Berkeley Journal of Sociology

2015

VOLUME 59

BERKELEY JOURNAL
OF SOCIOLOGY

2 0 1 5
VOLUME 59

EDITORIAL

Last year we reinvented *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, not as a forum for traditional academic research articles, but as a platform for writing a "history of the present." We sought to contribute to public debates by utilizing sociological knowledge to contest unquestioned assumptions, complicate common sense, challenge spurious empirics, supply theoretical frameworks, and mount political critiques — in other words, to regard the interpretation of the social world as a constituent element of attempts to change it.

It is in this spirit that we introduce the 2015 volume of the *BJS*. Each piece in the present volume puts forth a critical view of history as it unfolds before our eyes. Contained are articles centered on crucial 21st century dilemmas such as those of the environment, technology, borderlands, and incarceration. Diverse in focus, scope, and perspective, they speak to pressing contemporary problems and encourage us to imagine and work toward alternative futures.

This volume opens with L.A. Kauffman's critique of consensus decision-making. In drawing attention to its religious origins, she simultaneously sheds light on the sources of its appeal and the causes of its inefficacy. Calling for the demise of this activist practice, Kauffman challenges us to scrutinize the means of resistance with the same intensity as our political ends.

Both thematic forums grapple with the material foundations of society in the 21st century, and the concomitant dilemmas and dynamics that have emerged. In the forum on environment and society, Summer Gray and John Foran show how the struggle for democracy and the struggle for sustainability are deeply intertwined in the Maldives, a nation among the most threatened by climate change. Marie Mourad then problematizes dominant approaches to reducing food waste in the United States. Finally, Caleb Scoville argues that in order to address their present water crisis, Californians should confront the historical justifications for the development of the water resources in the state.

The second forum uses Silicon Valley as an empirical referent to address the relationship between society and technology. Eric Giannella shows how blind faith in the technology sector to produce progress results in the displacement of moral judgment. Freddy Foks counters Giannella, arguing that Silicon Valley's most fundamental threat to progressive politics is that we don't know what we are being sold at all. Ben Shestakofsky describes the objective conditions and subjective experiences of work in emerging global software production networks, highlighting often overlooked parallels between past and present technological upheavals.

A history of the present would be incomplete without a consideration of borderlands and its correlates, international migration and displacement. Two photo essays chronicle the experiences of people caught between states. Annelise Hagar documents life and resistance behind and alongside the wall that divides Israel and the West Bank. Divya Sharma draws our attention to the experiences of displaced Hindu families from Pakistan now living in Rajasthan, India. Both deal with the implications of citizenship and statelessness, the relationship between recognition and resources, and the ways in which the marginalized manage to maintain a sense of hope.

Read together, Megan Alpine and Liam Martin's articles are emblematic of both the breadth and unity the present volume. The former is an account of the cultural appeal and political effects of Chicago Public Media's *This American Life*, and the latter is an analysis of prisons as total institutions. Both problematize familiar notions in ultimately concordant ways. Martin's claim that prisons produce rather than correct the criminal class and Alpine's critique of white liberal middle-class representations of difference both shed light on the diverse ways in which social stratification is produced, reproduced, and legitimated.

If Kauffman's opening article sought to reorganize our thinking on the means of resistance, the closing contribution of this volume does much the same for the topic of domination. Franck Poupeau's remarks on Pierre Bourdieu's posthumously published *Sur l'Etat* synthesize the core contributions of this work and its implications for sociological inquiry. With the recent publication of the English translation of this work (*On the State*), we find significant resources for future sociological research and political critique.

For almost sixty years, the *BJS* has published pioneering sociological research, foreshadowed the rise of new areas of inquiry, and offered critical perspectives on mainstream sociology. The present volume represents the continuity of the *BJS* mission and the transformation in means required to enact it. We speak to contemporary issues that sociology should not ignore, but in ways that broaden the interpretive range, imaginative scope, and prospective application beyond the traditional limits of academic research. We are not content to be relegated to the sidelines. The point, after all, is to change the world.

– The *BJS* editors

THE THEOLOGY OF CONSENSUS

by L.A. KAUFFMAN

Consensus decision-making's little-known religious origins shed light on why this activist practice has persisted so long despite being unwieldy, off-putting, and ineffective. L.A. Kauffman traces its troubled history and calls for its demise.

Consensus decision-making, a process in which groups come to agreement without voting, has been a central feature of direct action movements for nearly 40 years, from the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s to the turn-of-the-millennium global justice movement to 2011's Occupy Wall Street. Instead of voting a controversial plan up or down, groups that make decisions by consensus work to refine the plan until everyone finds it acceptable. A primer on the NYC General Assembly website,[1] the structural expression of the Occupy movement, explained, "Consensus is a creative thinking process: When we vote, we decide between two alternatives. With consensus, we take an issue, hear the range of enthusiasm, ideas and concerns about it, and synthesize a proposal that best serves everybody's vision."

Proponents make broad claims for consensus process. They argue that it is intrinsically more democratic than other methods, and that it fosters radical transformation, both within movements and in their relations with the wider world. As described in the action handbook[2] of an Earth Day 1990 action to shut down Wall Street, which included a blockade of the entrances to the Stock Exchange and led to some 200 arrests, "Consensus at its best offers a cooperative model of reaching group unity, an essential step in creating a culture that values cooperation over competition."

Few, though, know the origins of the process, which shed an interesting and surprising light on its troubled real-world workings. Consensus decision-making first entered the world of grassroots activism in the summer of 1976, when a group of activists calling themselves the Clamshell Alliance began a direct-action campaign against the planned Seabrook Nuclear Plant.

Many activists of the time were well aware of what feminist writer Jo Freeman famously called "the tyranny of structurelessness."[3] The tendency in some early 1970s movements to abandon all structure in the name of spontaneity and informality had proven to be not just unworkable but undemocratic. Decisions still happened, but without an agreed-upon process, there was no accountability.

The organizers of "the Clam," as it was often called, were eager to find a process that could prevent the pitfalls of structurelessness, without resorting to hierarchy. Two staffpeople from the American Friends Service Committee, the longstanding and widely admired peace and justice organization affiliated with the Society of Friends, or Quakers, suggested consensus.

By this, they did not mean an informal process of building broad internal agreement of the sort used,

for instance, by the pathbreaking civil rights group SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) in the early 1960s. The consensus process adopted by the Clam was much more formal, and grew directly out of Quaker religious practice. As historian A. Paul Hare explained it, "For over 300 years the members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) have been making group decisions without voting. Their method is to find a 'sense of the meeting' which represents a consensus of those involved. Ideally this consensus is not simply 'unanimity,' or an opinion on which all members happen to agree, but a 'unity': a higher truth which grows from the consideration of divergent opinions and unites them all."[4]

That unity, they believe, has a spiritual source: Within Quaker theology, the process is in effect a manifestation of the divine. A 1943 "Guide to Quaker Practice" explained, "The principle of corporate guidance, according to which the Spirit can inspire the group as a whole, is central. Since there is but one Truth, its Spirit, if followed will produce unity."[5] Consensus process will eventually yield a decision, in other words, because discussing, listening, and waiting will ultimately reveal God's will. Patience will lead to Truth.

This religious core was left unmentioned when consensus decision-making came to the world of secular activism. Quakers do not, as a rule, proselytize their faith, and the two AFSC organizers working on the Seabrook anti-nuclear campaign—Sukie Rice and Elizabeth Boardman—were no exception. They were emphatically not looking to impose their religion on the group.

Consensus process will eventually yield a decision ... because discussing, listening, and waiting will ultimately reveal God's will.

They introduced the decision-making method because it seemed to them a good fit with the larger movement yearning for inclusive and truly democratic forms of decision-making, as well as with the philosophy of nonviolence, in which one tries to understand the heart and motivation of one's opponent. "*Under consensus, the group takes no action that is not consented to by all group members,*" explained a Clamshell action manual, using italics to underscore the point: Everyone's voice would matter.[6]

The process quickly spread among those segments of the activist left that embraced direct action as central to their strategy. Some called it "feminist process," for it seemed to embody feminist ideals of participation, inclusion, and egalitarianism. Rice recalled, "[People] had no idea that Clamshell would be the prototype for all the other groups that took off from there, they had no inkling of that." But by the end of the 1980s, the Clamshell model—fusing consensus decision-making, affinity groups, and a coordinating spokecouncil—was firmly established as the prevailing structure for grassroots direct action organizing in the United States.[7]

But while Rice and Boardman were careful to exclude any explicit theology from their trainings on consensus, something of its religious origin adhered to the process nonetheless – including a deep faith in its rightness,

a certain piety in its implementation, and a tendency to treat claims about consensus as foundational truths. A 1987 handbook produced by two founding members of Food Not Bombs, C.T. Lawrence Butler and Amy Rothstein, *On Conflict and Consensus*, codified the many assertions made on its behalf, central among which was the declaration that "Formal Consensus is the most democratic decisionmaking process." This statement of faith, presented as a statement of fact, could be heard in nearly every movement that adopted the process over the ensuing years. The conviction that consensus would produce more democratic outcomes than any other method was repeated like a catechism. "The goal of consensus," the handbook continued, "is not the selection of several options, but the development of one decision which is the best for the whole group. It is synthesis and evolution, not competition and attrition."[8]

In practice, the process often worked well in small-group settings, including within the affinity groups that often formed the building blocks for large actions. At the scale of a significant mobilization, though, the process was fraught with difficulty from the start. At the 1977 Seabrook blockade, where consensus was first employed in a large-scale action setting, the spokescouncil spent nearly all the time before being ordered to leave the site bogged down in lengthy discussions of minor issues. A similar dynamic played out in Occupy Wall Street almost a quarter century later, where the general assembly proved ill-equipped to address the day-to-day needs of the encampment. Though *On Conflict and Consensus* assured organizers that "Formal Consensus

is not inherently time-consuming," experience suggested otherwise. The process favored those with the most time, as meetings tended to drag out for hours; in theory, consensus might include everyone in all deliberations, but in practice, the process greatly favored those who could devote limitless time to the movement – and made full participation difficult for those with ordinary life commitments outside of their activism.

Movement after movement found, moreover, that the process tended to give great attention and weight to the concerns of a few dissenters. In the purest form of consensus, a block by one or two individuals could bring the whole group to a screeching halt. Sometimes, that forced groups to reckon with important issues that the majority might otherwise ignore, which could indeed be powerful and transformative. But it also consistently empowered cranks, malcontents, and even provocateurs to lay claim to a group's attention and gum up the works, even when groups adopted modifications to strict consensus that allowed super-majorities to override blocks.

Consensus consistently empowered cranks, malcontents, and even provocateurs to lay claim to a group's attention and gum up the works...

Consensus can easily be derailed by those acting in bad faith. But it's also a process that is ill-equipped to deal with disagreements that arise from competing interests rather than

simple differences of opinion. The rosy idea embedded in the process that unity and agreement can always be found if a group is willing to discuss and modify a proposal sufficiently is magical thinking, divorced from the real-world rough-and-tumble of political negotiation.

Groups hold on to ingrained practices in part because they help reinforce their sense of identity. The complex liturgy of consensus process—from the specialized language and roles ("facilitators," "vibes watchers," "progressive stack," and more) to the elaborate hand signals ("up-twinkles," "down-twinkles," and the like)—has functioned as much to signal and consolidate a sense of belonging to a certain tradition as it has to move decisions forward. And because consensus process was marked from the start not just by its religious origins but also by its cultural ones,

that tradition has been imbued with whiteness. The Clamshell Alliance was, after all, an overwhelmingly white organization, bringing together white residents of the New Hampshire seacoast with white Quakers and an array of mostly white radicals from Boston and beyond for action in a white rural region.

Few of the groups that would adopt consensus in the decades to come would be quite as starkly monochromatic as the Clam, and the use of the process is hardly sufficient to explain the reasons for racial divisions within activist communities. But time and again, activists of color found the use of consensus in majority-white direct action circles to be alienating and off-putting, and white activists' reverent insistence on the necessity and superiority of the process has exacerbated difficulties in multiracial collaboration and alliance-building.

During the campus anti-apartheid movement of the mid-1980s, for instance, the use of consensus drove a major wedge at UC-Berkeley between the mostly white Campaign Against Apartheid and United People of Color, a multiracial student group. UPC organizer Patricia Vattuone explained at the time, "We felt it was undemocratic to have these long meetings—four hours, eight hours— when, I have things to do, other students are not only active in their own organizations, but can't spend hours and hours and hours on Sproul, and that was the only way you could have input or provide leadership."[9] UPC proposed shifting to a representative decision-making method – but CAA, believing consensus to be intrinsically better and more radical, refused. Two other UPC activists, Sumi Cho and Robert Westley, later wrote, "As a result, planning meetings and political actions ... became virtually devoid of student-of-color participation in the name of radical hyperdemocratic (consensus-only) decision-making."[10]

Two decades later, similar though less acute tensions arose when white activists streamed to New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to participate in the Common Ground relief effort "with a preconceived notion that collectives use consensus as the decision-making process," according to participants Sue Hilderbrand, Scott Crow, and Lisa Fithian. Local black activists preferred a different course of action, in which "the group defines itself and establishes the decision-making process collectively," particularly since "the consensus process brought in by white activists confused many community members, who were often unfamiliar with the 'rules' of participation."[11]

The irony here, of course, is that activists have adopted consensus as part of a larger aspiration to prefigure the world they hope to create – presumably not one as racially bounded as the practice of consensus process has been. There's long been a deep yearning at the heart of that prefigurative project for a kind of community and connection otherwise missing from many movement participants' lives. In the wake of Occupy Wall Street, where consensus process played out with such dysfunction, Jonathan M. Smucker considered what role this yearning might have played in skewing movement practice:

> *I began to wonder if the heightened sense of an integrated identity was "the utopia" that many of my fellow participants were seeking. What if the thing we were missing, the thing we were lacking—the thing we longed for most—was a sense of an integrated existence in a cohesive community, i.e., an* intact lifeworld*? What if this longing was so potent that it could eclipse the drive to affect larger political outcomes?*[12]

The prime appeal of consensus process for 40 years has been its promise to be more profoundly democratic than other methods. This promise has been repeated again and again like dogma. But let's face it: the real-world evidence is shaky at best. Perhaps the reason why it has endured so long in activist circles despite its evident practical shortcomings has something to do with the theological character it carried over from Quaker religious practice, the way it addresses a deep desire for transcendent group unity and "higher truth."

If the forty-year persistence of consensus has been a matter of faith, surely the time has now come for apostasy. Piety and habit are bad reasons to keep using a process whose benefits are more notional than real. Outside of small-group settings, consensus process is unwieldy, off-putting, tiresome, and ineffective. Many inclusive, accountable alternative methods are available for making decisions democratically. If we want to change the world, let's pick ones that work.

L.A. Kauffman has been a grassroots strategist and movement journalist for more than 30 years. Her history of direct-action protest in the United States will be published by Verso Books in 2016.

1 http://www.nycga.net/group-documents/consensus-basics/

2 http://www.scribd.com/doc/220344101/Earth-Day-Wall-Street-Action-Handbook

3 http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm

4 A. Paul Hare, "Group Decision by Consensus: Reaching Unity in the Society of Friends," *Sociological Inquiry* Vol. 43, No. 1 (1973), pp. 75-84. On the adoption of consensus by the Clamshell Alliance, see Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 63-68. On the complex history of the informal consensus process used within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, see Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 55-119.

5 Quoted in Hare, p.75.

6 Seabrook '78: A Handbook for the Occupation/Restoration Beginning June 24, p.13.

7 Telephone interview with Sukie Rice, May 2, 2002.

8 C.T. Lawrence Butler and Amy Rothstein, *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decisionmaking* (Food Not Bombs Publishing, 1987, second edition, 1991), p.5.

9 Patricia Vattuone quoted in Richard C. Bock's 1988 documentary film, *From Soweto to Berkeley.*

10 Sumi Cho and Robert Westley, "Historicizing Critical Race Theory's Cutting Edge: Key Movements That Performed the Theory," in Francisco Valdes, Jerome McCristal Culp, and Angela P. Harris, eds., *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), p. 37.

11 Sue Hilderbrand, Scott Crow, and Lisa Fithian, "Common Ground Relief," in South End Press Collective, ed., *What Lies Beneath: Katrina, Race, and the State of the Nation* (Boston: South End Press, 2007).

12 Smucker, Jonathan Matthew. 2014. "Can Prefigurative Politics Replace Political Strategy?" *Berkeley Journal of Sociology,* 58:74–82

FORUM: ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION ■

by
MARTIN EIERMANN

Sociology has always been a project of denaturalization – an attempt to cast seemingly self-evident truths about the world as contingencies, and to regard them as historically and culturally specific social facts. Increasingly, this project includes studies of the natural environment itself: By framing events like the Chicago heatwave of 1995 or Hurricane Katrina as social disasters rather than environmental catastrophes, sociologists have drawn attention to social structures that expose particular communities to the risks of heat and flooding, mitigate the impact of weather events, and shape collective responses.

Direct transformations of the natural environment—the damming of rivers, the raising of levees, the digging of mines, and the clearing of forests—constitute some of the most overt attempts to render nature useful to, and compatible with, the demands of modern industrial societies. Yet the intersection between the social world and the natural environment is frequently more discreet. In their article on global warming and environmental politics, John Foran and Summer Gray argue that responses to climate change are necessarily inflected with political agendas. Perhaps this is especially evident in the Maldives, one of the world's countries most affected by climate change, where the struggle for sustainability is directly linked to the struggle for democracy. It remains an uphill battle: Despite the urgency of positive change, democratic and environmental reform efforts are constantly—and sometimes violently—thwarted. As the case of the Maldives illustrates, different relationships to the natural environment are rendered possible, or foreclosed, within the political realm.

Caleb Scoville brings another perspective to his analysis of water politics in California. While years of drought have left much of the state with severe water shortages and have pitted farmers, fishermen, environmentalists and suburban residents against each other, Scoville seeks to locate the roots of the current controversy at a much deeper level. As he argues, water politics in California is historically rooted in religiously infused discourses about the civilization of "untamed nature". By tracing the paradigm of "reclamation" throughout California's history, he illustrates the extent to which our inherited relationship with water permeates contemporary conceptions of what is possible, desirable, and natural. It is one thing, Scoville argues, to debate the proper distribution of natural resources, but another thing to question the discourses that underpin their organized extraction.

This is where Marie Mourad's article picks up the thread. More than one third of food in the United States currently goes to waste even as an increasing number of families suffer from inadequate access to food. According to Mourad, common responses have thus far focused on the consumer's responsibility to recycle and, to a lesser degree, on companies' duties to redistribute excess food. Often exempt from critical analysis is the system of over-production that is motivated by commitments to fully stocked shelves and year-round availability of seasonal products and sustained through government subsidies. By questioning these underlying commitments, Mourad opens up a critique of capitalist systems of agricultural production that impose a market logic on our relationship to the natural environment.

Together the three articles push us to reconsider commonsensical conceptions of "nature", and to rethink the intersection of social life and the natural environment.

CLIMATE INJUSTICE: THE REAL HISTORY OF THE MALDIVES

by
SUMMER GRAY
and
JOHN FORAN

In one of the world's countries most affected by climate change, the struggle for sustainability is directly linked to the struggle for democracy. It remains an uphill battle: Despite the urgency of positive change, reform efforts are constantly—and sometimes violently—thwarted.

There's nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. The alternative is suicide. You just have to keep going. And you will fall. You'll have your setbacks. But you must get up and you must keep going.

– Mohamed Nasheed, April 2014, interview[1]

The Maldives—a tiny island state without a single mountain or hill—may seem to be a world away. But what has been taking place there is a fight for the future, for everyone's future, a fight waged within a war that we are all living through. It's a fight for democracy, in the first instance, an old fight like countless others where a population stands up against lies, bullying, greed, power, and history. It's also a fight for human rights against a backdrop of torture and repression. And perhaps most urgently, it's a quiet fight on a vast front that concerns life as we know it: humanity's daunting, dogged struggle to face up to the ultimate existential threat of climate change.

What follows is a reading of the recent history of a too little known place where the battle for democracy and the right to exist has united people in a poetic stance against injustice.

After nine centuries of rule by a Muslim sultanate, the Maldives became an independent republic in 1968, only to be ruled by Maumoon Gayoom from 1978 to 2008, an authoritarian, quasi-dictatorial president who displayed a smiling face to the world. As *The Economist* put it in 2013, he was "an autocratic moderniser who made the Maldives the wealthiest corner of South Asia by promoting high-end bikini-and-booze tourism (usually on atolls some distance away from the solidly Muslim local population)."[2]

When a tsunami struck the Maldives in late 2004, Gayoom was forced by international pressure to permit free elections in return for assistance. The young journalist Mohamed Nasheed, who had been imprisoned for protesting the lack of democracy, returned from exile in 2008 to stand as the presidential candidate of the newly established Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP). Under the slogan "Aneh Dhivehi Raaje" ("The Other Maldives"), Nasheed's party evoked the defining slogan of the global justice movement, "Another World is Possible."

photo credit: CC-BY 2.0 []

Nasheed won the presidency on October 28, 2008 by uniting the various oppositional parties. His rise from prison to the presidency in the country's first democratic elections parallels that of Nelson Mandela in other circumstances. But just how different those circumstances would prove to be would become more apparent during his short term in power, which bears a striking resemblance to the tragic outcome of the Arab Spring in Egypt to date.

THE NASHEED ERA AND THE POLITICS
OF CLIMATE JUSTICE, 2008-2012

Nasheed and the MDP never commanded a parliamentary majority. Despite this, his administration made good on its promise to improve life conditions, delivering free healthcare, a national university, pensions for the elderly, social housing, improved transportation among the islands, and civil liberties such as

freedom of expression and security of one's person unheard of in the Maldivian context. He would deliver even more on a global stage.

On March 15, 2009 Nasheed declared Maldives' goal of becoming the world's first carbon-neutral country after the UK premiere of Franny Armstrong's timely film about climate change, *The Age of Stupid*. As he argued, "for us swearing off fossil fuels is not only the right thing to do, it is in our economic self-interest…. Pioneering countries will free themselves from the unpredictable price of foreign oil; they will capitalize on the new green economy of the future, and they will enhance their moral standing giving them greater political influence on the world stage."[3]

The world took note when the Maldivian Democratic Party staged a symbolic underwater cabinet meeting just before the historic UN climate summit in Copenhagen. After a few quick diving lessons, Nasheed and his ministers met six meters below sea level and signed a document calling on all countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, saying that "we must unite in a world wide effort to halt further temperature rises. Climate change is happening, and it threatens the rights and security of everyone on Earth. We have to have a better deal. We should be able to come out with an amicable understanding that everyone survives. If Maldives can't be saved today, we do not feel that there is much of a chance for the rest of the world." He added: "What do we hope to achieve? We hope not to die. I hope I can live in the Maldives and raise my grandchildren here."[4]

Two months later in Copenhagen, Nasheed and his Minister of the Environment Mohamed Aslam carried the banner of the frontline island nations most threatened by climate change. When the two arrived in Copenhagen they went not to the UN summit but straight to a gathering of young climate activists who greeted Nasheed by unfurling a banner that read "You Are Our Global President."

In a short period of time the Maldives had changed the discourse around climate action away from the common framing of the global south as climate victims. They had rewritten this narrative to show leadership on climate solutions. "You can ask somebody to stop something," Aslam explained in an interview, "but they won't stop it until there's an alternative to that. So our way of doing this is we wanted to talk more about the alternatives." In Nasheed's view: "We felt that everyone should be responsible for climate change…. The United Nations Conference was becoming an endless talking shop and without any substance coming out from that and it's still looking like that. So I think politicians need to sit down and not get the civil servants and the bureaucrats talking about it all the time. Leaders must lead."

Climate justice is the Maldives's long-term intergenerational struggle; it must be addressed for its fragile democracy to matter. As Nasheed states in the movie *The Island President* (2011), which chronicles his efforts to raise awareness about the effects of climate change on the Maldives: "we view climate change in the context of democracy. Without democracy, you cannot enact. The former dictatorship wasted $200 million because they gave the contracts to the wrong people." In the Maldives, the struggle against climate change depends on the success of the democratic project.

THE COUP

Pro-Gayoom parties and key members of the elite never accepted the results of the 2008 election, and through the whole of Nasheed's tenure waged a dirty campaign to regain power. On January 16, 2012, Nasheed ordered the arrest of Judge Abdulla Mohamed, Chief Justice of the Criminal Court, who repeatedly refused to prosecute corruption cases against the elite, including Gayoom himself. In response, Nasheed's opposition launched a chain of protests, whipped up by conservatives and Islamists who had flourished in the more open political atmosphere of the Nasheed administration.[5] Nasheed's efforts to establish new standards and qualifications for judges would return to haunt him.

