ROUTLEDGE-SCORAI STUDIES IN SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Social Change and the Coming of Post-Consumer Society

Theoretical advances and policy implications

Edited by
Maurie J. Cohen,
Halina Szejnwald Brown, and
Philip J. Vergragt

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ROUTLEDGE

Social Change and the Coming of Post-Consumer Society

Consumer society is an unquestionably complex social construct. However, after decades of unremitting dominance there are signs emerging that it is starting to falter, both as a coherent and durable system of social organization and as a strategy for societal advancement. Debates concerning how we can transition beyond present energy- and materials-intensive consumer society are beginning to gain greater salience.

Social Change and the Coming of Post-Consumer Society aims to develop more complete appreciation of the relevant processes of social change and to identify effective interventions that could enable a transition to supersede consumer society. Bringing together leading interdisciplinary experts on social change, the book identifies and analyzes several ongoing small- and modest-scale social experiments. Possibilities for macro-scale change from the interlinked perspectives of culture, economics, finance, and governance are then explored. These contributions expose the systemic problems that are emblematic of the current condition of consumer society, specifically the unsustainability of prevailing consumption practices and lifestyles and the persistence of inequalities. These observations are summarized and extended in the final chapter of the book.

This volume will be of great interest to students and scholars of sustainable consumption, sustainability transitions, environmental sociology, and sustainable development.

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The Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI) is an international knowledge network of approximately 1000 scholars and policy practitioners working at the interface of material consumption, human well-being, and technological and cultural change. For more information about SCORAI and its activities please visit www.scorai.org.

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"This fine collection focuses on the relationship between consumption and satisfaction, demonstrating how the economic culture of consumerism causes ecological damage, wasteful use of resources, and mindless yearning for distinction that is mistaken as the utter enjoyment of 'freedom.' The book explores examples and strategies of 'interstitial' change unfolding in the niches of consumer societies, the pursuit of which is driven by both economic crises affecting households and radical ideas of socioeconomic change as well as change of lifestyles. With a balanced focus on both novel practices of consumption and the policies needed to facilitate and nurture them, this volume maps roads toward post-consumerism."

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"If we want a sustainable and healthy environment, it is essential to shift decisively from a hyper-consumerist society. However, we live in a capitalist economy and stable capitalism depends on consumerism. What is to be done in the face of such a sharp contradiction? *Social Change and the Coming of Post-Consumer Society* explores a wide range of approaches to this question. This book marks an important contribution to this area of inquiry."

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"How do we transform political and economic structures in order to allow everyone to live meaningful lives with less intensive forms of consumption? Where do we start, and who will do the job? These are defining questions during an era of secular stagnation and impending climate disaster, and this book provides an important contribution in the quest for viable solutions."

Giorgos Kallis, ICREA Professor, ICTA-Autonomous
University of Barcelona, Spain

"Based on multiple case studies and theories of change, this book argues that the foundational pillars of consumer society are faltering. Drawing on a shared set of theories—from transition management to Karl Polanyi's embeddedness theorems—the volume contends that without deep changes in macroeconomic and political orientations, and mechanisms that escape current lock-ins, it will not be possible to achieve broad sociocultural change. The message is not of certainty or desperation, but rather of hope. By appealing to deeper values, broad change is possible. A must read for activists as much as for sustainability and consumption researchers."

Joachim Spangenberg, Vice-Chair, Sustainable Europe Research Institute, Germany

"Climate change, water shortages, and toxins in our food, air, and water. Loneliness and depression. Erosion of traditional values. These are among the problems that experts tell us we must solve for humanity to thrive, or even survive. However, these threats are symptoms of a deeper pathology, namely the desire for endless growth in consumption and the substitution of material goods for human relationships. This book sets out theory to understand how this came to be and what might be done about it, from an explicitly multidisciplinary perspective. The book also provides compelling accounts of exciting experiments in sustainable consumption now underway as people around the world seek to live within the limits of our finite planet, and in so doing, restore and heal our environment, our institutions, our communities, and ourselves."

John D. Sterman, Jay W. Forrester Professor of Management and Director of the System Dynamics Group, Sloan School of Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA

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Foreword

Richard Wilk

Historian Jackson Turner announced the closing of the American frontier in 1893, just at the cusp of an even greater historical change—the advent and triumph of mass consumer culture. During the following century, a cultural economy based on consumption has dominated the globe, meting out abundant wealth and goods to one segment of the planet, while impoverishing others through the exploitation and commodification of labor and raw materials. Today the expansion of consumer culture continues to accelerate, turning more and more people into "consumers," while scientists, citizens, and politicians have begun to realize that this growth cannot continue. The same engine that produces abundance and comfort for the consuming class is now destroying the physical conditions that made it possible in the first place.

Consumer culture is dependent upon the combustion of carbon-based fossil fuels, liberating the carbon slowly sequestered over hundreds of millions of years by living organisms. The entire biosphere is in the midst of a massive uncontrolled experiment to find out what happens to the atmosphere of a small planet when we add huge quantities of water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. The results are only now becoming clear; changes in climate and weather, rising sea levels, and mass extinction of plant and animal life. The results may surpass in their impact, the effects of the meteor that ended the Cretaceous period. After centuries of increased carbon emissions in the name of modernity, science now recognizes that we need to end the experiment, and embark on another, to see if the process is reversible, or if it will end in a catastrophic feedback cycle.

The contributors to this book are building on years of research in the emerging field of "sustainable consumption" which has established the connection between consumer culture and climate change. From this work we have learned a great deal about the interactions involving culture, politics, and technology that drive the growth of consumer culture at an ever-increasing rate. The authors also build on important advances in theories of social change, which provide a common language and set of intellectual tools for understanding the relationships among the economy, technology, and society. Poaching ideas from many different disciplines, these theories help us understand the inner workings of the "runaway train" of consumer capitalism (to borrow ecological economist Brian Czech's

(2000) metaphor). They also recognize the limitations of the over-specialized and fragmented scholarship on consumerism among the many fields and disciplines that touch on consumer culture. The result is a kind of inquiry we might call *post-disciplinary*, based on recognition that the project of changing consumer society is huge, encompassing, complex, and "wicked."

This book marks the emergence of "sustainable consumption" as a mature field that is turning to the serious question of "what is to be done?" The introduction and conclusion argue that it is not enough to visualize post-consumerist utopias; we need to think about practical actions that can move a massive and entrenched system into a more sustainable direction. These contributions to the volume collectively realize that we cannot depend on the slow and uneven growth of "green consumerism," which often ends up just substituting one kind of harmful practice for another. The corporate world has been very adept at absorbing and coopting each successive effort to create alternative economies, turning dissent into a commodity (Frank and Weiland, 1997). At the same time, the marketing industry has refined and grown the tools needed to keep people consuming, even when they have filled their houses, garages, attics, and storage lockers with stuff they never have time to use (Arnold et al., 2012).

