



THE
BREACHING
EXPERIMENT
E.O.W.

The Breaching Experiment: E.O.W.

Release notes

This album is based on Erik Olin Wright's book *Envisioning Real Utopias*. The book is an example of what Wright called emancipatory social science, which is a brand of science that is explicitly aiming to present and analyze positive societal alternatives, and to theorize the transformation paths of such alternatives.

The album is dedicated to the memory of Erik Olin Wright; to all the social scientists who engage in studies of positive transformations rather than simply analyzing the negative effects of current social orders; and to all the activists who are working every day to forge such alternatives into reality.

Recorded at the Institute for Breaching Experiments in Linköping, Sweden, July-August 2019. All music and lyrics by Christian Ståhl. All instruments performed by Christian Ståhl, with the following exceptions:

- Narration on *Growth Machine* by Doug Gross.
- Narration on *Real Utopias* by Erik Olin Wright, from a lecture given at the ISA World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama, Japan, 2014, used with kind permission from the International Sociological Association.
- Additional narration on *Real Utopias* by Markus der Schlagwerker, Monica Wise, Tom Wise, and Anna-Carin Fagerlind Ståhl.
- Lead guitar by Marcus Borggren on tracks 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

The lyrics for this album are freely imagined fantasies based on the theoretical and empirical arguments given in the book.

Growth Machine summarizes Wright's main critical points against capitalism, and is what can be considered a sociological diagnosis of problems under the current system. Wright is careful to point out that many of these criticisms are true also for other economic systems, which does not make their relevance in relation to capitalism less poignant.

Elements of a Theory of Transformation outlines some of the aspects that any emancipatory social theory need to target, namely social reproduction; limits, gaps and contradictions in current systems; and trajectories for social change. *Conform and Confirm* focuses more closely on social reproduction. *The Compass* takes aim at Wright's claim that any idea of social change needs a direction, which represents an ideal that any change can be assessed in relation to. Further, real utopias, in order to be considered real, needs to be desirable, viable and achievable.

A Reality of Harms serves as an instrumental interlude before the album proceeds toward presenting three potential trajectories for social change. *Rupture* describes the revolutionary ideal of overthrowing the existing system and replacing it entirely with a more desirable order. *Dandelions* present an anarchistic ideal of building alternatives in the cracks of the current system. *The Generic Swede* presents the social democratic vision of an alliance or compromise between capitalism and policies of social equality. *Real Utopias*, finally, presents a summary of Wright's arguments, along with fictive examples of alternatives to capitalism which are currently in existence in different parts of the world.

1. Growth Machine

I only live for where I stand
To work another day
It puts the wages in my hand
To buy my troubles away

I consume another spin
My creativity denied
In a game you cannot win
But it keeps me occupied

Exploit! Exploit!
You'll get your market share
Exploit! Exploit!
I'll tell you what is fair

A war on the organized
It's all against all
Individual and atomized
My voice is a brawl

I'm at the end of the line
Where I feed the machine
Until it breaks my spine
And calls me welfare queen

Capitalism perpetuates eliminable forms of suffering and deficits in individual freedom and autonomy. It blocks the universalization of conditions for human flourishing, and violates principles of social justice. Capitalism has a bias toward consumerism, and the subsequent commodification of life threatens non-commercial values, such as spirituality and art. It is further environmentally destructive, and fuels militarism and imperialism in a world of nation states. In certain ways, capitalism is also inefficient, limits democracy and corrodes community.

What does a future cost?
How many barrels of oil?
You melt the permafrost
With subhuman toil

How many working lives
To build another tank
The stock market hives
Make a happy bank

Exploit! Exploit!
You'll get your market share
Exploit! Exploit!
I'll tell you what is fair

2. Elements of a Theory of Transformation

Look the structure in the eye
See what it makes you do
Shapes you like a bonsai
And makes your field of view

To see beyond the wall
You need to study the cracks
We make a unison brawl
On institutional backs

*We have the key
To unlock change
In the debris
Of the middle range*

Find the unpredictable
And ripen the conditions
Make the system indictable
And seize its positions

We have the key

3. Conform and Confirm

Bred for this world
Raised from the womb
All the thoughts that whirled
Sifted in the classroom

Put me under your spell
Your little protege
A subtle fuel cell
To learn the social play

*A pattern routinised
Designed to reaffirm
A citizen baptized
Conform and confirm*

Slugging through the field
Spreading my cultural cash
I am the orthodox shield
Against the norm backlash

