

Towards an Anarchist Money and Monetary System: An Interview with Nathan Cedric Tankus



Though conceived out of conversations concerning the Eurozone crisis in summer 2015, this interview with Nathan Cedric Tankus engages with heightened focus by the left on finance capita. Tankus is research scholar at the Modern Money Network, an organization committed to: “The creation and improvement of monetary and financial institutions governed by the public and directed in support of public purpose; The universal, enforceable and inalienable right of every person to participate in economic life in a manner consistent with basic principles of justice, fairness, equality and dignity; The security of individuals, families and communities, the development of autonomous, non-state entities and the flourishing of civil society as critical components of economic freedom” as well as principles of ecological sustainability and intellectual freedom.

Relatedly, this interview with Tankus is situated around two concerns: (1) understanding the existing capitalist macroeconomic system, and (2) envisioning possibilities for transition and a post-capitalist, post-state alternative. This involves delving into questions of agency and structure, money

and monetary operations, central banking, as well as Marxism and anarchism. How might the left theorize and respond to such questions? Through this interview we hope to generate discussion. Discussions that could lead to concrete answers to questions that the left has ignored for far too long. It should go without that saying, to move beyond the rule of capitalist finance we must have some basic understanding of it. It is only through this understanding that we can adequately theorize and put into practice a post-capitalist, post-state world.

Q – Nathan, what is your conception of structural analysis? How does it differ from others?

A – First, it's important to start with the background of my analysis. Given my age, the Obama administration has been a foundational awakening for my politics. The left's relationship with Obama has, frankly, been bizarre. On one side you have leftists who have tried to claim him as their own. This group even contains some leftists who wouldn't warm up to someone of similar politics to Obama in any other context. These people wouldn't be showering love on Hillary for example- well outside of the fevered nightmare that is the final stretch of the 2016 general election anyway.

On the other side, there is ambivalence towards Obama. Many denounce the specific policies that he's actually a champion of, but very few on the left have been willing to claim that Obama both has agency and has used that agency malevolently. There's a general sense that Obama has done "as much" as a U.S. president can do. At the very least, the claim is that even if he did have room to do better on some issues, he's generally at the "limits" of American politics. An uncharitable summary would go something like "Yes it's the imperial presidency but only for imperialism. He just can't do anything else".

I think these perspectives have made the left blind to the

reality of the Obama administration. I think it is a major reason – beyond the dry technicalities of the subject – that the American Left hasn't really grasped the magnitude of the political and economic crisis in the United States. In particular, the left doesn't understand the magnitude of the fraud that was disproportionately perpetrated on People of Color, how the financial industry shook the foundations of centuries old property laws to perpetuate that fraud and how the Obama administration retroactively legalized one of the biggest fraud schemes ever concocted. Sure you can find individual leftists talking about how foreclosures are bad and it is a longstanding form of left activism to fight to prevent individual foreclosures and evictions, but the systemic analysis is completely lacking. If you'd like to read more about this see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

What I want to focus on is that last part: the Obama administration's legalization of property law fraud. There is just no way to underplay what happened. It was nothing less than a new enclosure movement legalized by executive fiat; and the left has had essentially nothing to say. This is no understatement. Since the seventeenth century North America has had laws on the books detailing the specific processes by which property is transferred and how it must be recorded. These haven't changed and there is good reason they haven't changed. The rules surrounding who can do what to which resources, especially land, are essential to any society – or a confederation of overlapping societies.

It is one thing for private actors to do everything in their power to undermine it by unilaterally replacing physical and local property recording with an under resourced national electronic recording system. It is another for the President to prevent reform or even investigation into the subject while bullying and bribing state attorneys across the country to go along with a federal settlement that retroactively legalized not only the privatization of this fundamental institution but

also all the fraudulent transactions built on top of them and institutionalize them. I can talk all day about the imperial presidency when it comes to foreign affairs but as horrible as all those things are I think this is the biggest overreach of executive authority in decades – perhaps ever.

