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## EUTOPIA AND ENGAGEMENT TODAY

### ABSTRACT

The contemporary conceptions of universal basic income (by Guy Standing), tax havens extraction (by Gabriel Zucman), and climate emergency (by Christiana Figueres) are briefly presented in the form of exposition in Massive Attack's *Eutopia* EP. These conceptions address the most concerning issues of today's world, while the concept of eutopia, proposed by Massive Attack's Robert Del Naja and Mark Donne, represents "a place of well-being, as a practical aspiration," a realistic utopia in which those issues are resolved. The present paper discusses the conceptions presented in *Eutopia*, assessing the possibility of the materialisation of eutopia. As suggested by Massive Attack, the ideas of *Eutopia* can be traced back to More's *Utopia*, being rooted in a humanistic endeavour of improving humanity, inspiring engagement and search for a better and just society. Apart from discussing *Eutopia*, the paper explores *Another Now*, the political science-fiction novel by Yanis Varoufakis. Varoufakis' critique of capitalism and the alternative he proposes in the novel *Another Now* argue along the same line as *Eutopia*, encouraging engagement in today's world.

### KEYWORDS

Thomas More's *Utopia*, engagement, Massive Attack's *Eutopia*, Yanis Varoufakis' *Another Now*

## I Introduction

Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) is a remarkable work that describes the fictional commonwealth society of the island of Utopia. It is widely discussed whether *Utopia* provides a positive political and economic content, suggesting and prescribing how an ideal society should be organised, or represents an ironic criticism of certain conceptions of an ideal society. Regardless, the locus of *Utopia* is certainly within the tradition of Renaissance humanism. According to this common approach to *Utopia*, we should interpret it with a consideration of the humanist values and ideals, and the goal of affecting the worldly endeavours and improving humanity.

Today, *Utopia* remains inspiring for the public figures activists such as Robert Del Naja of Massive Attack, a British band from Bristol, and Mark Donne, an independent writer, producer, director, and former journalist of The Guardian,

The Independent, and Sky News. Del Naja and Donne collaborated on *Eutopia* EP (2020), together with Guy Standing (a Professorial Research Associate and former Professor of Development Studies at the SOAS University of London), Gabriel Zucman (an Associate Professor of Economics at UC Berkeley), and Christiana Figueres (an internationally recognised leader on global climate change – former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (2010–2016) and an architect of the Paris Agreement (2015)). With *Eutopia*, Del Naja and Donne intend to disseminate the ideas that can be found in *Utopia* in traces – the ideas elaborately argued and firmly supported by the acknowledged experts, concerning *universal basic income* (Standing), *tax haven extraction* (Zucman), and *climate emergency* (Figueres).

The present paper analyses these ideas and assesses their value and the possibility of their materialisation, as well as their engaging potential. The analysis attempts to set these ideas as a part of the context of a critique of contemporary capitalism, which should prepare the ground for developing an alternative system of the post-capitalistic society. Such a critique of capitalism and an alternative to it is figuratively present in Yanis Varoufakis' book *Another Now: Dispatches from an Alternative Present* (Varoufakis 2020a), describing an alternative reality in which there is a human society without hierarchies and wages, based on the democratic decision-making procedures. The present paper shows that all these ideas can be traced back to More's *Utopia*, all of them being rooted in a humanistic endeavour of improving humanity, inspiring engagement and pursuit for a better and just society.

## II The Concepts of Utopia and Eutopia

More coined the word “utopia” (literally meaning – “no place”) to designate an imaginary island with the best possible society. Originally, the concept of utopia referred to a fictional place and state, but it has captured people's imagination throughout history, seeking its materialisation. While discussing the complexities of the relation between ideology and utopia, Paul Ricoeur argues that the fantasy of an alternative utopian reality can be used to rethink the nature of our social life, to rethink radically the nature of family, consumption, authority, religion, and so on (Ricoeur 1986: 16). According to Ricoeur, “what is ultimately at stake in utopia is not so much consumption, family, or religion but the use of power in all these institutions” (Ricoeur 1986: 17). Utopia, as an idea, should inspire us to question authority, to ask whether it is possible to live better in a society. Utopia should motivate us to act and seek for all humanity to flourish. Even if it is fiction, as the island of Utopia from More's book is, the idea of a utopia enables us to reflect on our life and reality with a more critical tone. As Ricoeur stated in his *Lectures*: “From this ‘no place’ an exterior glance is cast on our reality, which suddenly looks strange, nothing more being taken for granted. The field of the possible is now open beyond that of the actual; it is a field, therefore, for alternative ways of living” (Ricoeur 1986: 16).