On the morning of February 7, 2012, the world's climate justice and global justice communities woke in shock to the news that Nasheed had "resigned," and that vice president Mohamed Waheed was now the President. Within hours, Nasheed and his supporters were seen on the local airwaves being brutally beaten in the streets for protesting what they called a coup d'etat. Nasheed's supporters in the global climate justice community quickly voiced their concern. Mark Lynas, Nasheed's climate consultant, wrote in the *Guardian*: "The deposed president is famous for his efforts to fight climate change, but his lifelong struggle has been for democracy—and now I fear for his safety."[6]

Two weeks after the coup, the pushback in the streets and on global airwaves forced the new government to announce the formation of a Commission of National Inquiry (CONI) chaired by Gayoom's former Defence Minister, Ismail Shafeeu, to investigate whether the transfer of power had been legal. The transparent hypocrisy of a government investigating its own legitimacy prompted the British Commonwealth to pressure for the addition of independent experts. Unsurprisingly, the report's findings supported the new government. The Commission argued that "the change of president in the Republic of Maldives on 7 February 2012 was legal and constitutional.... The resignation of President Nasheed was voluntary and of his own free will. It was not caused by any illegal coercion or intimidation."[7]

In the words of Mohamed Nasheed, "now we have a very awkward situation and in many ways very comical, where toppling a government by brutal force is taken as a reasonable course of action ... accepted as long as it comes with an 'appropriate' narrative."[8] Still, the United States and Britain welcomed the report and recommended that Nasheed and the MDP look ahead to the 2013 presidential elections.

The problems with the report are numerous, and there are two independent legal evaluations which unequivocally find it deficient. The first of these, conducted by Sri Lankan jurists, clearly rejects the findings, concluding that "CONI could not have reasonably satisfied itself on objective criteria ... that President Nasheed resigned of his own free will."[9] The authors of a second independent report find that "President Nasheed resigned as President of the Maldives under duress, and ... his resignation cannot be considered voluntary or otherwise 'in accordance with law' ... To the extent that a 'coup d'etat' can be defined as the 'illegitimate overthrow of a government', we must therefore also consider the events as a coup d'etat."[10]

THE 2013 ELECTIONS AND THEIR AFTERMATH

In response to the CONI setback, the Maldivian Democratic Party prudently focused its energies on winning the 2013 presidential elections. They were generally seen as a popular referendum on competing visions for the future of the country. As MDP spokesperson Hamid Abdul Ghafoor put it: "This is a clash between the past and the future, and we are the future."[11]

The MDP campaign was based on four main development initiatives: the introduction of agribusiness, development of a local tourism industry that would put "wealth within reach of all locals for the first time", mariculture business, and the so-called "empowered worker initiative", which would use $4.6 billion in tax revenues to generate 51,000 jobs, build 20,000 housing units, provide assistance to single parents and persons with disabilities, and make educational loans available to students.[12]

photo credit: CC-BY 2.0 DYING REGIME

In contrast to Nasheed's sustainable development plan, Yameen Gayoom, the half-brother of the former autocratic president, pledged to create jobs by pursuing oil exploration. At his campaign launch, he proclaimed that "it is very possible oil might be found in the Maldives."[13] Another candidate, the billionaire tycoon Gasim Ibrahim, also campaigned with the promise to drill for oil, saying "It is very wrong to turn ourselves away from a blessing given by Allah … oil can be extracted safely without causing any harm to [the] tourism sector…. If I get to be the President, it would be the first thing my government would turn towards."[14]

The development of an oil industry in the Maldives would reverse Nasheed's declaration to become carbon neutral by 2020, as well as Mohamed Waheed's 2012 declaration during the Rio 20+ UN Conference on Sustainable Development, where he pledged that the Maldives would "become the first country to be a marine reserve."[15]

Nasheed's support was genuinely grass-roots. Azra Naseem, who runs an oppositional news site and supported the MDP campaign, recounts a campaign stop where he asked a group of women why they liked Nasheed so much: "He's like one of us. He treats us like equals.... He visits all the houses, rich and poor alike."[16]

On election day, Nasheed and the MDP received 45.45 percent of the vote. Sitting president Mohamed Waheed, who had come to power in the coup, suffered a humiliating rebuke with just 5.1 percent. The half-brother of the former autocratic president received 25 percent of the vote, to billionaire Gasim Ibrahim's 24. A run-off between the top two candidates would be needed.

Scheduled for September 28, 2013, the run-off augured a clash of "people power" against the power of money, intimidation, and violence. The fact that the opposition vote had been split three ways was a distinct advantage for the MDP. But since Nasheed had failed to clear the fifty percent hurdle, the likelihood that all his opponents would ask their supporters to vote for the one still in the running on the second round augured a dangerous electoral math for his campaign.

The events that followed added more drama. The week after the election, Gasim's Jumhooree Party filed legal papers alleging significant fraud, a case which the Supreme Court, packed with appointees from the days of the dictatorship, deemed sufficiently serious to investigate.[17] The lawsuit was an attempt to derail the electoral process, to annul the initial round of voting, and to allow Waheed and Gasim back into the political arena.

The evidence was flimsy at best. The Jumhooree Party presented a list of 568 people that were allegedly dead but still appeared on electoral rolls, and another list of 172 people whose names seemed to appear more than once. But as the Electoral Commission found, only seven of the 568 people actually appeared on the rolls, and four of them were still alive. The 172 allegedly double-counted voters turned out to be separate pairs of people who shared the same name.[18]

Despite overwhelming endorsement as clean and fair by every international observer, a narrow majority of the country's Supreme Court ruled that the September 7 first-round presidential elections were null and void. Neither the MDP nor the Electoral Commission were allowed to set foot in the courtroom for final arguments in the case.

When the first round was finally replayed on October 12, the results were nearly identical: Nasheed was first but under fifty percent, and Yameen edged out Gasim once again by a small but clear margin for the second spot on the final ballot. But for a public growing weary of the charade, the process was taking a toll.

In the run-up to the final round, attacks on Nasheed alleged his lack of respect for Islam. The overall political perspective of the Islamist Adhaalath Party comes across well in a speech by Sheikh Abdulla: "We came forward to save this Nation from Nasheed's clutches … Maldivians, have courage. I am ready to make any sacrifice with my body and my money to bring you Maldivians a happy and prosperous life. We will not give in to anyone."[19] At another political rally, an anti-MDP candidate announced that "we will not allow Mohamed Nasheed to return to power even if he wins the election."[20] Behind it all lay the threat of street violence that had already preceded the previous coup.

Meanwhile, it was entirely unclear whether the two main opposition parties could form a viable coalition, despite their shared determination to prevent a Nasheed win at any cost. As Azra Naseem reported: "Former military man Mohamed Fayaz, one of the main coup-enablers who put his support behind Gasim, advised him to join Yameen following the election results. What else was there for Gasim to do? Gasim responded with unbridled anger, swore at [Fayaz], and told him: 'I would rather walk into the sea with my wives and children than join Yameen'."[21]

When the results of the second run-off election came in, they were heart-breaking to Nasheed and the MDP: The two right-wing parties threw their votes together at the very last minute to win as Nasheed again came up just short of the 50 percent needed to regain his presidency. He won all major cities, but only gained 48.6 percent of the vote. As the journalist Yameen Rasheed wrote "[I]t is clear from the results that there is still another Maldives. A more isolated, isolationist, xenophobic and paranoid Maldives that is still susceptible to dangerous emotive politics."[22]

In March of 2014, the MDP came up short once more in the parliamentary elections sealing the MDP's decline. Voter turnout was seventy-seven percent, down from the eighty-eight percent in the presidential elections, perhaps reflecting the wariness of the democratic movement's base. As Mohamed Aslam remarked in an interview, "people were very uncertain of what was happening and if there would be a fair election held."

Ibrahim Ismail, who had led the drafting of the country's democratic constitution in 2008, had this to say about the elections: "I believe the election is a farce—while there was a free vote, it was not a fair vote. Government influences were used, voters were threatened, and people were bribed openly ... I think with these results, the constitution which protects minority rights and fundamental liberties will be suspended. It will be put on the shelf."[23] Hamid Abdul Ghafoor, the MDP's International Spokesperson, came to a similar conclusion but in a gloomier register: "The legitimisation of the 7/2/12 coup d'etat has reversed extensive democratic gains Maldives made post-2008. A cold winter has set on democracy in tropical Maldives."[24]

"A SAD, SAD DAY FOR THE MALDIVES"

In the months following Nasheed's electoral defeat, the newly formed right-wing coalition proved unstable. Tensions pushed Gasim and his Jumhooree Party to renounce Yameen and form an alliance with the MDP in order to bring attention to the ongoing "destruction of the Maldivian Constitution."[25] Gasim complained of physical threats and deliberate setbacks aimed at his businesses. In a live broadcast from Malé on the evening of February 5, 2015, Gasim addressed his comments directly to Yameen: "You were elected with my support. I can guarantee you that you will not receive 51 percent of Maldivian votes. Forget it."[26]

Weeks later, Nasheed was forcibly arrested and ordered to stand trial for charges that had been looming in the background since his 2012 decision to arrest Judge Abdulla Mohamed. On February 22, 2015, Maldivian police dragged Nasheed through the streets after reportedly pushing him to the ground to stop him from

speaking to journalists.[27] By March 13, 2015, he was charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and sentenced to thirteen years in prison.[28]

pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote on and on and loren ipsum pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote on and on and loren ipsum pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote on and

Days before his conviction, Nasheed's team of lawyers quit in protest, suggesting that the trial was a ploy to end Nasheed's political career.[29] Amnesty International urged that the trial was deeply flawed from the beginning: "Rather than responding to international calls to strengthen the impartiality of the judiciary the government of the Maldives has proceeded with this sham trial for political reasons."[30] Grasping the severity of this latest blow to democracy, MDP spokesperson Shuana Aminath reported: "Nothing good will come out of this. It's a sad, sad, sad day for the Maldives."[31]

A large outpouring of support for Nasheed followed. Protesters began to fill the streets daily, demanding Nasheed's release. On May 1, 2015—a symbolic day for social justice—Nasheed's supporters from across the nation's 1200 islands gathered in solidarity. As Azra Naseem observed, the demonstrators desired to be heard: "They want to rise up against the government that has refused to listen to any of their multitude of woes and worries ... promises that have been unfulfilled ... islands that have been sold to shady businesses; lagoons that have been signed away for centuries; atolls handed to foreign governments for unknown purposes ... and lives that have become too joyless and filled with fear to enjoy."[32]

The May Day protesters were met with tear gas, batons, and handcuffs. Nearly two hundred arrests were made, including a handful of key opposition leaders. Prompted by the unfolding chaos, US Secretary of State John Kerry made a public statement in which he acknowledged that "there are troubling signs that democracy is under threat in the Maldives."[33] However, nearly three years after the CONI report, in which the US supported the initial transfer of power, even this weak affirmation of support for democracy rings hollow.

The pain of political repression and the loss of democracy in the Maldives cannot be understood apart from the absence of one its rising voices. Months before Nasheed's arrest, fears had already mounted when 28-year-old Ahmed Rilwan Abdulla went missing on August 8, 2014 following a series of ominous threats.[34] A well regarded journalist, Rilwan was known for covering stories related to human rights issues, including religious radicalism and corruption (not unlike Nasheed in his younger days). Over a year later, Rilwan's disappearance remains unresolved and shrouded in suspicion. The Human Rights Commission of the Maldives has indicated that authorities have not done enough to find Rilwan.[35] In a 2015 letter addressed to Yameen, the international Committee to Protect Journalists (CJP) wrote: "If no independent investigation is launched into Rilwan's disappearance, Maldives risks joining the ranks of violent or repressive states like Syria, Mexico, and Russia, where journalists go missing and anti-press violations are at a high."[36]

MALDIVIAN FUTURES AND GLOBAL IMAGINARY

The challenges that Nasheed and the MDP have faced in the Maldives are similar to those faced by communities everywhere on the front lines of climate change. Injustice is hardly poetic. It is too often the normal way of the world, with the deck stacked against both social and climate justice. The locked-in nature of the hard fossil fuel energy path, the fragility of democracies led by authoritarian modernizers, the opening wide of nations caught in the clutches of neoliberal global capital—all of these portend a dystopic near-term future for the Maldives and for most of the world.

As the clock ticks for meaningful action on climate change, all eyes are on Paris. In December 2015, 196 countries will meet there to sign a global agreement. Might the balance of forces now tilted so heavily toward the fossil fuel corporations and their governments, and thus to the climate catastrophe that their business-as-usual attitude is locking in, shift—at least to some degree—back in the direction dictated by science and championed by the majority of the world's population? Without Nasheed's voice at the negotiations, this long-shot scenario seems even more unlikely.

In Paris, Maldives Ambassador Ahmed Sareer will lead the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a coalition of low-lying coastal countries. However, as Mark Lynas argues, the presence of the Maldives at such meetings contradicts the moral imperative of climate justice: "Should demands from these countries for billions of dollars' worth of climate aid be heeded, when minimum standards of good governance are ignored and human rights are trampled? ... Human rights and climate change cannot be traded off against each other."[37] If the Maldives is to be saved, what kind of Maldives will it be? Will it be Nasheed's "Aneh Dhivehi Raaje" ("The Other Maldives") or the one that imprisoned him?

Lost for the present in the Maldives is a difficult but clear-eyed path toward low-carbon sustainable development and a functioning democracy. Yet one wonders what might happen in 2018, when another round of presidential elections takes place. Will Nasheed be able to run? Perhaps a new leader will emerge. Reflecting on a lifetime of activism, Nasheed imparts the following words of wisdom to future generations: "After all this, some Maldivians told me that they felt despair over the future of their country. I responded: 'Don't presume that this is the end of the book. We're only in the middle of the story. Don't be so hasty as to predict how the story will end'."[38]

This is an epic and consequential struggle, and some future day, the people will choose again. It might just be the break that they, and all who are committed to the global fight for climate justice, need.

Summer Gray is a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow at UC Santa Cruz. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology at UC Santa Barbara in December 2014. For her dissertation, Gray studied the expansion of seawalls throughout the world to re-examine the causes, dynamics, and consequences of sea change for communities in Guyana and the Maldives. Gray recently produced a short film on the Maldives entitled Gone Before the Wave. *The film is available at www.maldivesculture.com.*

John Foran is a professor of sociology at UC Santa Barbara, where his current areas of intense focus and interest include the climate crisis, 21st-century movements for radical social change, and sustainable development or "building better futures." Foran is engaged in a long-term participatory action project with the global climate justice movement, with Dr. Richard Widick, with whom he co-directs the International Institute of Climate Action & Theory and is a founding member of the Climate Justice Project.

1 All interviews in this essay were done by Summer Gray, on two research trips to the Maldives in March-April 2013 and March 2014.

2 *The Economist.* 2013. "Yellow Fever: The Maldives Goes to the Polls" (August 31), http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21584375-presidential-elections-bring-chance-start-afresh-yellow-fever

3 Fielding, Nicholas. 2012. "The Maldives under Invasion - Under Threat, Under Water - Societies at Risk (December 20), http://underthreatunderwater.blogspot.com/2012/12/blog-post.html

4 Lang, Olivia. 2009. "Maldives Leader in Climate Change Stunt." BBC News (October 17), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8312320.stm

5 Naseem, Azra and Mushfique Mohamed. 2014. "The Long Road from Islam to Islamism: A Short History." Dhivehi Sitee (May 30), http://www.dhivehisitee.com/religion/islamism-maldives/

6 Lynas, Mark. 2012. "Mohamed Nasheed's overthrow is a blow to the Maldives and democracy" (February 7), http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/feb/07/mohamed-nasheed-overthrow-maldives

7 CONI [Commission of National Inquiry]. 2012. Report of the Commission of National Inquiry, Maldives (August 30), http://www.maldivesculture.com/pdf_files/CONI-Report-2012.pdf

8 Tisdall, Simon. 2012. "Maldives: Coni report causes predictable outrage" (September 9, 2012), http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/sep/09/maldives-coni-report-predictable-outrage9 Perera, Anita, Senany Dayaratne, and Shibly Aziz. 2012. A Legal Review of the Report of the Commission of National Inquiry [CONI] Maldives (September 5), Colombo, Sri Lanka, http://minivannews.com/files/2012/09/CONI-A-Legal-Analysis.pdf

10 Henriksen, Anders, Rasmus Kieffer-Kristensen, and Jonas Parello-Plesner. 2012. "Arrested Democracy: The legality under International Law of the 2012 transfer of power in the Maldives and alleged human rights violations perpetrated by Maldivian security forces"(August 16), http://www.maldivesculture.com/pdf_files/Report_on_the_Maldives-Coup-Henriksen.pdf

11 Naahee, Mohamed. 2013. "MDP appoints 1000 election observers as campaign spreads across country" (August 15), http://minivannews.com/politics/mdp-appoints-1000-election-observers-as-campaign-spreads-across-country-62437

12 Naseem, Azra. 2013. "Island politics: on the MDP campaign trail" (May 29), http://minivannews.com/politics/island-politics-on-the-mdp-campaign-trail-58668

13 Malone, Leah. 2013. "PPM would pursue oil exploration, foreign investment: Abdulla Yameen." (January 15) Minivan News, http://minivannews.com/politics/ppm-would-pursue-oil-exploration-foreign-investment-abdulla-yameen-51214

14 Naahee, Mohamed. 2013a. "Presidential Prospect Gasim Ibrahim Also Backs Drilling for Oil." (February 4, 2013) Minivan News, http://minivannews.com/politics/presidential-prospect-gasim-ibrahim-also-backs-drilling-for-oil-52330

15 The President's Office. 2012. "President Dr Mohamed Waheed's statement at the 1st Plenary Meeting at Rio+20, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development" (June 20, 2012), http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=12&dcid=7556

16 Naseem, Azra. 2013. "Island politics: on the MDP campaign trail" (May 29), http://minivannews.com/politics/island-politics-on-the-mdp-campaign-trail-58668

17 Nasheed has written retrospectively of the failure to remove corrupt unqualified judges that "like giving Dracula the keys to the blood bank, this decision gave unfettered power to a judiciary that is rotten to the core," seeing it as a problem that plagued Egypt as well after the ouster of Mubarak: Mohamed Nasheed, "Build a Party, Beware of Judges, and Never Give Up: Lessons from a lifetime of political activism" (June 28, 2014), http://minivannews.com/politics/comment-build-a-party-beware-of-judges-never-give-up-87743

18 Naahee, Mohamed. 2013b. "High Court holds first hearing of Jumhooree Party's case against Election Commission" (September 15), http://minivannews.com/politics/high-court-holds-first-hearing-of-jumhooree-party%E2%80%99s-case-against-election-commission-65569

19 Naseem, Azra. 2013a. "'Rigged Vote! Rigged Vote!': Sheikh Imrant" (September 14), http://www.dhivehisitee.com/election-2013/

20 Naseem, Azra. 2013b. "Yesterday, on the Sunny Side of Life," http://www.dhivehisitee.com/election-2013/latest-news/yesterday/

21 Naseem, Azra. 2013c. "Plan B" (September 19), http://bit.ly/18Bw3gb

22 Rasheed, Yameen. 2013. "Comment: Et tu Maldives?" (November 17) Minivan News, http://minivannews.com/politics/comment-et-tu-maldives-72021

23 Rilwan, Ahmed. 2014. "Majlis elections: Undue influence, bribery, and disillusionment led to losses, says MDP" (March 23), http://minivannews.com/politics/majlis-elections-undue-influence-bribery-and-disilussionment-led-to-losses-says-mdp-80744

24 Minivan News. 2014. "People's Majlis elections 2014" (March 22), http://minivannews.com/politics/live-peoples-majlis-elections-2014-80594

25 Minivan News. 2015. "MDP Holds Street Rally in Front of Gasim's Residence" (January 21), http://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/mdp-holds-street-rally-in-front-of-gasim%E2%80%99s-residence-92268#sthash.TLm2dfYi.dpbs

26 Bosley, Daniel. 2015. "Gasim Defiant as Opposition Sign Agreement to Defend Constitution" (February 7) Minivan News, http://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/gasim-defiant-as-opposition-sign-agreement-to-defend-constitution-92623#sthash.0TPxStn6.dpbs

27 Al-Jazeera. 2015. "Maldives Police Drag Former President Into Court." (February 23), http://www.aljazeera.com/news/southasia/2015/02/maldives-police-drag-president-court-150223143212679.html

28 Prior to Nasheed's rise to the presidency in 2008, he had already served six years of combined prison sentences (including eighteen months of solitary confinement and other tortures) for protesting the lack of democracy in the Maldives.

29 Al-Jazeera. 2015a. "Maldives Ex-President Nasheed Jailed For 13 in Jail" (March 13), http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/03/maldives-president-sentenced-13-years-jail-150313190257362.html

30 Amnesty International. 2015. "Maldives: 13 Year Sentence for Former President a 'Travesty of Justice'" (March 13), https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/03/maldives-mohamed-nasheed-convicted-terrorism/

31 Al-Jazeera. 2015a. "Maldives Ex-President Nasheed Jailed For 13 in Jail" (March 13), http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/03/maldives-president-sentenced-13-years-jail-150313190257362.html

32 Naseem, Azra. 2015. "'Mayday-Mayday-Mayday! Maldives" (May 1), http://www.dhivehisitee.com/people/may-day-maldives/

33 Haveeru. 2015. "'Maldives' Democracy Under Threat' Says US" (May 3), http://www.haveeru.com.mv/john_kerry/60375

34 Buncombe, Andrew. 2014. "'You Will be Killed Next': Maldives Journalists Shaken by Symbolic Machete Attack on Office" (September 14), http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/you-will-be-killed-next-maldives-journalists-shaken-by-symbolic-machete-attack-on-office-9757623.html

35 Bosley, Daniel. 2014. "HRCM Uncertain as to State's Actions in Rilwan's Case" (September 13), http://minivannewsarchive.com/society/hrcm-uncertain-as-to-states-actions-in-rilwan-case-89939#sthash.srMGFcrl.dpbs

36 CJP [Committee to Protect Journalists]. 2015. "CJP Urges Maldives to Launch Independent Investigation into the Case of Missing Journalist Rilwan" (August 6), https://cpj.org/2015/08/cpj-urges-maldives-to-launch-independent-investiga.php

37 Lynas, Mark. 2015. "The Maldives Cannot Represent Climate Leadership With an Autocrat at the Helm" (June 3), http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jun/03/the-maldives-cannot-represent-climate-leadership-with-an-autocrat-at-the-helm

38 Nasheed, Momahed. 2014. "Build a Party, Beware of Judges, and Never Give Up: Lessons from a lifetime of political activism" (June 28) Minivan News, http://minivannews.com/politics/comment-build-a-party-beware-of-judges-never-give-up-87743

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BIN
Is There a Better Way to Fight "Food Waste?"

by MARIE MOURAD

Governments, businesses and community leaders across the United States are building momentum to fight food waste, claiming to simultaneously save money, feed the hungry and reduce impacts on the environment. But how—and to what extent—can food waste reduction be a "win win win" for everyone?

Between 30 and 40 percent of the United States' food supply currently go to waste – with significant environmental, economic, and social impacts. Recent research reveals that food waste—whether it's called losses or surplus, avoidable or unavoidable—accounts for a share of greenhouse gases emissions equivalent to a medium-sized country and to a grossly unnecessary exploitation of land, water and other resources.[1] Economically, retail and consumer food waste together may cost the United States around $165 billion a year, while about 17 million Americans live in food insecure households.[2]

Although food waste can occur during farming, processing, storage and transportation, most international organizations, researchers and environmental organizations place responsibility for food waste in the industrialized world primarily on consumers. Industry representatives point out that consumers account for up to 50 percent of food waste,[3] and argue that consumer-side responses can thus be more effective than producers' own actions to optimize production processes, reuse and recycle excess food. The sociological critique, too, has often focused on the consumer side of production systems. Studies have detailed, for example, how manufacturers pushed more and more products onto consumers, who promptly responded by buying—and wasting—more.[4] Scholars have also shown how recycling took off in the 1960s when the food and beverages lobby pushed consumer-side responses to excess packaging.[5] Responsibility for sustainability was foisted onto consumers instead of placing the burden for disposable, designed-for-obsolescence products on the companies that made them.

But in a move that appears surprising at first, some of the most prominent recent responses to food waste are actions taken by producers and retailers themselves – and they don't focus primarily on consumer responsibilities: first, on-site recycling or participation in organic waste pick-up programs and, second, donations of extra food to charitable organizations. In 2011, three major trade organizations in the food industry—the Grocery Manufacturers Association, the Food and Marketing Institute and the National Restaurant Association—officially between 30 and 40 percent of the United States' food supply currently go to

photo credit: Marie Mourad

waste – with significant environmental, economic, and social impacts. Recent research reveals that food waste—whether it's called losses or surplus, avoidable or unavoidable—accounts for a share of greenhouse gases emissions equivalent to a medium-sized country and to a grossly unnecessary exploitation of land, water and other resources.[1] Economically, retail and consumer food waste together may cost the United States around $165 billion a year, while about 17 million Americans live in food insecure households.[2]

Although food waste can occur during farming, processing, storage and transportation, most international organizations, researchers and environmental organizations place responsibility for food waste in the industrialized world primarily on consumers. Industry representatives point out that consumers account for up to 50 percent of food waste,[3] and argue that consumer-side responses can thus be more effective than producers' own actions to optimize production processes, reuse and recycle excess food. The sociological critique, too, has often focused on the consumer side of production systems. Studies have detailed, for example, how manufacturers pushed more and more products onto consumers, who promptly responded by buying—and wasting—more.[4] Scholars have also shown how recycling took off in the 1960s when the food and beverages lobby pushed consumer-side responses to excess packaging.[5] Responsibility for sustainability was foisted onto consumers instead of placing the burden for disposable, designed-for-obsolescence products on the companies that made them.