Despite many movements aimed at finding alternatives to consumer culture, people continue to chase the dream of abundance and wealth. No matter how educated we may be, we still fall for the same old tricks. Conspicuous consumption still puts us on an endless treadmill of conformity and individualism, commensality and competition. Marketers find yet more ways to absorb new categories of goods into endless fashion cycles, converting durables into consumables, and inventing entirely new forms of material culture; for example, the development of gourmet food and cosmetics for dogs. Leisure is commercialized, play requires expensive equipment, and even after work is over we engage in forms of productive consumption like do-it-yourself home improvement and home cooking. Every kind of health and safety is driven by fear and hope into the marketplace. Consumer culture acts as a parasite on social life, turning important social relationships, every form of generosity or altruism into a reason to buy more things, from the diamond wedding ring to the elaborately painted, hermetically sealed coffin. Genuine concerns about health and safety are appropriated and used to create new niches and product categories.

It takes courage and fortitude to even imagine challenging a system that motivates almost $600 billion on advertising and publicity every year. How could we imagine effective action in the face of such an overwhelming force? The editors and authors of this book understand the complexity and difficulty of their task, and the chapters in this volume seek out the weaknesses, vulnerable spots, and cracks in consumer culture, the places where social action can make a difference. Their post-disciplinary science is infused with the search for practical activism, strategies that can open new pathways toward a post-consumer society.

Whatever the difficulty and risk, I cannot imagine a more important task. Climate change is the defining issue of this era, the most fundamental and

important challenge our young species has ever faced. If we are not going to leave a shattered and damaged world to our descendants, there is no time to waste.

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Preface

This book has been inspired by our discussions over the last few years with affiliates of the Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI). Established in 2008, SCORAI is an international knowledge network of professionals working at the interface of material consumption, human well-being, and technological and cultural change. Its aims are to foster a transition beyond the currently dominant consumer society; to understand the drivers of the consumerist economy in affluent technological societies; to formulate and analyze options for post-consumerist lifestyles, social institutions, and economic systems; and to provide the knowledge for emergent grassroots innovations, social movements, and public policies. SCORAI has experienced steady growth since its inception and now comprises nearly one thousand people around the world. It is anchored by organizational nodes in North America, Europe, China, and Israel and its activities are facilitated by a website, a listserv for online discussions, a monthly newsletter, and a regular series of thematic workshops, conferences, colloquia, and publications.[1] Members of the SCORAI Board serve on a voluntary basis and the network as a whole and its activities are supported by occasional grants and in-kind contributions by sponsoring institutions.

The specific concerns that gave rise to this volume centered on how to transition beyond the present energy- and materials-intensive consumer society. We began by contemplating how the voluminous literature on social change—both in terms of retrospective explanations and prospective inquiries—could help us to understand the dynamics of such a transformation and if there were ways to influence its underlying processes. Of course, we were aware of the extensive work conducted on social movements, sociotechnical transitions, and other theories of social change, but we found that most of it was not directly germane to questions pertaining to consumer society. We were also familiar with many grassroots initiatives and other social experiments, but this work was not particularly salient with respect to the linkages between macroscale transition and consumerism.

As we discuss in detail in the introductory chapter, consumer society is unquestionably a complex social construct. Its constituent infrastructures, practices, and institutions have developed over an extended period of time, but

did not become fully entrenched until the decades following World War II, first in the United States and then in many other parts of the world. After several decades of unremitting dominance and formidable influence, consumer society is starting to falter, both as a coherent and durable system of social organization and a strategy for societal advancement. Widening cracks and unintended consequences are becoming evermore apparent, from ecological impacts to income inequality to inability to deliver secure lifestyles and sufficient well-being.

Our primary motivation in this project has been to develop a more complete appreciation of relevant processes of social change and to identify effective interventions that could enable a transition to supersede consumer society. Innovation of new technologies and social practices to manage consumption will be, after all, critically important for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions as well as for alleviating other environmental problems including diminishing soil fertility, declining biodiversity, ongoing toxic contamination of humans and ecological systems, and increasing scarcity of various natural resources. In addition to these familiar biophysical problems, the economy, the political system, and the culture of present-day consumer society are responsible for widening disparities in income and wealth and for exacerbating poverty even in rich countries. Under these circumstances, sustainable consumption is not only about curtailing the energy and materials throughput of affluent consumers, but is also focused on ensuring a decent standard of living for all.

As we continued to enhance our understanding of the relationship between social change and consumption, a proposal emerged to organize a year-long series of seminars over the course of a twelve-month period spanning 2014 and 2015. We invited prominent scholars interested in large-scale social change—mostly from outside of our own circle of research on sustainable consumption, alternative lifestyles, and social experimentation—to create opportunities for fruitful dialogue on a range of pertinent issues. We are delighted that Dorothy Holland, Douglas Holt, Claus Offe, George Ritzer, Juliet Schor, David Snow, John Sterman, and Erik Olin Wright accepted our invitation to participate in this colloquium and, in some instances, for accommodating scheduling adjustments due to snowstorms and other unanticipated incidents. Video recordings of all sessions comprising the colloquium are accessible on the SCORAI website.[2]

To synthesize the diverse perspectives presented during these seminars, and to apply them specifically to the challenges of a transition beyond consumer society, we then organized a two-day workshop in Boston in October 2015. Most of the contributions that comprise this book were originally presented in draft form at this event and then subsequently revised for publication. Participants in the workshop included Erik Assadourian, Jeffrey Barber, Tom Bauler, Joshua Farley, James Goldstein, Tally Katz-Gerro, Emily Huddart Kennedy, Anders Hayden, Cindy Isenhour, Michele Lamont, Derk Loorbach, James Meadowcroft, Claus Offe, Inge Røpke, Marlyne Sahakian, Juliet Schor, Adrian Smith, Jennie Stephens, John Stutz, Vanessa Timmer, and Richard Wilk. Ruby Woodside and Tiy Chung, both graduate students at Clark University at the time, provided

excellent administrative and technical support and Robert Orzanna expertly edited and posted the video recordings on the SCORAI website. We thank the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation for financial support.

The Tellus Institute hosted both the colloquium and the workshop and we are grateful for this collaboration as well as for more general institutional assistance that SCORAI has received over the years. A special word of thanks to John Stutz who has been an especially valued colleague and friend. We also appreciate the help of David McAnulty who for the last several years has skillfully looked after the network's finances. At Routledge, Margaret Farrelly and Annabelle Harris have been in equal parts patient and helpful throughout the incubation of this volume. We are indebted to Janice Baiton and Elizabeth Spicer for careful assistance during the final stages of production.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that this book reflects the presentations and discussions during the colloquium and the collegial exchanges that took place at the workshop, as well as the incisive scholarship of the contributors. Of course, we realize that we have not been able to generate answers to all of our questions and that many issues still remain to be explored. We hope that in coming years others will take up study of the unfolding transition to post-consumer society and add to this body of knowledge.