Some scholars recently argued that More's *Utopia* provides an economic system for a society based on the common property, which could be viable in the sense of productivity and happiness in life (Mangeloja, Ovaska 2019). Such an economic system is based on altruism, families as basic economic units, equal distribution of resources, with the primary goal to satisfy basic needs – food, clothing, and shelter – with additional resources for education, science, health, and national defence. According to Mangeloja and Ovaska, the present-day example of living that approximate *Utopia* can be found among Hutterites, a communal branch of Anabaptists (see “Appendix: The Hutterites” in Mangeloja, Ovaska 2019: 80). The Hutterites have common property, wear simple clothes, share common meals and have strong internal social norms and rules. Their community is mostly self-sufficient because of success in agriculture. Their excess product is traded, and the proceeds are used mostly for agricultural machinery and health related services, which they cannot produce. All children are educated within the community's elementary schools, after which they undertake jobs in the community. Overall, although the Hutterites are deprived of luxury and long-term development, they live a productive and happy life.

Such a conservative non-consumerist utopian society is on the opposite end of the utopian visions that are prevailing today. Today's visions of utopia are closely connected to the growth and development of technology. For Ray Kurzweil, the accelerating progress of technology is the continuation of evolution, which should result in the Singularity – “a future period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed” (Kurzweil 2005: 24). According to Kurzweil, “this impending Singularity in our future is increasingly transforming every institution and aspect of human life, from sexuality to spirituality” (Kurzweil 2005: 24). Similarly, Max More defined the goal of humanity as transcendence to be “achieved through science and technology steered by human values” (More, Kurzweil 2002, Internet; Kurzweil 2005: 249). A more realistic conception of utopia, related to our present technological capacities, is provided by Eric Schmidt, Google's CEO from 2001 to 2011, and Jared Cohen, the first director of Google Ideas (present Jigsaw LLC). In the book *The New Digital Age* (2013), Schmidt and Cohen argue that the virtual civilisation set on the Internet platform will affect and shape physical civilisations, and vice versa. The result of the interaction between the virtual and physical would be a better world, “more egalitarian, more transparent and more interesting than we can even imagine” (Schmidt, Cohen 2013: 263). However, to make the world better the Internet users have to sacrifice their freedom, in terms of privacy on the virtual platform, as Schmidt and Cohen suggest:

As in a social contract, users will voluntarily relinquish things they value in the physical world – privacy, security, personal data – in order to gain the benefits that come with being connected to the virtual world. In turn, should they feel that these benefits are being withheld, they'll use the tools at their disposal to demand accountability and drive change in the physical world. (Schmidt, Cohen 2013: 263)

Internet connectivity should help us reach the goals of “economic prosperity, human rights, social justice, education or self-determination” (Schmidt, Cohen 2013: 263). However, it is questionable if we need to relinquish our freedom and privacy for these goals. This promise of the better world of the virtual-physical equilibrium, which demands deprivation of personal privacy, could be a false promise, set to manipulate us and exploit personal data by the big-tech companies or governments. Contrary to Schmidt’s and Cohen’s utopian vision, Julian Assange warned us: “The advance of information technology epitomized by Google heralds the death of privacy for most people and shifts the world toward authoritarianism” (Assange 2014: 57). We should take seriously Assange’s warning, having in mind that Edward Snowden’s exposed that Google, among many other Internet companies, was financed by the National Security Agency (NSA) on the mass surveillance program called PRISM (MacAskill 2013, Internet).

Technological conceptions of utopia can be characterised as escapist, which would be “pathological” in Ricoeur’s sense of the term. Ricoeur defined the escapist conception of utopia: “This escapism of utopia belongs to a logic of all or nothing. No connecting point exists between the ‘here’ of social reality and the ‘elsewhere’ of utopia. This disjunction allows the utopia to avoid any obligation to come to grips with the real difficulties of a given society” (Ricoeur 1986: 17). In addition, narrowing the concept of utopia to some aspect of the possible success of humanity, as the Singularity would be such ultimate success of technological development, ignores some essential human needs and problems of today. Inequality, political and economic instability, ecological and health crises and catastrophes, corruptions of democratic institutions and processes in countries all over the world, mass surveillance of the big-tech companies, big-tech monopolies, etc.