*A pattern routinised
Designed to reaffirm
A citizen baptized
Conform and confirm*

4. The Compass

Somebody held you back
Your passion never nourished
A structural attack
Content but never flourished

If you haven't had a chance
You cannot stand to blame
If you weren't taught the dance
You couldn't make your claim

We're gonna turn it around
Our common social ground
We're gonna turn it around
We are political bound

Desirable
Viable
Achievable

We have our heading
The needle pointing our way
The path we're treading
I say come what may
I say come what may

5. A Reality of Harms

(Instrumental)

6. Rupture

You are nothing like me
Get out of my way
You petty bourgeoisie
Will fear the Labor Day

Your system is broken
Enough thought pollution
The word is spoken
The word is revolution

*Wherever there is profit
You will sell me death
There is a way to stop it*

You see us in the distance
Marching to our drum
We are the resistance
Our beat will make you numb

*Wherever there is profit
You will sell me death
There is a way to stop it*

7. Dandelions

We live inside the gaps
Broken out of the grid
Outside official maps
Keeping ourselves well hid
We don't care about your apps
Wouldn't work for your bid

Capital is flexing its muscles
We can barely see it from here
It's on another flight to Brussels
To sell itself through the blogosphere

*Don't need no influencer
We've got Thoreau
And you can never censor
Our overthrow*

Smell the soil on our hands
It is outside your reach
Where the millionaire stands
We cannot hear him preach
Free your mind, it expands
It's a figure of speech

*Don't need no influencer
We've got Thoreau
And you can never censor
Our overthrow*

8. The Generic Swede

Snap to the master grid
Regression to the mean
I am no conflict kid
Consensus cuisine

*I think we have agreed
I'm the generic Swede*

I'm on a morning flight
To Schiphol, Amsterdam
I've got my headphones right
A business diagram
We have our way of life
Two children and a car
No bitter class-based strife
Revolt seems so bizarre

*A labor-profit creed
A peaceful life indeed
I'm the generic Swede*

We're proud and content
We have our compromise
Collective consent
In welfare to baptize

*I think we have agreed
A peaceful life indeed
I'm the generic*

9. Real Utopias

Voice 1: Participatory Budgeting

We all pay taxes, right? So, we should all have a say, and not just every four years when we elect someone we may or may not think will represent our interests. It's us who live here who know what is needed in the community, whether we need to build a new school or make road repairs. Such projects are decided on a community level, and the budget process for the municipality is open to everyone who wants to have the insight or to express their opinions. This is *real* democracy at work. I haven't heard a single complaint about having to pay taxes since the system was introduced - if anything, people are prepared to contribute more. Since we can see where all the money goes, there's no opportunities for corruption. It makes everyone less suspicious.

Voice 2: Wage-Earner Funds

These days, we, the workers, have a direct say in whatever decisions that are made, and on the direction of the company. Since we're all owners, we all want to do our very best and be on top of things. But it also means that profit isn't all that matters. Of course, we need to balance the books, but making the best possible product and having the best workplace imaginable is considered more important. The capital owners simply have to accept that, since they are not the sole owners anymore. When you think about it, the way it used to be was a bad case of exploitation - the only voice I had was the threat to leave, which would only make another person fill my place. We're all part of the family now, and a family cares for everyone.

This

This is real

These are real utopias

Voice 3: Cooperation Infrastructure

I work in a cooperative, where the main business is running markets for fresh vegetables and groceries. It's a community, not just within the cooperative, but in the whole chain, our cooperation with other cooperatives. We have an infrastructure for production, transportation and front-end stores and markets, which connects through an online platform. The users, or customers, can also access the platform, so it's a place for interaction with them too. It's all very transparent and social in character, where we build trust by helping each other out whenever it's needed. No one is in it for the money. The system as a whole reduces market pressure considerably - we don't have to compete, which makes everything run more smoothly.

Voice 4: Universal Basic Income

Since the universal and unconditional basic income was introduced, I find myself thinking much less about money. Before, I was living on whatever low wage jobs I could find, or on unemployment benefits, since I never got my grades or made it to college. I still hook up with jobs from time to time whenever I need the extra money or when I feel like it, but mostly I do various sorts of community work or social work these days, unpaid. Or I scribble away at my novel which I've been working on for the past year. I think the basic income's main advantage has been security. Especially in a time where the labor market is too precarious to offer that. I know I won't starve, which enables me to pursue all kinds of things that I didn't use to do, since it wouldn't render an income.



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