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Our Mandate

This journal represents an attempt to explore issues, ideas, and problems that lie at the intersection between the academic disciplines of social science and the body of thought and political practice that has constituted Marxism over the last 150 years. New Proposals is a journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry that is dedicated to the radical transformation of the contemporary world order. We see our role as providing a platform for research, commentary, and debate of the highest scholarly quality that contributes to the struggle to create a more just and humane world, in which the systematic and continuous exploitation, oppression, and fratricidal struggles that characterize the contemporary sociopolitical order no longer exist.

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Cover: The transformation of Vancouver, British Columbia, 2011. Tristan Menzies photograph.

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Introduction

Situating Neoliberalism, Colonial Land Appropriation, and Feminist Marxism

Sharon R. Roseman

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Our cover photograph displays one vantage point for thinking about the transformation of Vancouver, British Columbia. With it, we hope to reinforce visually the argument of the papers in this volume, which all make a case for studying the precise contours and reverberations of the inequalities and conflicts produced by exertions of power through history.

This first number of *New Proposals* for 2011 contains a set of three richly detailed papers by Lynn M. Nybell, Mehmet Barış Kuymulu, and Devin T. Molina which appear as a special theme issue on “Fracturing Neoliberalism: Ethnographic Interventions.” This special theme collection illuminates the importance of producing accounts that demonstrate the operation of neoliberal processes in particular institutions and spaces. It is introduced in more detail by its co-editors Kaja Tretjak and Elan Abrell.

In another paper, Andrew Woolford follows up on the analysis in his 2005 book *Between Justice and Certainty: Treaty-Making in British Columbia*. He argues that current land claims negotiations in British Columbia and elsewhere “forcibly transpose European notions of land and property,” failing to recognize indigenous groups’ experiences of being themselves assaulted when assaults are launched on their territories. His contribution intersects with the papers in the “Fracturing Neoliberalism: Ethnographic Interventions” theme collection in a number of ways. In the broadest sense, he speaks to these three articles in his demonstration that land

claims negotiation processes continue settler colonial modes of appropriation and simultaneously help to disseminate a neoliberal ideological assertion that “there is no alternative’ to current patterns of property ownership and economic participation.”

We are also very pleased to introduce an extended essay by Gary Blank that constitutes the first of what we plan to be a series of articles, comments and reflections in the pages of *New Proposals* that will debate how feminism intersects with Marxism as well as other critical perspectives.

Blank’s meticulous historical argument makes the case for a unitary materialist theoretical stance that brings together socialist feminism and political Marxism. He shows the importance of refining the historicization of capitalism through a synthesized reading that renders gender (as well as race/ethnicity, age and other differentiations) as centrally integrated concepts. The central question that Blank examines in this essay is the transition to capitalism, explaining that our overall understanding of “the specific relationship between capitalism and patriarchy” requires a reevaluation of “how relations of *market dependence* reshaped pre-capitalist gender relations, long before the onset of industrialization in the nineteenth century.” Blank’s emphasis on the specificity of historical patterns of proletarianization, dispossession, and struggle reinforces the same focus on careful contextualization found in the other papers discussed above.

Gender, Production, and ‘the Transition to Capitalism’: Assessing the Historical Basis for a Unitary Materialist Theory

Gary Blank
York University

ABSTRACT: When socialist feminists discussed the potential and pitfalls of Marxism in the “domestic labour debate,” the specific relationship between patriarchy and capital emerged as a defining concern. While offering a trenchant critique of orthodox Marxism, the tenor of the debate was highly abstract and theoretical, and largely ignored the question of capitalism’s *origins*. Political Marxists, in contrast, have devoted fastidious attention to this question in their own attempt to renew historical materialism; but their dialogue has dedicated little attention to questions of gender, families, and social reproduction in the feminist sense. This paper makes an initial attempt at closing the analytical gap between these two historical materialist traditions. It departs from an unresolved theoretical impasse within the socialist feminist tradition: how to conceive of the imperatives of capital accumulation and class in a way that avoids both reductionism and dualism. I argue that this tension stems principally from an inadequate historicization of capitalism. A critical assessment of Wally Secombe’s historical work illustrates how political Marxism can be deployed to correct this deficiency, while also revealing the extent to which these concepts must be rethought in light of materialist feminist concerns. A synthesis of the two traditions offers a more complete and effective account of the transition, while providing a basis for a unitary materialist theory.

KEYWORDS: Brenner debate, materialist feminism, political Marxism, primitive accumulation, social reproduction, socialist feminism, transition from feudalism to capitalism

Introduction

When socialist feminists discussed the potential and pitfalls of Marxism in the “domestic labour debate,” the specific relationship between patriarchy and capital emerged as a defining concern (Vosko 2003; Ferguson 1999). The debate, however, was highly abstract and theoretical, and most of its historical focus locked upon the formation of the “family wage” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This discussion was crucially important, but it often arose from (and reinforced) a misleading conflation of industrialism and capitalism (Middleton

1985; Fine 1992:58). Thus, while socialist feminists engaged with orthodox Marxism on a variety of terrains, they largely left to one side the question of capitalism’s *origins*. “Political” Marxists,¹ in contrast,

1 I use the term “political Marxism” here to refer to the group of Marxist scholars who have taken theoretical inspiration from Robert Brenner’s work on the transition to capitalism. This group includes, but is not limited to, Brenner himself, Ellen Meiksins Wood, George Comninel, Benno Teschke, Hannes Lacher, Mike Zmolek, Larry Patriquin, and Samuel Knafo. For a concise outline of the political Marxist account, see Patriquin, “The Agrarian Origins of the Industrial Revolution in England,” *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 36:2 (Spring 2004):196-216.

have devoted fastidious attention to this question as they have engaged in their own debate with more “orthodox” Marxian thought. While promising to provide the theoretical basis for a renewed historical materialism, their dialogue has dedicated little attention to questions of gender, families, and social reproduction in the feminist sense. Given the relative intellectual proximity of socialist feminism and political Marxism, the lack of meaningful exchange between the respective traditions is both lamentable and debilitating.

The objective of this essay is to make an initial, if necessarily modest, effort to break the silence, with the aim of merging the gap between the two theoretical approaches. It would of course be naïve to expect that such a *rapprochement* will be achieved easily; it must be acknowledged from the start that the two traditions have quite distinct concerns. Some materialist feminists² and feminist political economists might question from the outset why there is any need to pay heed to a body of literature which has given short shrift to the “feminist question.” Such wariness would be understandable; but as Heidi Hartmann (1981) pointed out three decades ago, the tension between Marxism and feminism portends either a “more progressive union” or a divorce. As a student of political Marxism who is nevertheless sensitive to feminist concerns, I intend to demonstrate that the insights of political Marxism provide a promising historical and theoretical *basis* for what has long been a central objective of materialist feminism: the construction of a “unitary, materialist theory” (Ferguson 1999; see also Sacks 1989; Vogel 1983). In fact, it would probably not be an exaggeration to suggest that political Marxism has come to style itself as exactly such a theory. Thus, a second component of my argument is that political Marxism, in sidelining gender and families, has fallen short in addressing *its own concerns*. The goal of constructing a unitary materialist theory is a lofty but necessary one; the

challenge lies in determining which elements of previous accounts are insightful and deserving of retention, and which elements obscure analysis and should be jettisoned.

The “transition to capitalism” has been chosen as the central question of this essay because it, more than any other, provides an historical pivot upon which these issues may be clarified. The transition is of course a defining concern for political Marxists; a small but insightful group of materialist feminists – particularly Wally Seccombe (1992), Maria Mies (1986), Sylvia Federici (2004) and Paddy Quick (2010) – have also addressed the question, providing fodder for fruitful comparison. Despite being smaller, however, this latter body of work is much more heterogeneous. Out of concern for space and coherence, I have therefore chosen to focus on Wally Seccombe’s work for this comparative study, while recognizing that it is by no means representative of all materialist feminist writing on the transition. Still, there are at least two compelling reasons for highlighting Seccombe’s work in particular. First, Seccombe seems to be the only materialist feminist who has *directly* addressed Brenner’s argument, enabling a more specific and nuanced comparison.³ Second, Seccombe’s historical and theoretical concerns are more congruent with those of the political Marxists, focusing narrowly upon socioeconomic and demographic developments within Western Europe, and doing so with the specific intention of *amending* the orthodox notions of historical materialism. A comparative review of Seccombe and political Marxists is therefore a sensible, if necessarily narrow, avenue for exploring the wider intersection between political Marxism and feminist political economy.

The argument of this paper is established in three parts. First, I briefly discuss a central unresolved tension within the socialist feminist tradition over how to conceive of the imperatives of capital accumulation and class in a way that avoids both functionalism/

2 For the purposes of this paper, the terms “socialist feminism” and “materialist feminism” are used interchangeably. In recent years “materialist feminism” (and sometimes “feminist historical materialism”) seems to have become the preferred designator, owing to the evolution of debates which are detailed below. Nevertheless, shifting terminology should not obscure the abiding concern of feminist political economists from the 1970s to the present: developing a materialist understanding of class and gender dynamics.