The question is: why is the left attracted to analysis that downplays the role of Obama and specific individuals with a lot of power when Obama has arguably instigated the most important legal change in property rights since the end of slavery? I think it is pretty clear that a dominant current in left wing politics conceptualizes talking about the agency of elites as denying structural factors in the progression of history. They think pointing out the malevolent and negative effects of powerful people imply some inverse- that “good leaders” would make capitalism workable. In other words, they think talking about individual elites and their decisions is necessarily reformist. This leads to a formulation of structural analysis designed to say that everyone’s agency is extremely constrained and structures are propelling history forward – until of course the proletariat uses its agency and makes revolution.

This is what one might call the “ruptured spleen” theory of revolution. Now I think many people would recoil at this characterization and if I were able to push them on these issues personally, I could get some concessions. However, I think you’ll find that this perspective is an instinctive crutch of the left and I would be surprised if readers don’t recognize the kind of analysis I’m referring to in people they’ve interacted with or left pundits they’ve read.

I see things very differently. To me the fact that elites- whether in government or at the head of corporations- have so much agency is an ipso facto indictment of this system. After all, why do these groups have so much agency? It’s because of their ability to command others. Thus, rather than structure constraining everyone’s agency, I have an agency and structure

analysis where structure works to constrain the agency of some and expand the agency of others. In short I see structure as functioning to redistribute agency and the role of agency in left politics as to undermine hierarchical structures. Sure, we could talk about World War I and the agency of elites who led the world into catastrophe as a “few bad apples” and wished that there had been better elites, but we could also talk about how this system made the personal characteristics of some upper crust mediocrities in a very small circle of diplomats and other decision-makers the relevant factor in determining whether millions of people were going to live or die.

Q – Though this interview primarily concerns what an alternative – may I say post-capitalist – monetary system might look like, I think your work, at least implicitly, touches upon a larger point that most across the left dangerously ignore. This point being that there are other sites of extraction and exploitation beyond the workplace – beyond the point of production. What you have sometimes referred to as Volume 1 Marxists versus Volume 2 and 3 Marxists. Could you elaborate on this?

A – Volume one Marxism is an overemphasis on production as where the surplus is extracted. This of course is important – production is important. A surplus of outputs over inputs is the “structural feature” that allows for profit margins and thus a profit share of output. However, production isn’t where the surplus is ultimately distributed or where monetary profits are determined. Money spent (along with the administered prices of business enterprises) is what determines what goods and services go where, and who spends what money is not simply determined by wages. As Marx points out here:

Finally, the rise in the rate of profit [to industrial capitalists] was due to rising nominal prices of commodities...and this enabled the manufacturers to retrieve

part of the product paid to the landowning rentiers and other men on a fixed income in the form of rent, etc.[1]

In other words, price changes can “redistribute” output after wages (and other fixed money payments) are paid. Rent extraction can both reduce disposable income and raise prices. Rents charged by landlords, capital gains captured by developers, interest and fines charged by the financial sector, insurance premiums and charges of Insurance companies – in short the FIRE sector – takes a huge share of income. “Taking” being the operative word. These sectors also modify the behavior of enterprises. Landlords exert control, creditors have a property interest in debtors and insurance companies can influence policy with the rates they charge – especially as those rates can adjust to the specific characteristics of their workforce.

Why does any of this matter? It of course isn't news by now to the left that the FIRE sector is large and in charge. Nonetheless, the on-the-ground activism still focuses on individual workplaces and working conditions while ignoring the macroeconomic forces driving problems behind the scenes. Housing activists in cities like New York know instinctively that something screwed up is going on, but the left isn't producing an overarching analysis of what's causing problems and what to do about it. In the worst cases, a handwaving appeal to “capital flows” and “capital strikes” suggest that the only point of organizing is to irritate a larger fraction of the work force while losing so they will be stirred to revolution.