But in a move that appears surprising at first, some of the most prominent recent responses to food waste are actions taken by producers and retailers themselves – and they don't focus primarily on consumer responsibilities: first, on-site

recycling or participation in organic waste pick-up programs and, second, donations of extra food to charitable organizations. In 2011, three major trade organizations in the food industry—the Grocery Manufacturers Association, the Food and Marketing Institute and the National Restaurant Association—officially embarked on food waste reduction efforts by creating a "Food Waste Reduction Alliance". Following a

pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote on and on and loren ipsum pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote on and on and loren ipsum pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote pullquote on and

first Zero Food Waste Forum organized in Berkeley (CA) by environmental organizations in October, 2014, businesses organized a second Forum in Austin (TX) in July, 2015, gathering multiple stakeholders claiming to fight food waste across the United States.

Yet at the same time as they champion new uses of food waste, businesses often do not make serious efforts to reduce the initial production of excess food. Instead, their new initiatives constitute "weak" and marginal changes, focused on improving production and distribution efficiencies, in the way capitalism "acknowledge[s] the validity of a critique and make[s] it its own."[6] After attention to food waste was originally raised by marginal, anti-consumerist or anti-capitalist movements such as the Freegans, who claim to use dumpster-diving as a strategy to live outside capitalism, industrial producers have now adapted to those critiques and reinforced themselves by integrating food scraps in manufacturing processes and commoditizing extra food. Yet these industrialization and standardization of food commodity chains are the very sources of overproduction and consumer waste. Therefore, a serious fight against food waste is a fight against the dominant paradigms of the entire food system. A "strong sustainability"[7] approach would fundamentally challenge the appropriate levels and patterns of consumption and question the broader economic and social structures that shape individual practices.[8]

RECYCLING: CLOSING THE WRONG LOOP

Recycling has been one of the most widely adopted responses to environmental problems in the United States, and both businesses and advocates explicitly describe it as a model for food waste management. 95 percent of food waste still ends up in landfills, so it's not surprising that the first initiatives to tackle food waste have aimed at recycling it.[9] Cities like San Francisco or Seattle and the states of Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts and California have passed disposal bans or mandatory composting schemes that require diverting bio-waste away from landfills.

These proposals flip the widely endorsed "food recovery hierarchy" on its head. Reducing waste ideally starts with optimizing food production to minimize losses, then feeding people, then other vertebrates and, last and definitely least, worms. But diversion policies encourage composting or waste-to-biogas facili-

ties, in the same way non-food waste policies often focus on downstream diversion instead of upstream prevention programs. Indeed, local governments are more likely to fund composting programs than prevention campaigns, for example, in order to show direct measurable results and meet diversion goals.

Unfortunately, as a result businesses and individuals are sometimes encouraged to recycle rather than donate, or compost rather than eat, their food. Citizens are also urged to carry out the unpaid labor of sorting their food, rather than industries bearing the costs. Moreover, municipalities and businesses promote recycling as the key for a circular economy and closed-loop systems, without questioning the scale of those "loops." As opposed to composting food scraps in a backyard, for example, large-scale waste pick-ups and treatment facilities generate larger contamination risks. More perversely, they require long-term investments that indirectly create demand for a constant stream of feedstock—that is to say, waste. We've seen this before: a similar phenomenon happened with incinerator projects in the 1980s that contractually *obligated* municipalities to provide waste in order to offset private investments.[10]

REDISTRIBUTION: NOT SUCH AN EASY FIX

Another popular solution is encouraging food donations. Fostering redistribution seems like an easy fix to both hunger and waste: a third of American food is wasted, which appears to be more than enough to feed the 17.6 million households that experience food insecurity each year. Indeed, waste reduction through donations seems like particularly low hanging fruit given that businesses still donate less than 10 percent of their excess food.[11]

Created as an emergency response to the neo-liberal restructuring of the 1980s, food banks are thus becoming a permanent solution: they redistribute supposedly *inevitable* surpluses to *inevitably* hungry people.[12] Federal laws encourage food donations through tax deductions for charitable contributions. Several states, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Oregon, Iowa, and Kentucky, provide businesses or farmers with additional tax credits of up to 25 percent of the food's value.

Such incentives, however, have had mixed results. Not only are they difficult to effectively implement and enforce, they push businesses to donate products of low quality that hunger-relief organizations then have to sort and potentially throw away. Another undesirable effect is that the institutionalization of donations cuts resources for gleaners or dumpster-divers who access food in informal ways and may be deterred by the stigmatization associated with "charity," such as long waiting lines or means-testing. If motives for dumpster-diving vary from anti-capitalist political action and lifestyle to necessity,[13] the practice is particularly prevalent among the urban poor: dumpster-diving can be a substitute for inaccessible and insufficient food assistance programs.[14]

A bigger question is what would happen if the remaining 90 percent of edible food currently thrown away *was* actually donated. Many food bank managers say that they already have to discard a significant percentage of the food they receive (although there are no public statistics on food bank waste). Even with logistical improvements, the poor are not well-served by the scraps of consumer society,

such as hundreds of pumpkin pies dumped right after Thanksgiving.

Some states implement specific incentives so that farmers donate more fresh produce, which is more appealing and nutritious than scores of birthday cakes. A wave of start-ups and social enterprises also create online platforms and phone apps such as Zero Percent that better connect supply and demand of excess food. But local partnerships can be disrupted when businesses that would donate extra food to grassroots organizations or charities now sell these materials to companies reusing or recycling them at a large scale. Extra food—no longer labeled "waste"—is becoming a commodity on secondary markets where food banks compete for surplus food with discount stores like Grocery Outlet. In a context of thin profit margins, secondary sales also thrive on a growing proportion of low-income consumers in highly segmented markets. Although both manufacturers and retailers have long been reluctant to let their branded[15] products go to "discount" shelves, they are now increasingly willing to sell "overruns" to lower-end stores whenever this constitutes a better economic opportunity compared with what a food bank can offer. They still favor donations when tax incentives make them financially "competitive," allowing them to reap image benefits without incurring too much cost.

In the end, large-scale redistribution of free food is neither a dignified way to access food nor a sustainable business model for private companies looking for more profitable outlets for their surplus. Perhaps more importantly, why would 17 million households rely on excess—possibly not healthy—food that others do *not* want? Redistributing "waste"—as opposed to say, food stamps, or, ideally, living wages—cannot be the only mechanism supporting sustainable food access. However, the most recent Farm Bill partly cut funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (providing food stamps) while increasing it for emergency food programs and redistribution.[16]

"WEAK" PREVENTION: THE LIMITS OF BLAMING CONSUMERS

Composting and redistributing more food may be overdue first steps, but the institutionalization of these practices depends on a constant stream of "necessary" surpluses to generate economic, and supposedly social and environmental, benefits. But what about having *less* excess food instead? Food waste reduction campaigns—often sponsored by industry—encourage consumers, not citizens, to write down their shopping lists, eat their leftovers, and learn about expiration dates. Large supermarkets like Intermarché in France have also started selling misshapen or "ugly" fruits and vegetables that used to be processed or, most often, thrown away. They claim this has a potential to expand farmers' outlets, reduce surpluses, and make fresh fruit more affordable. But seeing their products sold 30 to 40 percent cheaper, farmers fear an overall decrease in the price of their products as retailers strive to maintain their profit margins. Social activists, moreover, denounce the stigmatization of second-class consumers pushed to buy the blemished fruits. Ironically, an Intermarché store went to trial to prosecute three dumpster-divers accused of "stealing" expired food a few months after the chain's campaign to reduce food waste.

photo credit: Jordan Figueiredo

Focused on these marginal adaptations, advocacy campaigns rarely tackle the structural mechanisms that lead various consumers to waste. Advocates continue to take for granted that supermarket shelves "need" to be full and every product—including non-perishables flour or salt—needs to be labeled with a date to protect manufacturers from liability. Retailers continue to advertise and promote over-consumption even as they scold consumers' carelessness with respect to food.

Consumers' profligacy is a foil to stores' own efficiency efforts, even though the former is a condition for the economic viability of the latter: Current models of food production are economically profitable partly because they encourage over-stocking and over-consumption. We don't know—because such analyses are rarely conducted—whether or how a system that reduces excess food *production* would be compatible with capitalist agriculture as it is currently practiced.

"STRONG" PREVENTION: TOWARD LESS SURPLUS FOOD?

In order to achieve "strong" sustainability with long-term environmental, social and economic benefits, we must push further alternatives to current market systems, decreasing excess food production and increasing the quality and value of the remainder. This calls for "radical" change—from Latin *radix*, the root—that addresses the root causes of food waste.

In particular, we cannot reduce food waste in industrialized countries without reducing the quantities available per person in the first place. In the U.S., driven by subsidies, 3,500Kcal per capita are produced daily,[17] while a normal adult consumes only around 2,000 to 2,500Kcal.[18] To put it more concretely, in 2011, "each American had available to consume, on average, 54 pounds more commercially grown vegetables than in 1970; 17 pounds more fruit; 11 pounds more caloric sweeteners; 37 pounds more poultry...and 35 pounds more grain products."[19] Up to 133 billion pounds of food never get eaten in a year, which accounts for about 429 pounds or $521per person.[20]

Historically, the post-war United States agricultural system was premised on the redistribution of surplus food to the developing world.[21] As a result of certain farmers' political power, surpluses were subsequently re-oriented to feed low-income Americans through food assistance or school lunch programs.[22] By means of direct payments or subsidized crop insurance, the current Farm Bill still encourages the (over-)production of commodities—notably corn and wheat—that are major ingredients of unhealthy food.[23] Costs of wheat-based and corn-based products are also artificially low, which leads many stores to over-stock them. Unsurprisingly, these are precisely the products many food charities claim to have too much of even as they lack produce and protein. Despite recent changes in the Farm Bill, small or medium-scale farms are still largely unsupported, and so are the most nutritious and sustainable foods.

Radically transforming production and consumption patterns is possible. For example, "ugly" fruits and vegetables would certainly be eaten if most people knew how they grow, bought them directly from a farmer they knew, nay grew these funny-looking carrots by themselves. Indeed, systems like Community Supported Agriculture already allow for buying locally-grown organic products directly from producers at a reasonable price. But although exploratory studies (mostly conducted in Europe) show that reducing the number of intermediaries in food chains would significantly cut food waste and ensures additional environmental, social and economic benefits,[24] very few public and private organizations invest in such research. Indeed, creating direct links between producers and consumers jeopardizes the very *roots* of a large-scale, retailer-driven food system. Enduring profits of large players currently depend on standardized procedures, marketing and promotion-driven sales, overworked packaging... and, finally, recycling. In the long run, strong prevention will require cultural and political changes that may not benefit the current dominant actors of the food system.

BEYOND THE "FOOD WASTE" MOVEMENT

In response to rising environmental and social critiques of food waste, companies not only adopt traditional blame-the-consumer strategies but also change their own business practices. Capitalist food systems quickly adapt to their criticism. Yet, by focusing on optimizing processes, reusing, or recycling existing surpluses, they render surplus food both unavoidable and, increasingly, a commodity. Environmentalists themselves often endorse those marginal changes that nonetheless leave unsolved the main problem: overproduction. The chal-

lenge facing the "food waste movement" now is to tackle systemic flaws in the food system, including the production paradigm supported by the Farm Bill.

Nonetheless, contemporary concerns about food waste present an opportunity. The broader "food movement" against current agro-food systems may benefit from tackling "food waste," which for many people already carries negative connotations. In the wake of more radical social movements, it is now time to tie food waste to overproduction, agro-food policies and corporate governance of food chains. In France, a bill making it "forbidden" to throw away edible food was approved by the Parliament in July, 2015. This might be the first step toward more coercive measures against overproduction.[25] In the end, reducing *excess* food should lead to de-commodification processes and question capitalist food regimes as a whole.

Marie Mourad is a PhD student in Sociology in Sciences Po, Paris, and was a visiting researcher at UC Berkeley in 2014/2015. This article is based on more than 90 interviews with government, business and community leaders involved in fighting food waste between 2013 and 2015.

1 Food and Agricultural Organization. 2013. *Food Wastage Footprint*. United Nations.
2 Gunder, Dana. 2012. *Wasted: How America Loses up to 40% of its Food*. NRDC.
3 Food and Agriculture Organization. 2011. *Food Losses and Food Waste*;
Gunders, Dana. 2012. *Wasted: How America loses up to 40% of its food*. NRDC.
4 Packard, Vance. 1962. *The Waste Makers*. New York: Pocket Books.
5 MacBride, Samantha. 2012. *Recycling Reconsidered: The Present Failure and Future Promise of Environmental Action in the United States*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
6 Chiapello, Eve and Boltanski, Luc. 1999. *The New Spirit Of Capitalism* (p441). London, UK: Verso.
7 Lorek, Sylvia and Fuchs, Doris. 2011. "Strong sustainable consumption governance: precondition for a degrowth path?*," Journal of Cleaner Production* 38: 36-43.
8 Evans, David et al. 2013. *Waste Matters: New Perspectives on Food and Society*. Wiley-Blackwell.
9 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
10 Sze, Julie. 2006. *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
11 Food Waste Reduction Alliance. 2014. *Analysis of U.S. Food Waste Among Food Manufacturers, Retailers, and Restaurants*. Available at: http://www.foodwastealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/FWRA_BSR_Tier3_FINAL.pdf (Accessed: 6/29/2015)
12 Poppendieck, Janet. 1999. *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*. New York: Penguin.
13 Carolsfeld, Anna Lúcia, and Susan L. Erikson. 2013. "Beyond Desperation: Motivations for Dumpster™ Diving for Food in Vancouver." *Food and Foodways* 21, no. 4: 245–66.

14 In a study carried out in a Minneapolis neighborhood, 19 percent of low-income respondents claimed to have eaten from dumpsters (see Eikenberry, Nicole, and Chery Smith. 2005. "Attitudes, Beliefs, and Prevalence of Dumpster Diving as a Means to Obtain Food by Midwestern, Low-Income, Urban Dwellers." *Agriculture and Human Values* 22, no. 2: 187–202.)

15 Industries' own brands or "house brand" products for the case of retails

16 Ed Bolen, Dorothy Rosenbaum, and Stacy Dean. 2014. *Summary of the 2014 Farm Bill Nutrition Title*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

17 USDA, Economic and Research Service (ERS)

18 US Department of Health and Human Services; UK Department of Health; French Ministry of Health.

19 USDA, ERS. Food Availability Data System: http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-availability-(per-capita)-data-system/summary-findings.aspx (Accessed: 8/5/2015)

20 Buzby, Jean C., Hodan F. Wells, and Jeffrey Hyman. February 2014. *The Estimated Amount, Value, and Calories of Postharvest Food Losses at the Retail and Consumer Levels in the United State*s. USDA, ERS.

21 Friedmann, Harriet. 1982. "The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order." *American Journal of Sociology* 88: S248–86 ; Winders, Bill. 2009. *The Politics of Food Supply*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

22 DeVault, Marjorie L. and Pitts, James P. 1984. "Surplus and Scarcity: Hunger and the Origins of the Food Stamp Program," *Social Problems* 31, no. 5: 545–57; Levine, Susan. 2010. *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

23 Environmental Working Group database: http://farm.ewg.org/ (Accessed: 8/3/2015)

24 France Nature Environnement. 2015. *Circuits courts et de proximité : des modes de commercialisation moins générateurs de gaspillage alimentaire ? (Local and short distribution channels: modes of commercialization generating less food waste ?)*. FNE.

25 The bill was unanimously approved by Parliament in July, 2015, but remains to be validated by the French Constitutional Council. It includes a "ban" on throwing away food and mandatory donations to non-profits for supermarkets above a certain size. See Mourad, Marie. 2015. *France moves toward a national policy against food waste*. NRDC (Issue R-15-08-B). Available at: http://www.nrdc.org/food/france-food-waste-policy.asp (Accessed: 10/1/2015).

RECLAIMING WATER POLITICS
California's Drought and the Eclipse of the Public

by CALEB SCOVILLE

Decades before California's colossal water projects took shape, John Dewey located an enduring problem of modern industrial society. He defined "the eclipse of the public" as the tendency to mischaracterize truly collective problems as matters of private concern. Dewey argued that this form of ignorance forestalls democratic responses to collective challenges, ultimately endangering human freedom.[1]

California's present drought reveals an eclipse of the public that calls for a renewal of Dewey's concern about the anti-political tendencies of modern industrial society. The dominant ways of making sense of California's water crisis center on the interests of individual actors. As such they do little to catalyze a productive public discourse about the status of water in California. This is in great part because they cannot provide a critique of the underlying image of nature and its relation to society that is inscribed in the material and institutional structures that condition the collective existence of Californians today.

Below I sketch in outline the image of nature and its relation to society that permeates the most critical historical phases of California's relationship with water. While it has since faded in significant ways, its material and institutional legacy constrains our ability to construct alternative relationships with water that are socially just, ecologically resilient, and economically rational. Establishing an alternative relationship with water requires that we acknowledge that the one we inherited is not the result of a natural process, but the outcome of a human history that could have been otherwise.

TALKING ABOUT WATER, THINKING ABOUT POWER

The dominant way of making sense of California's water crisis is to analyze the interests of individual actors. There are two versions of this approach. The first is an economic rendition, which seeks to make visible water use and its implications across the state. Particularly popular are visualizations of the gallons of water required to produce various crops.[2] Informative and at times entertaining, this type of presentation casts the issue in arithmetic terms, the underlying goal of which is to provide a stock of useful information to empower the conscious consumer. (According to this view, *if only we consumed fewer almonds and more cantaloupes,* for example, *we wouldn't be in this mess!*)

The second version is to frame California's water crisis in terms of conflict and coercion. This perspective has a long history as encapsulated in the widely repeated dictum of the West is that "water flows uphill towards money." It was artfully brought to life by Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), in which a private investigator confronts the corrupt politics behind the city of Los Angeles's acquisition of water resources. In this vein, the present water crisis has been pre-

sented in terms of the impropriety of regulators, the ability of the rich to subvert restrictions on water use, and as essentially composed of clashes between various interested parties.[3]

These interpretations leave unexamined—and thus fully intact—the fundamentals of our relationship with water. We are presented with a broken world in need of a technical fix, or with a set of culpable actors in need of reprimand. To invent a new relationship with water, we need to be in a position to recognize the contingency of our current one. This requires a broad historical scope and a conceptual analysis of what is at stake when we argue over the status of water. By making visible and problematizing the conceptions of nature and its relationship to society inscribed in the history of California's major water development projects, we place ourselves in the position to provide a more comprehensive analysis of current power struggles over water in the state.

Implicit in the dominant discourses about California's water politics is a reliance on what Steven Lukes calls a one-dimensional view of power. Power, in this conception, refers to the ability of elites to get what they want by taking it from others or making them give it to them. Within this framework we can represent some of power's effects, but few of its causes. A two-dimensional view of power, by contrast, expands the scope of analysis to include the role of agenda control. In addition to observable, positive exercises of power over others, the powerful are able to decide which issues count as valid. But a thoroughgoing critique of water

politics requires a three-dimensional view of power, according to which the most important exercises of power are not simply those that keep people from getting what they want or publicly airing their grievances, but instead prevent them from formulating grievances in the first place. The powerful (in the three-dimensional sense) produce subjects who "accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained or beneficial."[4]

Unlike one-dimensional renditions, which reduce the problem to the behavior of rational, self-interested actors, a three-dimensional critique of water politics in California asks how the relationship with water that we inherited permeates our conceptions of what is possible, natural, and desirable. Such a critique can clarify the collective nature of the problem, a precondition for bringing the public out of eclipse, and by extension, for a democratic response to California's water crisis.

RECLAIMING EDEN IN THE WEST

The historical development of California's water resources was justified by the guiding image of "reclamation." In 1850, the Swamp Land Act transferred large amounts of federally owned wetlands to individual states so that they could be reclaimed (drained) and put to productive agricultural use. In California, organizing and funding reclamation projects was initially up to individual farmers, but as the 19th century came to a close, joint stock corporations and newly formed irrigation districts enabled larger-scale undertakings.[5]

Yet as Patrick Carroll notes, reclamation was not merely a technical term, but a thoroughly religious one. It "was bound up in a moral discourse of civilizing nature, of ordering the world and making it economically productive, and thus it was the basis of a civilized society." Deeply implicated was "the religious idea of regaining Eden as a sign of grace."[6] For example, in a scientific report published in 1891, a proponent of reclamation interpreted the flooding of the Colorado Desert as follows: "[t]he Colorado River seems to have repented of its evil work, and is now seeking to atone for its great sin, in desolating so large a portion of the earth, by refilling the desert sea."[7] Acts of repentance were of course rarely attributed to nature in the absence of human intervention. Beyond simply connoting the acceptability or prudence of enjoying the bounties of Creation, reclamation designated the act of bringing otherwise useless land into cultivation a moral imperative.

In 1902, the Federal Reclamation Act created the Reclamation Service, the predecessor of what is now the Bureau of Reclamation. If the Swamp Land Act empowered states to develop their own strategies for civilizing nature, the Reclamation Act made it the direct purview of the Federal Government. It also promoted a different physical manifestation of reclamation. Rather than removing water from places deemed to have too much, the Reclamation Act funded the irrigation of parts of the West with too little water to be agriculturally productive: to turn the desert into a garden.

The stated vision was a rural, agrarian society composed of small family farms reliant on the government only for deliveries of water. An early annual report of the Reclamation Service lays out a moral hierarchy of reclamation's subjects, the pinnacle of which is the "real farmer, the man who makes the principal part of his living by the tilling of the soil." "This is the type of man who should be given most encouragement," the report continues, "as it is his skill and labor intelligently applied

Reclamation endures, not simply in the minds of its proponents, but in the very places and productive capacities that were "reclaimed" and continuously present themselves to us as immutable fixtures of the universe.

that is adding to the permanent values of the country." This figure is placed in opposition to the less deserving "investor" and "speculator."[8] To the dismay of the earliest proponents of reclamation, an irrigated West proved too lucrative to be insulated from these parties, and the preeminence of the "real farmer" was mostly abandoned by the 1930s, at least as a practical matter.[9] New economic interests having been enrolled in the cause, the project of reclamation continued on nonetheless, dedicated as ever to the imperative of bringing previously useless land into cultivation, but at a scale and toward ends unimaginable by its earlier exponents.

Water development projects proved to be integral to the development of the modern American state apparatus in terms of expanding food and fiber production, providing flood control, enabling the growth of urban centers, and eventually as a source of expansionary fiscal policy and hydroelectric energy. Two massive projects in particular define California's relationship with water. The first is the federally managed Central Valley Project, which was "the largest infrastructure of any kind in the world at the time it was built," from the 1930s to the 1970s. The second is "the State Water Project [which] remains the largest infrastructure built by any state government in the union."[10] Together they transformed the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (or simply "the Delta"), the West Coast's largest estuary and the confluence of its two major river systems, into a machine for the conveyance of water southbound, a significant portion of which must be pumped thousands of feet over mountain ranges to reach its final destination. Significant portions of the state were brought into agricultural rotation that could never have been exploited without highly subsidized deliveries of water. Together the projects irrigate about 4.75 million acres of farmland, about the combined total area of Delaware and Connecticut. In order to support the needs of growing metropolises like Los Angeles and San Diego, water imports from Northern California and the Colorado River in turn allowed them to expand at an even greater pace, accumulating greater economic and political clout in the process.

In the case of water infrastructure in the 20th century American West, the direction of development was in the hands of a small group of individuals united in allegiance to the guiding image of reclamation. Floyd Dominy, the head of the Bureau of Reclamation from 1959 to 1969, was its most vocal and influential exponent. His crowning achievement was the Glen Canyon Dam, which turned

a stretch of the Colorado River into Lake Powell, a reservoir that boasts more shoreline miles than the entire West Coast of the United States.[11] Instrumental in the completion of the Central Valley Project, Dominy exemplified the religiosity of reclamation in full form. "I have no apologies," he once exclaimed when asked about his legacy. "I was a crusader for the development of water. I was the Messiah."[12]

"PUTTING WATER TO WORK FOR MAN"

Few individuals in human history have had as great an influence on the physical landscape of the world as did Dominy. And his case makes clear that a one-dimensional conception of power is insufficient in the analysis of California's (and more broadly the West's) relationship with water. More essential than greed or narrow self-interest is the relation to nature inscribed in the projects executed by Dominy and his political allies. According to this view, nature is insignificant in the absence of utility extraction. But it would be incorrect to interpret Dominy's version of reclamation as the simple instrumentalization of nature. It contained a distinctive moral vision characterized by an imperative to reengineer the natural world.

"Reclamation is the father of putting water to work for man," Dominy explained. "The challenge to man is to do and save what is good but to permit man to progress in civilization."[13] According to this view an undammed river is a waste. "I've seen all the wild rivers I ever want to see," he declared in a 1966 speech.[14] Responding to his ideological nemesis David Brower, then Executive Director of the Sierra Club, he argued, "I'm a greater conservationist than you are, by far. I do things. I make things available to man. Unregulated, the Colorado River wouldn't be worth a good God damn to anybody."[15] Asked if the benefits of damming the Sacramento and Columbia rivers were worth the damage it caused to salmon runs, he was equally unapologetic. "I think it's worth it, yes. I think there are substitutes for eating salmon... You can eat cake."[16]

Big water projects have been mostly politically out of favor in the United States for the last few decades. But even the winding down of the era for which Dominy serves as a prime exemplar is framed in reclamationist terms. Rather than admit defeat, the Bureau of Reclamation declares victory:

> *"The arid West essentially has been reclaimed. The major rivers have been harnessed and facilities are in place or are being completed to meet the most pressing current water demands and those of the immediate future."*[17]

And while few defenders of developmentalist water management practices would make their case in Dominy's terms today, there is plenty of evidence to conclude that reclamation was in fact victorious. Floods no longer threaten Sacramento on a regular basis, Los Angeles and San Diego have been able to grow by orders of magnitude, and California is the agricultural hub of the United States. Reclamation endures, not simply in the minds of its proponents, but in the very places and productive capacities that were "reclaimed" and continuously present themselves to us as immutable fixtures of the universe.