In terms of its organization, this volume is divided into two main themes. Following our introductory chapter, an initial section identifies and analyzes several ongoing small- and modest-scale social experiments. The second theme explores possibilities for macro-scale change from the interlinked perspectives of culture, economics, finance, and governance. These contributions expose the systemic problems that are emblematic of the current condition of consumer society, specifically the unsustainability of prevailing consumption practices and lifestyles and the challenges of a pending transition. We summarize and cautiously extend these observations in the final chapter of the book.

MJC, HSB, and PJV,
Princeton, NJ and Wellfleet, MA
August 2016

Notes

1 Further details on SCORAI are at www.scorai.org.
2 See http://scorai.org/colloquium-on-consumption-and-social-change.

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Part I

Consumption and social change

An introductory discussion and synthetic framework

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1 Introduction

Halina Szejnwald Brown, Philip J. Vergragt, and Maurie J. Cohen

Even a casual glance at the daily news provides ample evidence that we are living through an era of profound challenges including ecological crises, mass migrations, growing wealth inequalities at different geographic scales, and political extremism. Individually, but even more dramatically when taken in combination, these developments indicate that underlying systems of social organization are under profound stress. In recent years, a growing number of observers—from a wide array of political vantage points—have begun to sense that sweeping changes in the dominant order may be approaching (see, e.g., Mason, 2015; Monbiot, 2016; Reich, 2016; Angus, 2016; Levin, 2016).

Those seeking to understand the current trajectory of generally affluent countries in the world today have looked at processes of change through a variety of analytic frames including the shifting role of labor in the economy, the instability of contemporary political arrangements, the evolving role of globalized capital, and the advent of revolutionary technologies (Lanier, 2013; Ford, 2015; Brynjolfsson and McAffee, 2016; King, 2016; Gordon, 2016; Streeck, 2016). While each of these points of departure has potential to open up important lines of discussion, this book considers social change through the prism of consumer society—the system of social organization that in the years following World War II became in many countries the synthesizing logic for societal cohesion, economic development, institutional design, and power relations. The concept of consumer society is, of course, not an unproblematic notion, and it has been variously invoked over the years, often for polemical or provocative purposes (e.g., Galbraith, 1958; Packard, 1960; Scitovsky, 1976; see also Horowitz, 2005). Below we clarify what we mean before moving to the core questions of this book.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines consumer society as "a society in which the buying and selling of consumer goods and services is the predominant social and economic activity."[1] The first acknowledged usage of the term was in 1920 and during the intervening decades the scale of consumption, as well as its influence on political discourse and ideology, cultural meanings, and major institutions has only become more pervasive and entrenched.[2]

The transition that brought consumer society to its currently dominant position commenced and quickly accelerated in the United States in the years following 1945 and, through the efforts of government, industrial firms, and

organized labor, in a span of not much more than a single generation came to be the principal organizing logic of contemporary life. The leaders of these institutions shrewdly recognized a unique window of opportunity created by the confluence of several auspicious factors—the post-Depression craving for more materially comfortable lifestyles, the vast scale of the country's post-war industrial overcapacity, the national euphoria over uncontested American political and economic primacy (and the endless possibilities it afforded), the demographic surge that gave rise to the "baby boom" generation, and the technological advances and industrial resourcefulness that made an abundance of novel consumer goods more accessible than ever (Glickman, 1999; Cohen, L., 2003; Brown and Vergragt, 2016; Cohen, M., 2017). The resultant transformation ushered in a historically unprecedented period of national economic growth and led to sweeping redefinition of predominant living arrangements across large parts of the country (Brown, 1995; Collins, 2002; Gordon, 2016).

The diffusion of consumerist lifestyles also prompted a cultural shift whereby mass consumption became societally entrenched as a ubiquitous system of artifacts, symbols, and shared understandings. Consumer goods also came to be the centerpiece of social practices, leisure time, communal rituals, and celebrations in everyday life, as well as inseparably conflated with potent political ideals such as freedom, independence, and democracy. Equally important, a symbiotic relationship developed between mass consumption and the status of the economy. While the United States was at the forefront of these developments during the post-war period, it did not take long for Western Europe, Japan, and other countries to similarly remodel themselves and strike out on the same trajectory (Strasser et al., 1998; de Grazia, 2005; Garth, 2010; Garon, 2011; Francks and Hunter, 2012; Shrivastava and Kothari, 2012; Pulju, 2013).

In short, consumer society has evolved into a complex system of technology, culture, institutions, markets, and dominant business models. It is driven by belief in the feasibility and inherent desirability of limitless consumption-led growth and is justified by the creed of neoliberalism that has powerfully shaped political and economic life in the United States and elsewhere over the last several decades (Harvey, 2007; Ventura, 2012). Relentless emphasis on consumption has also fundamentally colored prevalent understanding of human betterment and well-being. To consider a transition beyond consumer society is to interrogate this entire system and to expose the tensions among different worldviews, political ideologies, and class conflicts. It is our contention that we can learn a great deal about the underlying mechanisms of contemporary social organization by examining the workings of consumer society and specifically how it functions and reproduces itself. It thus follows that efforts to address the challenges that affluent countries face and to transition beyond consumer society are deeply intertwined endeavors.

Over the past decade it has become increasingly common to examine the efficacy of consumer society and to speculate on its ultimate durability (e.g., Humphery 2010; Lewis, 2013; D'Alisa et al., 2015; Cohen, 2016). Numerous scholars and activists have become engaged in searching for leverage points and

promising interventions to steer presumptive harbingers of social change in directions that are ecologically and socially sustainable, politically stable, and capable of providing decent livelihoods. This rapidly cumulating body of knowledge and experience covers a wide spectrum of potential mechanisms and plausible agents—from the role of small scale, out-of-the-mainstream social innovations and experiments (Brown and Vergragt, 2008; Seyfang, 2009) to more instrumental approaches to altering human motivations through explicit government policies (Lorek and Fuchs, 2013; Spangenberg, 2014; Schäpke and Rauschmayer, 2014). Researchers have also considered the transformational potential of evolving social practices (Shove et al., 2007; Halkier, 2013; Spaargaren, 2013), insurgent sociotechnical changes (Geels and Schot, 2007; Kemp and Van Lente, 2013), and business models less calibrated for continual expansion (Kelly, 2012; Wells, 2013). Other areas of emphasis have included macro-level policies premised on alternatives to the economic growth paradigm (Victor, 2008; Jackson, 2009; Kallis, 2011; Harris, 2013), new fiscal policies like carbon taxes (Parry et al., 2014), and social movements committed to bringing forward different types of economic organization, institutions, and ethics (Raskin, 2011; Therborn, 2013). Additionally notable are numerous future visions and scenarios developed over the last two decades (Green and Vergragt, 2002; Raskin et al., 2002; Quist and Vergragt, 2006; Quist et al., 2011; Mont et al., 2014; Doyle and Davies, 2013; Speth, 2015).[3]

As ambitious as many of these efforts have been, less emphasis has been devoted to formulating a conceptual framework for understanding how such recommendations might be actualized, or more to the point, how systemic social change occurs. Without adequate comprehension, the search for effective strategies within state and civic domains is essentially a hit-or-miss exercise. The leading questions for this book then are: How might we interpret the potential of societal developments unfolding at the macro-, meso-, and micro-scales to foster a transition beyond consumer society? Do widely accepted theories of social change allow us to recognize—and possibly facilitate—incipient innovations as precursors of a prospective transformation?

