behaviour. It is good conditions that bring out the best in people. Free them from deprivation, exploitation, insecurity, worry and fear, and one might be surprised at how nicely they treat each other. Most people find that it is much more satisfying to share, cooperate, work together and care for each other, and be respected and appreciated accordingly, than to compete with and beat each other and take more than one's fair share. Thus, The Simpler Way is characterised by a powerful synergism. The situations and incentives it involves produce positive feelings and behaviours. People will live in conditions which make it clear that their personal welfare is directly dependent on how well the town works and how well people cooperate, care for and help each other. Being a good citizen will be enjoyable, and thus the required values will be powerfully self-maintaining. Again, this is abundantly evident in eco-villages.

An obvious reason this vision is labelled eco-anarchism is that, as has been explained, only settlements of this kind can address the ecological crisis effectively. A less obvious reason is that this vision recognises that a sustainable settlement is best understood as a complex integrated ecosystem in which the welfare of the whole is a function of the mutually beneficial arrangements negotiated between all participants, rather than decreed by superior authorities. Kropotkin saw that although nature involves competition, it also involves a great deal of cooperation and mutually beneficial adjustment. Ecosystems do not need to be organised by any superior authority; in general, spontaneous interactions between participants sorts arrangements out. The Spanish Catalan Integral Cooperative stresses the "integral" element; attention must be given to interconnections, feedbacks and synergistic effects within whole, complex socio-ecosystems.

tory deliberations regarding the design, development and running of their local productive and social systems. Their ethos must be co-operative and collectivist, seeking to avoid all forms of domination and to prioritise the public good. They must draw on the voluntary good will and energy of conscientious citizens who are ready to contribute generously and to identify and deal with problems informally and spontaneously, and to focus on seeking mutually beneficial arrangements with little or no need for bureaucracy, paid officials or politicians. These communities must be self-governing; they cannot be run from the centre, if only because state bureaucracies cannot know a town's unique traditions, personalities, history, soils, climate, problems, or needs and preferences, and therefore, cannot make the right decisions for it. The state cannot force people to be conscientious and happy contributors to largely autonomous communities.

Other anarchist elements of the vision discussed here include the assumption of spontaneity, i.e. enabling conscientious, collectivist and caring people to think about, foresee, discuss and fix problems, as distinct from leaving them for the officials to settle and hand down orders. The intention is to strive for consensus decision-making. The impressive Catalan Integral Cooperative is able to run many rather large-scale projects on this principle (Dafermos 2017). A central role is assumed here for the establishment of confederations to deal with issues wider than the town community. As this practice strengthens, the goal must be for it to eventually embrace all state-level functions (see Stage 2 of the transition below). Furthermore, the transition process follows the anarchist principle of "prefiguration," i.e. of starting to build elements of the new society in the here and now. These necessary elements of the alternative way and the path to establishing it mark this as an eco-anarchist perspective, quite distinct from eco-socialism. The essential point of difference has to do with the principle of minimising hierarchy and centrality, which anarchists refer to as "subsidiarity."

Most of the real economy would function without money. Most daily goods and services would come via households, neighbourhood gardens, workshops and kitchens, and the swapping of surpluses and giving and helping. We would obtain many goods free from the commons, and many "services," such as festivals and concerts, would be free as well. The town would have its own bank, and during the early years of the transition a town or region would have its own local currency, enabling it to set up enterprises to "employ" homeless and other disenfranchised people and to pay them with IOUs, enabling them to buy goods produced by other town firms. In the longer term a sensible national monetary system would obviate the need for local currencies, but it could not involve interest.

In the early years of the transition these new arrangements would gradually be built up as an Economy B underneath the old Economy A, which would continue to operate according to market principles (see Trainer 2017). As the global situation deteriorated, Economy A would increasingly fail, leading people to establish collective projects to provide necessities no longer purchasable, and increasing numbers of people to move over to the alternative system from businesses failing in Economy A. As noted, in the longer term a town might opt to retain a small Economy A in which some people might seek to produce, for instance, hand-made dresses or works of art to be sold in a more or less "free" market. Over time the desirability of retaining this sector and the functions left to it would become evident.

However, the most impressive characteristic of eco-villages is not their economy, technology or environmental sensitivity, but the level of solidarity and support in their communities and the resulting quality of life. No one experiences poverty, isolation or exclusion and all are looked after and respected as valuable contributors. The major goal here is to ensure strong community, and the above-described structures and activities indicate why eco-villages' achievements in this regard are not surprising (see the evidence reported by Lockyer 2017).

The Simpler Way is likely to remedy what Bookchin saw as the human readiness to dominate nature as well as other humans. When our welfare depends heavily on how well we treat the local ecosystems we are directly and obviously dependent on, we are likely to care for them well. But this goes beyond self-interest. When one lives close to the earth, one is frequently confronted by nature's miracles and generosity, and one is, therefore, likely to feel appreciative, in awe, humble, and likely to treat the environment properly. Thus, living in ways that are frugal and that minimise resource use should not be seen as an irksome sacrifice involving deprivation or hardship that must be made in order to save the planet. These ways, including gardening, making things, sharing surpluses, joining in working bees and community celebrations and festivals, can be rich sources of life satisfaction. Indeed, as many have come to understand, living simply can be a powerful form of spiritual liberation, especially because it avoids the need to earn much money (Alexander 2012; Trainer 2015b). These are the kinds of realisations the Simplicity Institute works to encourage (See Trainer 2012).

It should also be stressed that The Simpler Way does not mean cutting back on research, universities or advanced technology. It would enable retention of all the high-tech and modern ways that are socially desirable, e.g. in medicine, windmill design and public transport. In fact, we would have far more resources for these pursuits than we devote to them now. This is because we could transfer over to those pursuits many of the resources currently wasted on the vast production of unnecessary items, including arms. In addition, when there is only a need to work two days a week for money, people will have far more time to devote to science and technical research, especially into better plant varieties, mechanical devices and social arrangements.

That this general approach to settlement design could reduce per capita resource and ecological costs by an order of magnitude is supported by both the *Remaking Settlements* study (Trainer 2015a)

and the evidence from Lockyer 2017. The former involved detailed numerical estimates of the productive potential of a radically restructured Sydney suburb, and found that reductions in the order of 90 percent were plausible. These general magnitudes were also arrived at by Lockyer's study of the Dancing Rabbit eco-village in Missouri. Per capita electricity, fuel, car ownership, car use, and waste were around one-tenth or less of the US average. Both studies also point to the non-economic gains and benefits, e.g. in soil conditions, food quality, psychological welfare and community enrichment.

It is most important to recognise that the above has not been a wish list or a set of utopian dreams to be set alongside other possibilities, but a brief elaboration of necessary, non-negotiable conditions. Two fundamental arguments have been put forth. The first is that when the nature of the limits-to-growth predicament is understood, when the magnitude of the overshoot has been grasped, there is no alternative but to work for a transition to some kind of simpler way. Some of the above detail might be modified with experience, but no other general social form can get the per capita resource use rates down sufficiently while enabling a high quality of life for all. This has been explained by the above discussion of the significance of small scale, proximity and integration of functions. The second argument is that there is both a strong theoretical case for the practical adequacy of this vision and strong empirical evidence for it deriving from the experience within eco-villages and research conducted on them.

The Simpler Way Is an Anarchist Way

It should be evident that the kind of social organisation sketched above is a fairly straightforward anarchist vision. To summarise, settlements enabling a high quality of life for all on very low resource use rates must involve all members in thoroughly participa-