The concept of eutopia, suggested by Del Naja and Donne on *Eutopia*, is defined as “a place of well-being, as a practical aspiration”, in contrast to utopia as “an impossible concept”; “naïve notions of an ideal, perfect world” (Monroe, Strauss 2020, Internet). The elements and ideas presented on *Eutopia* deal with the “global, structural issues; taking the form of climate emergency, tax haven extraction and Universal Basic Income” (Monroe, Strauss 2020, Internet). The spirit of the *Eutopia* is about “the urgent & practical need to build something better” (Monroe, Strauss 2020, Internet). Thus, building eutopia is a practical necessity of the human society which is at an existential risk: the priority is to deal with climate emergencies to avoid the pollution, destruction, and extinction of the planet’s ecosystem; to eliminate tax haven extraction in order to minimise economic and social inequality and injustice; we need to introduce a universal basic income which should bring about greater economic security. All these, when materialised, should converge in a state of eutopia. However, is resolving these issues sufficient for eutopia? This “place of well-being” seems to be a practical but narrow conception of utopia, which is going to be discussed in the following sections of the paper.

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1 Massive Attack’s official account on Twitter, @MassiveAttackUK, July 10, 2020.

### III On Universal Basic Income

It would be far more to the point to provide everyone with some means of livelihood, so that nobody under the frightful necessity of becoming first a thief and then a corpse. (More 1965: 44) <sup>2</sup>

In *Utopia*, Thomas More described society with basic income, which was the first description of such a society. Satisfying basic needs is a prerequisite for a decent human life, a life worth living as everyone's right. Philippe Van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght, Yanis Varoufakis, Guy Standing, among many other theorists, argue for some sort of universal basic income as a human right. It can be defined as a cash allowance that is distributed individually, regularly, unconditionally, and universally. The main normative function of universal basic income is to eliminate basic economic insecurity.

The primary cause of economic insecurity are the social conditions of the contemporary world dominated by neoliberal policies and globalisation, as anticipated by the thesis of Karl Polanyi's book *The Great Transformation* (1944): "[T]he idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness" (Polanyi 2001: 3). "A stark utopia" of neoliberalism and globalisation leads to evolution of a new class – the *precariat*, a recurrent theme in Standing's work. The precariat is a socio-economic group vulnerable in terms of labour, income, work-based identity (Standing 2009: chapter 4; Standing 2011). With inequality, insecurity, and the growing precariat, social injustice grows. Universal basic income is a social "safety net" that should help to reduce the existing social injustice and prevent future injustice. It should help to eliminate what Standing identifies as the peril of the *eight giants*, eight obstacles to Good Society: (1) inequality, (2) insecurity, (3) debt, (4) stress, (5) precarity, (6) the robot advance, (7) extinction, (8) neo-fascist populism (Standing 2020a: chapter 1).

A global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic is a catalyst for social injustice and these eight giants, and it is considered being the ninth giant in Standing's exposition in Massive Attack's *Eutopia* EP. This exposition presents the major themes of Standing's theoretical work in a nutshell. The transcription of Standing's exposition is:

In the past 40 years, in almost every country in the world, the owners of physical, financial, and intellectual property have taken a growing share of the income, while the share going to people reliant on jobs and labour has shrunk. Today, a tiny, obscenely wealthy plutocracy and a well-padded salariat confront a growing precariat. Consisting of millions of people with bits and pieces lives, stagnant and uncertain fluctuating earnings and living on the edge of

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Massive Attack – Massive Attack x Young Fathers featuring Professor Guy Standing, #UNIVERSALBASICINCOME, taken from *Eutopia* EP.

unsustainable debt. Those trends are the result of policy decisions that have made economies and societies more fragile and less resilient to shocks. They have raised eight giants that block the road to a good society: inequality, insecurity, debt, stress, precarity, automation, extinction, and neo-fascist populism. Recurrent pandemics may become a ninth giant. To escape economic slump and tackle the nine giants, everyone needs basic economic security. That is a public good and it would improve public health. A modest regular basic income paid to all individuals as a right, without condition, would also boost demand for basic goods & services, kick-starting the real economy. It could be clawed back from the wealthiest through the tax system. While no panacea, a basic income as a right would rescue millions from economic hardship, curbing homelessness, suicides, and starvation. It would strengthen resilience, helping people to cope with shocks and setbacks better, and it would aid recovery by giving people the ability and confidence to spend. It would also be a much fairer use of public resources than the current morass of selective schemes. Longer term, experiments in various countries have shown that basic income security leads to better health, reduced debt, more productive work, improved status for women, and more harmonious family relationships. And it is affordable, especially if funded by eco-taxes and national capital funds. It can and must be done. (Standing 2020b, Internet)<sup>3</sup>