If it isn't capital flows and capital strikes, the handwave is to the low rate of profit. In my view the obsession with profit rates is overdone for the most significant reason that they have no analytical basis. Which businesses are making investment decisions based on profit rates? How do the arbitrary monetary values put on machinery for tax purposes become an aggregable and relevant factor for the economy

overall? Does anyone really think that what the United States is chronically short of is low cost productive capacity? The instinct behind this analysis from Marx was that the output of the economy is shared between three different categories: "productive" workers, "broad" profit (broad as in including rents, interest etc) and depreciation's share of output. The depreciation share of output is the output consumed to maintain the society as a going concern (e.g. upkeep cost of buildings). If investment accelerates strongly this commits the society to a greater upkeep cost in the future. That cost may not be bearable and thus may lead to the scrapping of past investments, i.e., malinvestment. It is the macroeconomic equivalent of abandoning a house because you can't afford the maintenance costs and it isn't salable.

This is an interesting and important notion, but if you're not actually measuring how much output gets consumed in this way every year, you can't really say anything definitive. And of course there are many reasons to think that our problem isn't that too much of the economy's resources is being consumed keeping up the buildings and roads but that resources are going criminally unused. It also makes certain "Low Rate of Profit" ideas strange. For example, one quasi-Marxist analysis says that low profit rates in the 1970s explain the drive for mass incarceration. From the perspective outlined above, that assertion is very odd. If the problem is the depreciation share of output is too high how would building big new economically unproductive infrastructures that will need to be kept up for decades be at all a sensible response to this problem? Indeed translated into this language, many Marxists used to discussing profit rates may be recoiling. This is ultimately one of the biggest problems on the American left. The form, but not the content, of Marx's analysis has remained and has become a way of obscuring a lack of understanding and critical thinking, rather than an essential part of it.

The essential point is we can understand the ultimate source

of the surplus as production until we're blue in the face, but if we don't understand how these broader macroeconomic forces influence production and the surplus we aren't going to get anywhere. Most importantly, we need to get past the jargon and gain a better understanding of how this system works so we can target precisely what about this system we think is wrong or destructive and change those parts. We also need to figure out what points we can most easily push this system to work more in our interest without falling into the reformist trap. The belief that we can control capitalism is inherently contradictory because by definition capitalism is the system where ordinary people are limited in their ability to influence the course of events. There may be some forms of capitalism where we are less limited than we are now, but if we really do eliminate all the hierarchical constraints on ordinary people's agency, I don't see how what results could meaningfully be called capitalism.

Q – It seems to me that part of touching on broader macroeconomic forces means that we must look at central banks. Can you give a simple explanation of what central banks do and why having an understanding of them is important for left politics? Even more broadly conceived, from a macroeconomic perspective, how does money work?

Well this is a big question and I don't have the space here to give anything beyond a broad sketch of an answer. Central banks manage the payments system, i.e., the infrastructure that allows individuals, businesses and financial institutions to make payments to each other – and the government – on a daily basis. In short, it is the lifeblood of capitalism. To do this banks are given what are essentially checking accounts at the central bank. Since banks always need to be able to make payments – otherwise capitalism will fall apart in short order – the central bank has a responsibility to preserve the stability of the payments system. In practice this means providing settlement balances – money in a bank's checking

account – through purchasing financial assets like government bonds or lending them directly to banks. This in turn means setting an interest rate at which banks lend these settlement balances to each other. □□Their ability to create settlement balances is the essential power they use to manage the financial system. When they want to provide liquidity to entities that aren't licensed banks, they use their ability to create settlement balances. When they want to manage exchange rates, they create settlement balances.

These settlement balances – and IOUs of the government generally – have value because banks can pay their debts, and the debts of their customers, to the government with them. These debts to the government are predominantly in the form of taxes. Macroeconomically, the point of this system is to give governments the ability to manage the distribution of resources in the rest of the economy and acquire resources they need to accomplish their objectives. Further, when combined with the existence of private property rights and the expropriation of ordinary people, it gives them the ability to manage the distribution of natural resources and means of production between themselves and among corporations/capitalists. In short, when combined with private property rights and primitive accumulation this money becomes “capitalist” money.