It is an unfortunate truism that most scholarship devoted to explicating social change aims to speak primarily to members of distinct disciplinary specialties. Sociologists tend to focus on social movements, popular mobilization, and institutional change as the most relevant factors. Political scientists favor the lens of power relations and concentrate their attention on "opportunity structures." Economists organize their understanding of social change around systems of production, natural resource endowments, international trade, and supply and demand of labor while cultural anthropologists direct their scrutiny to broadly shared belief systems, values, understandings, and norms. For all of their importance and insight, these disciplinary perspectives confront serious obstacles when trying to describe fundamental change in consumer society and to recognize its nascent signs. For one thing, it takes knowledge from all of these angles to get a handle on a complex system such as consumer society. Furthermore, the change processes presently transpiring are interdependent, with non-linear causal

relationships and feedback loops (see especially Sterman, 2012). The hallmark of reductionist science—understanding the whole by assembling the understandings of changes in individual societal parts—is clearly inadequate when applied to multi-causal progressions of social change because of the co-evolutionary relationships that exist among the various domains.

For that reason, we find that it is more productive to draw on a suite of complementary conceptual perspectives. Below, we highlight four such approaches, beginning with Erik Olin Wright's concept of interstitial social transformation. We then turn our attention to the multi-level perspective on sociotechnical transitions that originated among scholars of technological innovation in the Netherlands during the 1990s and has been advanced in subsequent years by a large network of primarily European researchers. The third formulation that we consider is the theory of strategic action fields articulated by Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam. Our final theoretical perspective draws on several enduring ideas initially described by political economist Karl Polanyi. These four approaches are corresponding and jointly form a conceptual framework for exploring different aspects of the core questions of this volume.

In his recent book *Envisioning Real Utopias*, sociologist Erik Olin Wright (2010) considers alternatives to the capitalist system of social organization and the possible routes for reaching them. Specifically, he seeks prospective arrangements that would be grounded in civic empowerment over the state and the economy. By calling these different systems "real utopias," Wright draws attention to the need to combine a commitment to deeply democratic, egalitarian, and just values and aspirations while devoting serious attention to the problem of how institutions really work and how attempts at social engineering can produce unintended perverse consequences.

As numerous observers have remarked over the years, the capitalist system, which is tightly bound up with consumer society, and in many respects supplies its commanding logic and propulsive engine, has proven to be remarkably resilient over time. This is partly because of the powerful forces that have successfully reproduced it, most notably coercion, institutional rules, ideology, culture, and material interests. However, the prevailing order also has built-in fault lines that derive from its very complexity as well as from its inefficiency, rigidity, and path dependency. Opportunities for radical social transformation may occur when these cracks widen as a result of either unintended side-effects arising from actions people take or purposeful projects of social change.

Wright considers three broad strategies for achieving radical social change. He dismisses the first option, what he terms "ruptural change," in essence an intentionally organized socialist revolution that starts with destruction of powerful incumbent institutions. The second means of radical social change is symbiotic and entails alternative movements challenging existing structures and culture and seeking to solve certain practical problems through social empowerment that effectively takes over and repurposes existing institutions and power structures. However, Wright finds greater promise in a third pathway predicated on "interstitial" strategies. This approach aims to nurture novel modes

of social organization in the fractures of the dominant system, in niches where they do not seem to pose any immediate threat to dominant classes and institutions. While leaders of these small-scale activities do not usually regard their interventions as being focused on undermining the larger system, they deliberately work to build new organizational forms and to foster novel social relations beyond the customary reach of the state.

Wright argues that such interstitial processes have historically played a central role in large-scale social change. Most dramatically, capitalism developed in the apertural spaces of feudal society and grew in due course to a scale at which point it was able to supplant its predecessor (Lefebvre et al., 1985; Braudel, 1995). These niche activities, often invisible and unacknowledged during their early phases of gestation, may provide the groundwork for future ruptural transformations that in time are unavoidable and lead the way toward alternative forms of social organization. Proponents of such transitions work to formulate innovative visions, to foster social and technical learning, and to build social capital.

Wright's theory of social change through interstitial processes is in several respects closely related to, and complementary with, the so-called multi-level perspective (MLP) on sociotechnical transitions. The MLP approach was initially developed by Dutch scholars working in the field of innovation studies to describe large-scale shifts in sociotechnical systems of production and consumption (Kemp, 1994; Geels, 2002; Geels and Schot, 2007; Markard et al., 2012; see also Smith et al., 2005; Shove and Walker, 2007). The concept of a sociotechnical system denotes, on the one hand, a relatively stable configuration of techniques and artifacts and, on the other hand, an array of institutions, rules, practices, and networks that determine the "normal" developments and uses of technologies in a particular area of provisioning to satisfy human needs (Kemp and Rotmans, 2005; Smith et al., 2005). Accordingly, an operative sociotechnical system (or "regime" in the language of its associated research community) constitutes an amalgam of social and technological components and fulfills a socially valued function such as generating electricity from fossil fuels or providing urban mobility on the basis of widespread automobile ownership. It also embodies strongly held convictions and interests concerning particular lifestyles, institutions, and power relations, all of which are co-dependent and continually co-evolving. Stability, complexity, and resilience are central characteristics of established sociotechnical systems and this means that change is invariably slow, involving both innovations in science and technology and changes in social practices, professional norms, belief systems, and other factors.

The MLP conceptualizes change in complex sociotechnical regimes as resulting from accumulated transformations occurring at three nested levels. In addition to the regime described above, the macro-level (or the "landscape") comprises broad dominant ideas, large-scale social currents, and historical trends on the scale of a country, region, or the world. Illustrative examples include widespread recognition of anthropogenic climate change, urbanization and growth of megacities, mass migration and terrorism, economic globalization, and diffusion of the Internet. Change at the landscape level is typically gradual, but can occasionally be sharp

and sudden, much like a powerful earthquake. Regardless of the specific pace, transformation in landscape conditions can have profound implications on the continued viability of extant sociotechnical system.