Marx argued that humans make their own history, not "under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."[18] In this sense, the built environment is both a reflection of the time in which it was built and a conditioner of the present. Physical structures built with reclamationist justifications continue to mediate social relations. We cannot escape the influence of our collective inheritance through a simple act of disavowal. But rendering that inheritance visible is a precondition for living responsibly as a collective.

CALIFORNIA TODAY: LIVING IN THE HOUSE RECLAMATION BUILT

For most Californians the circumstances handed down from the era of reclamation are invisible, or rather, so visible that they are naturalized. It is only under conditions like the present extreme drought—especially against the backdrop of anxieties about the destabilizing prospects of climate change—that we have an opportunity to actively confront them. Images of half-empty reservoirs with "bathtub-rings" show how far below capacity they are. Mandatory moratoriums on car washing and lawn watering are in effect in many parts of the state. Farm workers are being laid off. Previously productive land lays fallow. Unsustainable groundwater pumping dries out wells and causes land subsidence. Species that were endangered by the manipulation of their habitats for the extraction of water are in a more precarious position than ever. What reclamation rendered unproblematic, fixed, and economically necessary, now appears fragile, even dangerous.

But while the messianic vision of reclamation no longer commands the public imagination as actively as it once did, we still find ourselves constrained, not only by the physicality of the infrastructure that was built before most of us can remember, but also by the moral and technological vocabularies we inherited to evaluate our relationship with nature. An active defense of reclamation is no longer necessary, but alternatives remain, for the most part, unthinkable. Political leaders in both major parties, whether they realize it or not, are approaching the water crisis by doubling down on the old reclamationist model. *The Bureau was wrong to claim victory*, their proposals imply. *The war on nature has only just begun!*

California governor Jerry Brown, son of the namesake of the 700-mile "Governor Edmund G. Brown California Aqueduct," has been an avid proponent of reclamation since at least his first tenure as governor from 1975 to 1983. His original plan to install a "peripheral canal" which would have smoothed the conveyance of water to Southern California by bypassing the Delta was defeated by referendum in 1982. Like his governorship the plan has been resurrected. His current proposal (which has an expected price tag of somewhere between $15 billion and $67 billion depending on the version of the plan and how one runs the numbers) would bore two tunnels under the Delta to convey water to Southern California.[19] Although cloaked in politically correct language as the Bay Delta *Conservation* Plan, it remains true to the old model of reclamation. One way of interpreting the consequences of the present drought would be as a sign that we should accept as the new normal curtailed water conveyances in light of the threats associated

with climate change. On the contrary, advocates of the tunnels view it as a defensive measure that will enable us to continue to extract fresh water from Northern California at current rates indefinitely.

Rather than critically evaluating the decisions of prior generations, the tunnels plan takes as a natural baseline condition the present level of water extraction that the mid-century water projects locked California into, entrenching us even deeper into the reclamationist model. Given the price tag of the tunnels plan, the problem is not simply economic. Massive reductions in the demand for water could be achieved for a fraction of the cost.

A cynical interpretation of the tunnels plan is that the powerful will always see to it that their interests are served regardless of the social consequences. There is significant evidence to support the cynical view. But while special interests loom large in the political economy of California's water, the problem is bigger than them. It is also rooted in the unchallenged reclamationist imaginary that did so much to configure contemporary power relations in the first place. It presents megaprojects like the tunnels as inevitable and refuses to entertain alternatives. "We do not have the luxury of turning back time and reconsidering whether or how to build the state and federal water projects," writes Mark W. Cowin, director of the California Department of Water Resources, in an op-ed defending the tunnels. The tunnels, he argues, are on the side of *reason, science* and *modernity*. Those who oppose it, even if well meaning, are in the grips of *emotion*.[20] "Until you've put a million hours into [studying] it," Governor Brown recently shot back to critics of the plan, "shut up."[21]

The lack of imagination with respect to water issues is widely distributed across the political spectrum. Consider Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina's recent claim that California's water problems owe to a lack of storage.[22] (This statement came at a time when the state's major reservoirs hovered at or below half of normal capacity.) But the most extreme proposal comes from William Shatner of all people, whose apparently now defunct $30 billion Kickstarter campaign would have diverted water from Seattle to Southern California, a project that would dwarf the Egyptian pyramids and Panama Canal in scope.[23] This novelty would not be worth noting if the idea hadn't already been studied intensively and aggressively pursued by Dominy and his colleagues at the Bureau of Reclamation back in the 1960s.[24] Needless to say, even the heyday of reclamation had its limits, and the Columbia River diversion project never left the ground.

INVENTING A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER

What would a different relationship with water look like? Although no comprehensive alternative to reclamation has captivated the public imagination, two movements hint at alternative ways of politicizing water.

The first approach is to shift the terms of discourse to how our relationships with nature result in the domination of people. This is the approach of the environmental justice movement, and while it does not necessarily provide an alternative image of nature, it shows the extent to which California's water projects failed its most vulnerable residents. Thousands (and by some counts, millions)

of people in California, individuals who are disproportionately poor and predominantly people of color, are without safe tap water for drinking and sanitation.[25] Many of the communities affected are in the southern Central Valley, directly adjacent to the aqueducts that bring water to Southern California's cities and farms. The depletion and contamination of groundwater, which is insufficiently regulated in the state, puts the interests of agricultural users who continue to drill deeper and deeper for water, against the communities that surround them. These communities are populated in great measure by the laborers on which the farms rely. The passage of California's AB 685, which declared water a human right, is a small, if symbolic step in the direction of environmental justice.[26]

While environmental justice will be a crucial component of constructing an alternative relationship with water in California, it does not address the status of the dams, reservoirs, and aqueducts that shaped California's trajectory through the 20th century. In stark opposition with Brown and Fiorina's claims that the solution to our water ills is more massive physical infrastructural projects, a growing dam removal movement has begun to take hold in environmental circles and government agencies in several states. In 2014, after a decades-long political struggle, the largest dam removal in world history was completed on the Elwha River in Washington's Olympic Peninsula. Salmon runs have already made a significant comeback. Daniel P. Beard, former commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, argues explicitly for the demolition of Dominy's Glen Canyon Dam and even the abolition of the Bureau of Reclamation. His central claim is that while large infrastructural projects are always justified in technical terms, and despite their physical grandeur, we should view them as mutable artifacts of political struggles that may no longer be relevant to us.[27] The dam removal movement may inspire some California environmentalists to challenge what is presented as inevitable, but it remains to be seen if it contains resources for a positive counter-framework to reclamation that can appeal broadly to constituents of arid regions.

Rather than uncritically reproducing the collective relationship with water that we inherited, we should challenge the legacy of reclamation head-on. Confronting the image of nature and its relation to society that is inscribed in the physical and institutional structures that condition our existence can help us develop a substantive public discourse about the ends our relationship with water should serve. The management of water has been critical to the making of modern California. In reclaiming water as a political object, we address the questions: who are we today and what will we become?

Caleb Scoville is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. He studies environmental politics.

1 Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927.

2 For example: Buchanan, Larry, Josh Keller, and Haeyoun Park. "Your Contribution to the California Drought." *The New York Times*. May 20, 2015; Krishnakumar, Priya, Jon Schleuss, and Kyle Kim. "Eating the Drought: How Much Water Goes into Your Meal?" *Los Angeles Times*. April 7, 2015; Lurie, Julia, and Alex Park. "It Takes How Much Water to Grow an Almond?!" *Mother Jones*. February 24, 2014.

3 For example: Reid, Tim. "In California Drought, Big Money, Many Actors, Little Oversight." *Reuters*. April 25, 2014; Kuznia, Rob. "Rich Californians Balk at Limits: 'We're Not All Equal When It Comes to Water'" *Washington Post*. June 15, 2015; Goode, Erica. "Troubled Delta System Is California's Water Battleground." *The New York Times*. June 25, 2015.

4 Lukes, Steven. *Power: A Radical View*. London: Macmillan, 1974. 24.

5 Worster, Donald, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. 53-63.

6 Carroll, Patrick. "Water and Technoscientific State Formation in California." *Social Studies of Science*. 42.4 (2012): 489-516.

7 Cecil-Stephens, B. A. "The Colorado Desert and Its Recent Flooding." *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York*. 23 (1891): 367-377

8 Newell, Frederick H. *Twelfth Annual Report of the Reclamation Service, 1912-1913*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914. 5.

9 Reisner, Marc. *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993. 104-119.

10 Carroll, Patrick. "Water and Technoscientific State Formation in California."

11 "Lake Powell Frequently Asked Questions." Lake Powell Resorts & Marinas. 2015.

12 Arnold, Elizabeth. "The Legacy Of Dam Architect Floyd Dominy." *NPR*. May 4, 2010.

13 McPhee, John. *Encounters with the Archdruid*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971. 172-173.

14 Reisner, Marc. *Cadillac Desert*, 242.

15 McPhee, John. *Encounters with the Archdruid*, 240.

16 Korten, Fran. "Book Review: Cadillac Desert, by Sandra Itkoff and Jonathan Taplin." *YES! Magazine*. September 30, 1997.

17 "Bureau of Reclamation: A Very Brief History." *Bureau of Reclamation*. 2015.

18 Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978. 595.

19 See: Siders, David, and Dale Kasler. "Jerry Brown to Water Tunnels Critics: 'Shut Up'" The Sacramento Bee. May 6, 2015; Boxall, Bettina. "$25-billion Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Tunnel Project Reexamined." Los Angeles Times. April 4, 2015; Rogers, Paul. "Delta Tunnels Plan's True Price Tag: As Much as $67 Billion." San Jose Mercury News. December 26, 2013.

20 Cowin, Mark. "Bay Delta Conservation Plan: Diverting Water, Balancing Needs." *SFGate*. September 17, 2014.

21 Siders, David, and Dale Kasler. "Jerry Brown to Water Tunnels Critics: 'Shut Up.'"

22 Fiorina, Carly. New Hampshire Republican Leadership Summit. April 18, 2015.

23 Pogue, David. "Exclusive: William Shatner's $30 Billion Kickstarter Campaign to Save California." *Yahoo Tech*. April 17, 2015.

24 Reisner, Marc. *Cadillac Desert*, 275-280.

25 *Thirsty for Justice: Struggle for the Human Right to Water*. Sacramento: Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, 2014. Film.

26 "The Human Right to Water Bill in California: An Implementation Framework for State Agencies." International Human Rights Law Clinic, University of California, Berkeley School of Law. May, 2013.

27 Beard, Daniel P. *Deadbeat Dams: Why We Should Abolish the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Tear Down Glen Canyon Dam*. Boulder: Johnson Books, 2015.

EXISTENCE IN RESISTANCE.

by ANNELISE HAGAR

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN SEPARATION WALL

On one side, Palestinian homes. On the other, the beginnings of a settlement. From the Palestinian side, the wall is unattractive and decorated with graffiti. The surrounding area, on the right, is lined with dirt roads. From the Israeli side, the wall is more aesthetically pleasing. To the left of the wall is the smooth, "settler-only" highway. In the distance, on the left, olive trees continue to grow that were once tended to by Palestinians. Since the wall's construction, the Palestinian farmers can no longer access the land.

YACOUB ODEH SHARES HIS MEMORIES OF LIFTA

Yacoub was born and grew up in the village of Lifta, which was one of many villages forcibly depopulated and ethnically cleansed in 1948. Now, adolescent Israeli settlers gather in the former community center to swim in the pool and experiment with drugs away from their parents.

HEBRON

Normally settlements are placed to surround and isolate Palestine population centers, but Hebron is an exception. Here, Israel has strung together a series of micro-settlements through the heart of the community, which has resulted in vast dead zones throughout the city. Much of Hebron has become a ghost town no longer accessible for Palestinians.

WALEED AT THE GUARD SHACK

Waleed, our tour guide in Hebron, waits at an Israeli guard shack. As a Palestinian, he was denied access. We were allowed full access because we are Americans.

DOORS IN HEBRON

Many doors in Hebron have been labeled with black arrows by the Israeli military. The signs indicate that the door must remain unlocked at all times so that the military can access and use the home at any point.

THE LAST KUFIEH FACTORY

One form of non-violent resistance is economic resistance. Here, a Palestinian stands proudly at his place of employment, the last Kufieh factory in Palestine. Although the Kufieh is a staple item for Palestinian men, only one factory remains in Palestine. Outside of Palestine, Kufiehs are often worn in solidarity with the community.

AIDA REFUGEE CAMP MURAL

A mural adorns the separation wall of the AIDA refugee camp. Finished in 2010 by the camp's inhabitants, it uses art as a form of non-violent resistance. The camp frequently uses art as a form of self-expression and as therapy for children.

OLD OLIVE OIL FACTORY IN BIR ZEIT

This Palestinian man used to run a factory that produced olive oil. It went out of business when it couldn't keep up with technological advancement.

FATHER AND SON AT THE SEA OF GALILEE

George, our tour guide, takes a quick break to enjoy the sun and the sea with his younger son.

GEORGE'S SON

Despite the daily experience of occupation, this Palestinian boy is up-beat and hopeful. Over time, communities in Palestine have developed a remarkable resilience and continue to harbor hope for the future.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN SEPARATION WALL

Originally from the Los Angeles area, Annelise M. Hagar recently received her Masters in Sociology from Boston College. She is both sociologist and travel photographer. Annelise currently lives in San Francisco where she works for 826 National as a Research and Evaluation Associate.

CRAFTING FEEL-GOOD MULTICULTURALISM IN THIS AMERICAN LIFE

by
MEGAN ALPINE

"I find *This American Life* to be very comforting in a way. It connects me to people that I've never met, but I feel like now know in some special way. I look forward to long drives where I can listen to Ira Glass introduce me to people and their stories. TAL helps me stop and celebrate the small things, that I sometimes take for granted, with [its] stories."

— *This American Life* listener, 2007[1]

As a radio program that brings together in-depth reporting, compelling fictional storytelling, and meticulous editing practices, it not difficult to understand why Chicago Public Media's *This American Life* (TAL) has attracted so many fans – 2.2 million radio listeners and over a million podcast downloads weekly, the show's website claims.[2] Among the most common sentiments TAL listeners voice, one study finds, is the way listening to the show makes them feel good; TAL does this, listeners explain, by illuminating "universal" human experiences through stories told from diverse perspectives.[3] As a TAL listener myself, I was drawn to the show each week not just by a desire to hear expert analysis of current events or to learn about a new topic. What moved me to listen was more complex and difficult to articulate: a desire to feel as though I were stepping into another person's world; to understand a point of view that differed from my own; to become a better informed and more open-minded person, even. In short, I was compelled by the promise of a feel-good experience. Listening casually to the show, it is easy to become engrossed in the stories that

comprise each episode—what TAL calls "acts"—without thinking about them critically. However, more critically engaging with TAL allows listeners to see through the show's feel-good haze and interrogate the significance of the show as a social phenomenon. As TAL has covered a wide range of politically pressing topics (including the 2008 financial crisis, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and US immigration policies, for example), I am led to ask: what kind of politics does TAL produce? In other words, what does TAL "do?"

These questions, of course, assume that TAL "does" something with impact beyond the temporary experience of listening to the show. A closer look at who listens to TAL suggests that part of what TAL does is appeal to a particular target audience. Like public radio more generally, TAL attracts a specific demographic of listeners: its audience tends to be white, middle- or upper-class, highly-educated, and liberal.[4] What about TAL, then, makes it appealing to this demographic of listeners? Looking more closely at *how* TAL crafts its feel-good tone for its audience, I am struck by several recurring

elements of the program: its nostalgic feel, its gestures to multiculturalism, and its universal humanist sensibility. In its "old-fashioned" radio format, TAL creates a feeling of "pastness," appealing to nostalgia even while presenting stories about current events;[5] in its content, TAL brings together diverse, multicultural perspectives to speak to a common, "universal" theme about human experience. Together, these elements provide TAL's audience with a feel-good listening experience that, at the surface, appears to tell a story about universal human experiences. The show creates this illusion, however, by making its stories assimilable to a white, middle-class perspective. TAL thus produces a troubling politics: it allows listeners to see themselves as tolerant, culturally aware, well-informed, and self-reflexive, though spares them from both recognition of their own privileged position and the more difficult task of engaging in substantive self-reflection, which would interrupt the feel-good experience of listening to the show.

WHO LISTENS TO *THIS AMERICAN LIFE*?

First broadcast in 1995, TAL emerged from a particular history of public radio in the US marked by shifts in its organizational values, structure, sources of funding, and targeted audiences. National Public Radio (NPR) has undergone significant structural changes since its founding in 1970; these include a "corporate reorganization" in 1975, federal funding cuts and resulting "debt crisis" in the 1980s, and a growth in corporate and listener funding in the 1990s.[6] Following the debt crisis of 1983, public radio dramatically changed its organization to a more

decentralized, competitive model in which local public radio stations purchased individual programs from NPR and from its competitor, American Public Radio.[7] Adapting to this new model, NPR made increased use of audience research in the 1980s and 90s, ultimately leading the organization to move away from its original mission of representing national "diversity." One audience study, "Audience 88," found that "no public radio station should try to serve multiple audiences all by itself," thus encouraging local public radio stations to narrow the types of programming they offered.[8] Public radio managers, following the advice of audience researchers, increasingly designed programs to appeal to a specific demographic of devoted listeners who were most likely to donate money to the station.

In the early 2000s, historian Michael McCauley finds, these devoted listeners were largely "highly educated baby boomers" who turned to public radio out of a nostalgic longing for "the sense of idealism and community they felt while in college."[9] NPR appealed to this sense of nostalgia and idealism by presenting "long-form" journalism that stood in contrast to the increasingly abbreviated sound-bite format of commercial media sources. Public radio's long-form approach, which communication scholar Kevin Barnhurst traces to the 1980s, placed increased focus on journalists themselves, rather than facts, through "interpretative reporting" and "dramatization" of stories.[10]

TAL emerged in 1995 in the midst of a second budget crisis in public radio, in which state funding for public radio declined significantly.[11] In spite of these conditions, the show quickly attracted a devoted following of listeners. Journalist Marc Fisher described the

program's early national success: "It won a Peabody Award in its first year. In its second year it snared a $350,000, three-year grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting – more than double the money Glass had applied for."[12] Arguing that TAL was "at the vanguard of a shift in American journalism," Fisher found that the program effectively responded to the public's declining faith in mainstream commercial journalism by offering "something unfiltered," with "an unmoderated feeling, [and] a nonlinear, nonhierarchical, unedited sensibility."[13] TAL's listeners, demographically similar to those of public radio nationally, may be drawn to the show by the same "idealism" and "nostalgic longing" for the radio of their youth.[14]

Like most NPR listeners, TAL's audience tends to be white, "highly educated, socially conscious, [and] politically active," and with the majority TAL listeners holding at least a four-year college degree.[15] As of 2007, the average age of TAL listeners was 47.[16] This "liberal" demographic of listeners closely resembles NPR's targeted audience crafted in response to the public radio reforms of the 1980s. Through its content and form, TAL appeals to the particular demographics of its fans by both facilitating a nostalgic, self-reflexive mode of reception and constructing a multicultural-universalist ideology.

NOSTALGIA AND DISTANCE IN TAL'S FORM

As a program comprised primarily of present-day nonfiction stories, TAL seems to have little in common with more obviously nostalgic media forms. Unlike the "nostalgia films" Frederic Jameson describes, which recall an idealized 1950s suburban America, the content of TAL makes no explicit reference to a particular historical period.[17] Instead, TAL appears to embrace new technologies; the program attracts a significant portion of its listeners as an Internet podcast, for instance. What makes TAL "nostalgic" is the mode of reception it facilitates. In her analysis of TAL podcast listeners, Kristine Johnson argues that the show encourages listeners to engage fully with and "visualize" its long-form stories; this mode of reception, she finds, harkens back to the "Golden Age of Radio" of the 1930s and 40s, before the rise of television and the transformation of radio into a music-dominated, "background" medium.[18] Even as they listen to stories about the present day, then, TAL listeners engage with the program from the position of an idealized construction of a past era in which listeners devoted their full (rather than partial and distracted) attention to radio programs.

TAL encourages its audience to understand the program as "old-fashioned" storytelling by facilitating a fully engaged, "nostalgic" mode of reception, but also by subtly reminding listeners about the "old-fashionedness" of radio programs like TAL through the stories it presents. In episode 61, "Fiasco!," host Ira Glass interviews Matt Joseph, host of another public program called "All About Cars." Joseph tells the story of Wisconsin Public Radio's decision to move his long-running program to another time slot in order to make room for the more popular program, "Car Talk." TAL's story appeals to nostalgia for the past through both its content, the story of the demise of "All About Cars," and through the "old-fashioned," idealistic perspective of its host, Joseph. Through Joseph, Glass (who in turn represents TAL)

vicariously adopts a nostalgic perspective for a past "Golden Age of Radio" in which local radio programs could appeal to a limited audience that may not match the demographics of contemporary public radio's preferred audience. In this way, TAL signals its listeners to become self-consciously aware that they are listening to "old-fashioned" storytelling - even as TAL may have more in common with "Car Talk" than it does with "All About Cars."

Beyond its nostalgic content, TAL creates a vaguely nostalgic "feel" that can be understood in the context of Jameson's and Slavoj Zizek's anal-

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud

yses of "nostalgia for the present."[19] Revisiting Jameson's analysis of the 1981 movie, *Body Heat*, Zizek argues that this film presents a story about the present day with the aesthetics of 1940s film noir; he writes, "Instead of transposing a fragment of the past into a timeless, mythic present, we view the present itself as if it were part of the mythic past."[20] *Body Heat* thus does not draw from the particular content of 1940s films, Zizek argues, but nevertheless achieves a nostalgic effect by crafting what Jameson calls a feeling of "pastness."[21] By using a mode of storytelling that listeners readily recognize as "old-fashioned" in order to tell stories about the present, TAL similarly encourages its listeners to under-

stand these stories from a "nostalgic distance" and as "mythic past."

This "nostalgic" mode of reception introduces a layer of mediation between the listener and the program's storytellers. In this mode, rather than directly engaging with the program's stories and storytellers, TAL listeners are invited to self-consciously "see" themselves listening, adopting the perspective of an imagined "'naive' spectator"[22] (or, in this case, listener) from the "Golden Age of Radio." Following Zizek's analysis, I find that TAL encourages its listeners both to engage with TAL as though its stories took place in the past and to imagine themselves to be listening to the program in the same way that someone from an earlier era would have listened to the radio. TAL thus facilitates a mode of reception that subtly de-contextualizes the events recounted by its storytellers, encouraging listeners to displace TAL's stories to the fantasy realm of "mythic past" rather than recognize their present-day relevance.

TAL further encourages its audience to engage with its stories from a mediated distance because the program assumes and constructs listeners who sees themselves as self-reflexive and open-minded.[23] Episode 199, "The House on Loon Lake," exemplifies how TAL hails a self-reflexive listener. "Loon Lake," unlike most TAL episodes, tells just one story that begins with Adam Beckman's discovery of a mysteriously abandoned house in New Hampshire as a young boy, narrated by Beckman himself. During the hour, Beckman traces the 20-year saga of his attempt to solve the mystery of who lived there and why they abandoned the house. He concludes by reflecting on what he has learned from "solving" the mystery of the house and how his perspective has

changed since his childhood. Beckman realizes, through critical self-reflection, that his own limited perspective had influenced his understanding of the abandoned house and its owners. Situating himself as an interpreter of other people's stories, Beckman likens himself to the TAL listener who occupies a similar position listening to the program. Like Beckman, listeners engage in making sense of other people's lives in listening to TAL - and, also like him, they are able to reflect on themselves and be self-critical.

TAL's facilitation of a self-reflexive mode of reception assumes and appeals to a specific audience: educated and upper- or middle-class Americans. As Pierre Bourdieu and Michele Lamont describe in their analyses of "taste" in French and American culture, educated upper- and middle-class audiences, compared to working- and lower-class audiences, display distinct preferences in cultural artifacts and different modes of engaging with "culture."[24] Bourdieu finds that upper- and middle-class audiences dismiss immediate, "natural" enjoyment of cultural artifacts in favor of engaging with culture by way of a "decoding" process accessible only to those who (like them) possess the "cultural competence" needed to grasp an artifact's "meaning."[25] In the case of TAL, this "meaning" extends beyond the details of any of the stories that comprise an episode; it can only be grasped when, through a process of "decoding," listeners relate TAL's different stories to the unifying, universal-humanist "theme" of the episode.

TAL's facilitation of a nostalgic mode of reception and its hailing of a self-reflexive, critical listener serve to position listeners at a distance from the program's stories and storytellers.