Thus, whether this is malevolent or not relies on your assessment of the objectives of monetary policy, fiscal policy and property laws that are being aimed at. It does not rely on the existence or non-existence of money. When this system is used to provide health care services based on need and not on the basis of price, I generally approve. When it is used to devote a society's resources to war and policing, I don't. To me the principle of democratic management (or at least accountability) comes about because democratic decision-making seems to me the only way to ensure that the goals pursued by organizations are desirable social goals. We might think of

this principle – and imperative – for democratic management as participatory budgeting at every level.

Q – From this we get into the question of whether money is the “root of all evil” or if it is a tool that is simply often just wielded by evil? What is your perspective on this? Otherwise put, if money is a tool of undemocratic coercion, is there a way of imagining money working differently? Or do we have to abandon money itself?

A – This is one of the big questions for radical politics. It’s not remembered now but this was one of the biggest and most controversial debates of the Russian Revolution. It was also complicated by the fact that hyperinflation was a tool used to more easily expropriate the Elites. This was primarily because they didn’t have the technical knowledge to take over the monetary system and prevent the elite from using it to finance the counterrevolution. It was also because the normal tax system was breaking down and they started switching to ‘in kind’ taxation and confiscation – especially as the civil war got going. As we’ll get to later, a monetary system requires the enforcement of monetary debts – especially monetary taxes – to persist. Preobrazhensky expresses the role of the printing press in the aftermath of the October revolution quite well in “Paper Money in the Epoch of Proletarian Dictatorship”:

The revolutionary government of France was able to survive and wage war thanks to the issuing of paper-money; the assignats were what saved the Great French Revolution. The paper-money of the Soviet Republic has supported a new power during the most difficult period of its existence, when it was not possible to pay for the costs of a civil war through direct taxes. Glory to our printing press! True, it is not left with much longer to live, but it has already completed three-quarters of its work. In the archives of the great proletarian revolution, along with the cannons, rifles and machine-guns of our epoch, the mechanism of the Commissariat of Finance’s

machine-gun will occupy the place of honour. This machine-gun shot up the bourgeois order in its rear, in its monetary system, and transformed the laws of monetary circulation in the bourgeois régime into a means for destroying that régime and a source for financing the Revolution.[2]

In this milieu money abolitionists were extremely dominant. There's an attitude now that socialist politics are antithetical to monetary cranks but this has historically not the case – as Marx himself confronted (perhaps over polemically). You can get a sense of what the Russian Revolution climate was like based on this comment Finance Commissar Gukovskymade in a speech in 1918 “In a socialist society, finance is not supposed to exist, and therefore I beg to be excused for its existence and for my own appearance here”.[3] Others took the more traditional position that the movement towards communism would (in some vague sense) lead to the elimination of money. Thus the early debate (before the New Economic Policy and 1922-1924) was dominated by forcible money abolitionists and a Marxist position that under socialism (and eventually communism) money would “wither away”.

It's unclear whether the inability to impose monetary taxes (or at least to do so on a nationwide basis) generated these ideas as rationalizations or whether they were deeply held beliefs. Whatever their origin they do a good job of representing twentieth century socialism's relationship to money and monetary thinking. At best you get some grudging acknowledgement that cost accounting is a useful tool of socialism (and thus implicitly money as a unit of account is important) and of course no socialist country ever abandoned money, financial systems or monetary cost accounting. However, the relationship has always been schizophrenic and it is very clear socialist decision-makers were uncomfortable with money – hence the attempt to resort to vouchers, tokens and ration cards.