To complete the typology of the MLP, micro-level innovations occur in niches which are spaces that enable individuals and groups to experiment with new technologies, social arrangements, production techniques, and consumption routines. Particularly salient examples at present include electric vehicles, organic urban gardens, locally owned renewable energy generation, and some manifestations of the "sharing economy" (Raven and Verbong, 2009; van Bree et al., 2010; Bell and Cerulli, 2012; Martin et al., 2015). Niche activities generally seek to grow and could potentially come to challenge and perhaps even supersede the incumbent sociotechnical system which operates on and is anchored in the meso-level. Like the dominant mode of social organization addressed by Wright, the established regime also contains structural fault lines that are created by internal contradictions, complexity, institutional cumbersomeness, and technological shortcomings. Movement at either the landscape or niche levels (and especially at both of them) may destabilize incumbent arrangements, and large-scale social change is imputed to occur when emergent activities in niches, regimes, and landscapes are "aligned" temporally and spatially. While these developments generally mature slowly, the actual transition from the existing to an alternative sociotechnical regime may be quite rapid. A classic instance (and one that is extensively cited in the MLP literature) is the replacement of horse-drawn carriages with the combustion-powered automobile, a development that followed a "latency" period of several decades but that became manifest in the course of a few years as a profound "ruptural" social change (Geels, 2005).

Wright's formulation and the MLP share an emphasis on niches as the space for experimentation and for their capacity to destabilize the dominant complex system. Both approaches stress the processes of reproduction that give the prevailing configuration its resilience and durability, the incumbent power structures that benefit from it and provide protection, and the integral, strategically exploitable tensions that are inherent characteristics. The MLP though adds an important element to the social transformation theory of Wright by emphasizing technology as a key element in producing and changing complex societal systems and by pointing out how technical know-how, culture, and institutions co-evolve. It also enriches that understanding by articulating the concept of a landscape and highlighting technological innovation as a potential trigger of change taking place across different scales. At the same time, the social transformation conception puts more emphasis on the role of power in both the stability and the change of complex systems.

The similarity (and in some respects complementarity) of the two approaches also includes their limited attention on the unavoidable dynamics of contestation among social actors, both in competing niches and at the niche-regime interface that are typically conspicuous during periods of disruption. While the MLP emphasizes the importance of "aligning" destabilizing changes at the levels of the landscape and niches, as well as the growing stress within the regime, both

frameworks devote less attention to how some interstitial processes might lead to radical systemic transformation while others fall short. The result is that from an empirical perspective neither approach offers much assistance on how to recognize the early signs of approaching change in a dominant system of social organization.

The contemporary work of sociologists Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2012) and the enduring insights of political economist Karl Polanyi (2001) confront these issues by focusing on the behavior and mutual relations of key social actors who are guided by, respectively, self-interest and ideology. Fligstein and McAdam's influential theory of strategic action fields strives to explain how stability and change are achieved by social actors in specific arenas (fields). They synthesize scholarship produced by a wide array of political sociologists, political scientists, economic sociologists, social movement scholars, and organizational sociologists and seek to interpret empirical phenomena of interest to researchers working in these domains.

A strategic action field is a constructed social order in which actors (individual and collective) routinely interact with each other on the basis of overlapping interests, shared understandings about the purpose of the field, relationships to each other, and rules governing legitimate actions. So defined, strategic action fields are fundamental units of collective interaction in society. They are, even when stable over long periods of time, dynamic structures where gradual social changes occur continuously as a result of activities undertaken by incumbents, challengers, and the state. Viewed through the lens of the MLP's typology of niches, regime, and landscape, connectivity within a strategic action field occurs at various levels of aggregation and co-evolution is also an intrinsic feature of related strategic action fields.

According to Fligstein and McAdam, incremental changes are prevalent and transformative changes are less common. The latter could happen when the stable order in a strategic action field—the institutionalized rules of the game, the shared understandings about incumbent-challenger relations and prevailing distribution of power, the appropriate use of technology, and other constitutive elements—become destabilized by changes or prompted by external events in other fields. Borrowing terminology from the MLP, pressures from niches, changes in a landscape, and strains in the incumbent regime may spatially and temporally converge and briefly come into alignment. Under such circumstances, field actors rearrange their mutual connections and power relationships adapt accordingly, followed or accompanied by changes in other domains of the system that the field represents.

This theory offers a broad lens for analyzing and understanding social change by examining developments in multiple fields and accounting for their resultant impacts on one another. Using two cases from the United States—changes in racial politics between 1932 and 1980 and restructuring of the mortgage market between 1969 and 2011—Fligstein and McAdam demonstrate that radical change in a field is the result of strategic actions within that field as well as the destabilizing effects produced by changes in other closely relevant ("proximate") strategic action fields.

From the perspective of research design, examining social change in accordance with the theory of strategic action fields pushes analysts to define the purpose of the field and to identify its key actors and their mutual relationships and institutional rules. It also entails indicating the external fields—state and non-state—that are most important for the reproduction of a particular field and the maintenance of its stability. It is furthermore important to pay attention to the events and processes that are likely to destabilize the field, the challengers who come to the fore to exploit the vulnerable situation, the insurgent alternative visions of the field that are circulating, the social skills with which to pursue incipient agendas, and the actions taken by all parties to affect a new condition of dynamic equilibrium.

The theory of strategic action motivates treatment of consumer society as an assemblage of fields, including the growth-impelled financial system, the marketing industry, the mortgage and home-construction sectors, the transportation infrastructure, and numerous others. Destabilization can occur at various levels—micro, meso, and macro—within a field as well as due to, as noted above, events in other proximate fields. One can also conceptualize a large-scale social change occurring as a result of significant concurrent changes in multiple interlinked fields. From a research perspective, this means that to identify the signs of transformative social change it is useful to map out the relevant strategic actions fields, as well as the field that most directly represents the heart of the incumbent system, and to consider the likelihood and extent of changes within and between them.

In addition to self-interest, ideology plays an important role in motivating, directing, and justifying the behavior of social actors, whether viewed through the lenses of Wright's concept of transformative social change, the MLP, or Fligstein and McAdam's strategic action fields. Normative commitments also set the stage for the actions taken by the state, often with far-reaching consequences at all societal levels. As we observed earlier, the emergence of consumer society was enabled by the widely shared conviction that consumer capitalism was a superior system for generating and distributing societal wealth and for nurturing democracy. In addition, the overall project was informed by a particular interpretation of Keynesianism, namely that mass consumption should be the pillar on which to build a virtuous cycle of economic growth. In the second half of the twentieth century, neoliberalism provided the ideological justification for allowing markets to mediate societal aspirations and problem-solving, thus increasing dependence on economic growth and consumption as the interlinked engines of social progress. The seminal work of Karl Polanyi (2001; see also Block and Somers, 2014) is helpful in conceptualizing the role of ideology—and specifically its political economic expressions—as a driver of social change.