Standing's views on universal basic income should be understood as a part of the context of his critique of the contemporary capitalism, which he describes as "rentier capitalism" (Standing 2016). Here, capitalists are essentially rentiers who gain income from possession or control of assets, physical, financial, and "intellectual" property. For example, high tech companies, such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon, use their digital platforms as rentier entities. By controlling technological apparatus, they act as labour brokers in order to collect a percentage from all activities on their platforms. The capital market of the digital platforms is closed except for the elite and plutocracy. Taskers hired by the platforms are perceived as independent contractors, and so they are not covered by the law and not entitled to certain benefits and safeguards, making them a part of the precariat. In that way, rentier capitalism of the digital platforms companies generates social inequality and insecurity.

The "euthanasia of the rentier" is a part of a strategy to reduce social income inequality, as Standing quotes John Maynard Keynes (Standing 2016: chapter 2). According to Standing (Standing 2016: chapter 8), the precariat should lead a revolt against rentier capitalism, since it is the group that is most disadvantaged by rentier capitalism. To achieve the "euthanasia of the rentier", we need to build a novel distribution system. Standing proposes the taxation of rental income that would be collected in a sovereign wealth fund, and from there redirected for distribution to all citizens. Other schemes, such as profit sharing, do not have the redistributive potential of the sovereign wealth fund. Profit-sharing schemes benefit the elite and salariat more than the low-paid.

3 Massive Attack – Massive Attack x Young Fathers featuring Professor Guy Standing, #UNIVERSALBASICINCOME, taken from *Eutopia* EP.



The optimal distribution system would be a system of “social dividend” (see Standing 2016: chapter 8; Standing 2019; Standing 2020a).

Still, financing of universal basic income is open to debate. Yanis Varoufakis (2016, Internet) provides an alternative perspective on funding of universal basic income: it should be funded from the return of the capital. Varoufakis’ argument is that wealth results from collective activity, but it is privatised by those with power to do so. For example, Google’s income is because of big data collected on its Internet platform, which is extracted and analysed in order to create assets and attract capital. This big data results from collective activity of users of Google’s platform, which is privatised by Google thanks to its control over technological apparatus. Varoufakis proposed to create a “simple policy” to “enact legislation requiring that a percentage of capital stock (shares) from every initial public offering be channelled into a Commons Capital Depository, with the associated dividends funding a universal basic dividend” (Varoufakis 2016, Internet). Therefore, by applying the policy, Google and other rentier platform companies would provide shares that would pay for the universal basic dividend.

#### IV On Tax Havens

No living creature is naturally greedy except from the fear of want – or in the case of human beings, from vanity, notion that you’re better than people if you can display more superfluous property than they can. (More 1965: 80)<sup>4</sup>

Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was a friend of Thomas More, says that like the Utopians, More prefers “to dress simply and does not wear silk or purple or gold chains, excepting where it would not be decent not to wear them” (Logan 1983: 11). Like Utopians, too, he is averse to “cards and gambling, and the other games with which the ordinary run of men of rank are used to kill time”, and also like them, he is “otherwise... by no means averse to all sources of innocent pleasure, even to the appetite” (Logan 1983: 11). In *Utopia*, More presented a society of the simple people whose consumption is limited to necessities, although exaggerating and ridiculing some aspects of their way of life. Every citizen of Utopia was guaranteed the equal ration of basic goods and necessities, while the entire society is thriving on the altruistic goals and the welfare of the rest of humanity, prohibiting accumulation of private property. In that regard, Utopians live a simple but happy and productive life. In the closing remarks in *Utopia*, Raphael Hythlodæus states that “the Utopian way of life provides not only the happiest basis for a civilized community, but also one which, in all human probability, will last forever. They’ve eliminated the root-causes of ambition, political conflict, and everything like that” (More 1965: 131).

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4 Cited in Massive Attack – Massive Attack x Saul Williams featuring Professor Gabriel Zucman, #TAXHAVENS, taken from *Eutopia* EP.