3 Seccombe does so in his Appendix to *A Millennium of Family Change*, apparently upon the encouragement of Ellen Wood. More recently Paddy Quick has also made reference to Brenner, offering a brief but insightful comment on the gendered nature of pre-capitalist “political accumulation” (2010:179), which is discussed below. However, Quick’s intervention draws eclectically from various Marxian accounts of the transition, without suggesting which (if any) is most compelling.

reductionism and dualism (Ferguson 1999). This provides a theoretical entry point within feminist political economy for a consideration of the *specificity* of capitalism as a qualitatively distinct form of class-divided society. I suggest that this analytical problem has not been exclusive to materialist feminism, but has also plagued Marxism as well. Among Marxist historians, Robert Brenner (1985) was the first to explain the emergence of capitalism in a way that does not assume precisely what needs to be explained, i.e. capitalist dynamics themselves. Brenner's historical investigation throws into question many of the Marxian categories and assumptions that socialist feminists themselves critiqued (e.g., base/superstructure dichotomy, productive forces determinism, etc.), and points the way towards new categories which enable a *potential* integration of gender and social reproduction within historical materialism. Yet the promise of integration has been frustrated thus far, as political Marxists have been largely inattentive to questions of gender and family.

Second, the insights and oversights of political Marxism are then brought to bear in an assessment of Seccombe's account of the transition. I suggest that Seccombe makes a considerable advance upon previous Marxist work by drawing explicit attention to gender relations and family forms, and synthesizes much of the historical literature that is undoubtedly essential for constructing a unitary materialist theory. However, the force of Seccombe's account is ironically limited by its retention of problematic concepts and assumptions developed by more orthodox Marxists – the very concepts and assumptions that political Marxists convincingly call into question. These theoretical shortcomings prevent Seccombe from providing a persuasive interpretation and understanding of the “hidden” variables he seeks to uncover.

Finally, the contributions of political Marxists and Seccombe are brought together in the final section of the essay to trace an alternative historical materialist approach to the transition. As space does not permit even a minimally detailed account, this section is necessarily tentative, and only aspires to call attention to crucial turning points in the evolution of English capitalism from the Black Death to early

industrialization. Its central purpose is to illustrate how political Marxist concepts can be deployed to answer materialist feminist questions, thereby establishing 1) a more complete and effective account of the transition, and 2) a methodological basis for a unitary materialist theory.

The Theoretical Impasse of Socialist Feminism

Within the Marxian tradition, political Marxism has been defined by a central – and seemingly obsessive – concern for tracing capitalism's origins. Indeed, one of its more creative proponents has recently called his co-thinkers to task for neglecting institutional and comparative questions, thereby yielding “an overly structuralist notion of capitalism as a system with inherent dynamics” (Knafo 2007:102). Such a result would be especially ironic given Brenner's (1977) original project of seeking to explain capitalism in a way that structuralist accounts (particularly world systems theory) could not. Knafo offers a welcome caution: historical materialist analysis should always seek to build and inform theory by examining history, rather than to use theory as a talisman for waving away complicated comparative questions. Still, even if political Marxists have been rather slow in expanding the scope of their concern, there remains an important sense in which an understanding of capitalism's emergence remains analytically primary for historical materialists. An appreciation of capitalism's specificity and uniqueness *as a social form* requires some understanding of how and why it emerged historically, in certain historical contexts and geographical places but not in others. Discerning capitalism's historical specificity remains the surest – and ultimately, the only – means of guarding against the logical circularities of structuralism.

It is in this sense, then, that the project of political Marxism is directly applicable to unresolved questions and debates within socialist feminism and feminist political economy. Over a decade ago, the socialist feminist Sue Ferguson issued a short but very useful summary of previous debates, and a sympathetic critique of “social reproduction theory.” Ferguson noted that the “festering (and ultimately unresolved) issue” fuelling socialist feminist thought

in the 1980s was the place of Marxist analysis (1999:2). Over its course, the debate tended to polarize around two poles: an “economic determinist” camp asserting the economic and class roots of women’s oppression, and a “dualist” camp suggesting the independent operation of a patriarchal sphere or structure. Both groups suffered from analytical difficulties. The first tended to posit women’s oppression as a function of capital accumulation and class processes, while the second had difficulty explaining the transhistorical basis for patriarchy in a way that did not assume men’s sociobiological drive for mastery. Patriarchy, commonly understood to mean the social subordination of women (Sacks 1989:537), could not serve as both *explanans* and *explanandum*. As Meg Luxton recently reiterated, “There is ample anthropological evidence that sex/gender divisions of labour do not necessarily produce gender inequality. Rather, women’s oppression emerges in relation to specific forms of social organization” (Luxton 2006:32; see also Coontz and Henderson 1986).

Social reproduction theory emerged out of this impasse as a means of establishing a unitary materialist theory. Here, to use the words of Pat and Hugh Armstrong, patriarchy and capitalism, “are not autonomous, nor even interconnected systems, but the same system” (1986:226). The class analysis of socialist feminism is retained, but the reductionism and dualism of previous analyses is overcome by focusing on “the ways in which the labouring population is produced, sustained, and reproduced on a daily and generational basis” (Luxton 2006:40). According to its proponents, social reproduction analysis permits a materialist understanding not only of gender, but also a third category of social identity allegedly trivialized by orthodox Marxism and early socialist feminism alike: race/ethnicity.⁴ Luxton explains that such investigations

put issues of imperialism, racialization and racism at the heart of gender and class analyses. Capitalist development depended on supplies of (reproduced)

labour from people who originally lived outside regions where capitalist relations were dominant and on people in and from colonies; the transnational, trans-regional locus of social reproduction and capital’s mobility mean that capitalism is foundationally racialized and dependent upon differences and divisions. [2006:38]

However, despite an avowed commitment to understanding the materialist foundation of social relations as an integrated and unified process, Ferguson maintains that many feminist materialists remain wedded to dualist approaches. For example, she charges Secombe with maintaining a sharp distinction between “economic” laws and “demographic” laws. The result in social reproduction literature is an ambiguity regarding the precise nature and locus of power within society, such that its proponents “tend to sidestep the twin issues of capital accumulation and class exploitation” (1999:10). If structuralism is to be replaced with a “truly integrative and historical understanding of social reproduction,” attention must shift to the decisive role that capital accumulation plays over the entire process, and to class and class consciousness as lived experience (1999:11).

Ferguson is certainly correct to criticize the “vague theoretical foundations” of much work in the social reproduction tradition, and her call for a more “rigorously constructed, coherent social theory” readmitting a Marxian focus on capital accumulation and class is welcome (1999:3). However, in the end it might be asked whether Ferguson’s analysis generates more questions than answers. There seems to be a real tension between the abstract contention that capitalism and patriarchy be viewed as “one system,” and the more concrete proposal that we overcome residual dualism by appreciating that capital accumulation “asserts its mandate over the whole process of social reproduction” (1999:12). How is the latter proposition to be accepted without lapsing into dualism’s dreaded counterpart, economic reductionism/functionalist? A notion of class and class consciousness as “lived experience” is undoubtedly a crucial step in the right direction (Johanna Brenner 2000). But what exactly are the imperatives of capital accumulation that have come to play such a decisive role? Can they be conceived as “laws,” and if

⁴ I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting the importance of this third category in developing a satisfactory unitary materialist theory. A sustained treatment of race/ethnicity cannot be made in this paper, although I do offer some general methodological suggestions below.

so, how do we retain the focus on historically-evolved social relations? There is undoubtedly much to value in the Armstrongs' work, but on closer inspection their method of analysis seems to drive in a direction opposite to that which Ferguson wants to travel. Starting with an analysis of the capitalist mode of production at the "highest level of abstraction," they define capitalism as a system premised on free wage labour, and therefore also the division between private and public spheres and a sexual division of labour (1986:224-5). This is an insightful logical deduction, but it is not an historical one. We need to assess the transformation of social relations which *gave rise* to a system of free wage labour if we are to adequately trace the alleged necessity of a certain sexual division of labour in capitalism. Generalized free wage labour may not, in fact, be the *sine qua non* for capitalist development, even if it is certainly the *outcome* of capitalist social relations (Wood 2001).

The Transition Debate and the Specificity of Capitalism

Indeed, it was with the goal of explaining the emergence of a system of free wage labour and generalized commodity production that Marxists initially turned their attention to the historical question of capitalism's origins. In doing so, they naturally drew inspiration from the work of Marx himself. The problem, as Brenner (1989) initially pointed out, is that Marx seems to offer two *distinct* accounts of the transition within his work; moreover, on closer inspection, the two are not merely distinct but *mutually incompatible*. The first (hereafter "model one"), presented in Marx and Engels' early works (1961), was predicated upon a theory of historical development which suggested a relatively linear progression through different stages of mode of production, propelled by a tension between the forces and relations of production. Although the exact constitution of the productive forces is disputed, in these early works Marx seems to suggest that the division of labour directly expresses the level of development of the productive forces, in turn determining social relations of class and property (Brenner 1989:272).

It is worth pausing for a moment here to consider the extent to which model one was taken for granted

by the various contributors to the domestic labour debate. In *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Frederick Engels extended the ambit of Marx's first model to incorporate women and family forms, suggesting that sexual oppression can be traced to the seclusion of women from the division of "productive" labour with the advent of class society (Vogel 1995). Feminist socialists of "dual systems" persuasion largely *accepted* Engels' transhistorical separation between "productive" work/production of goods and "reproductive" work/production of people.⁵ Their axis of intervention was to theorize and render more "visible" the latter form of work, which Engels shunted to one side. "Single system" critics such as Iris Young (1981) correctly pointed out that this largely took the orthodox Marxist model of production relations for granted; but her answer, somewhat ironically, was to revert back to certain aspects of Marx and Engels' first model, suggesting that the division of labour be taken as analytically prior to class analysis. Dual systems sought to more fully theorize domestic labour as separate from the productive division of labour; Young and others sought to "genderize" the division of labour itself. Both, in different ways, departed from (and took for granted) Marx's model one.