According to Polanyi, all economic systems known up to the end of feudalism in Western Europe were deeply embedded in society and organized around the principles of redistribution, reciprocity (gift-giving), or householding (self-provisioning) and guided by strong social norms. The emergence of a market economy (and eventually of a consumer society) was greatly facilitated by

"disembedding" the economy from its social, cultural, and political contexts. In other words, the economic realm increasingly came to be conceptualized as autonomous and separate from other societal realms. This is a false and misleading conception, as economies are always enmeshed in wider organizational systems and guided by government regulations. Polanyi regarded this idea to be utopian and asserted that pursuit of it would inevitably lead to disaster.

Disembedding means in practical terms to turn everything into a marketable good governed by the forces of supply and demand (see also Granovetter, 1985 and Giddens, 1990). To make this work, Polanyi contended, it was necessary to commodify human labor, land, and money (he called these "fictitious commodities" and noted that this practice contributed to exploitation of human labor and land). Commodification also gave rise to the creation of the reductionist concept of *homo economicus*, which refers to an individual who acts in the marketplace strictly according to her own perceived economic self-interest. The ascendency of this notion resulted in replacement of the "embedded" actors who had previously valued cooperation, community, and mutual support and were emblematic of preceding stages of socioeconomic development. In the second half of the twentieth century, neoliberal ideology emerged as a direct descendant of the interlinked processes of disembedding and commodification and the concept of *homo economicus* and gave rise to economic and social policies that triggered the Great Recession of 2008 and are responsible for growing income inequality and other harmful social conditions.

Polanyi further introduced the concept of the "double movement" to describe processes of social change from the perspective of political economy. The disembedding of the economy from the political and social realms and the pervasive belief in the power of a self-correcting free market as the driver of human progress—which Block and Somers (2014) refer to as market fundamentalism—is known as the "first movement." This movement in its purest form leads to human suffering, ecological degradation, and other adverse outcomes. The "second movement" is a reaction to these excesses, usually by way of collective action in the political sphere. The state then responds by means of legislation and policies designed to protect people from the consequences of the first movement.

The recent political economic history of Europe illustrates this progression. From the early nineteenth century onward, the ideology of "self-regulating markets" had the upper hand as a guiding logic for national economic policies. The second movement at the time consisted of organized actions to fight the most horrific impacts of industrialization, but was not successful to sufficiently counteract the first movement. After a "hundred year peace" in the nineteenth century, the political, economic, and social orders collapsed in 1914 because of the internal contradictions of the first movement (exemplified by the gold standard). In the years following World War I, history in essence repeated itself. After a brief struggle with various socialist experiments (for instance, "Red Vienna"), the first movement reasserted itself, a development that initially led to the 1929 economic collapse and its aftermath and, in due course, to World War II.

According to Block and Somers (2014), Polanyi wrote his "Great Transformation" in 1944 to influence the post-war political economic settlements and to try to avoid the mistakes made thirty years earlier, including re-establishment of the gold standard. The Keynes-inspired Bretton Woods agreements, which created a supranational governance structure (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) promoting the goals of full employment and a regulated free market, largely reflected his warnings.[4] Social democratic policies in Western Europe and the New Deal-inspired policies like Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society in the United States thrived in this context as the first three post-war decades (roughly 1945 to 1975) witnessed relative social peace and an extraordinary reduction in inequality with respect to income, wealth, and social relations.

However, Keynes' rather technocratic approach—which led to the establishment of similarly technocratic policy institutions—did not sufficiently address the more fundamental issue of a disembedded economy. As a consequence, starting in the mid-1970s, market fundamentalism regained legitimacy and prominence in the form of neoliberalism (after Polanyi and Keynes mistakenly thought that they had been buried once and for all). The results were disastrous for the relatively young movement toward more egalitarianism as well as for the global ecosystem increasingly threatened by mass consumption and economic financialization.

While Polanyi does not focus explicitly on consumerism as the bulwark of modern capitalism, his conceptual contribution to the theme of this book derives from recognition of the importance of political economic ideology in social change. In particular, the systemic tensions created by neoliberal ideology—as illustrated by apparent inseparability between economic growth and sustainability—need to be taken into account when contemplating development of a new system of social organization.

Taken together, the quartet of conceptual approaches outlined above helps us to understand how social change beyond consumer society might transpire and how the contributions comprising this volume constitute a coherent conceptual vision. Some authors explicitly draw on one or more of these four theories while others are more implicit in how they embrace this ensemble of approaches. In the remainder of our discussion, we summarize the chapters that follow and, where appropriate, highlight the connections to the previously outlined synthesis.

The content of this book is organized into three subsequent sections. The next section, entitled "Niches of social innovation," offers case studies of initiatives aimed at modifying familiar systems of production and consumption. These social experiments highlight the role of niche activities in interstitial processes, niche-regime interactions, and strategic action fields and shed light on the activities of key actors in a number of different provisioning domains.

In Chapter 2, Juliet Schor and Robert Wengronowitz analyze the recently emergent sharing economy through a cultural lens. The authors seek to understand the extent to which new forms of platform-based economic exchange might be the seedbed of nascent post-consumer lifeways that are more egalitarian, communal, and environmentally sustainable. Drawing on the work of sociologist

Pierre Bourdieu, they introduce the concept of eco-habitus, which entails a preference for "authentic" localism, an emphasis on manual skills rather than abstract thinking, and an affinity for small-scale production and do-it-yourself (DIY) activities. Eco-habitus also celebrates the community and social relationships. The authors contend that "high cultural capital" consumers have been the early adopters of platform-economy innovation and are the primary embodiment of eco-habitus. Notably, this development represents a striking inversion of the traditional values distinguishing conventionally high and low cultural capital consumers. The former have traditionally shied away from manual work, locally made products, and sharing with strangers in favor of abstraction, individualized consumption, and cosmopolitan shopping.

Schor and Wengronowitz's findings, consistent with the work of political economist Karl Polanyi on the social embeddedness of the economy, highlight the power of free-market ideology even among proponents of social change who purport to reject these currently dominant values. The result is that in the strategic action field of the sharing economy incumbent actors have had little difficulty reorienting some of these new business models in ways that make them consistent with notions of "platform capitalism" rather than the "sharing economy." Looking toward the future of more collaborative modes of consumption, Schor and Wengronowitz see two competing possibilities: the business-as-usual scenario will continue the trajectory of translating and absorbing sharing into dominant forms of market exchange or we will see a radical departure where this mode of consumption contributes to a refashioned economy that is more embedded in society. The emerging progressive movement within the sharing economy that advocates for radical, anti-capitalist alternatives gives some credence to the latter scenario.