By hearing the program's stories from a "nostalgic distance," TAL listeners can sincerely and self-reflexively listen to TAL's storytellers without recognizing the continuing, present-day relevance of their stories. Further, this distanced mode of reception allows TAL listeners to feel as though they can understand a diversity of "multicultural" perspectives and abstract from these particular stories to grasp the larger "meaning" of the show: a universal humanist ideology. By reconciling multiculturalism with universal humanism, the program produces a particular political ideology - what I call "multicultural universalism" - to appeal to a liberal, educated, white, and upper- or middle-class audience.

MULTICULTURAL-UNIVERSALIST CONTENT

Presenting stories from multiple perspectives on wide range of subjects, and often incorporating several points of view within the telling of one story, TAL constructs an outwardly "multicultural" ideology. Rather than establishing one reliable narrator who provides the listener with the "Truth," TAL offers multiple and often competing points of view in its presentation of a story and does not obviously privilege one voice over another. In this way, TAL seems to challenge the idea of universal "Truth" by instead offering multiple "truths." Episode 416, "Iraq After Us," offers the contrasting perspectives of Abu Abed, a leader of the Sons of Iraq, and Colonel Kiel, of the US military, in a way that illustrates the program's "multiculturalism." Abed articulates his reasoning for believing that the US would offer him a leadership position with the new Iraqi police force, while Kiel states the US military

did not seriously consider Abed for this role. TAL edits in the voice of reporter Nancy Updike alongside Abed's and Kiel's voices, but rather than arbitrating "Truth," Updike's commentary contextualizes Abed's and Kiel's comments without situating one perspective as more credible than the other. Updike presents herself as respecting both men's points of view and leaves it to the listener to negotiate among and make meaning of these divergent "truths."

Offering a diversity of perspectives is essential to TAL's ability to hail a middle-class, white, educated, liberal, and "multiculturalist" listener. Surveying TAL listeners, Johnson found that many respondents enjoyed listening to the program because of the "connection" they felt to a diverse range of storytellers. One respondent wrote, "I love that the show is a cornucopia of knowledge about so many different aspects of life, and different types of people. I find that even with such diversity, the staff manages to create stories that I relate to; every time;" another respondent similarly emphasized the program's multiculturalism: "It genuinely helps me to understand different places, people, and perspectives."[26] Each listener who commented on the diversity of TAL's stories, however, also remarked on how the program brought together these different points of view to create a feeling of universal humanism. In the case of the latter comment, the respondent continued: "As a secular humanist, it helps reaffirm my faith in the universality of the human experience."[27] Multiculturalism in TAL, rather than undermining the program's feel-good universal humanism, serves to facilitate it.

Central to TAL's feel-good universal humanism is each episode's organization around a "theme." In episode 175, "Babysitting," Glass introduces the episode and its "universal" theme by describing "a ritual that happens in millions of American families, everyday: parents dropping off kids at the babysitters." The last of the episode's three babysitting "acts" features the story of a woman, Carol, who as a teenager made up a story about a fake family that she babysat to escape the restrictions of her overbearing mother. This story, Glass comments, "gets to babysitting in a big, big way." Throughout the interview, Glass (who reports this story) presses Carol and her brother Myron to reflect on why they invented the family, why their mother acted as she did, and what this fake family "meant." Offering his own interpreta-

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud

tion of their story, Glass expands on his earlier comment that this story is about babysitting "in a big way" by claiming that this brother and sister acted as "babysitters" for mother. Positioning himself as a self-conscious listener and interpreter of their story, Glass draws from Carol's and Myron's particular situations to construct a larger, universal humanist message to which TAL's listeners can relate.

Through its use of particular, "multicultural" stories to craft a universal-humanist message that speaks to an episode's "theme," TAL reconciles tensions between multiculturalism and

universal humanism. TAL highlights details that make its stories relatable to its assumed audience, thus constructing a narrative that reveals more about the program's listeners than it does about the storytellers presented in each episode. TAL's audience can be described as occupying what Zizek calls a "privileged universal position" that allows middle-class, white, educated, liberal, and "multiculturalist" listeners to maintain a "patronizing Eurocentrist distance" from the various "Others" who share their stories on TAL.[28] By situating its audience in this all-knowing, "universal position," TAL enables listeners to feel as though they can understand and critically evaluate a diversity of perspectives without needing to acknowledge the particularity of their own privileged position.

THE POLITICS OF LISTENING

This *American Life* does more than entertain and inform; it constructs a particular "liberal" political ideology that reconciles multiculturalism with universal humanism. Through its deployment of an "old-fashioned" storytelling form and multicultural-universalist content, the program hails a white, middle-class, liberal, and educated listener who engages with its stories from a nostalgic and self-reflexive distance. This distanced mode of reception reflects the aesthetic preferences, described by Bourdieu and Lamont, of educated upper- and middle-class audiences. Rather than encouraging immediate, unmediated engagement with its stories and storytellers, TAL facilitates a self-conscious mode of listening in which listeners must "decode" the stories in order to grasp the "meaning" of each episode's theme. This mode of reception assumes a

particular demographics of listeners: those who possess the requisite "cultural competence" to "get" the meaning of the program.[29]

The case of TAL illuminates both the techniques by which a distanced mode of reception is crafted and its ideological effects. The superficiality of the program's engagement with diverse perspectives allows listeners to reconcile "multiculturalism" with universal humanism, suggesting that, in spite of our differences, there is a shared "Truth" about humanity that unites us. This implied common humanity glosses over difference in order to privilege a white, liberal, middle-class perspective that reflects the demographics of TAL's listeners and facilitates their ability to identify with the stories and storytellers on the program. TAL's glossing of difference is particularly problematic because it gives the appearance of presenting multiple truths and providing insight into other people's lives, but ultimately undermines this "multicultural" multiplicity by making its stories assimilable to a white middle-class perspective.

Unpacking the ideological work in TAL highlights the ambivalent, uneasy place of multiculturalism and self-reflexivity in the landscape of mainstream liberal values in the US. In order to be made palatable to a white, upper- and middle-class audience, these values must be emptied of their critical content. More critical engagement with multiculturalism and self-reflexivity in the program would have the potential to implicate TAL's audience as complicit in the reproduction of the social inequalities they claim to oppose. Rather than facilitating meaningful self-reflection among its audience, however, TAL absolves its listeners of potential guilt and discomfort through

its construction of a feel-good tone.

Here, TAL misses an opportunity to provide more critical, if uncomfortable, analyses of complex political issues, which might inspire listeners to take action to address social problems. Instead, in bringing together a multicultural-inflected version of universal humanism and an overarching feeling of "pastness" that encourages listeners to hear stories about the present as though they took place in the past, TAL quietly produces a politics that draws in white, liberal, middle- and upper-class listeners. Precisely because of its widespread popularity and lack of controversy, the case of TAL exemplifies the insidious ways media forms that outwardly appear to be politically neutral can re-inscribe status quo relations of domination. Rather than act, all that listeners need to do to make the world a better place, the show implies, is listen.

Megan Alpine is a graduate student in the Sociology department at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her work focuses on discourses of poverty, moral worthiness, and empathy in the wake of US welfare reform, particularly as they are taken up by nonprofit social service organizations.

1 As cited in Kristine C. Johnson, "Imagine This: Radio Revisited through Podcasting," (M.S. thesis, Texas Christian University, 2007), 36.
2 "About Us," Chicago Public Media, accessed July 8, 2015, http://www.thisamericanlife.org/about.
3 Johnson, "Imagine This," 3, 48.
4 Marc Fisher, "It's a Wonderful Life," *American Journalism Review* 21 (1999): 44; Johnson, "Imagine This," 76-7.
5 Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 19.
6 Michael McCauley, *NPR: The Trials and Triumphs of National Public Radio* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 39; 57-64; 84.
7 Ibid., 76.
8 Ibid., 9.
9 Ibid., 2.
10 Kevin Barnhurst, "The Makers of Meaning: National Public Radio and the New Long Journalism, 1980-2000," *Political Communication* 20 (2003): 18,21.
11 McCauley, *NPR*, 89.
12 Fisher, "Wonderful Life," 42.
13 Ibid., 42-3.
14 McCauley, *NPR*, 2.
15 Fisher, "Wonderful Life," 44; McCauley, *NPR*, 2; Johnson, "Imagine This," 76-7.
16 Marc Fisher, *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and the Revolution that Shaped a Generation* (New York: Random House, 2007), 266.
17 Jameson, *Postmodernism,* 19.
18 Johnson, "Imagine This," 3, 48.
19 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 279.
20 Slavoj Zizek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 112.
21 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 19.
22 Zizek, *Looking Awry*, 112.
23 See Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1984); Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
24 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Michele Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
25 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 2, 5.
26 Johnson, "Imagine This," 37.
27 Ibid.
28 Slavoj Zizek, "Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review* 225 (1997): 44.
29 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 4.

THE CORRECTIONS MYTH

by LIAM MARTIN

James Cole jumps from the car in a hurry. He hardly looks up on the way past, heading straight for a straggly patch of grass at the end of the halfway house driveway. He stands between the rusted blue dumpster and old grey picnic table, reaching for cigarettes in the pocket of worn jeans. Cigarette lit, he takes a long drag and stands there staring out. Then he turns and starts to walk. Feet hardly leave the ground. James ambles in a circle, a slow walk to nowhere in particular.

Bill looks over from a chair on the porch: "he just got home?"

A nod confirms. Bill laughs loudly: "Oh, he's still walkin' the yard. I remember that: you're free but still walkin' the yard. Don't wana be around nobody.

You needa reevaluate the whooole situation when you get outta that mutha fucka."

I get in the car to leave, watching James' slow walk through the windshield. I put the keys in the ignition and fumble with the radio, trying not to stare. Having already lived in the house as a researcher for nine months, interviewing dozens of former prisoners about getting out, I've come to expect this kind of prison hangover. But there's something eerie in seeing it so starkly: a robotic repeat of prison habit, walking the yard transported to a world where walking the yard is totally out of place.

America's prisons carry the name "corrections." Stories like James' reveal the word as an illusion, giving tone and texture to the numbers: two-thirds of those released from state prison are back behind bars within three years. Prisons don't work because the experience of imprisonment never really ends. People are prisonized, they smuggle out the institution in simple habits and everyday rituals - like slow walks for exercise that now look strange. Prisons don't work, too, because they teem with jailhouse lessons of street crime and the underground economy.

These basic ideas are common enough: institutionalization, prisons are schools for crime. But few understand their human meaning, the sad and intimate ways they unfold in lived experience. Corrections is a myth. And it all looks even more self-defeating upclose, watching people churn through the system of mass incarceration.

CROSSING OVER

Prisons are total institutions. They break down the usual separation between work, sleep and play – in prison, these all take place at a single site with the same people. The daily rounds are tightly scheduled. One activity leads at a prearranged time to the next, done among others treated alike and made to do the same thing together. The 'total' or all-encompassing character of these institutions is both enforced and symbolized by their physical barriers: concrete walls, iron bars, razor wire.

To survive, the prisoner learns to sense potential violence in subtle movements and sideways stares, to see what others fail to notice and fear what others take for granted. He gets used to being contained, not just by bars

and walls, but by the convict rules that regulate his movement – making sure he does not send the wrong signal to the wrong guy. He grows attuned to the tight scripting of biological rhythms: rising at the same time, showering at the same time, eating at the same time. The closed world of the prison becomes home.

Walking out the gate he enters a different world. The familiar rules are scrapped. People crowd and jostle and move their bodies recklessly, bumping into each other on the sidewalk and reaching over plates at the dinner table. They speak loosely and disrespect each other without consequence. Fast-moving cars make a simple walk to the shops disconcerting. In an instant, grinding monotony and rules are replaced with all kinds of choices and responsibilities: paying bills, doing laundry, making dinner. Days are not scripted but radically open.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud

The prisoner is now a *former* prisoner, an ex-convict living in free society. But prison is not really in the past. It lingers as muscle memory and habit and body language, a way of being imbibed spending day-after-day in a total institution.

Maybe the former prisoner finds herself standing in front of doors, waiting for them to open. Or washing socks and underwear in the shower. Or seeking out Ramen noodle soups at the Supermarket – the same kind she had in jail. Or isolating and spending long periods in a single room, a room she sometimes unthinkingly calls a 'cell' in casual conversation. Or eating dinner standing up, one foot on a chair, ready for any threat. These habits encapsulate a whole way of relating to the world that works in prison.

The freshly released prisoner is attuned to a world she no longer inhabits.

JAILHOUSE LESSONS

Roy Jones was first locked-up as a teenager. He tells me in there it was one big learning experience. Now he's 42 and carries those jailhouse lessons around like a street encyclopedia. He talks about robbing jewelers and picking pockets and breaking and entering. About setting up dealers and tricking office workers and travelling to New York to get the best price. And he goes from one technique to the next without pause, the words rushing out in a deep, husky voice.

Over the years, Roy got used to staying safe in prison. Now we're in a public park and it all comes naturally. He uses the word "awareness" to talk about the skills needed to be a good hustler. I interject to ask what he means by the term.

"Have you noticed what I've been doing while we talk?" He asks.

As he says he's been "constantly watching" and recounts the details of people coming and going in the area around, it dawns on me that Roy has been in motion the whole time: standing to talk, moving from the front to

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud

behind the bench, sometimes with a foot-up, at others resting folded arms on the back.

All this movement hadn't struck me as odd or unusual. These were not the jumpy actions of a person anxious about their surroundings. There was an ease, a naturalness to the way Roy set up lines of vision covering the whole park. It could have been the prison yard.

Roy was not the only one who told me prison was like a school. The former prisoners I've got to know said they were always talking about what went wrong and how to do it better next time. People who did armed robberies learned smash and grabs were easier. Dealers learned about breaking and entering. Prisoners met prisoners with connections to heroin and cocaine on the outside. Friends were made and phone numbers passed along.

Just about everyone had a hustle. Some made tattoo guns from ballpoint pens and stolen VCR motors, ink from the soot of burned black plastic mixed with water. Others brought drugs in with kisses in the visiting room. In small yellow balloons in packets of *M&M*'s or tennis balls thrown over concrete walls. People stole from the kitchen and sold medication and made homebrew liquor from rotten fruit.

When they talked about prison life, the descriptions were often scattered with animal imagery. It was like animals in a cage, they said, animals in a cage with an overseer. Prisoners were watched like lab rats and shuttled around like cattle. People reduced to animals *became* animals: not cats or birds, but sharks and bears and wolves. Predatory animals living by the law of the jungle.

Roy Jones has been there enough times to know what this means coming out the other side:

"It's like when you have a dog locked up or chained up all day long. Once you let him off that leash – what's he do? He runs wild."

LISTENING ACROSS THE DIVIDE

In colonial America, burglars were punished with branding: the letter 'B' burned into the hand, or if the offence took place on Sunday, into the forehead. With a hot iron, criminality was marked in the flesh of the condemned, punishment combining pain and lasting stigma.

Today prisons brand the convict: incarceration inscribed in the body as lasting dispositions, motor schemes and bodily automatisms. They create a criminal class, a sharp division between the criminal and the law-abiding, the normal and the abnormal – *us* and *them*. When the marked lash out in frustration, they only confirm what *we* already knew.

My father-in-law looks up from the newspaper and declares the guy should be locked away for good. I say that things are more complicated, that locking everyone up means there's no money left for preventing these things. He gets angry and says I'm changing the subject. It seems like I'm defending

a multiple offence drunk driver who just killed three people. We finish our eggs in silence.

Our breakfast conversation is a world away from the overwhelming reality of three dead people and that man staring blankly at the ceiling of a prison cell. The corrections myth thrives on the distance. For many Americans still don't know anyone who has been to prison. In middle- and upper-income, predominantly white neighborhoods, incarceration remains a rare and shocking experience. Through the screen of CSI and Law and Order Special Victims Unit, the prison appears as a readymade solution to complex problems.

Seek out and listen to the voices of those we mark criminal. They show the dysfunction of prisons more clearly than rates of recidivism ever could. Dwell on their words. Dissolve the corrections myth.

Liam Martin is a Ph.D. candidate in the Sociology Department at Boston College. His research examines how the prison experience follows people after they leave, the forces and processes that push people back toward prison, and the strategies of former prisoners rebuilding their lives. Liam also teaches college courses inside Framingham and Norfolk state prisons.

FORUM:
TECHNOLOGY
& SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION ▮ *by* *THOMAS GILBERT*

Silicon Valley contains an implicit vision of a classless society. Whether one turns to startup culture, the increasing prevalence of crowdsourcing, the growing popularity of biometric devices such as FitBit and the Apple Watch, the "disruptive" social effects of "sharing economy" companies like Uber, and the cultural prominence of tech moguls such as Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs, the industry appears to promise a novel, techno-presentation of self: one can become one's own classifier, and thereby escape historical forms of inequality, stratification, and prejudice. As companies in the Valley become fodder for political debate, and contribute to political campaigns in ever greater quantities, the implications of this vision for actual social change have become front and center.

But can such a vision be realized in practice? How do companies in the Valley actually operate? And do their products really lay the groundwork for such fundamental transformation? Because the history of the Valley is so recent and its social implications so broad, social scientists have been slow to establish its empirical significance as an object for inquiry and its usefulness as a case in developing better theories of society and technology. The purpose of this forum is to confront this hesitancy head-on and pry open, for critical analysis, the Pandora's box of social forces contained in our smartphones, apps, and tablets. We hope to reshape a conversation on the social nature and function of technology already begun in the public sphere, though whose terms and stakes are still under dispute.

The three pieces in this forum aim to both conceptualize and empirically investigate the intellectual, historical, and above all moral stakes of Silicon Valley as a possible engine of 21st century social transformation. Their focuses of inquiry are distinctive, and their lenses are not commensurable. What they share is a strategic concern with indexing the Valley relative to the wider political struggles in which we are already engaged.

In his piece, Eric Giannella presents a Weberian critique of Silicon Valley as fundamentally amoral. Looking at recent examples of technological development, Giannella notes how the ideological statements of leading figures deploy the rhetoric of "progress" in order to mask a deeper indifference for personal accountability and moral judgment. Against this view, Freddy Foks claims that Silicon Valley has unclear moral foundations, making the political and social stakes of its technological artifacts fundamentally uncertain. He suggests a genealogical exploration of key informational and material innovations that have paved the way for objects like the smartphone, as well as a comparative approach to other periods of mass technological shifting. Finally, Ben Shestakofsky presents an ethnographic study of the working conditions present in software production, noting unexpected parallels and differences with previous models of labor productivity such as factory work. He problematizes the notion of a distinctive Silicon Valley "culture" by revealing it as just another form of work: one whose distinctive internal practices and place in society do not separate it from history or necessarily lay the groundwork for radical change, good or ill.

As such, these pieces both extend and complicate the ways of thinking about Silicon Valley that are prevalent in both mass media and academic debates, reframing a conversation whose intensity and urgency will only increase in the coming years.

MORALITY AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

by ERIC GIANNELLA

Brian Mayer didn't expect to become the "most hated person in San Francisco, for a day." After spending thirty minutes in line for a food truck, he built a service that would book reservations at Bay Area restaurants under fictional names and then sell those reservations to people willing to pay to get a table at the last minute. To horrified observers, it was scalping and gentrification all in one. It even led a writer at TechCrunch, which normally channels the go-go anxiety in Silicon Valley, to post an article titled "Stop the Jerk Tech." When replying to critics on his blog, Mayer wrote, "Is this even legal? Is it ethical? ... To be honest, I haven't spent a lot of time thinking through these questions. I built this site as an experiment in consumer demand for a particular product..."

Part of the reason for the backlash against Mayer is that his service epitomized a shift toward amorality in Silicon Valley. It hasn't always been this way. For much of its history as the heart of information technology, people in Silicon Valley had robust conversations about morality and ethics. In the 70s and early 80s, debates about software (free vs. commercial) and competing visions of technological utopias (e.g., libertarian vs. socialist) were relatively commonplace and infused engineering choices with a distinctly moral dimension. Even as recently as a decade ago, the Google founders insisted they understood the distinction between opportunism and ethical business through their motto, "Don't be evil." At a minimum, debate forced people to think about and articulate moral views. Yet, over time, dramatic examples such as the personal computer, the internet, and search engines seem to have convinced those of us in Silicon Valley that information technology is generally a force for *good*.[1] Moreover, the fact that these technologies happen to be beneficial to people and successful in the marketplace has lulled many into thinking that market success is ethics enough. As Mayer puts it, "If someone does pay for it willingly, is it really unethical?"

Critiques of recent scandals in Silicon Valley rightly place the blame on a culture that supports amorality, thoughtlessness, and ignorance rather than ill intent. But the problem runs much deeper, because Silicon Valley's amorality problem arises from the implicit and explicit *narrative of progress* companies use for marketing and that people use to find meaning in their work. By accepting this narrative of progress uncritically, imagining that technological change equals historic human betterment, many in Silicon Valley excuse themselves from moral reflection. Put simply, the progress narrative short-circuits moral reflection on the consequences of new technologies.

The progress narrative has a strong hold on Silicon Valley for business and cultural reasons. The idea that technology will bring about a better world for everyone can be traced back to the Enlightenment aspiration to "master all things by calculation" in the words of Max Weber.[2] The successes of science and technology give rise to a faith among some that rationality itself tends to be a force for good.[3] This faith makes business easier because companies can claim to be

contributing to progress while skirting the moral views of the various groups affected by their products and services. Most investors would rather not see their firms get mired in the fraught issue of defining what is morally better according to various groups; they prefer objective benefits, measured via return on investment (ROI) or other metrics. Yet, the fact that business goals and cultural sentiments go hand in hand so well ought to give us pause.

The idea that technology will bring about a better world for everyone can be traced back to the Enlightenment aspiration to "master all things by calculation" in the words of Max Weber.

The idea of progress is popular because it ends up negating itself, and as a result, makes almost no demands upon us. In Silicon Valley, *progress* gets us thinking about *objectively better*, which suggests that we come up with some rational way to define *better* (e.g., ROI). But the only way to say that something is *better* in the sense we associate with *progress* is to first ask whether it is *moral*. Morality is inherently subjective and a-rational. Suggesting that a technology represents *progress* in any meaningful, moral sense would require understanding the values of the people affected by the technology. Few businesses and investors would be willing to claim they contributed to *progress* if held to account by this standard. If people are concerned with assessing whether specific technologies are helpful or harmful in a moral sense, they should abandon the progress narrative. *Progress*, as we think of it, invites us to cannibalize our initial moral aspirations with rationality, thus leaving us out of touch with moral intuitions. It leads us to rely on efficiency as a proxy for morality and makes moral discourse seem superfluous.

WHY PROGRESS AND RATIONALITY ARE SO CLOSELY LINKED IN OUR IMAGINATION

We need to look to our cultural history to see why our understanding of progress is so bound up with rationality. Silicon Valley's faith in progress is the purest distillation of Enlightenment ideas that Max Weber saw embodied in early Americans like Ben Franklin.[4] Weber was interested in the rapidly growing role of rationality in changing how people lived and experienced life.[5] People like Ben Franklin not only thrived on a pragmatic, rational approach to life, they celebrated it. They took the rational and calculating style of thought that made the sciences so successful and applied it to every aspect of life. Because worldly success demonstrated one's grace (in Protestant America), productivity became a moral issue and rationality was its engine. This allowed early Americans to view a purely means-ends approach to life as praiseworthy rather than shallow.

Once this means-ends approach to life was introduced, Weber thought that there was no going back. Rationally designed and managed firms would spread because they would outcompete firms that were run on more traditional bases – such as a mixture of family obligation and devotion to craft. Henry Ford's manufacturing system for the Model-T would beat any other system for producing cars.

Yet it was not just businesses that saw rationality applied in greater measure. In the German city-states of the late 19th century, professional administrators following explicit rational procedures allowed the government to attain a previously unimaginable level of speed, coordination and power. The rapidly expanding use of rationality in planning and running human affairs could also be seen in religion, the law, and even the university.

While it had innumerable practical benefits, applying more rationality to more of life took an existential toll. Combined with scientific explanations of the natural world, the observation that so much of life could be controlled through systematization reduced, for some, the power of traditional sources of meaning – superstition, religion, as well as pre-modern ethics like honor. With science being able to explain so much, and technology able to control so much, the world had become disenchanted.

WHY *PROGRESS* BECAME A SOURCE OF MEANING

Weber knew that people need narratives to provide coherence between their lives and their understanding of the world. He wondered what new beliefs modern people would invent to find meaning in their lives. Ironically, with no common ground left but the tools of disenchantment, we have enchanted those tools. John Gray describes the general pattern:

> *"Modern myths are myths of salvation stated in secular terms. What both kinds of myths have in common is that they answer to a need for meaning that cannot be denied. In order to survive, humans have invented science. Pursued consistently, scientific inquiry acts to undermine myth. But life without myth is impossible, so science has become a channel for myths – chief among them, a myth of salvation through science."[6]*

To put it another way, progress is the only myth left when rationality has eviscerated other sources of meaning. Because of our faith in progress we have granted rationality itself a positive moral valence.

This problem of meaning is brought to a head in Silicon Valley. In trying to answer the question, "what does all this new technology mean for us?" Silicon Valley executives, investors and journalists often default to a story about human *progress*. Moreover, many in Silicon Valley are so privileged and talented that they can ask themselves what they would like their work to *mean* beyond simply making them richer. Venture capitalists (VCs) and entrepreneurs regularly invoke phrases like "make a difference," "have an impact," or "change the world," which suggest that they at least partially view their work in moral terms; in terms of beneficence. Of the thousands of investments VCs might screen per year, they end up funding less than one percent. Yet, it is troublingly hard to glean consistent moral criteria from their investment choices. For people with so much discretion, one would think a robust concern with "changing the world" in any meaningful, moral sense, would at least preclude them from investing in companies such as Zynga; or, for that matter, cause them to fire the management team of Uber.