Within the premises of model one, the West European "bourgeois" revolutions are portrayed as but the latest example of the dynamic productive forces (represented by the urban bourgeoisie) bursting asunder "outmoded" (in this case, feudal) relations of production.⁶ Notwithstanding considerable finessing, the work of Perry Anderson (upon which Seccombe explicitly draws) offers a largely similar account, portraying towns, market trading, and the revival of Roman law and quiritary ownership as inherently antagonistic to feudal social relations (Anderson 1979:424; Seccombe 1992:144). An emphasis on the causal importance of trade and towns is also a hallmark of Paul Sweezy's work (1978), which was later

⁵ See especially Hartmann 1981.

⁶ For Marx's own account, see his and Engels' famous passages in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Volume One (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961), especially p. 108-119. For a critique, see Brenner, "Bourgeois Development" and George C. Comninel, *Rethinking the French Revolution: Marxism and the Revisionist Challenge* (London: Verso, 1987), chapters 3 and 7.

elaborated and extended by Marxian world-systems theorists such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, and Andre Gunder Frank. Here, the emergence of capitalism is understood as a much more temporally and geographically extended process, predicated upon the metropolitan bourgeoisie's exploitation of the "periphery" through mercantilism and colonialism. Various forms of coerced labour and generalized violence are thus given prominence as forms of "primitive accumulation" preceding industrialization and generalized "free" wage labour.

Precisely because it problematizes the status of "free wage labourer" under capitalism, Marxian world systems theory has often been invoked by feminist materialists who seek to integrate race/ethnicity into analyses of gender and class. Maria Mies and Silvia Federici are most explicit in acknowledging this intellectual inspiration.⁷ An implicit reliance upon world systems theory is also frequent, as in Luxton's argument that capitalism is *foundationally* racialized because its historical development depended upon processes of imperialism and colonialism which drew upon supplies of reproduced labour in regions where capitalist social relations were not yet dominant. In her landmark essay outlining a "unitary theory of race, class and gender," Karen Brodtkin Sacks draws upon the feminist world systems analyses of Veronika Bennholdt-Thompson (1981, 1984) and Mies (1986), as well as a wealth of feminist anthropological and historical studies, to underscore the racialized dynamics of capitalist accumulation on an international scale. Capitalism continuously creates "non-capitalist forms of production as its surroundings" for its "existence and future development" – but in doing so, "these cease to be modes of production in the sense of retaining independent dynamics, and become non-capitalist forms of production subordinated to and part of the capitalist mode of production" (Sacks 1989:541). These observations inform Sack's (re)definition of the working class, "in which membership is not determinable on an individual basis, but rather as membership in a community that is

dependent upon waged labor, but that is unable to subsist or reproduce by such labor alone" (Sacks 1989:543).

For Brenner and the political Marxists, the problem with all of the above accounts lie in their assumption of precisely that which needs to be explained – *viz.*, capitalist "rules of reproduction" and "laws of motion." Brenner points out that Adam Smith's *description* of capitalist dynamics is largely correct. Market competition induces actors to cut costs by innovating and improving labour productivity, leading to a more specialized technical division of labour. However, Smith is only able to describe this dynamic by assuming the causal priority of an intrinsically human capitalist rationality: the propensity to "truck, barter, and exchange" (Brenner 1986). Such a propensity is also assumed by Anderson and world systems theorists, who regard capitalism as already present within the interstices of feudalism. Since merchants have traded for centuries and even millennia, capitalism – despite references to "bourgeois revolution" – is really conceived as merely a quantitative extension of social relations that have always been present. Its emergence at a particular time is therefore attributed to the removal of barriers or obstacles in its path (guild and feudal restrictions, etc.), rather than a qualitatively new social dynamic.

Even the prominent British Marxist historians – Rodney Hilton and Maurice Dobb chief among them – exhibit the same explanatory tendency, which Wood (2002) refers to as the "commercialization model" of the transition. While focusing appropriately on the peasantry and rural social relations, they root the emergence of capitalism and a waged proletariat in processes of peasant differentiation and polarization. With the Black Plague and loosening of lordly exploitation, it is claimed, rich peasants were in a better position to take advantage of potential "gains from trade," while their poorer counterparts – those less able to produce and market competitively – fell even further behind. The differential effects of market competition eventually resulted in a polarization between capitalist farmers, on the one hand, and landless labourers, on the other (Wood 2002). Seccombe's understanding of the transition is largely informed by this thesis, in addition to what he takes from Anderson.

7 Indeed, Mies' work is explicitly conceived within the terms of world systems theory, and is peppered with references to Wallerstein in particular. Federici herself draws extensively upon Mies, and more conventional world systems theorists to a lesser extent. See Federici, p. 18, n. 1.

Political Marxists contrast all variants of the “commercialization model” with a second model, drawn from Marx’s *Capital*. In his famous chapter on “so-called primitive accumulation,” Marx does not trace capitalism to the lifting of barriers to profit-making, but rather to the forcible expropriation of the peasantry from customary lands through enclosure (Marx 1976:877-907). The separation of the direct producers from their means of subsistence is therefore the original “primitive accumulation,” not the accumulation of wealth via colonialism or trade. However, Marx’s account did not adequately explain the historical reasons for this expropriation. If we do not assume a capitalist rationality from the outset, how do we explain *why* feudal landlords sought to expel the peasantry from their land? Did a similar process occur outside of England, and if not, how are these societies to be characterized during the same historical period?

Brenner (1985) sought to answer these questions in his famously controversial essay on early modern Europe, which provided a foundation for the political Marxist tradition. In doing so he offered the first explanation of the origins of capitalism that did not confuse *explanans* with *explanandum*, and overturned the received Marxist models taken as reference points in the domestic labour debate. Rather than conceiving of a forces/relations dialectic propelling historical change, Brenner instead points to the radical difference between capitalism and all previous forms of class-stratified society. While technique, organization and technology have varied across time and place, in all pre-capitalist societies the production of most goods assumed a basically similar form: peasants cultivated the land they held in some form of direct possession (but not *ownership* in the contemporary capitalist sense). Surplus appropriation (and therefore class exploitation) did not generally occur at the point of production as it does in capitalist societies, but instead through the exercise of political power and (at least implicitly) violence/coercion, after the agricultural product had been cultivated. In pre-capitalist class societies, therefore, political and economic powers were fused, and were in fact indistinguishable. As some political Marxists have since pointed out, the operative concept for historical materialist analysis

should not therefore be the “mode of production” (as if production were the dynamic principle dictating political and social development) but rather the “mode of exploitation” (Teschke 2003:53-7).

Modes of exploitation are meaningfully distinguished from each other by their form of “social-property relations,” which Brenner defines as:

the relations among direct producers, relations among exploiters, and relations between exploiters and direct producers that, taken together, make possible/specify the regular access of individuals and families to the means of production (land, labour, tools) and/or the social product per se. The idea is that such relations will exist in every society, and define the basic constraints on – and the possibilities and limits of – individual economic action. [Brenner 2007:58]

It is notable that Brenner here makes explicit reference to families, and refers to them again when suggesting that distinct social-property relations give rise to particular “rules of reproduction” among both direct producers and exploiters. In fact, the novel historical materialist categories introduced by Brenner seem to at least *potentially* admit the importance and complexity of family forms and reproductive labour in a way that traditional Marxism never had. In practice, the political Marxists have fallen short of recognizing or realizing this potential – a fact which likely stems, at least partially, from a lack of concern for the “feminist question.”

Before engaging with this question and linking it to Secombe’s analysis, it is first necessary to identify Brenner’s “feudal” rules of reproduction and their relation to the origin of capitalism. Brenner sharply distinguishes between peasant and lordly rules of reproduction. Peasants, he suggests, adopted a “produce for subsistence” rule. To guarantee immediate subsistence and generational security, they minimized productive specialization, had large families, subdivided their holdings, and encouraged early marriage (Brenner 2007:69). Feudal lords, because they had minimal capacity to transform production, increased output and income only by “extensive growth” – carving out new lands, conquering new ones, etc. – as well as “political accumulation,” or investment in

the means of violence. Benno Teschke (2003:62-3) has added that marriage itself was a form of lordly political accumulation, as it was inextricably tied to the inheritance of land and peasant tenants. Dynastic marriage, therefore, constituted a ruling class strategy.

In this light, the problem of accounting for the transition to capitalism is explaining how it was possible at all. Why would lords enclose on the direct producers who provide their wealth and security? Brenner's answer, which has been given important elaboration by Comninel (2000), is that capitalism emerged as an *unintended consequence* of class struggles in England specifically. The Black Death (c. 1348) and consequent depopulation occurred throughout the continent, jeopardizing the normal rules of reproduction that once governed lordly accumulation. In France, peasant communities were able to secure rights of inheritance and fixed rents against their lords, even as new powers of politically-mediated appropriation were formed by tax-office absolutist states (Zmolek 2001:136). In England, however, a very different path was followed. Here, depopulation also turned the terms of class struggle against the lords, and attempts to re-impose feudal exactions failed. Whereas the serfs were once obliged to perform a certain amount of labour upon the lords' *demesne*, they were now relieved of labour-rent obligations and obliged to only pay money rents on their customary tenancies (Patriquin 2004:204).