Chapter 3 by Marlyne Sahakian continues this discussion of the sharing economy and she, too, draws on insights originally developed by Karl Polanyi to amplify the distinction between commodified modes of collaboration and forms of exchange that enhance social cohesion. This contribution formulates a typology that brings into sharper focus provisioning practices consistent with the social and solidarity economy and draws on fieldwork involving affiliated enterprises in Geneva and its surrounding area. Sahakian profiles six organizations in western Switzerland including a mobility cooperative, an electronic platform that matches drivers with underutilized parking spaces, a public bicycle program, a creative scheme that enables neighbors to exchange household objects via their personal mailboxes, a project that retrofits newspaper-vending machines as micro-sized sharing depositories, and a website that facilitates the mutual exchange of various goods and services. While these cases are mostly very small-scale experiments, the chapter points to the importance of the Internet in enabling these alternative consumption routines and the ways in which new social norms become instantiated. Resonating with the MLP's notion of niches as "protected spaces," Sahakian emphasizes the importance of government support for these initiatives, especially regarding the apportionment of risk, if they are to gain wider relevance in terms of scale and replicability.

In Chapter 4, Emily Huddart Kennedy examines a related case pertaining to the "eat-local" movement. Using social practice theory and extensive empirical research, she describes the political narratives that circulate in the Canadian local food movement and inquires whether they might hold potential for transformative social change. This chapter demonstrates that the most visible figures within the strategic action field of local food increasingly realize that they have to confront the powerful incumbent system of industrial food production if further progress is to be made. Awareness of this challenge is creating tension between a politically astute leadership and others in the movement who, for the most part, hold to strongly rooted twin beliefs that food activism should be apolitical and that any political intent should be expressed through individualized market behavior. Despite the very real prospect of alienating adherents—and thus undermining economic influence—some leaders in the Canadian local food movement evince increasing willingness to engage with the political and ideological domains. They have begun to openly discuss the shortcomings of the dominant agro-food system and, in particular, to shed light on the social inequities it generates. Kennedy's work highlights the process of contestation among actors in this strategic action field and the conscious deployment of interstitial strategies by its frontrunners through the framing of the eat-local movement as a collective political agent.

Chapter 5 by Tom Bauler, Bonno Pel, and Julia Backhaus focuses on social innovation which is a topic that has attracted increasing attention over the last few years among European academics, activists, and policy makers as an important complement to top-down government interventions. The "transformative" variant of this approach challenges dominant institutions, leading to "irreversible, persistent adjustment in societal values, imaginaries and behaviors." Echoing themes discussed elsewhere in this book, Bauler et al.'s contribution examines the vulnerability of these projects to capture by incumbent institutions. The authors report on two cases that seek to promote radical changes in economic and social relations: the International Network of Social and Solidarity Economy (generally known by its French acronym, RIPESS) and the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN).

The ideologically motivated ambitions of the two organizations can be understood as part of what Polanyi referred to as the "second movement." By examining the strategic action fields of each case, Bauler and his colleagues describe the tensions inherent in pursuing transformative social change between, on the one hand, domesticating radical ideas and, on the other hand, remaining ideologically consistent but politically marginal. This is the crucial dilemma for strategists seeking to infiltrate the interstitial spaces of the dominant system. In the RIPESS case, the social and solidarity principles have been successfully translated into specific locally relevant schemes, but mostly in attenuated form. With respect to BIEN, next to strident proponents of basic income are other more pragmatic actors in the broader movement who advocate on behalf of policies such as tax-exemption or flexible social security as useful social experiments that constructively advance the debate. Notably, the chapter's authors observe that although capture leads to

less transformative changes, a certain degree of concerted engagement enables long-term transformative change.

In Chapter 6, Tally Katz-Gerro, Predrag Cvetičanin, and Adrian Leguina demonstrate how a sharp and protracted economic crisis can destabilize prevailing consumption practices and, under certain circumstances, set them on a trajectory toward greater environmental sustainability. They focus specifically on four countries in the greater Balkan region of southeastern Europe (Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia) which have been seriously affected by the economic contraction and subsequent stagnation triggered by the financial meltdown that began in 2007. This chapter synthesizes and builds on a growing body of research on how economic crises variously affect household consumption practices and contribute to the instigation of novel routines. Not surprisingly, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and geographic residency (urban vs. rural) are key factors in understanding the unevenness of these processes, but also salient is each country's developmental condition and degree of integration into the global economy in terms of reliance on consumer-oriented lifestyles. Katz-Gerro and colleagues develop a taxonomy that delineates five strategies for how households cope with the strain of economic crisis and contribute to social change: proactive self-provisioning, passive endurance, consumption reduction, proactive with no consumption curtailment, and mixed forms of adjustment.

The third section of this volume entitled "Post-consumerist transitions" turns attention toward more macro-level analyses of social change. Chapter 7, by Cindy Isenhour, employs an anthropological perspective to argue that economic exchange is tightly bound up with culture, as well as social and political systems and historical circumstances. Considering the recent history of consumer culture, she "understands culture not as a thing but as a process deeply influenced by the material and structural elements of society, the strong ideational pull of past human experiences, and our encounters with new natural, economic, political, or intellectual environments." A transition beyond the culture of consumption therefore requires more than a change in values and practices as is often presupposed by leading critics of contemporary consumerism. Social change at this scale rather requires transformation of the underlying and prefiguring economic, institutional, and political domains. Isenhour then draws on Polanyi's work to hypothesize on the possible trajectory of a shift beyond consumer society. She highlights growing societal tensions around the impoverishment of many socioeconomic groups in the United States, the lack of opportunity that households encounter, the extent of environmental degradation, and the degree to which the costs of growth are externalized on society's most vulnerable populations and future generations—all outcomes that are largely attributable to the hegemony of market fundamentalism in the country over the past forty years. This strain may signal the cresting of the "first movement" and open a political space for the "second movement" which would entail expressions of collective civil outrage and subsequent state-lead institutional changes aimed at constraining or undermining the social and economic structures that enable consumer capitalism.

In Isenhour's rendition, the second movement would make explicit the connections between unregulated consumer capitalism, dramatic inequalities, environmental degradation, and overconsumption, thus bringing together the hitherto relatively separate social justice and ecological movements. Both would draw on already existing strong cultural values in the United States of equal opportunity and justice which may be the only way to challenge powerful neoliberal appeals to freedom and abundance.