The narrative of progress proves very useful here. One way to claim moral credit and disavow blame is to equate economic benefits with moral benefits. If productivity improves, that is morally good. If productivity does not improve, it is not *good*, but it is also not *bad*. The rhetoric around innovation relies on this logic. The harshest condemnation one can receive is "not innovative." Talking about innovation provides a means for having a pseudo-moral discourse. It celebrates the good but fails to condemn the bad. Moreover, by placing all technologies within the same category, the innovation rhetoric legitimates each new technology product, however frivolous, by association with major beneficial technologies such as email and databases. The halo cast by a tiny minority makes inquiring about the moral implications of new technologies appear less urgent.

Another business benefit of finding meaning in a story about innovation is that it can motivate people. Imagining that major technological change might occur at any moment keeps buyers attentive. Journalists would rather write about the significance of historical trends than incremental changes in a business. Entrepreneurs would like to believe that the technology they are commercializing will be of tremendous consequence. Some engineers can indulge in the knowledge that they do the hard and under-appreciated *real work* of building celebrated products and services. *Innovation* justifies purchases, assigns roles, and allows people to have something bigger and more interesting to talk about than the fortunes of a company, but it will never lead to serious moral evaluation of a technology.

WHEN THE ONLY MEANS ARE RATIONALITY, THE ENDS BECOME MORE RATIONALITY

A common business model today is to optimize some activity. Information technology is perfectly suited as a tool to make activities more efficient (i.e., rational in a technical sense). Only a few ideologues would flat-out claim that more rationality is, as a rule, *good*.[7] Yet, because we've gotten so adept at using information technology to rationally plan, we'd like to be able to claim that making things more rational is *good*. This Enlightenment motif that "more rationality = progress" justifies the countless products and services whose origins can be traced to someone noticing an opportunity for optimization. But, if we put this default assumption aside for a moment, there are many cases in which we need to question whether making activities more rational in a technical sense is moral. Is workforce-scheduling software that makes single-parents' lives even more demanding a good thing? Is automating someone's job if we know they will struggle to find other work a good thing?

This brings us back to why our notion of progress is self-negating. We would like progress to be defined in moral terms. Yet, because not everyone shares the same morals, businesses and governments try to redefine progress in objective terms. Because we fear charges of subjectivity, we look to rational means and rational measures for pursuing objective goals. Besides, moral goals would, in many cases, make it impossible to serve everyone (to "scale," in the local parlance). As a result, we take a technocrat's approach to progress: we try to define it in objective terms and pursue it through rational means.[8] Yet, the only criteria we have for

better (i.e., progress) are informed by subjective, moral intuitions. How we might define and measure *better*, even in an economic sense (e.g., cost-of-living adjusted income or reduced income disparity), is informed by moral intuitions. If we deny the importance of these moral intuitions, we cannot say much, if anything, about whether something is *good* or *bad*.[9] In our culture, progress is self-negating because we define and pursue progress solely in objective, rational terms, thus ignoring our inherently subjective moral intuitions and allowing them to atrophy. It is a classic story of the means overtaking the ends.

WE NEED TO TALK MORE OPENLY ABOUT MORAL CONSEQUENCES OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

What if we allowed ourselves to reflect on and talk about morality a bit more? A more robust public moral discourse would make it less likely that companies such as Zynga, which has a history of treating employees and customers terribly, receive venture capital funding or find qualified job applicants. Marc Pincus, the longtime CEO, was known by many as extremely focused on "winning"—dominating competitors and going public. He convinced some of the most prestigious venture capital firms in the Bay Area to bankroll his efforts. Apart from rampant copying of other developers' games, extreme overwork of engineers, and vicious treatment of some employees, the design of Zynga's games also revealed an astounding disrespect for its users. It used an understanding of behavioral psychology, even hiring a psychologist, to design games to be more addictive. Had public conversation in Silicon Valley been more focused on moral issues, it would have been more difficult for Pincus to get venture capital funding and hire sought-after engineers.

There are, of course, cases more nuanced than Zynga that would have benefitted from a more robust discourse about morality. Until it was banned by the FDA from selling a product with unproven health claims, many celebrated 23andMe for doing something "innovative." (In fact, many then complained that the injunction represented a "government threat to innovation.") The company found a way to sell personal genetic tests for $99. People argued for the benefits that the company would bring: it would lower the cost of other forms of genetic testing; it would provide a massive repository of genetic data for researchers. It would bring the promise of genomic medicine closer to reality.

Despite 23andMe's seeming aspirations to make money while helping people, any concrete benefits to consumers were far off into the future – and there were potential harms to consumers that were buried in Silicon Valley's excitement. In other words, there were moral implications of selling the tests that we might have attended to if not for our desire to have another example of a commercially successful technology that helps people. For instance, do we think it is good for people to obtain hard-to-interpret genetic test results? Some patients might get unjustified medical tests, experience unwarranted anxiety, change their lifestyles or, in the worst cases, may decide to stop taking medications. Of course, 23andMe's investors would not want to see the product marketed as a novelty (though some consumers treated it this way). Many more people would be willing to purchase the product if it represented a cheap medical screening.

The FDA had been trying for at least four years to get 23andMe to prove its health claims or to stop making health claims. In its letter telling the company it could no longer sell products in the U.S., the FDA noted:

> *"... your company's website at www.23andme.com/health (most recently viewed on November 6, 2013) markets the PGS [Personal Genome Service] for providing "health reports on 254 diseases and conditions," including categories such as "carrier status," "health risks," and "drug response," and specifically as a "first step in prevention" that enables users to "take steps toward mitigating serious diseases" such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, and breast cancer."*[10]

Banned from sale in the U.S., 23andMe just began selling its product in the U.K. In a recent interview on the BBC, CEO Anne Wojcicki could be heard again explaining the potential health benefits of her firm's genetic tests.

Second, and perhaps just as troubling, is what 23andMe has long planned to do with genetic data. In order to justify the low price of its tests to investors, 23andMe will recoup money by selling aggregated data to other companies. The recently announced $60 million deal with Genentech suggests the real money will be made here.[11] Unfortunately, because genomics is such an immature field, it is unclear what information is truly anonymous and what information might someday provide clues for exposing personal genetic data. The marketing emphasis on medical relevance rather than fun novelty makes consumers much more willing to compromise on their privacy.

23andMe should have been a long-term research project, not a Silicon Valley startup. Given its business model, investors should not have funded it, nor should the media have celebrated it. There were too many questions to be resolved in terms of consumer's use of the test results and potential misuse of genomic data by other firms.

My overall point is that the progress narrative is counterproductive. We ought to abandon it. A simple step is to stop using obfuscating terms that prop up a progress narrative. Words like *innovation*, *impact* and *disruption* invite an abstract style of thinking and talking that leaves little room for moral reflection.[12] Talking about technology in terms of *progress* invites a technocratic and uncritical approach to thinking about the human good. It quickly moves from real benefits for real people to abstract systems upon systems that may someday benefit people. By encouraging this hyper-analytical thinking, the idea of progress desensitizes us to the use of moral judgment. It allows our moral intuitions to atrophy.[13] It serves a function: it preserves the false connection between what some Silicon Valley firms do, in terms of consequences for real people, and what they claim to do in terms of ushering in a better future. The progress narrative shrouds the tech industry in virtue for playing a key role in technological change while weakening moral evaluation of new products and services.

We ought to treat the tech industry as any other industry and put aside the association with human progress. Some technologies do improve our lives in general, but the assumption that technology is a force for good has proved harmful. Letting go of the idea of progress would allow us to talk more clearly about the moral consequences of new products and services.

AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE ABOUT CONTRIBUTION

There are alternatives to the progress narrative for making work in technology meaningful. Many people find meaning in their work through a narrative about making a contribution. Rather than thinking about contribution in a historic sense (i.e., progress), contribution can be thought in terms of specific groups of people.[14] People in many fields—teachers, cooks, doctors, among others—find meaning in their work through making a contribution to specific people. In tech, some might define the affected group more broadly, for example, programmers who rely on a software development tool, the users of a word processor, or the people who enjoy a particular game. The point is that knowing who will be affected by our work keeps us honest in terms of what we think is a contribution.

There is a second benefit to thinking of contribution in terms of specific people or groups rather than human progress generally. Knowing a group through individuals rather than via market segments prevents professionals from inadvertently imposing one set of values on groups with disparate values. In other words, thinking about contributions in terms of specific groups encourages understanding the people within those groups.[15] Many of the complaints about Silicon Valley's service and social media tools focus on the fact that they reflect the concerns and interests of privileged young urbanites. Tools developed with the idea of contributing to specific groups would do less to encourage convergence of views about what constitutes the "good life."[16]

None of this is to say that there are no do-gooders in tech. There are people who have a clear idea of how the technologies they are developing will serve specific groups – whether pursuing social justice in the United States or for providing better medical care in poorer nations. The morality of these causes does not stem from their association with progress – it flows from the desire to bring about real benefits that real people affected would say are *good*. Although it would be ideal if everyone could pursue such causes, that day is a long way off.

That does not leave everyone else off the hook. Everyone can, at a minimum, ask whether they are doing more harm than good. The trouble in Silicon Valley is that many talented, highly educated young people seem relatively unconcerned with the potential for harm. To be more aware of not harming people, much less helping them, we need to cultivate moral intuitions by discussing the consequences of our work for specific people.[17] The search for solidarity with specific people, not some objectively better moment in human history, keeps us exercising our moral intuitions.

Eric Giannella is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at UC Berkeley.

---

1 I am going to refer to "us" and "we" in this essay because having grown up in Silicon Valley, with my parents and now many of my friends in tech, I consider myself a member of this culture (there are large disagreements in any culture).
2 Weber, Max. 1958 [1919]. "Science as a Vocation." *Daedalus* 87, no. 1: 117.

3 For example: Weber, Max. 1949. Pp. 34-47 of "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality in Sociology and Economics" in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. Free Press.

4 Weber, Max. 2012 [1905]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Dover.

5 Brubaker, Rogers. 1984. *The Limits of Rationality: An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber*. HarperCollins.

Schluchter, Wolfgang. 1985. *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History*. University of California Press.

6 Gray, John. 2013. P. 82 of *The Silence of Animals: On Progress and Other Modern Myths*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

7 See so-called "rationalist" groups in the Bay Area, such as http://rationality.org/ or the meet-ups promoted by http://lesswrong.com

8 For example, Marcuse argues that the rise of technocratic thinking curtails our ability to reflect and criticize. Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man*. Beacon Press.

9 On the idea of moral intuitions, see the work of Charles Taylor, such as Chapter 1 of *Sources of the Self*: The *Making of the Modern Identity*. 1989. Harvard University Press.

10 http://www.fda.gov/ICECI/EnforcementActions/WarningLetters/2013/ucm376296.htm

11 http://www.forbes.com/sites/matthewherper/2015/01/06/surprise-with-60-million-genentech-deal-23andme-has-a-business-plan/

12 In terms of communicating any underlying substance that people might attach to these words – one could replace *innovation* with "change" or "improvement", *impact* with "effects" or "consequences" and *disruption* with "gain market share".

13 The language of benevolence and emphasis on real people is borrowed from chapter 9 in:

Taylor, Charles. 1991. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Harvard University Press.

14 This discussion largely parallels Richard Rorty's pragmatist defense of scientific contributions being made to a specific community versus to a universal history of scientific progress. See:

Rorty, Richard. 1991. "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*. Cambridge University Press.

15 Weber's notion that formal and substantive rationality are often in competition captures an important tension here. Weber called the use of rationality to make activities more internally coherent *rationalization*. Rationalization is a process of logically orchestrating a set of activities in order to pursue certain ends. (Note that this is exactly what many information technologies help us do). Weber was particularly interested in the spread of *formal* rationality in recent history. Formal rationality strives for consistent, objective logic across contexts – it needs no reference to culture, time or place. As reliance on formal rationality expands, it often conflicts with substantive rationality. Substantive rationality is about whether something is reasonable in a particular context – it relies on subjective understandings of the people in that context. The spread of a single, technically efficient way of doing things might trample on a variety of local norms and values. The conflict in this essay might be reframed as faith in progress leading people to embrace formal rationality at the expense of substantive rationality.

16 See the work of Paul Feyerabend for an argument about the link between the veneration of rationality and the convergence and narrowing of human experience (e.g., the final chapters of *Against Method* or the introduction to *Conquest of Abundance*).

Feyerabend, Paul. 1957. *Against Method*. Verso.

17 I am not claiming that we should only evaluate actions in light of their consequences (i.e., consequentialism). I am saying that, as a starting point for moral reflection, people might ask themselves whether they expect a new product or service to be beneficial or harmful to the people affected. Respect for individuals and groups matters.

DISRUPTING THE DISRUPTORS

by FREDDY FOKS

The problem with Silicon Valley is not just that we are being sold an overly simplistic world of rational progress, as Eric Giannella argues, but a much more fundamental issue: that we don't know what we are being sold at all. If we're going to enrich our moral intuitions then we'll have to get a better sense of what those intuitions might be about in the first place. We will have to look behind the scenes at the back end of things.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF 'GOOD'

Giannella's argument goes something like this: the word 'good' can mean different things in different contexts. If I was going to buy some piece of tech—a new rifle, let's say—I would be buying it to meet some need. Imagine that I've chosen this rifle because I reckon that it's a better gun than the one I currently own. I have based this judgment on a couple of its attributes: its smaller size and its higher rate of fire. These qualities represent 'progress' on a number of levels. Yet, this would not mean that selling it to me would be 'a good thing.' Giannella applies this kind of argument to technology in general and effectively punctures the complacency of a discourse that equates 'moral good' with progress understood simply as increased efficiency. The gun's uses, intended and unintended, raise a host of moral dilemmas. What is efficiency *for* and who benefits: whose progress and which rationality?

A similar case was made by the eighteenth century economist and moral philosopherAdam Smith when he wrote, "it seems impossible that the approbation of virtue should be a sentiment of the same kind with that by which we approve of a convenient and well-contrived building; or that we should have no other reason for praising a man than that for which we commend a chest of drawers." Recognizing the distinctions between 'good guns,' 'good people,' and 'good policies' doesn't solve our moral quandaries. Giannella provides a nuanced analysis of these distinctions in relation to Silicon Valley. Placing an emphasis on cultivating our "moral intuitions," he wants us to avoid the 'short-circuiting' of inevitably messy ethical discussions in order to make us think more seriously about the kind of social world we want to create. A similar point was made in the classic paper 'Do Artefacts have Politics' by Langdon Winner.[1] However, Winner's and Giannella's arguments share a common problem rooted in their shared view of 'tech.' The 'artefacts' of the new age are not simply tools. Silicon Valley sells Information Technology. Information can be used for many different things.

Our capacities for judging whether a thing is good or not clearly depends, in part, on how we think the thing is going to be used and what its human consequences will be. On this point Giannella's argument is useful. But Silicon Valley's "amorality problem" lies as much in its talk of progress as in its handling of information. How is it that we have so little information about our information econ-

omy? Who holds this information, what is it, and what is it used for? Giannella inadvertently points to the importance of these questions in the examples of successful regulation he cites. Brian Mayer

> *Knowing what something is involves knowing how it came into being.*

was lambasted for his app once people realized what it was doing. The company *23andMe* was censured by the FDA, and banned from selling its product in the United States, when the consequences of its services were realized. Both cases demonstrate that critiques of technology can be leveled once information is available about what the service is and when we can begin to see how it might be used. Knowing what a technology will be used for is premised on the ability to know, or guess, what the technology *is*. Giannella cites examples of genetic-screening services. Langdon Winner discussed tomato-picking machines and highway overpasses. Yet if we keep treating connective media as ontologically identical to non-, or minimally-, connective commodities, we will continue to have poor grounds for moral reasoning, which no deflation of 'progress' discourse can begin to remedy.

MARX'S CHERRY TREE, OR TWO KINDS OF MORAL REASONING

On this count, I want to distinguish between two kinds of moral reasoning. I call these two modes of enquiry the *moral front end* **and the** *moral back end*. Attending to both front and back ends might give us a better way to grapple with Silicon Valley's amorality problem. We discuss the moral front end of a thing or activity when we discuss the morality of its uses based on immediate information. The moral back end is only available once we have additional information about what something is, how it came into being, and what it might be hiding within it. Both front and back ends make moral intuitions available.

This distinction is similar to a point made by Karl Marx in the *German Ideology*. Marx's criticism of Ludwig Feuerbach's epistemology lay in what we might call today 'social ontology.' In a key passage he raises the question of what philosophical quandaries might be generated by perceiving a cherry tree in the garden. To Feuerbach, cast as a naive empiricist, problems of perception may be posed in the language of 'essences' and 'representations.' The empiricist may also be concerned about the tree's uses: how we might chop it up, distribute it, or make something from it. The moral dilemmas here are all about surfaces, and uses.

To Marx, these epistemological questions are only partly useful. He wants us to focus on history and economics: "The cherry-tree, like almost all fruit-trees, was, as is well known, only a few centuries ago transplanted by commerce into our zone, and therefore only by this action of a definite society in a definite age it has become 'sensuous certainty'." Knowing what something is involves knowing how it came into being. To be sure, we can discuss how to use the tree's trunk and branches after cutting it down without being able to answer why it came to be planted in the back garden in the first place. Something can be available for discussion without having a full knowledge of what it is. However, Marx's point sug-

gests that knowing about something's human origins, even something as seemingly 'natural' as a cherry tree, makes better discussion and richer moral intuitions available.

A different example might bring this home more clearly. Let's say that I want to buy a new pair of sneakers.

> *The question of moral front ends and moral back ends is the difference between imagination and knowledge; between surfaces and origins.*

There seem to be no moral front-end problems here, unlike in the case of the rifle above. I will use the sneakers to play sports, look great, and appear fashionable. However, a different kind of moral claim may be lodged against the shoes. I am about to buy the pair when a friend stops me and says that the firm, whose trade-mark is swooshed along the side of the shoe, is well-known for employing desperately poor workers in near sweatshop conditions. What I thought I was buying was a pair of shoes to go jogging in, but what I seem to be buying now is a part in the exploitation of workers. My response to the sudden appearance of this moral back end can go a number of ways: I could choose to buy another pair of sneakers, I could organize boycotts of products made in sweatshops, or I could argue that buying the shoes means that the workers gain some share in their value as a result of trickle-down economics. Whatever. The point is that my friend's intervention enabled me to see, like Marx's cherry-tree, that what I thought of as a clear decision about objects and utility—running comfortably, looking good, showing off—involved a significant and hitherto hidden moral hazard. More information allows us to generate richer moral intuitions. With this in mind, what kind of answers might be generated by the questions: 'What is an iPhone?' or 'What is a social network?'

The question of moral front ends and moral back ends is the difference between imagination and knowledge; between surfaces and origins. An immediate criticism can be lodged against my division between front and back ends. There is, strictly, no clear-cut distinction here that holds in all cases. For instance, I may be eminently well informed on a specific subject, commodity, or process. In this case there may be an open door between front-end and back-end morality, with very little distinction drawn between how something comes into being and the large number of immediately available imaginative moral situations that a technology, product, or policy might present to me for comment and debate. If I am an expert on a thing—its production, exchange, and uses—there may be a large range of possible moral intuitions I can immediately experience without recourse to additional information. Marx may have had much to say about the Cherry tree in his garden without needing to be told anything about the economic history of southern Germany—he was an expert. His moral intuitions had been sufficiently cultivated by a certain way of thinking about the world to recognize in the object of analysis a number of moral quandaries relating to proletarianization, labor, capital, and politics. On the other hand, I may be overtly imaginative and able to construct multiple possible alternate social worlds on the basis of a small smattering of facts and a large deal of ethical creativity—I may be a science fiction writer.

In both limit cases, however—the expert and the creative savant—attending to back-end morality is part of the process; a frame of mind which we know from experience can lead to many new moral intuitions. There is always the possibility that the appearance of a seemingly clear ethical situation may be concealing a back door—hidden until new knowledge emerges or is introduced into the public domain. Then more back ends—hitherto unseen and unimagined—can be delineated and brought to light to provoke new moral intuitions. This was Marx's critique of Feuerbach's epistemology. This is why Edward Snowden felt compelled to reveal the structure of America's national security state. We need an account of social forces, intentions, and economic processes before we can understand an artifact like a cherry tree. When information about the back end of things is not readily available, and, even more so, when information is made unavailable, about what a thing might be and how it came into being, the distinction between front- and back-end reasoning becomes more closed off; the architecture of moral reasoning more baroque. If we attend to surfaces we might be left with shallow discussions.

SILICON VALLEY, TECHNOLOGY AND
BACK-END MORALITY

Anyone who has done a job search in tech, or who talks to friends in the sector, will have heard of roles like: "software engineer for new youth-focused website. Front-end new media, back-end data capture, market metrics." Front-end disruption, back-end consolidation. The Janus-face of new communications technology has long been recognized. In an essay published in 1953, sociologist Karl Mannheim made the argument that communications networks—e.g., roads, mail-systems, and printing presses—have an ineluctably centripetal effect, drawing power closer into itself. The Feudal state, Mannheim thought, was so limited and dispersed, despite the violence and megalomaniac intent of its ruling class, because of the terrible roads, slow water transport, and the impoverished communications technologies that existed in the Middle Ages. Rule is only exercised over constituencies that can be brought into being through some kind of representative and communicative function.

Power, Mannheim wrote, has an inherent "tendenc[y] towards concentration."[2] Twentieth-century worriers about telephone and radio and television knew that the increase of easy leisure meant the dispersal of a certain kind of political communication on the soapbox and in the public hall. What will it mean for our democracies when advertising companies own our voting records; when where we go, what we read, and who we meet are the property of bodies with opaque interests, or interests as banal as trying to sell us new televisions and telephones and radios?

For the generation of values we rely on separate spheres of exchange and labor and of work and leisure. We rely for the protection of our liberties on hard-fought distinctions between power and politics and money. How will the recurrent scandals that beset public institutions corrupted by profit look in contrast to the quickly arriving world in which profit-seeking organizations, aided and abetted

by the most coercive arms of state power, capture the grounds of potential for democratic citizenship itself? Is this the new dawn of the age of Silicon Valley? Is *this* its "amorality problem"?

Giannella's article presumes that 'tech' is something obvious, something that has multiple uses; that we have to know how to use it to build a better world. But an iPhone is not simply a tool, like a pair of shoes or a gun is a tool. Its functions are dispersed beyond the uses its users make use of it for. Its uses extend beyond its surface. While Marx pointed out that the cherry tree was, ontologically, *minimally-historically-connective*—connecting constituencies of traders

---

I may use my phone to make calls to friends, but the phone's creators may simultaneously be using my phone calls to build a picture of my patterns of consumption...

---

and workers in historical relations—information technology is *maximally-simultaneously-connective*—connecting multiple constituencies at the same time.[3] For instance, I may use my phone to make calls to friends, but the phone's creators may simultaneously be using my phone calls to build a picture of my patterns of consumption, or sexual, or political, persuasions—conceived as patterns of consumption—or any other number of uses. This state of affairs is itself the result of the concretization of layers of various, sometimes contradictory, historical and political conjunctures: the laying of undersea cables, orbiting satellites, and engagements in grand strategy. Individual items of 'technology' nest in webs of connective tissue. A smartphone has a multitude of moral back ends.

To pull back from the global to the local, a particularly jarring example of contemporary ontological mystification is the iPhone flashlight app developed by a company called iHandy. The front end was all about utility for the user. The back end was all about utility for the data gatherers. What looked like a helpful tool with an obvious function for the end user—a flashlight on your phone—was also a helpful tool with an utterly different function for the producer. There was a firewall between these uses and ends, or to put it better, perhaps, a one-way mirror. The app's designers could see through the back end into the front, but the users could not. Only additional information and journalistic reporting meant that users could make informed choices about the app. When tools like flashlights end up hiding surveillance technology in them, we should recognize that we have entered a strange new age, an age characterized by almost limitless information stored out of sight.

We are beginning to get a better sense of the politics and economics of Silicon Valley. What is becoming increasingly clear is that nothing is as it seems. This is because when we buy Silicon Valley's goods we do not simply buy *things*, but *services*. In Michel Callon's terms, they 'translate' between constituencies of agencies simultaneously.[4] This makes them different from Marx's cherry tree in which relations are crystallized in history. *History is now and America*—to bowd-

lerize T.S. Eliot. The things we use, wear, and manipulate are connective devices. They are not widgets. They are not like other machines. They are multimedia nodes, whose uses we do not own, masquerading as useful things we are in control of. Once embedded in the network, a phone or computer's functions are never wholly ours. This means that we are, at least minimally, enmeshed in the intentions, purposes, and motives of a set of opaque agencies. It seems unlikely that 'progress' is the right way to describe this world—it might be, but it might not.

The indeterminacy of our media age means that the back ends of many of the things we confront are closed and locked and unavailable for discussion. In fact, we have very little idea about what kinds of back ends might exist at all. How are moral intuitions meant to be provoked in this case? When confronting these new technologies we are not in clear possession of our ethical faculties.