This initial peasant victory set in motion a series of interconnected events which eventually yielded agrarian capitalism. Lacking traditional extra-economic powers of surplus extraction, in the mid-fifteenth century the lords began to rent their *demesne* land to the highest bidder, i.e., they established variable "economic" rents. Although this would have otherwise had no consequence for customary tenants, the English common law (absent in France) enabled the lords to gradually claim *exclusive* right to common lands. There thus began a process – largely "legal" – by which common lands and rights were extinguished, and lords increasingly asserted their right to enact variable rents on customary holdings as well (Patriquin 2004:206-8). Peasant access to the land (the means of subsistence) became conditional upon meeting a market-determined rent. For tenants,

production for the market was now an *imperative*, rather than an opportunity – they had to specialize, innovate, and improve productivity just to ensure their self-reproduction. Those who failed to do so sufficiently were evicted, and came to constitute a wage-dependent proletariat.

This result differed markedly from that of France, where enduring peasant possession of land ensured the maintenance of pre-capitalist rules of reproduction. There, a secular tendency of declining labour productivity set in as peasant families subdivided their holdings over generations. To subsist, many peasant families necessarily *supplemented* their income with wages and "proto-industrial" production; but "tenant farming and wage labor had changed little since the crisis of the fourteenth century...whereas capitalism had totally transformed the agriculture of England" (Comninel 1987:192-3).

To summarize, political Marxism offers at least two important conceptual contributions to feminist materialism and a unitary materialist theory. First is the more narrow concern of understanding the transition and explaining capitalism's specificity. Brenner and the political Marxists are alone in having done so without "begging the question." This does not mean that their account is in any sense comprehensive or complete, but it seems at least to be the best starting point, certainly better than world systems theory or other varieties of Marxian work. Most importantly, their analysis has shown that it is at least misleading to begin feminist materialist analysis (as the Armstrongs do) by conceiving of an abstract capitalist mode of production predicated upon free wage labour. Instead, market dependence is the historical basis for capitalist development, upon which proletarianization followed. As Ellen Wood suggests:

The moment access to the means of production and appropriation becomes market-dependent – and even before market dependence takes the form of the general commodification of labour power – the 'fundamental contradiction' of capitalism is already at work, and the market's imperatives of competition and profit-maximization come into play. [2001:284]

In assessing the specific relationship between capital-

ism and patriarchy, then, a necessary starting point should be an historical investigation of how relations of *market dependence* reshaped pre-capitalist gender relations, long before the onset of industrialization in the nineteenth century.

A basis for such work has been laid by the political Marxists' second contribution: the interlinked concepts of mode of exploitation, social-property relations, and rules of reproduction. The important point here is that pre-capitalist relations of exploitation, given their politically-mediated character, carried direct implications for gender relations. In fact, if "rules of reproduction" are to be sufficiently comprehensive, they must recognize the mutually-constituted nature of relations of exploitation, on the one hand, and gender relations, on the other. This can be demonstrated by embarking on a closer examination of feudal rules of reproduction. Brenner and other political Marxists correctly note that lords relied upon extensive rather than intensive growth, but it is crucial to point out that such extensive growth required the *political* management of peasant women's biological reproduction function. Not only was it advantageous to guarantee a surplus peasant population for new lands, it was even more necessary to ensure a secure and steady supply of labour for both the lordly *demesne* and customary tenancies (Middleton 1981:108).

Chris Middleton, in particular, has shown how regional variations in tenancy and rent obligations under English feudalism were associated with gender relations of greater or lesser equality. In regions where lords had larger *demesnes*, there tended to be a stricter regulation of peasant sexuality and women's reproductive capacities. Contrary to the suggestions of some socialist feminist authors (Federici 2004:25), there *was* a certain social separation between the productive and reproductive tasks in late English feudalism. Peasant women were largely excluded from labouring on the *demesne*, a central site of surplus production (Middleton 1979:156). On larger manorial estates, surplus was also produced *within* the lordly household by a permanent staff of waged but unfree labourers (the *famuli*). While both men and women laboured in this capacity, there were substantial differences. Most specialist occupations

(ploughing, shepherding, herding, carting, milling) were traditionally carried out by men (Middleton 1985:189). The great majority of female *famulae*, on the other hand, were recorded as "servants," and performed a wide variety of productive and reproductive tasks: growing vegetables, raising poultry, tending to the dairy, cooking and cleaning, maintaining clothing, and caring for the lord's children. Unlike the male *famuli*, a large proportion of the *famulae* were between the ages of 12 and 25, and conventionally left service upon marriage (Quick 2010:173-5).

After marriage, women established new households with their peasant husbands. On the peasant's customary holding, the division between productive and reproductive tasks was less sharp – but it did exist, alongside a corresponding sexual division of labour. Plowing, mowing (with a heavy scythe), hedging, ditching and the spaying and gelding of livestock were typically "men's work." Women laboured in the fields, but at different chores – planting, weeding, gathering straw, stubble and chaff, as well as washing and shearing of sheep. In the household itself women took care of the poultry, the dairy and the garden, labours which were more compatible with the demands of child-rearing (Middleton 1988:28). To be sure, there is evidence that women performed all of the above tasks at certain times, but it is important to note that mowing and ploughing seems to have consistently remained a male preserve (Hilton 1947:145-7; Casey 1976:227-31).

Gendered occupational specialization and discrimination, therefore, clearly *preceded* capitalism. However, this fact should not be taken as evidence of an autonomous "patriarchal" structure and/or the "functional" necessity of a sexual division of labour. Instead, the particular sexual division of labour and patriarchal norms of the period can best be explained with reference to the specific rules of reproduction that instantiated feudal social-property relations. Both feudal lords and peasant families had an interest in ensuring a large and stable inter-generational labour supply (i.e., large families). As Brenner noted, large families were important for peasants because they helped to meet the immediate requirements of subsistence and rental obligations, as well as long-term security in old age. Perhaps even more

importantly, lords sought the same because a large peasant population ensured the flow of surplus agricultural product from existing and newly established customary holdings, and surplus labour for the *demesne*. Middleton has convincingly argued that lordly demands, in particular,

made a married woman's fecundity her most valuable asset – more valuable, generally, than the labour she might contribute herself or the property she brought into the marriage. Her main function was to procreate. This expectation, combined with a high rate of infant mortality and relatively low adult life-expectancy, would mean that a considerable proportion of a peasant woman's married life would be absorbed by the sheer physical experiences of pregnancy, birth and lactation, and though this might not prevent her making a large and varied contribution to the household, it could impede her role in the *direction* of agricultural labour – something which requires regular and relatively uninterrupted involvement to be effective. [Middleton 1981:148]

The expectation that young peasant women would eventually marry and raise children shaped the terms and limits of the labour that they performed as servants before marriage; while the demands of child-rearing in the peasant household, after marriage, restricted women's role in agrarian production for the customary tenancy and the *demesne*.

An emphasis on female "fecundity" and the control of women's reproductive capacity provides a means of linking the rules of reproduction of both feudal lords and peasants. In Brenner, the two are often artificially separated, while the family itself is presented as something like a black box, in which gender relations are seemingly inconsequential. When an analysis of the feudal mode of exploitation is expanded to encompass the sexual division of labour, we gain not only a more complete understanding of its dynamics, but also an explanation for the particular form of patriarchal power it entailed. The male's assumption of superiority in the household, and a corresponding sexual division of labour in which women performed the bulk of childrearing tasks, is closely related to the *politically-mediated* character of feudal surplus extraction. Lordly demands

for surplus product from the customary holding and surplus labour for the *demesne* impelled a hierarchical organization of production within peasant households (Wood 1995:276-9). Households were also required to provide "political" representatives to village assemblies and the lord's manor, through which the broad management and regulation of agrarian relations was determined. Even though women made essential contributions to the productive and reproductive labour of the peasant (and lordly) household, they were excluded from participation in the labour-intensive tasks of agricultural (and thereby surplus) production on the customary tenancy and *demesne*. Through their authority in this domain, men claimed representation of their household "politically" at the village level and gained overall control of the household, its property, and its labour.⁸

With the separation of the political and the economic under capitalism, the basis of women's oppression in politically-mediated exploitative relations was dramatically altered. In pre-capitalist societies, the generational reproduction of the labour force was directly connected to exploitation and accumulation through "extensive" political mechanisms. Under capitalism, exploitation and accumulation is mediated by the market, and the political regulation of fertility can no longer be *directly* wielded for exploitative purposes.⁹ In this respect, Ellen Wood is justified in suggesting that capitalism "is uniquely indifferent to the social identities of the people it exploits" (Wood 1995:266). Yet – as feminist political economists have insisted – paid and unpaid labour remain profoundly gendered (and racialized). How is this fact to be explained in a non-functionalist and non-dualist way? It seems that the best and only way is to trace the process of transition in a manner that

⁸ On this very important point, see Middleton, "Peasants," p. 148. Although beyond the purview of this paper, it is worth linking the political foundations of male supremacy in feudal society with the larger question of the origins of the state, class, and gender oppression. Stephanie Coontz and Peta Henderson, for example, have traced male supremacy to their political role in kin-based societies, which was eventually transformed into a vehicle for accumulation. See Coontz and Henderson, "Property Forms, Political Power and Female Labour in the Origins of Class and State Societies," in Coontz and Henderson (eds.), *Women's Work, Men's Property: The Origins of Gender and Class* (London:Verso, 1986).