Inge Røpke in Chapter 8 focuses on reform of the financial sector which will invariably be important for any transition beyond consumer society. Most recent literature on the sustainability dimensions of finance highlights consumer credit, protections from predatory lending, and pensions and insurance. In contrast, she takes a wider view and stresses the role of the financial system as a driver of unsustainable consumption and, indirectly, a contributing factor to many ecological problems. During the first three decades following World War II, the economic growth model was based on strong linkage between, on the one hand, productivity and wages and, on the other hand, the state's commitment to full employment and public investment. The financial sector was, in a Polanyian sense, embedded in the macroeconomy and served to support it. As the post-war model was supplanted by neoliberal ideology, the economy became increasingly disembedded from society and the financial system lost its attachment to the real economy. Røpke emphasizes that these process entailed struggles over ideology and economic power and were further propelled by the advent of several key technological innovations.

The resulting financialization of the economy enabled increasingly risky speculation while the allure of large profits in the housing market generated incentives in the United States and elsewhere to build ever larger, more luxurious, and thus more profitable homes. Along the way, materials and energy consumption increased upward while easy credit drew even people with modest means into the game. The human suffering and dislocation during the subsequent Great Recession and the successful preclusion of radical reforms by powerful incumbent actors have been amply documented. These developments are eerily reminiscent of the "first movement" described by Polanyi before the outbreak of the two world wars during the twentieth century.

Røpke proposes several reforms of the financial system directed toward increasing systemic resilience, reducing risks and complexity, redirecting credit and investments, and creating disincentives for speculation. The overarching goal of these recommendations is to re-embed the financial system in the macroeconomy. If (and this is a big if) these reforms could be successfully implemented, one could readily envision a future where there is less upward pressure on consumption.

Chapter 9 by Anders Hayden and Jeffrey Wilson discusses the technocratic approach of seeking to induce social change through government adoption of so-called beyond gross domestic product (GDP) indicators of societal progress. Drawing on the Canadian and UK experiences, the authors analyze the reasons for the relative lack of success with formal implementation of various GDP

alternatives. When originally introduced in 1937 by Nobel laureate Simon Kuznets, and first applied by policy makers during following years, GDP reflected the widely shared belief that economic growth was the surest way to improve human well-being. The ongoing and largely unreflective deployment of this particular policy tool is a testament to the remarkable appeal of this narrative. The conclusion that proponents of GDP alternatives derive from this experience is that the most effective strategy for a change in priorities—from economic growth to other more multifaceted understandings of societal progress—is to move to a new set of indicators.

Research by Hayden and Wilson sheds important light on the behavior of actors in this strategic action field and shows how they have been unable to speak with one voice and incapable of influencing the state or mobilizing a popular bottom-up demand for change. The reasons for failure include the multiple and inconsistent visions and agendas advanced by proponents, the difficulty communicating this seemingly powerful idea to actors in other fields, and the political and ideological strength of skeptics and other opponents. While it is obviously not presently possible to determine whether the interventions proposed by the Beyond GDP Movement will in the future become marginally important technocratic policy tools or fizzle out altogether, more transformative scenarios are also plausible. For example, popular social movements built on currently growing societal discontent may usher in a new narrative about human well-being. Alternatively, politicians may find themselves unable to deliver on public expectations of ever-increasing GDP, as some analysts anticipate is emerging to be the case for the developed world (Costanza et al., 2014; Gordon, 2016; see also Irwin, 2016). Under such circumstances, they would be obliged to look to other means to substantiate their political performance. When such interstitial spaces open up, the GDP alternatives may provide a powerful mechanism for affecting social change.

In Chapter 10, Derk Loorbach uses the MLP to explore what types of governance might advance a radical transition beyond consumer society and its commitment to increasing economic growth. He takes as a starting point the historical transformation that brought about the era of modernization—a process that was impelled by the need to address persistent societal problems such as hunger, inadequate healthcare, unevenly allocated political rights, and others. Loorbach conceptualizes this radical systemic social change as the outcome of a "family of transitions" in various subsystems. These lower order transitions share a number of characteristics that constitute the design principles of the modern state: centralized coordination, linear innovation, and inexpensive fossil fuels. A radical transition to transcend consumer society would have to fundamentally challenge this ideology of incumbent institutions, markets, and practices. Loorbach stresses the importance of three emergent forces for change—self-organization, renewable energy, and systemic innovation—and proposes "panarchy governance" as an overarching concept. He defines this model as "the context in which multiple forms or regimes of governance co-exist and develop in an unplanned or centrally coordinated way" and emphasizes that transformative

institutions capable of dealing with diversity, surprise, and uncertainty would compete without prescribing specific solutions. Panarchy, somewhat paradoxically, would require strong government, clear boundaries, guiding sustainability principles, capacity for systematic development of skills, and conditions to enable broad participation.

The final section of the book is entitled "Social change toward post-consumer society" and in Chapter 11 we revisit the full span of this volume to assess what we have learned. We conclude that broad sociocultural changes to transcend consumer society are unlikely to occur without deeper reorganization of the macroeconomy and political priorities. To get the transition under way, there is a great need to develop a coherent "second movement," which might arise to counteract the problems that have been created by prevalent modes of market fundamentalism. While the obstacles to such mobilization are considerable, there are signs that the foundational pillars of consumer society are faltering and it may not be possible for much longer to pacify intensifying civic discontent with neoliberal sloganeering. This book is conceived out of a desire to prepare for that moment.

Notes

1 The word "consume" derives from the Latin *consumere* formed from *con* meaning "altogether" and *sumere* "take up." The OED finds that the first published use of the term "consumer society" appeared in a 1920 book by Norman Hapgood entitled *The Advancing Hour* in which he wrote "The consumer is the principal person considered, and the worker, employee or producer, within the consumer society, has had thus far little special representation." Hapgood was a New York City-based journalist, editor, and author and he helped to promote establishment of the League of Nations. He was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to serve as American ambassador to Denmark and was an early writer to denounce Henry Ford for anti-Semitism.

2 Historians of consumption have variously traced the emergence of contemporary consumerist practices to fourteenth-century China, fifteenth-century Italy, and elsewhere. Mass consumption in these societies, though, tended to be limited to a fairly narrow segment of the population and large-scale material acquisition was not regarded as a central feature of societal organization as became the case in the United States and other countries during the years after 1945. For extremely useful reviews of the international history of consumption, see Stearns (2006) and Trentmann (2016).

3 See also the SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 project which was conducted between January 2011 and December 2012 with financial support from the European Commission's Seventh Framework Funding Scheme. Details at www.sustainable-lifestyles.eu.

4 Although the World Bank and International Monetary Fund are portrayed by Block et al. (2014) as manifestations of the "second movement," they quickly developed into pillars of advancing free-market ideology and practices, especially in developing countries. These developments, and eventual emergence of the World Trade Organization, led to divisive protests in Seattle in 1999 and establishment of a vibrant anti-globalization social movement (often referred to as "Another World is Possible") and creation of the World Social Forum which can be considered as more credible manifestations of the second movement.

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