Let me put my cards on the table: I think societies need a common measure for accounting purposes to do economic calculations and a general system of distribution. For various reasons I think that labor measures, energy measures, etc. are inadequate for the job (although I think statistical work on how much energy is needed to produce varieties of outputs is important). Thus, a monetary unit of account is the worst unit of account, except for all the others. I do not think this is a concession to the capitalist mode of production and this is where I disagree with a great many Marxist and radical thinkers. Traditionally, the existence of markets has been conflated with capitalism.

The clearest and most thought out statements along these lines (and thus easiest to critique) comes from the "Sprouts of Capitalism" view within Chinese Marxism. This view emerged to say that between the sixteenth and eighteenth century China had developed a kind of "proto-capitalism" that could have evolved into capitalism. A major part of their evidence was the development and "expansion" of consumer markets. I completely disagree with this view. I think following Marx's logic of M-C-M' and C-M-C to its logical conclusion means seeing only the expansion of human beings undemocratically coerced to work for others for the purposes of monetary profit as the development of capitalism. If more output is being sold in markets but by independent (or cooperative) producers who are doing it to get yet other goods (or to settle tax liabilities) I don't think it's right to see that as the expansion of capitalism.

To me the major differences between the kind of post-capitalist societies I would want and societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production come in three crucial respects:

- 1) the entrepreneurial going concerns aren't owned and thus aren't sellable (For example, cooperatives are communal entrepreneurial organizations. They are meant to continue

indefinitely and are thus "going concerns". What makes them different from capitalist firms is no one owns them and thus the cooperative – and any other type of communal organization – can't be sold)

2) private ownership of means of production is eliminated (although that doesn't suggest that usufruct – i.e., individual use of property on specified terms – is eliminated)

3) Neither cooperatives or other democratic decision-making councils redistribute agency away from some individuals towards an elite. In other words, social institutions don't become hierarchical.

In short eliminating labor markets, eliminating markets in natural resources including land, and eliminating hierarchical structures is the essence of ending capitalism, not eliminating consumer markets. If you take the 'sprouts of capitalism' view then consumer markets must be suppressed to prevent capitalism from reemerging. If you don't take this view then they are just not that important. Nor would you expect them to "wither away". The important thing is that markets aren't managing the most important institutions anymore and thus almost by definition they aren't that important. Cooperatives and other democratically organized going concerns may be administering prices in a similar way to capitalist firms.

Administering prices is just the idea that those who manage going concerns calculate their expected production costs and then set what prices output is sold at in reference to their costs. The crucial difference with cooperatives and other democratic organizations calculating monetary costs and administering prices is that the democratically chosen goals of the social institutions – not profit seeking or whatever other undemocratic goal capitalist firms have – is informing the decisions surrounding the quantity, qualities and prices of output that the democratic organizations are making. Who

cares if individuals are selling things for cooperative IOUs on their own? If they're doing that with say, a computer and some ingenuity, who cares? Even if they've been democratically granted the privilege of using some means of production for their project e.g. usufruct, does it really matter? The community is deciding and if they see a problem they can respond.

This is the essence of the difference between the society we want and the current one we have in my view. The existence of large institutions isn't the problem. The existence of money or imposed monetary liabilities isn't the problem. The problem is that these large institutions are run undemocratically and their tools, including money and taxation, are used to pursue goals contrary to the common interest. It is this we need to strike at. Other things are, to a large extent, a distraction. It is notable in this regard that the "socialist" countries didn't ever hit at these crucial points. These institutions weren't run democratically and although they may rhetorically say that the going concerns under their control were being run in the "common interest", they were very transparently run in the interests of their elites. They may have done a better job providing for citizens than many capitalist countries but that is a low bar. A more cynical man than me might say that the attempts to suppress markets were a symbolic way of expressing commitment to socialist ideals without the express emphasis and institutionalization of socialist practices like democratic management.