In contrast to the Utopian economy, capitalism is based on the self-interest of individuals competing for the property. Individuals, and companies likewise, will choose to maximise preferences fulfilment and minimise risks and costs. While accumulating capital, both individuals and companies are trying to minimize taxes, and the best way to do it is to evade taxes altogether. And this is *raison d'être* of tax havens: to evade taxation by moving the accumulated wealth to the locations with minimal levies. However, tax havens are the prevalent factor in the crisis of capitalism, which generates social injustice and inequality. So, to reduce social injustice and inequality, we need to eliminate tax havens. In *The Hidden Wealth of Nations: The Scourge of Tax Havens*, Gabriel Zucman explains the financial significance of tax havens in today's world economy, providing a precise and realistic prescription of what should be done to stop tax evasion (Piketty 2015: vii). According to Zucman, tax evasion can be stopped only "if we have statistics to measure it, to implement proportional penalties against the countries that facilitate it, and to monitor progress" (Zucman 2015: 3). Touching on the major themes in his work on tax havens, Zucman's exposition in *Eutopia* discuss tax havens evasion in the COVID-19 crisis, as given in the following transcription:

The international tax haven system syphons off 700 billion dollars in profit each year from sovereign states. Even in normal economic times, the damage to those countries is extraordinary. Countries like Britain, France, Germany, and Nigeria lose 20% of their corporate tax revenues to these offshore secrecy jurisdictions. In the year approaching the COVID-19 outbreak, close to 60% of U.S. multinationals foreign profits were booked in tax havens. Profits moving to these havens are totally artificial. There's very, very little real economic activity in tax havens. The economic and thus social scarring of this pandemic is without modern precedent. So, how do we end tax haven extraction in a time of emergency? First, we should publicly highlight that big multinationals have a tax deficit. The tax deficit is the difference between what a corporation should pay if it were subject to a minimum tax rate of say 25% in each country where it operates and what this company actually pays. Second, countries must collect this tax deficit. To do so, we can simply look at what sales are actually made. When this company makes 10% of its sales in Britain, then Britain collect 10% of their tax deficit. We don't even need a global agreement to end tax havens. Any single country can unilaterally decide to collect the tax deficit of tax-dodging multinationals today. If several nations join forces as nations like France, Denmark & Poland effectively have, in barring companies registered in tax havens from state bailouts, this could be enough to render tax havens useless for major companies. And collecting the tax deficit of giant multinationals would be vital to treasuries and public services now on course for colossal strain. (Zucman 2020, Internet)<sup>5</sup>

Because of the devastating economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemics, the focal interest of Zucman's exposition is tax evasion of big multinational

5 Massive Attack – Massive Attack x Saul Williams featuring Professor Gabriel Zucman, #TAXHAVENS, taken from *Eutopia* EP.



companies, since they have the largest earnings while they evade fair taxes. In the time of global crisis such as the COVID-19, it is a tragedy of the commons that the multinationals make a lot and do not pay fairly, while the rest have a tremendous loss because they have to pay more instead. Taxes evaded by the multinationals, or by any company or individual, are “compensated for by higher taxes on the law-abiding, often middle-class households in the United States, Europe, and developing countries” (Zucman 2015: 2). So, in *The Hidden Wealth of Nation*, Zucman proposes a set of measures aimed at collecting precise information about worldwide tax evasion and a course of action to retrieve most of the unpaid taxes. For the precise statistics, we need to create “a worldwide register of financial wealth” (Zucman 2015: 4). And to retrieve unpaid taxes, Zucman proposes “to levy sanctions proportional to the costs that tax havens impose on other countries” (Zucman 2015: 5). As it is shortly mentioned in Zucman’s exposition in *Eutopia*, the profits of multinational companies should be merged worldwide in order to derive the taxation they should pay, because they manipulate the locations of their profits. In *The Hidden Wealth of Nation*, Zucman clearly and carefully describes the strategies of the manipulations (Zucman 2015: chapter 5).

Eliminating tax havens should help eliminate the greed of the wealthiest, which is a root-cause of financial injustice and inequality in today’s world. However, tax havens are not the only problem of today, although it is important to solve it on the global scale if we want to live in a just world.

## V On Climate Emergency

There is never any shortage of horrible creatures who prey on human beings, snatch away their food or devour whole population; but examples of wise social planning are not easy to find. (More 1965: 40).<sup>6</sup>

There have always been existential threats to humanity, the global human-caused crises or natural catastrophes. However, our choices and actions are only concerned with the problems in the realm of human affairs, which are entwined with nature. Since global natural processes, such as climate change, are affecting all aspects of human life, the present and future living conditions, climate change should be recognised as the primary issue. In the book *The Future We Choose: Surviving the Climate Crisis* (2020), Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac state that “climate change is the mother of all issues”, and all who care about social justice, health, economic stability and investment value, and intergenerational justice, climate change should concern them (Figueres, Rivett-Carnac 2020: introduction). In the *Eutopia* exposition on the climate emergency, Christiana Figueres discusses the COVID-19 crisis as a part of the ongoing crises:

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Massive Attack – Massive Attack x Algiers featuring Christiana Figueres, #CLIMATEEMERGENCY, taken from *Eutopia* EP.