⁹ Which does not mean, of course, that fertility and other gendered processes cease to be regulated, or that they are of no economic consequence.

is attentive to capitalism's specificity, but which also demonstrates how *gendered* pre-capitalist rules of reproduction were reshaped and transformed by the social relations of market dependence.

Assessing Seccombe's Contribution

It is in this context that Seccombe's work should be assessed and appreciated. From a political Marxist perspective, there is much in his account that is problematic. On the one hand, Seccombe (1992:10) rightfully encourages a theoretical "integration" of the socioeconomic dimension with the politico-legal relations of the state. On the other hand, he does not engage in a concerted attempt to reformulate Marxian theoretical categories in a way that would enable such integration. Instead, readers are provided with a theorization of the "mode of production" that largely relies upon the previous work of more orthodox Marxist historians. While he does "expand" the mode of production concept to encompass family forms, there necessarily remains – as Ferguson (1999:10, 14 fn.22) pointed out – a certain dualism between the two. The categories that political Marxists provide in place of the mode of production – while not initially developed with the intention of illuminating such factors – actually seem better equipped to integrate gender and family forms directly into historical materialist analysis.

Seccombe's reliance upon more orthodox Marxian models is well illustrated by his treatment of the West European late/non-universal peasant marriage pattern, a social phenomena that is central to his account of the transition. This pattern – which Seccombe traces to as early as 1650 and attributes to a tightening land market and declining wages – ostensibly provides a "missing piece of the puzzle" in explaining the genesis of industrial capitalism (1992:239). He identifies seven interrelated factors to which the pattern gave rise, including higher life expectancy, greater savings, more "efficient" use of women's reproductive labour, and greater willingness among youth to assume proletarian employment (1992:239-41). However, these are all *quantitative* factors. They may explain the intensification of capitalist social dynamics once set in motion, but they cannot explain the origin of those dynamics. In the

end, like so many others, Seccombe assumes what has to be explained. For Seccombe, the pattern's greatest significance is not necessarily its restrictive function,

but rather the obverse capacity: to unleash a sustained *rise* in the birth rate by means of earlier and more universal marriage, in sensitive response to shifts in the mode of labour-power's employment and consumption. This occurred in zones of rural industry in the late eighteenth century. [1992:241]

An obvious question is how to explain the emergence and sustainability of rural industry. In his main narrative Seccombe appears to take this development for granted, but in his Appendix (critique of Brenner) he links it to the development of intensive agriculture in the same period. Curiously, Seccombe accepts that English agriculture, in contrast with that in France, developed "within an essentially capitalist structure" (1992:251) – but then denies that this difference had any measurable effect, and credits the development of intensive agriculture to the "stimulus" of rising grain prices in the late eighteenth century (1992:231, 251). Such a stimulus, however, can only be held to have *causal* effect if some underlying model of social development is assumed. In Seccombe's case, it is a model of peasant differentiation/polarization and proletarianization in the Hilton/Dobb tradition (Seccombe:1992:141-4).

For this reason, it is very difficult to accept Seccombe's specific critique of Brenner. As is suggested above, Seccombe correctly takes Brenner to task for "largely ignor[ing] the familial dimension" in his account of the transition (1992:253). The problem is that when Seccombe attempts to demonstrate the causal force of specifically English family forms – stronger traditions of unigeniture, neo-locality, and exogamy – he separates them from the social-property relations within which they were embedded. English unigeniture and neo-locality, for example, cannot be contrasted with French partibility and virilocality as causally independent factors. Instead, these patterns were inextricably bound with the experience of *differential* modes of exploitation spanning several centuries in both countries: distinct forms and degrees of lordly power during the feudal era before the fifteenth century (Comninel 2000),

and the divergence between English agrarian capitalism and French absolutism afterwards. Granting family forms the status of independent causal factors simply conceals Seccombe's underlying fidelity to flawed orthodox Marxian models which posit a fundamental *similarity* between England and France.

The above criticism is being offered not to undermine Seccombe's overall project of integrating gender relations and family forms into historical materialism. Instead, the objective is to build on this concern by highlighting the need for stronger conceptual foundations. Indeed, despite its flawed theoretical orientation, Seccombe's account has much to offer. By asking "feminist questions," he delivers a much richer and historically nuanced understanding of peasant family dynamics than Brenner. Some political Marxists (Comninel 2000:27; Teschke 2003:69-70) have recently attempted a more detailed periodization of the medieval era based upon forms of lordship (e.g., manorialism is contrasted with "feudalism" proper). The distinction between partibility and primogeniture is being raised in this context, but largely as a factor of lordly inheritance, rather than peasant gender relations. There is thus not just the possibility, but the necessity, of drawing both literatures together.

Reframed in this way, the late marriage pattern may still prove to have been causally linked to the transition, albeit for reasons entirely unforeseen by Seccombe. As noted above, the political Marxists trace the emergence of agrarian capitalism in England to a specific pattern of developments following the Black Death of 1348. Depopulation induced a crisis of lordly revenue extraction, eventually compelling lords to begin leasing out their *demesne* lands and, around 1450, enclose on the commons. Thus far, political Marxist authors have made almost no reference to the role that a delayed/non-universal marriage pattern may have played in the course of these events. Indeed, Brenner has asserted that the late marriage pattern was simply a *consequence* of agrarian capitalist development, which eliminated the basis for early marriage and high fertility embedded in peasant rules of reproduction (2007:104). However, Seccombe suggests that England was the first European country to experience such a pattern, beginning shortly after the Black Death in the late fourteenth century

(1992:155-6; see also Gottfried 1978:177, 191, 221; Hallam 1985). Although evidence of a late marriage pattern at this early date is only cursory, by the early sixteenth century its existence has been well established by historians (Youngs 1984:137). It seems, then, that the social significance of the late marriage pattern (and corresponding gender relations) should be dramatically rethought, by placing it *within* the history of the English feudal crisis. In this context, the late marriage pattern appears as neither the "missing link" for explaining industrial capitalism (as Seccombe suggests), nor the *consequence* of agrarian capitalism (as Brenner avers). Rather, it was the formative factor in the class struggles that *gave rise* to agrarian capitalism, exacerbating the crisis of lordly revenues.

The pattern's emergence would have been inextricably tied to the contours of the class struggle after the Black Death, involving peasant (and perhaps especially peasant women's) assertion of control over reproduction against lordly intervention and demands. The establishment of a late marriage pattern may have played a decisive contributing role to the transition by maintaining a high degree of land availability throughout the century of crisis. What this evidence suggests, then, is that peasant men and women significantly altered their previous rules of reproduction, in gendered ways, as they sought to cope with the constraints and opportunities of the crisis period. The persistence of a low peasant birth rate, however, also meant a crisis of surplus appropriation for lords, denying them an ample supply of labour for the *demesne* and a high rate of surplus product from customary tenancies. By reverting to leaseholding of the *demesne* and eventually the enclosure of common lands, the lords succeeded in turning the tables on the peasantry, "unintentionally" establishing an entirely novel form of capitalist social-property relations.

This thesis is certainly tentative, and requires much greater historical research of family forms and gender relations in fifteenth century England if it is to be upheld with confidence. Indeed, the historical record itself is patchy and contradictory, especially in the decades immediately after the Black Death. Nevertheless, such an investigation would provide an

ideal synthesis of the best elements of Brenner and Secombe, while also prompting a “rethinking” of the transition from both sides.

Family Forms and Social-Property Relations

At first glance, the minutiae of late medieval and early modern English agriculture may seem to bring us rather far from the contemporary concerns of feminist materialism. However, a rethinking of the transition is crucial not simply for ensuring historical accuracy and nuance, but also for overcoming the theoretical impasse of socialist feminism identified above. In conducting this effort, the conceptual limitations of much previous work in the political Marxist tradition will have to be confronted as well. Here we must return to, and take more seriously, Samuel Knafo’s suggestion that both Brenner and Wood have exhibited a tendency to essentialize the English experience of capitalism:

Partly because the comparative work on the various capitalist trajectories remains to be done in this approach, there has been a tendency among political Marxists to rely on an overly structuralist notion of capitalism as a system with inherent dynamics.... Political Marxism now needs to take a step further in applying its own comparative method to the study of capitalism itself in order to historicize it. This requires, above all, that we stop taking the imperative of the market as the defining feature of capitalism. Social imperatives clearly do matter because they compel social classes to find solutions to distinctive types of problems, and encourage the diffusion of successful innovations, thus normalising them. Yet these solutions are not predetermined. [Knafo 2007:102]

Knafo’s methodological concern, above all, is to assert the centrality of agency in critical analyses of social relations:

structures are established and transformed precisely in order to gain leverage and to influence a social reality. Structures are thus intimately tied to agency. Their purpose is precisely to create agency (for some), not simply to close it off (for others). [Knafo 2010:509]

International relations scholars inspired by political Marxism have offered some instructive examples of how a focus on agency can be deployed to historicize capitalism. Benno Teschke, for example, stresses that the *pre-existing* absolutist state system had a profound effect upon the development of capitalism, including the state in which it was pioneered: “Britain never developed a pristine culture of capitalism [contra Wood 1991], since she was from the first dragged into an international environment that inflected her domestic politics and long-term development” (Teschke 2003:266). But just as British capitalism was inflected by the international relations of European absolutist states, so too did absolutist “rules of reproduction” come under increasing strain from the *geopolitical* competition imposed by Britain’s uniquely dynamic and productive capitalist economy. The international expansion of capitalism is therefore best understood as a geopolitically combined and socially uneven process, whereby pre-capitalist state classes had to design counter-strategies of reproduction to survive in an international environment. These strategies were not uniform, and were always refracted through pre-existing domestic class relations. The transposition of capitalism to the Continent and the rest of the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was therefore riddled with social conflicts, from civil and international wars, to revolutions and counter-revolutions (Teschke 2003:266).