There are valid reasons to object to this view. David Graeber for example thinks that quantification necessarily leads to violence and thus the lack of quantification is a crucial part of his post-capitalist vision (or at least that's my interpretation of his views from what I've read of him). He provides an enormous amount of convincing evidence that quantification starts with violence (e.g. Wergild debts) and he has good reason to be skeptical that we can quantify

without it leading to the traditional moralities of debt and violence. I do agree that, for example, medical care, food and housing shouldn't be distributed on the basis of consumer markets. Ultimately however, I just haven't been convinced that there is a way to organize production on the scale to preserve the current human population in a non-quantitative fashion. Remember that we have an enormous amount of people that not only require the basic necessities but are reliant on specialized international supply chains. In particular, medication for chronic medical conditions, relatively rare diseases, specialized surgical tools, specialized products and services for the elderly and disabled etc. This is all currently produced capitalistically and in order to preserve these production lines we will need to quickly build organized social and communal arrangements across oceans and long geographic distances. This is much easier with quantified relationships, especially given people's prior socialization in capitalism. These reasons make me think that any transition away from capitalism will involve something along the lines I'm discussing. As with past attempted transitions the path chosen constrains future options. This could be a lack of imagination and I could certainly be convinced on this front though.

Q – Can there be anarchist money, then? If so, what is your concept of anarchist money?

A – The issue is this: I think imposed debts by governments (taxes, fees, fines, etc.) have been essential for making a currency valuable. On its face this suggests that an anarchist society can't have money because anarchism is premised on smashing the state. There are many ways I think the existence of money can be made consistent with anarchism but my essential premise here is that coercion can be acceptable as long as it's based on democratic decision-making. So for example a cooperative democratically decides to administer prices on its output and to only receive the cooperative's

ious in payment for that output. This necessarily involves not letting people have output they haven't paid for. I'm not an expert on anarchist political theory so perhaps that isn't acceptable from many anarchist points of views. In that case I must confess I don't see how any actual way of organizing and producing output could be made consistent with anarchism. I think these activities require planning and I think at some level planning requires fixed commitments to do certain specified activities.

My concern about social arrangements that don't involve any social enforcement of obligations (not necessarily debts) is that production falls to volunteerism. My experience with volunteerism is not positive and where it does come even close to functioning it seems to involve an inequitable distribution of work. Women and many others who are oppressed in our society – and thus empathize most with the afflicted – tend to be moved to action more quickly than anyone else and by the time they start, others feel less social obligation to participate. I also think that just like many activists they would burn out over a few years and even if a semblance of stability could be reached for a time, volunteerism would break down. I think social obligations are essential to an equitable distribution of work. That is without even dealing with the issue that without social enforcement of obligations planning becomes very difficult.

Moving on to some more details about my vision. I think administering output prices and then announcing that the only acceptable payment would be cooperative (or a federation of cooperative's) IOUs would be a sufficient to create a demand for those IOUs. This is simply an expanded (and non-state) version of selling metrocards for money. Access to the social product is a major incentive. However, for various reasons (for example wanting to distribute more output on a non-market basis e.g. healthcare and food) a cooperative – or a communal council – may want to charge membership fees. This requires

people to do a certain amount of work for their cooperative rather than relying on the need to buy output to encourage labor participation. This I'm sure would be more controversial because it comes the closest to being similar to a traditional tax. I still think democratic decision-making makes all the difference but it is very understandable how uncomfortable I'm sure this would make many anarchists. The ability to leave for another community is also another way of making this process less coercive that isn't available in a system of capitalist nation states.

In order to expand the usability of these IOUs – and make interregional planning and supply chains possible – cooperatives should federate. Cooperatives could even be created as working groups sprouting off of city or regional councils. Thus rather than having their own IOUs they would all be users of the city or regional council's IOUs. I say that not as a concrete proposal but just to emphasize that decision-making over money doesn't have to be centered in these "social enterprises" but could be put on a separate political level. Federation would involve receiving each other's IOUs at negotiated exchange rates in payments. If the geographical space covered by such federations is large enough, this has the advantage of letting someone vacation. They can accumulate – save – IOUs and then vacation in another region by meeting their obligations with their locally earned IOUs. This recreates one of the great virtues of modern money without the lack of democracy or the devastation. In short, I see various forms of Bookchinian confederation as consistent with an anarchist approach to money.