Before the COVID-19 crisis crashed into our world, governments were already facing the convergence of the climate crisis, the inequality crisis and the oil price crisis. Now, the fourth, the global health crisis has not only converged on us as well but has accelerated the impacts of the previous crises, deepening economic disorder and accentuating social suffering. In emerging from this, everyone can play their part, individually and collectively. The future we choose should be one of resilience, starting with aligning the food system to the four principles set out by the F.A.O: availability, access, utilization and stability. Energy is another sector that must be transformed. Well before COVID-19, fossil fuels were already showing signs of irreversible decline. They will recover somewhat from the historically low prices, but they will not recover their previous place as the engine of growth and development. We now know that their use is polluting our lungs and loading our atmosphere, both at life-threatening levels. Financing the transition to a clean, healthy economy requires that businesses, investors, and citizens each play their part alongside governments. Governments can be excellent first movers and their development finance institutions often are. There has never been a more critical role for them than now. The social fabric of our world, the health of democracies and the well being of people can either be destroyed or made stronger by a crisis such as the one we are living. We need to choose this crisis as the moment to anchor ourselves back into the reason humans live in collectives. We are stronger and more resilient together. We will need this solidarity to face what's ahead. Rise to the crises and thrive beyond them. It's a unique privilege that our generation can forge a healthy, bustling future through our actions today. The future we choose is in the hands of each of us alive right now. (Figueres 2020, Internet)<sup>7</sup>

The keyword in the exposition is “resilience”. Dealing with the climate emergency and other related issues, we should develop resilience in terms of individual health, clean and healthy economy, and health of democracies. We cannot resolve the issues concerning health, economic stability, and social justice without resolving the climate change issue. According to the view from *The Future We Choose* (Figueres, Rivett-Carnac 2020: chapter 4), “systemic change is a deeply personal endeavor”: to change the social or economic system we are part of, we must change our understanding of these systems. The transformation of society begins with the individual, but addressing climate change is the responsibility of every individual and every collective. The governments should not let the status quo continue, but help to solve the urgent issues of the contemporary world.

However, global climate emergency may not be a burning issue for the developing world, which deals with the high poverty, economic vulnerability, grid stability issues, etc. The primary issues for the developing countries may not be a reduction of carbon emissions and transition to a clean economy, being too expensive or unobtainable for them. So, Figueres’ “systemic change” does not appeal to the individuals and collectives, such as those of the developing world, that are powerless and hopeless in the global society of today.

<sup>7</sup> Massive Attack – Massive Attack x Algiers featuring Christiana Figueres, #CLIMATEEMERGENCY, taken from *Eutopia* EP.

## VI A Critique of Capitalism and an Alternative in *Another Now*

Today's climate emergency should be understood as capitalism-induced. The priority of capitalism is economic growth and development, while it disregards its catastrophic effects on the environment. The political science-fiction novel *Another Now* by Varoufakis points out that share market and technology developed and created together "the Technostructure", changing their environment at the same time. "Technostructure" is the term borrowed from John Kenneth Galbraith, referring to the organization which "embraces all who bring specialized knowledge, talent or experience to group decision-making" (Galbraith 2007: 120). A paradigmatic example of a technostructure is today's big-tech corporations such as Google, Amazon, or Facebook, which Varoufakis has in mind when speaking of the Technostructure in *Another Now*. Because these big-tech corporations own the markets on their platforms, capitalism has morphed into what Varoufakis calls "technofeudalism" (Varoufakis 2021, Internet). The metamorphosis of capitalism into technofeudalism Varoufakis defines as "a qualitative transformation of capitalism into a brand new exploitative mode of production" (Varoufakis, Morozov 2022, Internet). The technostructures of the big-tech dominate the market economy, controlling political processes in their interest, while environmental and social crisis are out of control. Therefore, the crisis of contemporary capitalism leads to a crisis of democracy, as well as to climate and social crisis.