Taken together, what do these internal critiques and extensions of political Marxism offer for the project of a unitary materialist theory? At least two important implications stand out. First, the concept of geopolitically combined and socially uneven development affords a way of understanding the international dynamics of capitalist expansion and accumulation that avoids the problems of world system theoretic approaches often utilized by feminist materialists. Contra Luxton, capitalism was not *foundationally* racialized, but *became* racialized with the expansion of the British empire and, more importantly, the international instantiation of capitalist social relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By recognizing the comparatively “late” development of capitalism outside Britain, feminist

materialists will actually be in a better position to assess the specific historical processes by which capitalist development in and between certain localities became intertwined with racial/ethnic identity and subordination. A further exploration of this important point, unfortunately, is not possible here.¹⁰

The first point does, however, relate to a second: the concept of “rules of reproduction” must be employed and interpreted in a more flexible and historically open way to capture the social significance of agency. Indeed, Teschke and Hannes Lacher have suggested that the term “ways of reproduction” may better serve an “agency-centered and dialectical” approach to international capitalist competition (2007:571). The same concerns, I suggest, apply to domestic capitalist class relations. Brenner and Wood were quite correct to highlight the historically specific rules of reproduction that attend market dependence, but these rules are also too abstract to denote the specific and historically contingent strategies that class actors may pursue in achieving their objectives. Particularly pertinent for this discussion are the ways in which “non-economic” structures of social differentiation based on gender were instantiated and transformed in order to gain leverage and influence in the novel circumstances of agrarian capitalism.

Despite largely conflating the British and continental European (especially French) developmental experiences, Seccombe does note a number of profound contrasts between the two. He correctly observes that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, increasing numbers of land-poor cottagers in both France and England had to resort to wage labour to supplement diminishing agricultural income. In England, however, the land-poor were much more likely to become *landless*, “forced to rely ever more exclusively on selling their labour-power to subsist.” In contrast, a far greater proportion of smallhold-

ers in France “clung tenaciously” to a small plot, a common garden, and common use right (Seccombe 1992:253). Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century according to Seccombe, “most English labourers were devoid of any productive property at all. On the continent, however, the proportion of small property owners had risen substantially, while the growth of the property-less class was comparatively negligible” (Seccombe 1992:252; Fischer 1973:165). As we have seen, Seccombe also identifies differing family forms between the two countries as causally independent factors promoting early English industrialization. These factors, in England and France respectively, were unigeniture versus partibility; neo-locality versus virilocality; and dispersed versus locally dense kinship networks.

Once the differing patterns of proletarianization are recognised as stemming from qualitatively distinct social-property relations (agrarian capitalism and absolutism), the divergent families forms are also explicable. This divergence had its origins in distinct outcomes of class struggles during the feudal crisis. In France, peasant struggles enacted a definitive end to the system of seigneurial exploitation, whereby lords wielded the political power of the *ban* to command a variety of arbitrary exactions from servile tenants (serfs). Rents were fixed, and peasants gained personal freedom as well as effective and alienable title to the land they tilled (Comninel 2000:20-21). Crucially, however, these changes did not signify an end to extra-economic exploitation of the peasantry. Deprived of their old feudal prerogatives, French lords increasingly purchased “offices” in the king’s centralized state, providing new opportunities for wealth and status through the prerogatives of taxation. Thus, even as French peasants were able to entrench their right to petty property, they not only faced the obligations of fixed levies, but also the growing surplus exactions of an absolutist “tax/office state” (Teschke 2003:169).

Precisely because direct producers in France retained direct access to the means of subsistence, while also having thrown off the social regulation of banal lordship, they were able to organize inter-generational reproduction through the norm of partible inheritance. Partibility itself was not

10 Wood (2005:101), for example, suggests that racial ideology, in particular, emerged only because of the previous development of capitalism in Britain. Without the ascriptive categories and hierarchies of pre-capitalist societies, slavery could only be justified by inventing a new category of labour subordination, based on skin colour. However, capitalism in many other societies may have been “foundationally” racialized. France, for example, established racial categories as a participant in the Atlantic slave trade decades before it developed capitalism. For an insightful discussion of some of these issues, see Shilliam (2009).

historically novel. Absent lordly restrictions, this norm was adopted almost universally by peasants, in Europe and elsewhere, because it allowed the basis for (male) children to start families of their own at an early age and enhanced the security of aging parents (Brenner 2007:69; Seccombe 1992:39). Partibility, in turn, went hand-in-hand with virilocality and the formation of locally dense kinship networks, as male adults established new households in close proximity with those of their fathers.

This family form, then, was one that invested the elder patriarch with immense power over both children and wives. The historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie studied the transformations that occurred in one French province at the outset of this period:

In fifteenth century-Languedoc there was a move to substitute the extended patriarchal family for the nuclear family, to reconstitute the 'great household' of archaic rural societies.... They lived under the same roof, eating and drinking the same bread, and the same wine. There was a sole money box, and the patriarch retained the keys. Without the express consent of the parent, the married son did not have the right to more than five sous for himself.... The veritable master of the wife's dowry... was the husband's father. It was he who received and disposed of it. Among the extended family groups that allied themselves to one another through marriage, the dowries passed from father to father. [Ladurie 1974:31-33]

It should be noted here that Seccombe himself traces this transformation of peasant family forms and patriarchal power to the conditions of early modern France (1992:147). Yet, just as Seccombe's adherence to a conceptual model of single, West European transition to capitalism in the early nineteenth century prevents him from locating the causal role of family forms in the rise of agrarian capitalism in England, so too he misses their significance in shaping the conditions that yielded a distinct mode of exploitation (absolutism) in early modern France. There are at least two important ways in which the emergence of this particular peasant family form (and its attendant gender relations) may have played a heretofore unrecognized role in forcing the French

lordly class to devise new class-exploitative rules of reproduction. First, the reorganization of peasant production and reproduction under an elder patriarch would have strengthened peasants' claim to free status and *de facto* property rights over their smallholdings, curbing lordly attempts to maintain and re-institute the privileges of banal power. Second, the emergence of the elder patriarch as pre-eminent authority in the extended household and among kin would have facilitated the reorganization of politically-mediated social relations of surplus appropriation. Instead of acting as political representatives of the household in village communities dominated by individual lords, the patriarchs now served as the mediating link between their formally "free" peasant communities and a new stratum of tax-seeking office holders in the absolutist state (Comninel 1987:190).

Over many generations, however, the cumulative effect of partibility was to dramatically reduce the average size (and therefore productivity) of individual peasant holding. Eventually, only a minority had fully sufficient land for their own subsistence. To ensure their reproduction, peasants everywhere engaged in a variety of *supplementary* activities, such as leasing land (including even tenant farms to operate commercially), contractual sharecropping, wage labour and proto-industry. This last factor, in particular, has been pointed to by Seccombe and others as evidence of a fundamental similarity between France and England, where "putting out" industry expanded rapidly in the eighteenth century (1992:206-7). Proto-industry is seen as significant because it served as a transitional form to full capitalism (industrialization); but Seccombe also notes that it blurred traditional gender roles and softened patriarchal power:

The need to combine industrial work with child care and housework at one site fostered a much greater flexibility in the allocation of tasks between households. When a wife went out to do business with the contractor, her husband would take care of the home, mind the children, tend the garden and milk the cows. In these circumstances, the sex-typing of skills and areas of responsibility, so pronounced in peasant households, was frequently blurred and sometimes inverted. [1992:207]

Seccombe is not incorrect to identify the growth of proto-industry in the continent and England, and there is no doubt that it was associated with changes in the sexual division of labour and an *alteration* of patriarchal forms. Indeed, proto-industry and attendant commercialization often figured in peasant strategies of reproduction, when partibility was carried out to such an extent that individual plots can no longer meet basic subsistence needs. A particularly prominent non-Western example is the Yangzi Delta of late imperial China, where peasants also secured rights to their smallholdings and a fixed (albeit still very onerous) level of rent to lords. In the Yangzi, women who once worked alongside men in the fields moved into the household to engage exclusively in spinning and weaving for market sale (Cantin 2009:257; Brenner and Isett 2002:629). In the Chinese example, at least, proto-industry seems to have actually rigidified the sexual division of labour, and the extra-economic relations of kinship empowered men of the household to appropriate surplus from the women who produced it (Cantin 2009:456-7). In fact, some historians have evidenced a similar pattern in at least parts of France, with women withdrawing from agrarian activity to combine proto-industry with household tasks (Thirsk 1961:73, 81; Shorter 1976:517).