Criticizing the discourse of 'progress' is a helpful start, but understanding why we could even begin to believe this description of the social reality of 'tech' is surely the real problem.

As Evgeny Morozov has recently pointed out, many works of tech criticism, Giannella's included, contain their own idea of historical development—a story, not of progress, but decline. In Giannella's case it is Max Weber's ideas about modernity and bureaucratization and the Frankfurt School's notions of Enlightenment and decay that he uses to argue against the slick techno-speak of Silicon Valley. The role of the expert, the Silicon Valley venture capitalist or the critical social scientist, is to understand these historical processes and exploit them for rhetorical capital. Both rely on a meta-history, to use Hayden White's term, that presumes some process or rationality at work in history itself. Yet if we really face a world of endless back ends, neither Max Weber nor Silicon Valley's brand of apolitical libertarian pap will help us much. We see a cherry tree in the garden and have no account of how or why it got there. As the political theorists Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit have persuasively argued, there is a name for the political class that is beholden to such hidden, arbitrary, power: slaves.[5]

POLITICAL ONTOLOGIES

To back-pedal a bit from the dire conclusion to the previous section, Pettit and Skinner's republican theory of liberty concerns the arbitrary subjection of persons to *sovereign* rule. I may be arbitrarily subjected to a domineering parent or partner, and thus seemingly enslaved, but my political status as a free citizen trumps this state of affairs and renders my subjection illegal and not a question of political ontology, i.e., the kind of citizen I am. Yet if the arbitrary opacity of intent begins to blur into the grounds of democratic citizenship itself—e.g., free association, secret ballot, and free speech—then we may need to reconsider the basis of our political statuses.

The convergence of state power and individualized technology is not new. Legal instruments have always mediated these relationships. The spaces for political contestation, economic production, and communal distribution have always been sites of debate, liable to provoke moral sentiments—often anger—and have led to the contracting of multiple parties within the settlements of law and custom. Putting in place robust legislation for data protection was considered a common-

sense response to the intuition that data are sensitive. The previous few years have seen this moral intuition thrown out repeatedly because we should trust tech companies. Putting trust in power, concentrations of power, and agencies of powerful bodies, is antithetical to democratic, and certainly liberal, citizenship. Liberals, historically speaking, have been intent on busting trusts.

There are signs that political communities are beginning to wake up to the re-organizations of liberty, law, and economy that are being swiftly secreted through the fiber-optic cables of the world. Recent discussions in the European Parliament about the virtual monopoly of Google in the world of web search is a beginning. The British political party the Liberal Democrats have proposed the creation of a digital bill of rights in their election manifesto. Despite this progress, we have yet to get a good conceptual grip on the production of the new media that seeks to provide information, money, and jobs in relationships that subvert, minimize, or ignore traditional legal jurisdictions. In Langdon Winner's terms, we are in a state of considerable technological "flexibility." Yet unlike the technology he discussed, it is not clear that biometric data, data-mining, and online voting are of the same ontological status as highways, casting-moulds, and agricultural machinery. It seems like the technology that is so flexible today is the technology of governance itself.

In his recent inaugural lecture "Political Theory and Real Politics in the Age of the Internet," Professor of Politics David Runciman said that we are waiting for the Thomas Hobbes of the Internet age. This is a rather big ask. While it would be nice for our age to birth a thinker like Hobbes to grapple with the politics of the new total media age, in the meantime we need to begin to think of ways to legislate and disrupt the disruptors so that, as Giannella urges, the new technology is bent to the peoples' will rather than the people to the tech giants.

A healthy dose of skepticism about 'progress' is a beginning. But it only gets us so far. Positing other meta-narratives about 'modernity,' 'hyper-modernity,' or 'rationalization' in response can only ever be partially helpful in understanding our world. Weber's 'Puritan Ethic' may tell us something about the *mentalité* of tech-workers but it tells us little about their power. Replying to meta-historical accounts of rationalization or modernization, like Giannella's, by arguing that we need to attend to back ends does not necessarily mean falling into fears of the Loch Ness monster "lurking beneath the surface," as Andrea Denhoed put it last year in *The New Yorker*. Back ends can always be pried open. Unlocked, and cleared out, however, they may prove to be hiding rather politically embarrassing piles of paperwork and mess; structures of power that might look imperial rather than national, economic rather than political, confused rather than rational.[6] Opening them up to inspection would require significant judicial or political will.

If Silicon Valley has an amorality problem it lies in its self-belief that it is inaugurating a politics of democracy while keeping the sinews of its power hidden from view behind empty words and the rhetoric of not being evil. This is not a problem of progress. Moral intuitions have become separated from the messy world of action in which moral practice must be brought to bear. The role of the expert must be to adopt the role of my friend in the sportswear store. Rather than pose more meta-histories, we need more facts. Back ends need to be opened up

so that we can begin informed public discussions. Whether we will then see connective technologies as things to be heavily regulated, like guns, or minimally regulated, like sneakers, can be debated. For the time being, the kinds of moral intuitions provoked by assessing the back ends of the Valley's corporations are impossible to ascertain. We have so little information that we are left guessing. As Dave Eggers's book sales suggest, this is good for the science fiction trade. It is not good for progressive politics.

Freddy Foks is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Cambridge.

1 Winner, Langdon. 1980. "Do Artifacts Have Politics." *Daedalus*, 109(1):121-136
2 Mannheim, Karl. 1953. "Planned Society and the Problem of Human Personality" in Karl Mannheim ed. Paul Keckskemeti *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. P.258
3 I am indebted here to the discussion about 'representational media' and 'connective media' in David Trotter's *Literature in the First Media Age*(Harvard University Press, 2013) Pp.7-8
4 Callon, Michel. 1986. "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay" in ed. J. Law, *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
5 Pettit, Philip. 2002. "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple: On a Difference with Quentin Skinner." *Political Theory* 30(3):339-356
6 On the weighing of these claims Edward Snowden's views are: imperial, economic-cum-political, and confused, see Laura Poitras's documentary *Citizen Four* (2014)

MORE MACHINERY, LESS LABOR?

by
BENJAMIN SHESTAKOFSKY

Jobs and Technological Change in the 19th and 21st Centuries

Recent years have brought a resurgence of interest in how the rapid evolution of computer technologies is affecting work. Some have examined how smart machines are replacing manual labor, swallowing up the manufacturing jobs that have driven the growth of China's economy.[1] Others reveal how algorithms are supplanting knowledge workers. "Big data" and "machine learning" techniques help software engineers create algorithms that make more accurate and less biased judgments than well-trained humans. Software is already doing the work of medical lab technicians and replicating higher-order cognitive functioning, such as detecting human emotions and facial expressions, processing language, and even writing news articles.[2]

Technology has long played a role in both eliminating certain types of work and creating new opportunities. Today's debates often echo those of the past: technophiles believe that "disruption" is a source of social progress, whereas detractors worry that the coming waves of automation will deepen the insecurity and exploitation of workers. Both sides, however, often overlook the surprising ways in which, rather than creating "frictionless" economies, automation can in fact intensify the use of human labor.

In the remainder of this piece, I compare an exemplary study of the industrial revolution of the 19th century with a case study from the front lines of the automation revolution that many believe is now underway. In the Victorian era, new machinery did not replace human workers, but in fact often expanded their use. The same was true at a tech startup that I observed, where artificial intelligence was combined with the routinized application of human labor. Both of these cases draw attention to the specific ways in which technology restructures labor markets not only by eliminating jobs, but also by creating new types of work that must keep pace with machinery.

WORK AND TECHNOLOGY DURING THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

In 1977, historian Raphael Samuel published a masterful account of how the industrial revolution affected jobs in mid-Victorian Britain.[3] Whereas scholars had traditionally believed that the technological innovations of the 19th century supplanted handicraft skill, Samuel presents a plethora of firsthand accounts of manufacturing work to demonstrate that, rather than rendering human labor unnecessary, the industrial revolution "created a whole new world of labour-intensive jobs" (8). In industries as diverse as agriculture and food production, the building and construction trades, woodworking, and metallurgy, a familiar pattern emerged: as soon as a new piece of equipment was introduced into the production process, new jobs would spring up in and around the machine.

Just one of Samuel's countless examples is drawn from the mining industry. He describes how new steam-driven fans and pumps allowed workers and engineers to reach deeper deposits of coal. But larger mines meant that additional haulers were needed to handle more coal, while "longer galleries to travel…meant more roofs to prop, more roads to keep up, more rails to be laid down, while the increased use of blasting meant more hand-bored holes" (21). In a variety of trades, the growth in production enabled by new machinery was predicated upon the engagement of a greater number of workers in physical labor. Long after technology had supposedly revolutionized industry, Samuel shows pot-makers stomping on clay to mix the materials, men in the fur trade jumping on seal skins to render them more elastic, and the backbreaking toil that was required to produce the world's most powerful technology, the steam engine.

Manufacturers preferred "hand work" to automation for a variety of reasons. Sometimes human workers simply produced higher-quality output than machines. For instance, manufacturers of paint resisted mechanical stoves throughout the 19th century because hand production yielded better results. Other tasks were too complex to be automated: in trades like tanning and woodworking, variation in delicate raw materials meant that every step of manufacturing continued to rely upon human dexterity long after machines had been introduced into the production process. And in some cases, consumers simply found hand-made goods more aesthetically pleasing than their machine-made counterparts.

Machinery was frequently more expensive than workers, and could only be profitably run within the context of consistent, large-scale production. Manufacturers often preferred to scale workforces up or down on the fly to meet consumer demand. When they wanted to quickly ramp up production, "it was easier to take on extra hands…than to install expensive machinery and plant: less risky in the long run, and in the short run at least a great deal more profitable" (55).

Additionally, machinery was often viewed as an impediment to innovation. Carriage makers eschewed fixed capital investments that would hamper their ability to experiment with new product lines. Bespoke orders and limited production runs were common in metallurgy, and engineering firms resisted the mechanization that would limit them to standardized products.

In short, 19th-century manufacturers often preferred workers to machines because their capabilities and cost could make them more attractive than new equipment. In addition to delivering more reliably high-quality output, workers were also cheaper, more adaptable, and more easily replaced. Technological change had indeed ushered in an era of unprecedented economic expansion. However, this growth was driven in large part by how the application of innovative technologies expanded the division of labor and created a superabundance of low-cost workers.

HIGH-TECH HAND WORK IN THE 21st CENTURY

I n 2012 and 2013, I conducted participant-observation research at a company that I call AllDone, which administered a centralized online marketplace for local services in the United States. AllDone used Internet and mobile technologies to connect buyers and sellers of local services—from wedding photographers and DJs to electricians and plumbers—more efficiently than ever before. Consumers

would visit the website and enter a few details about the job that they wanted done, and the company would then introduce them to local providers of that service who might be interested in bidding for the job.

If this description manages to suggest a symphony of elegant algorithms seamlessly connecting buyers and sellers, the organization of work that I witnessed at AllDone bore a striking resemblance to a 19th-century British factory. Just like in Samuel's vignettes, at AllDone, "machinery was rarely self-acting, but required skilled hands to guide and to complete its work" (52). Artificial intelligence (AI) remains a work in progress. Many tasks that are easy for humans to complete are still difficult for algorithms alone to handle. Some software engineers deploy "artificial artificial intelligence" (AAI)—inserting routinized human labor into algorithmic processes—to fill in the gaps in software's capabilities.[4]

About 20 employees worked in AllDone's San Francisco office, half of them the software engineers and designers who built and managed the company's technological infrastructure. Rather than tasking its small and expensive engineering staff with perfecting the website's technological infrastructure, AllDone recruited 200 online contractors distributed throughout the Philippines to serve as AAI. The work-from-home team performed over ten thousand micro-tasks every day to guide and complete the work of AllDone's algorithmic machinery.

AllDone used hand work to supplement its code base for many of the same reasons that 19th-century factory owners often preferred workers to equipment. There were some tasks that humans performed better than machines. Like many other companies, AllDone used search engine optimization techniques to try to bump its pages to the top of search engine results.

> *Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.*

Companies that want to get in front of consumers create pages that are rich in the "keywords" that consumers search for (e.g. "best locksmith," "affordable tutor"). AllDone's engineers used a team of 50 Filipino writers to help the company attract buyers. They set up a web portal that would show writers descriptions of sellers registered on the site and the top keywords for the services they offered. Working with this automatically-generated information, the team wrote around 50,000 descriptions of the services that sellers offered per month.

The low cost of hiring workers in the Philippines, where the prevailing wage for qualified workers is far lower than in San Francisco, allowed the company to undertake projects that otherwise would have been infeasible. AllDone's engineers set up a process that allowed team members in the Philippines to curate each new seller's profile to enhance the perceived trustworthiness of the company's offerings. For instance, members of one team eliminated sellers whose services violated the company's guidelines, verified professional licenses in online state databases, ran voluntary criminal background checks, and even proofread

the text that sellers entered in their profiles to ensure a minimum standard of professionalism. They also boosted sellers' trust in AllDone's buyers by manually vetting each consumer request before distributing them to sellers, throwing out any that looked fraudulent (e.g. "Mickey Mouse of Orlando, FL wants to hire a dog trainer for Pluto").

AllDone's remote teams could also be more flexible than computer code alone. AllDone maintained two dozen contractors on a "special projects" team available to handle spur-of-the-moment missions. Imagine that a company wants to undertake a data mining project to gather a massive amount of information about potential users or competitors. Some would assign engineers to code up smart programs to scrape that data from the web. AllDone could instead deploy "human computation" to undertake the project immediately. Using AAI allowed AllDone to quickly expand and adapt its marketplace.

Finally, AllDone's remote teams could be "scaled up" or "scaled down" to meet fluctuating user demand. Rather than perfecting an algorithm to match consumer requests with the appropriate sellers, AllDone maintained a team in the Philippines to manually construct each connection. As request volume grew, the team simply continued to expand, until nearly 100 workers had been trained on the process and were available to link each of thousands of buyers with dozens of sellers per day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Ceding the process to AllDone's AAI freed up engineers to build and test new projects that would help the company grow. This is why, like Samuel's factory owners, AllDone continued to "rely on workers' skills even when there was machinery ready, in principle, to replace them" (47-8).

THE WORK OF INNOVATION

S team power and hand technology "may well appear as belonging to different epochs, the one innovatory, the other 'traditional' and unchanging in its ways," Samuel wrote, but instead "they were two sides of the same coin" in 19th-century Britain (57). The same could be said of the information technology and hand work used by AllDone in the early 21st century.

Since I left AllDone, the company's financial resources and engineering staff have expanded dramatically, along with its user base. Meanwhile, the team in the Philippines has more than doubled in size. While some processes have been automated, new tasks have been added to its purview. AllDone's top managers recognize what Samuel's factory owners saw 150 years ago: that high-tech tools can be more powerful when they're interwoven with high-quality, low-cost human labor that is flexible and scalable.

Though the similarities are striking, we can also observe important differences in how technology restructures labor markets and affects the subjective experience of work across time. By de-skilling work, British factories in effect created the same low-wage workers upon whom they would subsequently rely to complement their new technologies. Those who had previously been craft workers experienced this process as the degradation of their labor. The situation today is different: as software developers in rich nations automate certain tasks, they open up new sources of, and demand for, low-cost labor around the globe. Conse-

quently, much of the work in and around today's new machines can be performed remotely by workers in developing countries whose access to alternative sources of income may be limited. AllDone's Filipino team members frequently reported that they preferred working from home for a startup to commuting to high-pressure jobs in outsourced call centers. For many, the subjective experience of high-tech hand work is thus intertwined with the promise of new opportunities in a global economy.

Work is not only changing for the people whose efforts complement algorithms, but also for those tasked with creating the software itself. Instead of being limited to experimenting with code, software engineers are increasingly "tinkering" with human labor.[5] As Shreeharsh Kelkar notes, today's computer scientists are encouraged to "concentrate on designing useful assemblages of humans and computers rather than on creating intelligent programs."[6] Tech giants like Google, Facebook, and Twitter use online contractors to rate the search engine results produced by algorithms, filter out inappropriate user-generated content or advertising, and sort content to identify trending topics.[7] Netflix has combined the power of software with the cognitive capacities of human viewers to create an innovative categorization scheme that classifies content into nearly 77,000 micro-genres.[8] In these and many other cases, innovations in programming are not premised on generalized AI that delegates "thought" to machines. Instead, code is developed to accomplish specific tasks, with the knowledge that its execution will require human input, interpretation, or supervision.

Both 19th-century capitalists and AllDone's managers operated in environments in which consumer demand, products, and production techniques were in flux, and both had access to relatively cheap and flexible sources of labor. Given these circumstances, both found it advantageous to supplement innovative technologies with a great deal of "traditional" routinized human labor. It is likely that AI will continue to fall short of replicating human cognition for the foreseeable future. Many tasks—including vetting content and gathering and standardizing data from disparate sources—require cultural competencies that remain expensive and time-intensive to program. Meanwhile, the supply of AAI will increase as global, online labor markets grow.

In the coming years, many of the innovations emerging from high-tech hubs like Silicon Valley will be enabled by the efforts of far-flung, flexible, and relatively low-cost workers. Those who focus on how automation eliminates jobs often miss how it can also give rise to new types of work that may be hidden from view. By examining the objective conditions and subjective experiences of work in emerging global software production networks, analysts can help societies understand and respond to these new realities.

Benjamin Shestakofsky is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. His research combines theoretical insights from economic sociology and the sociology of work to investigate how technology is transforming economic exchange and employment in the 21st century.

1 Martin Ford, *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future.* New York: Basic Books, 2015.

2 Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2014. Zeynep Tufecki, "The Machines Are Coming." *New York Times*, April 18, 2015, accessed April 18, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/opinion/sunday/the-machines-are-coming.html. Stacey Vanek Smith, "An NPR Reporter Raced a Machine to Write a News Story. Who Won?" *Planet Money*, May 20, 2015, accessed August 18, 2015, http://www.npr.org/sections/money/2015/05/20/406484294/an-npr-reporter-raced-a-machine-to-write-a-news-story-who-won.

3 Raphael Samuel, "Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in mid-Victorian Britain," *History Workshop Journal* 3 (1977): 6-72.

4 Lilly Irani, "The Cultural Work of Microwork," *New Media & Society* 17 (2015): 720-739.

5 Lilly Irani, "Difference and Dependence among Digital Workers: The Case of Amazon Mechanical Turk." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114 (2015): 225-234.

6 Shreeharsh Kelkar, "What's the Matter with Artificial Intelligence?" *CASTAC*, February 18, 2014, accessed August 23, 2015,http://blog.castac.org/2014/02/whats-the-matter-with-artificial-intelligence/.

7 Lilly Irani, "Justice for 'Data Janitors'." *Public Books*, January 15, 2015, accessed August 25, 2015, http://www.publicbooks.org/nonfiction/justice-for-data-janitors/.

8 Alexis C. Madrigal, "How Netflix Reverse Engineered Hollywood." *The Atlantic*, January 2, 2014, accessed August 23, 2015, http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/01/how-netflix-reverse-engineered-hollywood/282679/.

Divya Sharma is Associate Professor of Justice and Law Administration at Western Connecticut State University. Her research focuses on South Asia and covers informal banking systems, money laundering and terror finance, immigration, ethnic identity, and globalization.

THE PEOPLE OF KALI BERI SETTLEMENT: PAKISTANI MIGRANT STRUGGLES IN INDIA

by DIVYA SHARMA

A bout 200 Hindu families displaced from Pakistan have made Kali Beri their home. First settled 17 years ago, Kali Beri is government-owned land located approximately 18 kilometers (11 miles) from Jodhpur in the state of Rajasthan, India. Locals also call it "Bhil Basti": *Bhil* refers to the caste and *basti* is a local term for an unauthorized and unorganized colony. There are many such settlement camps in the rest of state of Rajasthan (Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Barmer and Ganganagar) as well as the country (Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and New Delhi). Since the partition of India in 1947, refugees have continued to seek shelter in India. While researchers and journalists have written extensively about the 1947 exchange of populations, there has been scant attention given to the continued flow of refugees from Pakistan to India. In 1965, about 10,000 refugees came to India, followed by about 90,000 more in 1971. About 55,000 of these refugees were resettled in Barmer District of Rajasthan following the 1971 India-Pakistan war as part of the rehabilitation package declared in 1977-78. Officially, these displaced families are not given the status of refugee. But, the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' are used interchangeably by volunteers, the media, and the affected people themselves.

A vast majority of families living in Kali Beri are extremely poor lower-caste Hindus who migrated to India to escape religious persecution and economic struggles in Pakistan. When asked, these families told stories of forced conversions, kidnappings, rapes, and murders. They talked about the absence of any legal recourse. Most of them did not know how to get the resources they needed or take advantage of the services provided by human rights activists or non-governmental organizations in Pakistan. Their only option was to migrate to India. But to obtain visas, they had to face corrupt officials, steep bribes, and uncertainty on both sides of the border.

Their hardships did not end in India, either. In the settlement of Kali Beri, migrants' daily struggles range from tackling corruption and bureaucratic delays as they try to meet their daily needs of food, water, healthcare, and education. There is no electricity in Kali Beri. Nor are there roads, or any other forms of basic infrastructure. Only in 2012 did a local member of legislative assembly get the connection for potable water set up. There are no proper toilets or sanitation facilities. Most homes are made of brick, clay, stones, and tarp. Roofs often leak when it rains and people live exposed to the elements.

The Men: Most men in the Kali Beri settlement were once landless farmers or daily laborers in Pakistan. But in Jodhpur and surrounding areas, they cannot find adequate work in farming and so, they are absorbed by the quarries. It is not the kind of work that they are used to doing and it takes a toll on their minds and bodies. Nor does it pay well: they cannot make enough to meet their children's schooling costs and they struggle to make ends meet.

Many young men in the Kali Beri settlement want to go to other cities in order to seek better work opportunities and pursue higher education. They want to find jobs other than the ones to which they are often relegated – day or contract work in quarries and agriculture. But the lack of support system buries their aspirations and they are forced to remain underemployed and unemployed.

Migrants who do leave Jodhpur in search of better work are vulnerable to India's apathetic criminal justice system. Most migrants come to India on visas designated for specific districts. To travel anywhere else in the country, they must report to the local police station and seek additional permission. In the process, many have to pay bribes, spend time in jail, or both. This is equally common when they travel to other regions to perform agricultural work, get married, and visit family and friends in other parts of the state or country.

Stateless, Statusless and Invisible Indians: "I am an Indian," is a common sentiment in Kali Beri. Nonetheless, refugees from Pakistan struggle for legal recognition. While most refugees who arrived in India in 1947 (the year of the Partition) were more or less accepted as Indian citizens, Kali Beri refugees migrated after 1947, and faced a multitude of challenges in acquiring Indian citizenship. Even families who have acquired Indian citizenship remain on the margins of society: without caste and below poverty line (BPL) certificates, they cannot access subsidized food or apply for spots (in schools and jobs) that are reserved for members of lower castes (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes). New migrants arriving every week have no realistic sense of how long these legal processes may take.

Over the years, politicians from different parties have visited these families, received letters and petitions on behalf of these families, and made promises to these families. But these promises have yet to be translated into something concrete. The process of acquiring Indian citizenship has grown more expensive and time-consuming. The time it takes just to be eligible to apply for citizenship has increased from five years to seven years. Even after meeting the eligibility requirement, many applicants continue to wait up to 14 years.

In the words of one of my respondents, "Many have died waiting for citizenship. Many have got citizenship, but their lives are on hold as they wait for caste and BPL certificates. We do whatever work we can find and provide for our families and wait. Just wait."

Despite innumerable public debates about the poor and other vulnerable sections of Indian society and despite lengthy discussions about women's rights and children' education, the media has rarely highlighted the plight of the people living in Kali Beri settlement. Nor has the media taken an interest in refugees from Pakistan, more generally. It is as if these thousands of families do not exist at all.

The Women: The women of Kali Beri proudly welcome visitors into their homes. The women try their best to keep their homes clean and tidy. Family members remove their shoes before entering their houses and ask visitors to do the same.

With little or no education, young women have even more limited choices than young men. Most are married off at a young age.

Hardships abound. One woman talked about killing snakes during the rainy season in order to protect her grandchild. Many women complained of falling ill and not being able to see a doctor. Most had never had a medical check-up. Volunteer-led medical camps are too infrequently set up to provide any sustainable and consistent medical care.

The Children: Most Kali Beri families have young children and parents worry about their future. Most refugee children were pulled out of school in the middle of the academic year in Pakistan. When they arrive in India, there is no clear provision regarding how they would continue their education in their new country. To address this gap in schooling, a community-based organization, the Universal Justice Society (UJAS), has been trying to set up makeshift classrooms that can be run by its volunteers until more permanent options become available, but it has not materialized yet due to limited finances.

There is, however, a government-run school in Kali Beri. It has classes till fifth grade and caters to about 60 to 70 children. All classes are taught by one teacher and the resources available to her are extremely limited.

Some more shy than others, children talked about their dreams of becoming doctors, actors, and teachers. They shared stories about their best friends in the settlement. In any society, investing in human capital is critical; but most children here cannot afford to study beyond the 8th or 10th grades. These children do not get adequate assistance from the government. At a young age, they are burdened with financially helping their families.

Under the Government of India's Midday Meal Scheme, children receive free lunch on weekdays. But, because there is no proper system of roads in the settlement, children are forced to run about a kilometer to reach the one road where the delivery truck arrives carrying their midday meals. This daily struggle raises questions of basic human dignity: It is the obligation of the government to deliver basic services in a dignified manner and not as a favor, or worse, an insult.