To address all these crises, we need to embrace engagement at many levels. In *Another now*, Varoufakis describes one course of action which could lead to a breakdown of capitalism. According to the storyline of the novel, the techno-rebels contact households and invite them to take part in low-cost short-term payment strikes. Those techno-rebels use the strategy known as crowd-sourcing, which cause numerous short-squeezes and lead to the collapse of the financier. An analogous action occurred in reality when the trading platform Robinhood App pushed up the price of the electronics shop GameStop in order to make the hedge funds lose (see Varoufakis 2021, Internet; Varoufakis, Morozov 2022, Internet). The number of hedge funds had bet on GameStop to lose value, but few millions of people bought shares in GameStop causing a short-squeeze, raising GameStop's share price substantially while the hedge funds were forced to buy their shares to forestall greater losses.

Compared to Occupy Wall Street, giving rise to a much wider Occupy movement in the United States and other countries, the techno-rebels' actions in *Another Now* strive to ossify capitalism as the global economic system. Besides the actions similar to the GameStop, the techno-rebels organise mass consumer strikes, targeting the big-tech companies. For example, one of the techno-rebel's leader issues a global call to boycott Amazon, which causes a drop in Amazon's usual revenues, and encouraged by their success, the techno-rebels embark on many more campaigns of widening scope. While these strikes are a part of *Another Now* fiction, in the actual reality, workers, activists, and citizens around the world joined forces to demand justice from Amazon, forming a planetary

movement MakeAmazonPay. On Black Friday, Friday 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, in the name of the MakeAmazonPay campaign, Varoufakis called for a global boycott of Amazon only for that day. According to Varoufakis, this small activism would translate into a tremendous blow for Amazon, even if it caused a small dent in Amazon's revenues (Varoufakis 2020b, Internet). MakeAmazonPay movement, just like the techno-rebels from *Another Now*, embraced digital platforms as an instrument to fight social injustice that was increased by technological innovations.

The novel technological devices used for the big-tech platforms rely on infrastructure and components that were originally developed owing to a government grant or through the commons of ideas produced collectively. This technology enables the existence of digital platforms and big-tech companies, making the information flowing on those platforms be a new kind of capital. Information is a collective product, having a value in the context of the platform and in relation to the user who produces it. Big-tech appropriated this socially produced capital, paying no dividends to society. In *Another Now* and elsewhere (Varoufakis 2016, internet; Varoufakis 2018, internet), Varoufakis proposes the idea of universal basic dividend as compensation for society's investment in corporations' capital. The shares from every initial public offering should be channelled into a Commons Capital Depository, with the associated dividends funding the universal basic dividend.

As an alternative to capitalism, Varoufakis proposes an anarcho-syndicalist model of corporate organisation, which replaces corporate hierarchies with decentralised systems based on equal rights and the principle of one person one vote. Each employee-partner has the right to a single non-tradable share, and the right to vote in the corporation's general assemblies. Hence, there are no wages since the employees are also the corporation owners, getting the profits from their shares, and there are no bosses since decisions are made democratically by the vote of the corporation employees. Also, there are no share markets since shares are non-tradable. The implications of this model without share markets are lower income inequality and democratisation in decision-making that favours collective, long-term interests.

However, this anarcho-syndicalist model is reminiscent of Yugoslav self-managing socialism, which was inefficient for many practical reasons. In the Yugoslav economic system, workers were supposed to manage the economy through workers' councils; in actuality, all significant decisions were made by the "directors" appointed by the politicians. The Yugoslav model that was supposed to be a democratic and decentralised system became politically controlled and centralised in practice.

## VII Conclusion

Robert Nozick proposed the following thought experiment as a test for the best world imaginable:

Imagine a possible world in which to live; this world need not contain everyone else now alive and it may contain beings who have never actually lived. Every rational creature in this world you have imagined will have the same rights of imagining a possible world for himself to live in (in which all other rational inhabitants have the same imagining rights, and so on) as you have. The other inhabitants of the world you have imagined may choose to leave it and inhabit a world of their own imagining. You may choose to leave an imagined world, now without its emigrants. This process goes on; worlds are created, people leave them, create new worlds, and so on. Will this process go on indefinitely? (Nozick 1974: 299)

This process goes on until we reach a stable world. In the stable worlds, if there are any, none of the inhabitants can imagine an alternative world in which they would rather live. A world from which any rational inhabitant may leave is called *association* (Nozick 1974: 299). Nozick's thought experiment is a *framework for utopia*, as he would say (Nozick 1974: chapter 10). This thought experiment assumes the freedom to leave any world for any other world an inhabitant would like, analogous to the freedom to leave one state and go to another in the actual reality (Cekić 2016: 143). However, this is not the freedom that most people of the actual world possess. The recent European migrant crises show the hardship of the asylum seekers and immigrants striving to reach the developed Western world.