The gendered implications of proto-industry, therefore, cannot be assessed without a wider consideration of historically specific social norms embedded in rules of reproduction. For our purposes, what must be stressed are the distinct social-property relations that facilitated proto-industry in pre-capitalist societies such as France and China, on the one hand, and agrarian capitalist England on the other. The central difference is that in the former, direct producers retained non-market access to sufficient land so that proto-industry remained only a side-line (if an increasingly important one). The emergence and instantiation of market dependence in England, however, produced very different results for direct producers and the gendered division of labour.

When the social-property relations of agrarian capitalism are taken into account, the family forms observed by Seccombe in England are also readily explicable. While unigeniture was already a norm

among lordly families in feudal England, it assumed renewed importance for all agricultural producers with the onset of agrarian capitalism. Under the competitive pressures of market dependence, the size and integrity of land holdings were of vital economic necessity. Landowners, of course, sought to constantly expand the extent of their arable and/or pasture land to ensure economies of scale and maximization of output on their tenancies. However, freeholders and even remaining customary tenants were cognizant of the same factors because they too increasingly felt the pressures of the market in purchasing inputs and selling outputs, especially as the capitalist market became more national and fully integrated. The sub-division of holdings was therefore detrimental to landholders of all types and sizes.

By the early seventeenth century, the effect of enclosures and continued concentration of holdings pressed hard against customary tenants and small leaseholders alike, forcing them to give up their land. Some became cottagers if they could receive a minuscule "allotment" of land, taking up home industries such as weaving, or working as wage-labourers for larger farms. Others among the dispossessed went to the cities in search of work, became "vagabonds" or lived off poor relief (Zmolek 2001:143). By the late seventeenth century, customary tenures comprised only one-third of all tenures (and certainly a smaller proportion of total agricultural land), and leasehold prevailed everywhere except the northern district of Cumberland at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Indeed, by 1750 there were hardly any customary tenures left in England, which again explains Seccombe's observation that English labourers were devoid of any productive property at all by this period (Patriquin 2004:208; Seccombe 1992:252). The insecurity of smallholder agriculture and extensive dispossession and proletarianization help to explain patterns of neo-locality and dispersed kinship networks. Children of smallholders and especially proletarians were forced to leave their homes and villages of birth in search of employment, leading to increasingly scattered kinship ties across the country.

Patriarchy, Gendered Labour and Agrarian Capitalism

The above narrative of persistent agrarian capitalist growth and attendant proletarianization leads rather tidily to the historical conjuncture of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, widely recognized as the beginning of the first industrial revolution. However, although it is crucial to identify the historical origin of capitalism with the specific and novel social relations of market dependence that emerged in early modern English agriculture, industrial capitalism did not come to fruition several centuries later through the simple unfolding of a capitalist logic. The process of enclosure, dispossession, and proletarianization was not only gradual – it was marked by massive social struggles and contentions, as both capitalists and direct producers constantly devised new strategies to reproduce themselves amidst a changing social reality. Although a tremendous amount can (and has) been said about this, the focus here is limited to the ways in which gender relations were embedded in these class strategies. The objective is to clarify the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism by employing the revised political Marxist approach outlined thus far, thereby laying a foundation for a unitary materialist theory.

With the separation of the political and the economic under capitalism, surplus appropriation took the form of a wage-labour contract between individuals, rather than a politically-mediated obligation between formally unequal households. Nevertheless, wage labourers who entered into such contracts – especially in the first two centuries of agrarian capitalism – often did not rely upon their wages alone for full subsistence. Even after being dispossessed from their customary tenancies or leaseholds, new proletarians were often given tiny “allotments” of land, or were able to keep or establish a “cottage” with a garden (Patriquin 2004:209; Quick 2010:165). In addition, many common rights from the feudal era remained in place into the eighteenth century, though they varied by locality and their status was always under threat (Humphries 1990). Thus, members of the working class generally subsisted as family units, supplementing wages with agricultural production from small plots, proto-industry, and whatever could be still garnered from the commons.

Paddy Quick suggests that the transition from feudal tradition and custom to capitalist wage labour contracts “denoted a reliance on the sex-gender-age relationships within the working class for the reproduction of the working class, and a severing of the responsibility of the ruling class for the regulations guiding this” (Quick 2010:172). There is a crucial element of truth to this, insofar as those directly exploiting the direct producers lost their capacity to *politically* manage sex-gender-age relationships. “Freed” of the regulations of the lordly manor, working class families assumed a new responsibility to organize gender and age relationships among themselves, enabling a degree of flexibility and variety in family forms and gender relations that was unprecedented in the feudal period. Yet, the separation between the political and the economic did not divest the ruling class of its own agency in shaping these forms. While not directly wielding political power, agrarian capitalists used their economic prerogatives (hiring, firing, wage-setting, etc) to shape gender relations. Likewise, politicians and officials in the capitalist state did not shy from instituting a variety of legal regulations that implicitly and explicitly reordered gender relations, often in profound ways. Indeed, it was the conflictual interaction of these factors that served to reinforce, undermine, and transform patriarchal norms within the new social context of agrarian capitalism.

Agrarian capitalism began and developed most quickly in the south and east of England. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a continuous and remarkable expansion in the size of the great landed estates. Market pressures pushed small and inefficient tenants and freeholders into bankruptcy, while landlords engrossed their holdings through forms of enclosure and the purchase of additional land to maintain competitive size. In the early stages of this process, when the average farm size remained small, unmarried proletarian men and especially women were hired on yearly contracts to act as servants – half “family member” and half “hired help.” Contractual labour afforded protection against the uncertainties of the labour market, but it also served as a school for inculcating inherited gender expectations: “Girls in service were not only expected to acquire the skills they would need as a farm labourer’s

wife, but also the virtues of a submissive demeanour" (Middleton 1988:32). The particular tasks she was asked to perform – including the balance between indoor and outdoor labour – varied according to the size of the household and its form of farming. Once married, however, women generally found it more difficult to obtain regular employment than men. To a much greater extent, women's waged labour tended to be menial and low paid, combining agricultural work with household tasks or cooking for day labourers (Middleton 1988:32). Occupational segregation and discrimination, therefore, endured into the era of agrarian capitalism, and was likely reinforced by women's predominant labour in the "domestic" cottage, where gardening, husbandry and proto-industry ensured a higher income than wages and was also more amenable to the tasks of child-rearing.

The growth of large estates in the succeeding centuries had a contradictory effect, expanding the opportunities of wage employment but also reinforcing a pattern of occupational segregation resembling that of late feudalism. To meet competitive market pressures, farmers not only "improved" their farms through territorial consolidation and expansion, but also by introducing innovations in technique and technology and a more pronounced technical division of labour within their estates. Servants were gradually replaced by wage labour hired on a daily or weekly basis, and there was a marked rise in agricultural specialization within the workforce (and consequent stratification based on "skill," status and income). As in feudalism, it was intense work on the arable land that was regarded as most essential (and most remunerative) because of its tangible connection with surplus production, even though the surplus was now being secured through market competition rather than extra-economic coercion.

Interestingly, however, early records indicate that men as well as women were hired as reapers and mowers, even though women still predominated in dairy and garden work. It was only with the replacement of the sickle by the scythe that women were displaced. Michael Roberts has argued that this transition occurred because men possessed greater physical capacity to utilize the scythe (Roberts 1979). Middleton criticizes this explanation as a form

of "physiological-cum-technological determinism" (1988:35), and he would be correct for doing so *if* the introduction of the scythe is isolated from the wider social logic that compelled its use. However, if we connect its introduction to the social-property relations of capitalism – specifically, the need to enhance productivity under market pressure – then it can be shown that neither technology nor biology "determined" its impact on women. Indeed, we can achieve a social-historical understanding of why it was that certain forms of gender subordination persisted (indeed, were reintroduced) in a new social context. In these circumstances, pre-existing patriarchal norms had a material force, insofar as they provided a resource for capitalists (and some male workers) to achieve their strategies of reproduction. The capitalist farmer, unlike the feudal lord, was compelled to transform production under market pressure, which was both a cause and consequence for extinguishing customary rights. Yet broader social norms and customs remained important in shaping *how* this was achieved.

Similar considerations must be brought to bear in understanding the profound changes of the eighteenth century. The exclusion of women from reaping and mowing did not immediately result in an end to their employment on the harvest fields, where they continued to work as rakers and "followers." Indeed, it should also be noted that the scythe was only gradually implemented, as the sickle was still used to mow cheaper quality grains (in work that still involved women) (Middleton 1988:34). Around 1720, capitalist farmers responded to falling grain prices (and therefore falling profitability) with a vigorous effort to lower production costs by enhancing productivity and yields (Patriquin 2004:210). The "cereal belt" of large, grain producing estates was geographically extended throughout the country, placing further pressure on whatever small plots and customary lands the working class still claimed. While these developments ensured that England as a whole did not experience subsistence crises such as those that occurred on the Continent, it posed new and profound challenges for workers. Productivity increases made many male labourers redundant, generating structural rather than simply

seasonal unemployment. Although these pressures were faced by workers of both sexes, they were felt most acutely by women. Over the next few decades, it seems that women were entirely excluded from any harvest work, as their employment became restricted to gleaning and the poorly-paid (low demand) spring-time tasks of weeding corn, hay-making, and stone-picking. Snell suggests that this new gendered division of labour was a product of male labourers' defensive actions. In order to secure their own income, male workers actively sought to exclude female competition in agricultural labour, especially the more remunerative harvest tasks of all types (Snell 1985:57-66). Here, the class agency of male labourers, rather than capitalists, seems especially important in explaining the further subordination of women in the wage-dependent division of labour. Once again, though, pre-existing patriarchal norms were utilized as a resource for securing reproduction under the conjunctural conditions of the capitalist economy. In the process patriarchy was instantiated but also transformed in its specific social content.