The point of floating exchange rates in capitalist economies is to create an informally political way of dealing with the balance of payments between countries. It also takes a lot of resources to run a worldwide floating exchange rate system and I don't see why horizontalist decision-makers would need such a device. Horizontalists and anarchists should embrace more

explicitly political forms of decision-making. Since the exchange rates are stable you can net out balances between each other. For example if region A accumulates 1000 IOUs of region B and region B accumulates 1000 IOUs of region A, you can just cancel those IOUs against each other. This is called clearing and is a major part of what clearinghouses do. Some regions would – measured at stable exchange rates – run deficits (thus, by definition, others would run surpluses) and overtime stocks of debts (assets) would accumulate between regions. This should be dealt with by periodically canceling debts in exchange for something from the community, e.g., cooperation with a big irrigation project they were planning on undertaking. This has the virtue of being explicitly and formally political. This kind of thing could happen every year but it could also be every five years.

Another thing you could do is cancel the debt with a big feast and party organized, funded and thrown by those who had accumulated the IOUs. This has the virtue of being much more fun than the alternatives. People joke today about the Eurozone crisis being solved by a bunch of Germans taking southern European vacations. Democratically federated entities can put these kind of strategies of preserving balance – and thus equality – into practice. On the flipside if for some reason an agreement can't be reached, a federation of cooperatives or a city council can exit a confederation. They don't have foreign denominated debts. All they have to do is stop accepting the other confederation's IOUs and the other parties will just stop accepting their IOUs. In other words, the hope is that the benefit – not the threat of utter catastrophe – hold these alliances together. This of course relies on a social norm that federations are unwilling to fight to maintain confederations or to enforce more favorable terms on an unwilling partner.

Q – In terms of thinking about mutual aid and mutual benefits, how does this fit with thinking about welfare arrangements.

For example, what might an anarchist social security look like? How might that work?

A – In my view one of the biggest virtues of this proposal- or perhaps vision for approaching anarchist money- is that it provides a concrete way to build social security programs on top of a democratic foundation. Since we're using cooperative/city council/regional council IOUs to distribute goods and services, IOUs must be distributed to those who can't work for this system not to be ablest.

This leads to all sorts of issues. If you know how much output you'll be producing (and selling) over the next year, you administer the prices they will be sold at, and you know how the division between IOUs distributed to those who work and those distributed to those who can't, you know approximately how much saleable output you're distributing on a non-work basis. In other words, by default, federations of cooperatives/city councils/regional councils are deciding how much output social security beneficiaries are getting. What factors are going into that decision?

In our society, because by definition cooperatives and other democratic going concerns can't acquire very much of the means of production, there are real limits to how much can be accomplished without revolution, social breakdown or various victories that increase the social space for alternative production arrangements. I still think such an approach to building anarchist money in the here and now is valuable. It provides people with the experiential tools to understand how money works now and how it could work in a future society. It is quite well known that your random teenage crust punk anarchist is more expert in democratic decision-making than most people on the planet. My goal for the here and now with an implementation of anarchist money would be for the proverbial teenage crust punk anarchist to be more expert in monetary theory and fiscal policy than a lot of central bankers purely because of this kind of experiential learning.

Incidentally, this is also a good way of showing the difficulties with a basic income guarantee/universal basic income. If you distributed to everyone the same amount of IOUs regardless of whether they worked, production will fall into volunteerism and the community has no method of insuring that work is distributed equally or that production continues at adequate levels given the goals of the community. In many ways though, this situation is better than the capitalist one because the capitalist state can't give workers unmediated access to the means of production or communally administer all consumer prices.

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