Assuming that people can choose the world in which they would live, Nozick's framework of utopia can be useful for assessing the conceptions of utopia, such as the one proposed in Massive Attack *Eutopia* EP, as well as other conceptions mentioned in the present paper. We can ask, would the rational inhabitants of the eutopia world rather live in some other "association"? Would they leave the eutopia world, the world with a universal basic income and without tax havens, with a healthy and clean economy and without climate emergency? Without more specifics about the eutopia world, it is impossible to answer the question. The actual world we live in would certainly be better if it were a eutopia, for social income inequality and instability, injustice caused by tax havens extraction, and climate emergency are the threatening issues of today's world. However, there are some unraised issues that the *Eutopia* ideas entail: is universal basic income affordable only through taxation? Is the redistribution of wealth through taxation justified? How can economies of developing countries make the shift to a clean economy? The world in which some people work hard and pay taxes, while others do not work by choice and enjoy the benefits that came from taxation of those who work, would be unjust (see Varoufakis 2016, Internet). Such a world would not be a "stable association". If we would live in a world of a clean economy, with a preserved and

healthy environment, on a global scale, in which developing countries would have to sacrifice their development for a global cause, it would be a world of even greater injustice and inequality. In such a world, people of developed countries would live prosperously and healthily, while most inhabitants of developing countries would still suffer and struggle, living in poverty and insecurity. A clean economy is not the universal *deus ex machina* that resolves all the problems of living conditions. It is usually too expensive and insufficiently productive for sustainable economic development.

Despite the possible gloomy consequences of the solutions Massive Attack's *Eutopia* proposes, it intends to empower us to act, to change the world for the better. Furthermore, Massive Attack acts upon the ideas of *Eutopia*: in collaboration with Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, Massive Attack explores possibilities for reducing emissions associated with live music touring, intending to develop "a roadmap for the wider live music sector to support delivery of emissions reductions in line with the UN Paris Agreement" (Jones, McLachlan, Mander 2021: 4). Massive Attack has designed emissions reduction modules for their 2022 tour, "to trial implementation and carry out modelling on interactive practicalities, and to then bring all project learning together in a major UK testbed live show to proliferate change" (Tyndall, Internet).

Overall, Massive Attack and *Eutopia* provide the ideas backed up by theoretical expertise and political and social activism. However, *Eutopia* does not provide a well-rounded theory, which indeed cannot be expected from such material. Although it represents an unfinished and narrow conception of realistic utopia, it suggests many paths to the future of human society, while striving for, again to cite Sir Thomas More, "the Utopian way of life", eliminating "the root-causes of ambition, political conflict, and everything like that" (More 1965: 131). *Eutopia* should be regarded as a political unfinished sympathy towards social justice and well-being that can motivate engagement and make a better world, a world closer to the ideal of utopia.

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## Miloš Agatonović

### Eutopija i angažovanost danas

#### Apstrakt

Savremene koncepcije univerzalnog osnovnog prihoda (Gaj Stending), poreskih rajeva (Gabrijel Zukman) i klimatskog vanrednog stanja (Kristijana Figeres) kratko su predstavljene u formi izlaganja u EP *Eutopia* muzičkog sastava Massive Attack. Ove koncepcije odnose se na najzabrinjavajuće probleme današnjeg sveta, pri čemu pojam eutopije, koji predlažu Robert Del Naja iz Massive Attack i Mark Don, predstavlja „mesto blagostanja i praktične aspiracije“, odnosno, realističnu utopiju u kojoj su spomenuti problemi razrešeni. U ovom radu se raspravlja o koncepcijama iz *Eutopia*, uz procenu mogućnosti ostvarenja eutopije. Kao što Massive Attack u naznakama nagoveštava, ideje iz *Eutopia* mogu se pronaći u Morovoj *Utopiji*, delu koje je utemeljeno u humanističkom poduhvatu poboljšanja čovečanstva, koje nadahnjuje angažovanost i potragu za boljim i pravednijim društvom. Pored razmatranja ideja iz *Eutopia*, u radu se razmatra *Drugo sada*, politički roman naučne fantastike Janisa Varufakisa. Varufakisova kritika kapitalizma i predlog alternative u *Drugom sada* polaze od ideja koje su slične onima iz *Eutopia*, ohrabrujući angažovanost u današnjem svetu.

Ključne reči: *Utopija* Tomasa Mora, angažovanost, *Eutopia* Massive Attack, roman Janisa Varufakisa *Drugo sada*