Faith: People in Kali Beri have built a small temple. Many of the settlers say, with a mix of pride and sadness, that all that were able to save and bring with them to India is their faith. Faith is especially important in a community where many have lost family members and friends to violence and poverty.

Despite the hardships that they face, the people of Kali Beri remain hopeful and lean on their faith for strength. They have made Kali Beri their home and hope to acquire legal right to the land on which they have been living for years. But mining in the area threatens even the parcel of land that the settlers use as a cremation ground. The fear of being displaced again is a common one.

New Refugees, Same Struggles: The newly-arrived refugees do the same things as those who arrived before them: women cook, talk amongst themselves, and care for the children, while men acquire guidance from UJAS about finding employment, shelter, and schooling for their children. Like those before them, the newly-arrived refugees have left family members behind in Pakistan and hope to make India their home.

The Universal Just Action Society (UJAS; formerly Seemant Lok Sangthan) is a volunteer-run organization headed by H.S. Sodha. H.S. Sodha is himself a migrant from Pakistan. After informally helping others like himself for many years, H.S. Sodha formally founded UJAS in 1999 to do social and legal advocacy work on behalf of migrants. He runs the organization out of his house and it is open to everyone. He also makes monthly visits to cities within and outside of the state of Rajasthan. He leads protest, meets with politicians and activists in the hope of addressing the migrants' problems, without politicizing the issue. Interns from India and the United States have worked for UJAS.

H.S. Sodha meets with migrants in the field, listens to their problems, and makes arrangements to address their immediate needs, such as scheduling medical checkups, acquiring food, and finding shelter. Additionally, the organization has helped approximately 13,000 migrants successfully get their Indian citizenship. Many people that UJAS has helped in the past, volunteer for the organization by traveling with H.S. Sodha and providing assistance to others. But these makeshift arrangements are unsustainable in the long-run.

Governments at the state and central level in India have put together schemes to alleviate poverty, safeguard the rights of women and children, and bring people of lower castes into the mainstream. On the basis of these criteria, thousands of the migrant families in Kali Beri qualify for assistance, but have not received it. Under the new government elected in 2014, the Union Home Ministry has set up a Task Force to facilitate citizenship to Pakistani Hindus. But a task force is insufficient: there needs to be a sense of urgency and more clarity of purpose.

What Should Be Done: There are fairly straightforward steps that the Government of India could take to bring immediate relief to migrants living in Kali Beri and other parts of Rajasthan. These include the resolution of all pending citizenship applications in a timely manner as well as the immediate provision of Below Poverty Line and caste certificates to migrants in different stages of the immigration process. Moreover, local offices should be set up to address grievances so that refugees do not have to travel out of state and face potential abuse by local and state agencies. To protect migrants from harassment by local authorities, the police and administrative authorities should be made aware of the problems that migrants face. Additionally, the Government should provide adequate sanitation facilities and electricity in Kali Beri and other similar settlements. This would be part of a larger effort to transform these makeshift settlements into places of permanent residence so that refugees do not have to live in the fear of being displaced again. At the same time, the medical and educational needs of the community should be addressed. Refugees should have immediate medical care upon arrival in India as well as free, regular medical checkups later. Local schools should be encouraged to admit migrant children while their legal status is being established and there should be more resources put into the school in the Kali Beri settlement. The most effective way to deliver these services is to coordinate efforts with groups like UJAS that are familiar with problems at the grassroots level. As the number of refugees increase on a global scale, these straightforward local measures would ensure that the human rights of this particular group are protected.

THE INVENTION OF THE STATE

BOURDIEU BETWEEN BEARN AND KABYLIA   *by FRANCK POUPEAU*

Editor's note: Pierre Bourdieu's *On the State*, based on a three-year lecture course he taught at the College de France, was published earlier this year. It comprises his most systematic and capacious exposition of the state as an object for sociological inquiry, presenting the development of a working theoretical framework in real time. In this piece, Franck Poupeau interprets it in the context of Bourdieu's early fieldwork in Algeria, uncovering the postcolonial conditions for his interest in the state and its pivotal role in setting the terms by which social life is enacted. The result is a new interpretation of Bourdieu's entire project: an attempt to identify the role of the state in both constituting and impeding the synthesis of the social self, as well as its embodiment of the ideological contradictions (integrationist and domineering, universalizing and exclusive) which defined Bourdieu himself as a consecrated heretic in the French academy. At a time when Bourdieu's scholarly legacy remains open for debate, and nation-states around the world face existential challenges in the form of financialization, political revolution, and refugee crisis, Poupeau makes us ask: what kind of self is needed to confront the social ills of the twenty-first century? And can the state—or at least Bourdieu—help us get there?

T he edition of Pierre Bourdieu's *Sur l'Etat* (*On the State*),[1] presenting the courses that he taught at the Collège de France between 1989 and 1992 is not only interesting because it presents a very unknown dimension of the sociologist's work—his oral transmission of knowledge—but also because it really shows his thinking *in progress*: going back and forth, doubting and wavering about his own approach and his own way of questioning this "unthinkable reality" named "the state". This book offers a familiar image of Bourdieu himself for those who could go to his seminars, but, for a larger public, it offers an unusual vision of a sociology that is sometimes reduced to a system of classical concepts (habitus, capital, field, etc.).

This article focuses on a specific dimension of *Sur l'Etat*. Bourdieu relied on information gleaned from most of his past research, especially his first fieldwork in Algeria in the 1950's. However, the presence of the French state in this context of colonial domination appears marginal to the analytical framework applied by Bourdieu, who first went to Algeria with the French army and stayed on as a teacher at the University of Algiers. This article ascertains the degree to which an analysis of colonial domination underpins Bourdieu's analytical model of the "universal" state (of which Europe and, particularly, France are the self-proclaimed representatives[2]), and to identify the very conditions of possibility underpinning his project to develop a sociology of the state capable of describing the state's emergence and its peculiar efficacy.[3]

COLONIAL DOMINATION IN BOURDIEU'S ANALYSIS

A parenthetical remark made by Bourdieu in the third year of the course provides a good starting point: "[E]verything that I have been saying for many years now is a long commentary on the phrase, 'French Republic,'"[4] an object symbolized by the letters 'RF,' the flag, the bust of Marianne, and the President of the Republic. The French Republic is at once secular and universalist, colonialist and nationalist.[5] From the outset, this remark about the French Republic addresses a sensitive point: what the Republic defines is also what it excludes and rejects as its other, outside of its realm. If to be French is to locate oneself in this symbolic space, to become French is to pass the threshold of that space, to salute the flag, sing the national anthem, and recognize the authority of the state and its representatives.

In effect, the particularity of the French colonial state was that it provided the inhabitants of conquered territories with French nationality, without necessarily giving them either citizenship or the rights associated with it. The *Sénatus-consulte* of July 14, 1865 for colonial Algeria defines the civic status of Muslims: "the indigenous Muslim is French; nevertheless, he will continue to be governed by Muslim law." Until the order of October 7, 1944, indigenous Muslims could only become citizens if they renounced their personal Koranic status. In his first article on the "Shock of Civilizations," published in 1959, Bourdieu provides an analysis of the *Sénatus-consulte*, which he views as a form of land law designed to restructure land ownership and fragment the tribes, seen as obstacles to "pacification." The colonial administration's approach is presented as a process of "land dispossession" that led to the "disappearance of traditional social units (fractions and tribes) and their replacement by abstract and arbitrary administrative units, the *douars*, an approximate transposition of the French municipal unit."[6] The word "state" is not employed, but in *Sociologie de l'Algérie* Bourdieu makes the following comment about the period: "between the years 1830 and 1880, the state attempted to install colonists on the land that it had grabbed, purchased or liberated."[7]

The state in question in this last text is what could be described as the French "Metropolitan" state, rather than the colonial state in the sociological sense of the term defined by George Steinmetz.[8] The colonies were territories the sovereignty of which had been appropriated by an external political power, and which, without having the formal legal status of a state, were "permanent and coercive institutions exercising a relative monopoly of violence within defined territories." It should also be added that French Algeria was specific in at least one regard: the colonies on the North African coast became French *départements* in 1848, thereby diminishing any pretentions to sovereignty on the part of existing colonial governments. From this point of view, the geographical proximity of Algeria added extra impetus to the French assimilationist project.

It is clear that Bourdieu was aware of how the French state imposed models on its colonized societies, with his introduction, for example, of the *douars*. Still, it comes as little surprise that Bourdieu does not think of French Algeria as a colonial state. This is because Algeria was formally a block of three French *départements*, though

Frédérik Cooper demonstrates that the fiction of Algeria being an integral part of France is contradicted by the fact that the majority of its non-Muslim colonists had pan-Mediterranean roots, while most of the Muslim population identified with the Arabs, or Bedouins.[9] In addition, unlike the notion of the "colonial situation" theorized in 1955 by Georges Balandier, the concept of the colonial state had not yet been formulated. Indeed, the question of its specificity was not even posed, since colonialism was seen as a simple transposition of the forms of the Western state onto foreign societies.[10] Neo-Weberian theories of colonial administration, which treat the economic and political interests of the Metropolitan state as determining the form of the institutions of the colonial state, considerably postdate Bourdieu's research on Algeria as well as his course on the state. It is nevertheless curious to note that Bourdieu, who integrates a cultural logic into his analyses of the economic destructuration of traditional societies, did not, during this period, attempt to understand "the socio-cultural logic of the formation of the state," as, according to Daniel Goh, cultural studies later enabled him to do: "what these approaches have in common is the idea that the official representatives of Western countries did not only go to live in the colonies with a desire to develop a policy based on self-interest, but that they also brought with them representations of indigenous societies."[11] The urgency of war and its destructive effects on colonial society explain why Bourdieu put any reflection on the cultural aspects of the situation on hold.[12]

Bourdieu's research on Algeria focuses on the colonial situation as a meeting between two economies, and his analysis takes into account the "cul-

Rather than focusing exclusively on the mechanics of the colonial administration, [Bourdieu's] analysis of the effects of a capitalist economy on a pre-capitalist one emphasizes the fragmentation of traditional society.

tural" characteristics that govern how those economies function. Rather than focusing exclusively on the mechanics of the colonial administration, his analysis of the effects of a capitalist economy on a pre-capitalist one emphasizes the fragmentation of traditional society. Bourdieu is not interested in taking the colonial situation as state domination, but in "domination effects," a concept that he borrowed from François Perroux. He studied destructuration effects at the socio-spatial level of the internment camps in *Le Déracinement* (1964); at the level of the relationship of Algerian sub-proletarians to work and time in *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (1963); and, more broadly, at the level of the generalized collapse of the symbolic economy of the colonized society (honor, kinship, time, etc.). He was therefore not interested in what constitutes the unity of the colonial situation, namely the ascendancy of a particular state exercised on either side of the Mediterranean,.

However, this is not enough to explain why Bourdieu did not use his experience of the colonial administration in his later analyses of the state. The explanation is to be sought elsewhere, in the interstices between his texts and his life trajectory, and in the space of the thinkable available to him, the limits of which he never ceased challenging, notably in terms of his analysis of the imposition of a dominant cultural order.

KABILYIA AND THE BÉARN IN A SAME RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

In his article, "Pour Abdelmalek Sayad,"[13] Bourdieu talks of his relations with the Algerian sociologist in very strong terms. Although Sayad had been his student, his principal informer, his field guide, and then, from 1958, his co-author, Bourdieu compares their relationship, characterized by silent understanding, with his relationship with his own father. He writes of having taken Sayad to his home village in the Pyrenees, where he was doing research on the causes of celibacy among the eldest sons of peasant families. Bourdieu writes that, **"**he understood immediately, thereby helping me to understand (...) the roots of my interest for the peasants of Kabylia."

Bourdieu's texts on Algeria have to be compared here to his research on the French Béarn. There is no methodical and coherent "comparison" between the two fields of study based on defined criteria (types of activity, economic indicators, kinship systems, etc.); there is, instead, a much stronger link that could almost be described as an interweaving of texts and themes. Kabylia and the Béarn, thought of together, provide a way out of the "national" framework in which researchers, be they ethnologists or sociologists, tend to become ensnared. The two thought of together: not, as has often been maintained, Kabylia imagined on the basis of the Béarn, or the Béarn reimagined in the light of Kabylia, but, instead, Kabylia and the Béarn thought together and simultaneously, the Béarn in Kabylia and inversely,[14] in a process of "denationalization" of categories of analysis and of the symbolic violence that affects the two situations – on his return to France, Bourdieu be-

gan to view the education system as a colonial power that subjected and humiliated social classes bereft of the legitimate bourgeois culture that the system recognizes and institutes. Evoking, in "Entre amis"[15] his relation to the traditional objects of ethnology in Algeria, Bourdieu writes, "I should also mention my research on peasants in Kabylia and the Béarn. Why the Béarn? In order to avoid falling into the trap of the compassionate ethnologist in awe of the human wealth of an unjustly despised population, etc., and to put a distance between myself and my informers that allowed for familiarity. I often asked myself, when talking to a Kabilyian informer, how a Béarnais peasant would have reacted in a similar situation."

The denominations themselves are revealing: "informers" rather than *enquêtés* ("respondents"), a term widely employed in the social sciences even today. The "objectivist distance" created by the relationship of exteriority with the most familiar situations, such as the bachelor's ball, does not encourage the researcher to treat social facts as pure "things" or "objects of inquiry"; indeed, it has an affective, subjectivist *pendant*: informers exist when one seeks to get to know a world *better*, or when one has already penetrated a world to which interlocutors give form from the inside, a world that they *inform*. Bourdieu addresses this affective relation in referring in an interview to the article written about him by Yvette Delsaut, an article that he compared to Sayad's perspective on his native Béarn. She "wrote an article about me in which she said, quite correctly, that Algeria is what enabled me to accept myself. I was able to apply the comprehensive, ethnological viewpoint that I adopted in regard to Algeria to myself, to the people of my region, to my par-

ents, to my mother and father's accents, and to reappropriate all that, without drama, which is one of the problems faced by all *deracinated intellectuals*, trapped in a choice between populism on the one hand and, on the other, a self-loathing linked to class racism. I applied the obligatory comprehensive perspective that defines the ethnological discipline to people very similar to the Kabyles, people with whom I spent my childhood. My photography, first in Kabylia, then in the Béarn doubtless contributed greatly to this conversion in terms of perspective that presupposed—and I don't think it's too strong a word—a real conversion."

Although the influence of cultural anthropology was to disappear in later editions of *Sociologie de l'Algérie*, it is a matter of record that Bourdieu's Algerian experience was decisive. Indeed, he acknowledges the fact on several occasions: "I came back from Algeria with an ethnological experience which, acquired under the difficult circumstances of a war of independence, marked, for me, a decisive break with my educational experience."[16] By educational experience is, of course, to be understood the "scholastic bias" associated with a certain philosophical posture, as well as a structuralist objectivism designed to provide a commanding, neutral overview of so-called "cold" societies. But we can also see in the term a reference to two properly academic experiences: the preparatory class for the Louis Le Grand *lycée* in Paris, and the time Bourdieu spent boarding at the *lycée* in Pau. In regard to both experiences, he expresses the sentiment that he was never really at home, that he felt deracinated; but he also, no doubt, developed a resolve to master the dominant codes to which "the colonized of the interior" are generally subject.

Bourdieu describes the particularities of his habitus and their links to the cultural particularities of his region of origin, particularities that he was able to "better perceive and understand by analogy with [what he read] about the 'temperament' of cultural or linguistic minorities like the Irish."[17] Minorities whose specificities are denied by the process of the invention of the state: this was the function assigned to the education system and the Army in the French Third Republic. The Army in terms of the conquest of Algeria, and the education system, which introduced Bourdieu to another "probable future," that enjoyed by the "over-selected," but at the cost of a social divide with his original milieu. Thus, when he wrote of the startling contrast between the world of the boarding school and the normal, sometimes exulting world of the classroom," he described two realities: on the one hand, "a world of study, populated by boarders from the country or small local towns" [and] "on the other, the classroom, with its professors, with their observations and grueling trials [...]. And there were also the day boys and girls, like slightly unreal foreigners, in their flamboyant clothes [...] so very different from our gray blouses, and different also in their manners and preoccupations, which were obviously characteristic of an inaccessible universe [...]. Much later, in the preparatory class for the Louis le Grand *lycée*, I found once again the same demarcation line between the boarders, bearded provincials with gray blouses and string belts, and the Parisian day boys, who deeply impressed a French teacher of modest provincial origins, avid for intellectual recognition, with the bourgeois elegance of their demeanor, as well as the literary pretentions of their scholarly productions." A re-emergent colonial

relationship between the center and the periphery, this one inside, rather than outside Metropolitan France.

His reappraisal of the duality of his educational experiences helped him to understand that his "very deep ambivalence in regard to the world of education perhaps had its roots in the discovery that there was another aspect to the exaltation of the diurnal and supremely respectable face of school, namely the degradation inherent in its nocturnal flipside, displayed in the scorn of the dayboys for the culture of the boarding school and the children of small rural communes," with whom he shared "among other things, the feelings of confusion and helplessness provoked by certain cultural phenomena." This "tension between contraries, never resolved in a harmonious synthesis," can be considered as the key point and the impetus of his theory about the invention of the state.

THE DOUBLE REALITY OF THE STATE

Bourdieu was clearly aware of the way in which the French state had remodeled "traditional" society since the 19th century. He mentions it indirectly in the course—and it is doubtless an advantage of the aural as opposed to the written medium that it produce(s) associations of ideas concerning the unthought dimension of the state—at a particularly revealing moment, when he addresses the double face of the state: domination and integration, monopolization and unification.[18] It is not a question of an antinomy "between two theories,"—Marxism versus French Republican theory—but of an antinomy "inherent in the very functioning of the state": the modern state is at once progress toward universalization (de-particularization,

etc.), and a vector of the monopolization of this same universal (concentration of power). Bourdieu adds: "In a certain way, it could be said that integration—which should be understood in the Durkheimian sense, but also in the sense of those who talked about the integration of Algeria [...]—is the precondition of domination." Bourdieu cites cultural unification as the condition of cultural domination, the unification of the linguistic market which "creates patois, bad accents, dominated languages," in the same way that the unification of the market of symbolic goods explains celibacy in Bearn. This idea of a process of unification which is, at the same time, a process of universalization, which Bourdieu presents as a break with Weber and Elias, is associated with the construction of a unified social space linked to the state as "holder of a meta-capital that makes it possible to partially dominate the way in which various fields function." This unification of a homogeneous and de-particularized space occurs in relation to a central locus—which "in the French case, attains its limit"—that tends to replace personal relations (*jus sanguinis*) with territorial relations (*jus loci*) by constituting groups. It is significant that, in this instance, Bourdieu mentions Kabylia and the conflict between the principles of clan-based and territorial unification.[19]

This is how he explains his example: "the village [Bourdieu is writing about Sayad's village] on which I worked was composed of two agnatic clans: all the members of the clans regarded themselves as descendants of a single ancestor, as cousins – their terms of address were kinship terms. They shared more or less mythical genealogies; at the same time, the village unit encompassed the two halves in a single, territory-based unit and, therefore,

there was a kind of wavering between the two structures. I had great difficulty in understanding this because, with the local structure in my unconscious, I wasn't clear in my mind about this territorial unit—the village—which, in the end, did not exist. Compared to the family, the clan and the tribe, the village unit was an artifact that only existed as a consequence of the existence of bureaucratic structures – there was a town hall … In many societies, it is still possible to observe this kind of oscillation between two forms of belonging, one based on a lineage group, the other on a place. The state thus installs a unified space and ensures that geographical proximity predominates over social, genealogical proximity." Bourdieu is well aware of the fact that "traditional society" is a product of colonial domination, as is demonstrated in the passage on the Algerian village quoted above, in which he admits to have found it hard to understand that this French administrative unit "did not, in the end, exist," that it was "an artifact that ended up existing as a consequence of the existence of bureaucratic structures" transported from Metropolitan France to the colony.

After giving this example, Bourdieu examines the unification of the national state and obligatory education—the education system being an instrument of integration, which enables submission—before moving on to another example of unification, this time of the marriage market, a kind of résumé of the colonization of the French countryside. He then evokes the phenomenon of male celibacy in the Béarn as the "incarnation of the unification of the market of symbolic goods in which women circulate."[20] In this instance, the protected local market is annexed by the national market, notably by means of the education system and the media. Once again, Bourdieu mentions Alge-

ria, pointing out that, "submission and dispossession are not antagonistic to integration; indeed, integration is their precondition. (…) This mode of slightly twisted thought is difficult because we are so used to thinking of integration as the opposite of exclusion: it is hard to understand that, to be excluded, or to be dominated, one must first be integrated. If we take the example of the struggle over "French Algeria," we should ask why those most unfavorable to integration became, at a certain moment, integrationists? It is because, in order to dominate the Arabs, it was necessary to integrate them, to transform them into "bougnoules," racially scorned, dominated individuals."

There are not, therefore, two Algerias in Bourdieu's work, but a double reality of the state: integration and domination, unification and monopolization. A double reality without which Bourdieu would never have been able to become what he was, without having been "torn" from his original milieu by the French education system and his success in the school and university systems. Of course, Bourdieu did not go as far as to *say* explicitly that the Republican, secular and universalist state is colonialist in its very principles. A colonialist state is nestled at the heart of an emancipatory project based on equality and homogeneity, which is its mirror image or double as well as its condition of possibility. As such, the Algerian failure is the failure of the secular, Republican model[21] of which Pierre Bourdieu is a product, at once an academic phenomenon and a rebel.

*

Such a reading of Bourdieu's experience of domination and of the colonial state sheds new light on his theorization of the state and suggests why, with the exception of a few articles, his analysis of the state remains incomplete and unpublished except as course

notes, from which he extracted the most "objective" aspect: the socio-historical model and the analysis of the twin process of monopolization and the division of labor of domination associated with the invention of the state.

Franck Poupeau is Senior Researcher at the French CNRS and director of the International Joint Unit iGLOBES (CNRS/University of Arizona). After training in philosophy, he obtained his PhD in Sociology from the EHESS in Paris, following a three-year stint as a research assistant to Pierre Bourdieu at the College de France. His interests include urban inequality, education and segregation, social movements and environmental sociology, and the sociology of knowledge and politics, with a focus France and the Andes. Poupeau has published over six books and 50 articles in in French, Spanish, and English in peer-reviewed journals of sociology, anthropology, urban studies, education, geography, and Latin American studies. He coordinates several international grants on water conflicts and urban inequalities.

1 Bourdieu, P. 2012. *Sur l'Etat*, Paris, Raisons d'agir/Seuil.
2 For example, Bourdieu writes that "it is impossible to understand the specific logic of French colonialism and of decolonization, which took an unusually dramatic form, without taking into account the fact that France, due the particularity of its history and its Revolution, has always thought of itself as the vector of universal values." 2012. *Sur l'Etat,* Paris, Raisons d'agir/Seuil. Pp. 562-563
3 Go, J. 2009. The 'New' Sociology of Empire and Colonialism, *Sociology Compass*, 3/5:775-788; Go, J. 2013. For a postcolonial sociology, *Theory and Society*, 2013, 42:25-55
4 Bourdieu, P. 2012. *Sur l'Etat*, Paris, Raisons d'agir/Seuil. P.462
5 Conklin, A. 1997. *A Mission to Civilize. The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa (1875-1930)*, Stanford, Stanford University Press
6 Bourdieu, P. 2013. *Algerian Sketches*, New York, Polity Press. P.66 ed fr.
7 Bourdieu, P. 1958. *Sociologie de l'Algérie*. P.108
8 Steinmetz, G. 2008. L'État colonial comme champ, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Pp.171-172,122-143
9 Cooper, F. 2010. *Le colonialisme en question. Théorie, connaissance, histoire*, Paris, Payot
10 Goh, D. 2008. Genèse de l'Etat colonial, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Pp.171-172
11 Ibid. P.58
12 P. Bourdieu, « Entre amis », *Esquisses algériennes, op.cit.*, p.352: "I presented an initial critical summary of what I had gleaned from my readings and observations in the book published in the "Que sais-je?" series entitled *Sociologie de l'Algérie* by applying the theoretical instruments available to me at the time, or, in other words, those provided by the cultural anthropology tradition, but critically reappraised (with, for example, a distinction between the colonial situation as a relationship of domination, and 'acculturation')."
13 Bourdieu, P. 2013. *Algerian Sketches*, New York, Polity Press. Pp.295-300
14 Wacquant, L. 2004. "Following Pierre Bourdieu into the Field," *Ethnography*, 5(4):387-414
15 Bourdieu, P. 2013. *Algerian Sketches*, New York, Polity Press. Pp.288-294
16 Bourdieu, P. 2004. *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse*, Paris, Raisons d'agir. P.54
17 Ibid.
18 Bourdieu, P. 2012. *Sur l'Etat*, Paris, Raisons d'agir/Seuil. P.351
19 Ibid. P.353
20 Ibid. P.360
21 Luizard, J.-P. 2006. La politique coloniale de Jules Ferry en Algérie et en Tunisie, in Luizard J.-P. (ed.), *Le choc colonial et l'islam. Les politiques religieuses des puissances coloniales en terres d'islam*, Paris, La Découverte, Pp.89-120