Such a strategy may have seemed reasonable to male workers, and met with little resistance from their female counterparts, because of the remaining opportunities to meet subsistence needs through proto-industry and common rights, which were also more compatible with nursing and child care. Indeed, the eighteenth century was something of a "golden age" for proto-industry, as the expanding capitalist economy provided a large market for domestically produced crafts. Both of these alternatives to wage labour, however, were to be virtually eliminated by the turn of the century. As capitalists increasingly invested in the production of non-agricultural goods, the market became fiercely competitive even before the widespread use of machinery and industrial methods. Household proto-industry simply could not compete in a market governed by capitalist principles, leading to a spiral of debt and poverty (Zmolek 2001:150).

Just as important, in considering the fate of working women, was the final assault upon common right. As Jane Humphries has emphasized, the vestiges of common right in England were pivotal in ensuring women a certain degree of independence from male

wage-labourers, as well as the material reproduction of the family as a whole. But these rights were also a nuisance for agrarian capitalists seeking to expand cereal production, and their advocates strenuously lobbied parliament for enclosure. One such advocate, Arthur Young, observed in 1791: "The advantages of inclosing to every class of the people are now so well understood and combated at present but by a few old women who dislike it for no other reason but a love of singularity and a hatred of novelty" (quoted in Humphries 1990:22). Indeed, women figured prominently in the resistance to the parliamentary enclosures that ensued, though not of course for the reasons Young sneeringly imputed. The final elimination of common right extinguished women's major non-wage source for survival, increasing their dependence on wages and family wage-earners (and thereby, male workers). It also ensured women's full "availability" for existing and new forms of employment. The implications of these changes, for the history of industrial capitalism, gender, and family forms were profound.

These implications cannot of course be explored here. For the purposes of this analysis, though, it is enough to note that they prepared the ground for the dramatic expansion of capitalist industry in the nineteenth century. The gender relations that accompanied and shaped industrialization provided the historical pivot for the early socialist feminist debates, and the empirical ground for theoretically conceptualizing the relationship between patriarchy and capital. In many ways this focus is understandable because the historical significance of industrialization has been so far-reaching – including, as I have suggested, for the combined and uneven development of capitalism on an *international* scale. However, the common conflation of industrialism with capitalism prevents an understanding of capitalism's origins and specificity. Without such an understanding, attempts to theorize the relationship between class and gender inevitably yield some variant of functionalism, reductionism, or dualism. With such an understanding, however, we acquire conceptual tools that enable a fully social-historical explanation of their relationship and causality.

Conclusion: Toward a Unitary Theory

As the century of crisis in early modern England underscores, much of the history of the transition remains unwritten. Political Marxists have provided an invaluable contribution by pointing to a cardinal flaw in all previous accounts. Their alternative historical materialist approach has focused attention on the need to explain what had always been taken for granted or assumed: capitalist rationality and social relations themselves. In doing so, they have furnished a host of new concepts which provide the basis for a genuine *explanation* of the transition. Yet their work has, thus far, largely avoided questions of gender relations and family forms, an oversight that undermines the explanatory efficacy of their account. Secombe and other materialist feminists, in turn, have exhibited something of an opposite error. They have devoted significant attention to women and families, but have done so in a way that largely “adds” these factors to traditional, and inadequate, Marxist models. A synthesis of the two literatures – utilizing the political Marxist concepts of social-property relations and “rules of reproduction,” but also broadening the scope of these concepts in order to fully integrate families, gender, and racial/ethnic relations – would provide a solid methodological foundation for a unitary materialist perspective.

A unitary materialist theory should not, and cannot, be a positivist “theory of everything” akin to what is being sought in modern theoretical physics. Knafo has usefully suggested that social theory “only represents a means for specifying in a richer way social reality, not a means to abstract from it. Theory provides clarity in specifying what needs to be explained, but it cannot serve as a substitute for historical research” (2007:100). What socialist feminists have sought to explain is the relationship between capital and patriarchy, with more recent social reproductionist literature focusing on how class, gender and race constitute “one integrated process” of pro-

duction and social reproduction. In this, it might be said that some feminist materialists have been more consistent than many Marxists in pursuing “a theory of the social totality” (Rioux 2009:597). There can be no doubt that literature produced from a social reproduction perspective has offered a wealth of empirical analyses detailing the complex intersection of class, race and gender. However, without a clear conception of capitalism’s specificity, the “social totality” is often described without the theoretical tools that enable an *explanation* of how it came about and why it changes. In this context, a discussion of the transition to capitalism is highly pertinent. First, it illuminates the uniqueness of capitalism as a social form, something that is surely necessary for any materialist theory ascribing explanatory power to class relations. Second, it highlights the importance of agency and contingency, even in something as historically momentous as “the transition” itself. Once this analytical shift is made, we arrive at more useful and historically open historical materialist concepts – ones that that enable an integration of gender (as well as race/ethnicity, age and other identities and differentiations) into a materialist analysis that explains their causal significance in social change. The account of the transition and history of agrarian capitalism presented here, while very limited, attempts to demonstrate the possibility and utility of a unitary materialist theory based on such concepts. Certainly, the history of how patriarchy/gender subordination was instantiated and transformed between late feudalism and early industrialization supports no variant of dualism or functionalism/reductionism. But it also does not allow for the simple ontological alternative, that class exploitation and gender subordination are “one single system.” A unitary materialist theory must explain why and how this was and is so, amidst the vast process of social change, animated by a diversity of historical actors.

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Special Theme Issue Introduction

Fracturing Neoliberalism: Ethnographic Interventions

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While the concept of neoliberalism¹ occupies a central place in understanding political economic and cultural change across disciplines, emerging approaches in anthropology challenge paradigms that envision neoliberalism as a coherent, unitary force or treat it as a monolith acting upon the world. Further, these approaches do not take up the project of identifying neoliberalism's unifying strands across disparate contexts. Rather, they highlight the contingent, contradictory, and unstable character of neoliberal processes, examining historically and geographically contextualized situations through grounded studies of concrete places, people, and institutions (e.g. Clarke 2004; Kingfisher 2002;

Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008; Maskovsky and Kingfisher 2001; Nybell, Shook and Finn 2009). Importantly, the aim is not to downplay the powerful impact of neoliberal formations on real lives and experiences; it is to interrogate and problematize the particularities of these formations with an eye toward their limits. The central set of questions, then, focuses on specific places at particular moments: "who does what, by what means, to what ends and with what institutional effects?" (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008:121).

The concept for this volume stems from a 2009 American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting invited session on the interrelations between contemporary neoliberal and conservative movements, in which all authors participated. The articles collected here explore a number of themes that contribute to the project of developing more nuanced understandings of disparate neoliberal processes across varying contexts. In particular, we wish to highlight three such interrelated themes, illustrated especially well through grounded ethnographic studies: (1) the role of narratives and discourses in legitimizing neoliberal projects as well as in helping understand their transformations and limits; (2) that such projects are decidedly not self-actualizing (Peck and Tickell 2002) but stem from distinct actors,

1 As is well known, neoliberalism as a political economic concept posits that human flourishing is best promoted through an institutional framework comprised of free markets, free trade, and private property rights and guaranteed by the state, the actions of which beyond this ought to be highly limited. Contemporary policies under the neoliberal rubric include deregulation of private industry, privatization of public services, and reduction of public expenditures for social provision. The rise of neoliberalism is associated with the economic restructuring of Pinochet's Chile under U.S. influence during the 1970s, and, subsequently, with the regimes of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan more generally (Harvey 2005). Among other important contributions, analysts have theorized the different moments and changing forms of neoliberalism throughout its ascent to global prominence (Peck and Tickell 2002) as well as the potential transcendence into a post-neoliberal era (MacDonald and Ruckert 2009); the role of state action in neoliberalism (Bourdieu 2003; Sassen 1996); and neoliberalism's ideological and political dimensions (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Klein 2007).

although often with unintended consequences; and (3) the significance of both historical and contemporary political context, particularly of competing political projects that intersect with, but are not the same as, neoliberal processes.

Narratives and Discourses

All three contributions illustrate how key elements of the state are anything but absent or in retreat, facilitating neoliberal processes in different but important ways. Through ethnographic engagement, the articles show the varied ways in which narratives and discourses produced through complex interactions between state and non-state actors play a crucial role in justifying and perpetuating neoliberal projects. Importantly, the particularities thus revealed also point to vulnerabilities and spaces for potential intervention that may emerge over time in each unique context.

Key to Nybell's account of a neoliberal reform project of social services for young people in Michigan is the question of how such reform is made appealing or acceptable to those with vested interests in the well-being of poor and working class children. While the appeal to elites of program cutbacks and the elimination of entitlements may appear more evident in light of tax cuts and privatization efforts, Nybell examines the narrative structures through which social service workers themselves became invested in the reform effort throughout the 1990s. Her ethnographic study illuminates how the movement at issue presented new narratives that "offered workers relief from 'shame and blame' for the failures of the bureaucratic welfare state in exchange for participation in new, community-based, voluntaristic and entrepreneurial configurations of help" (page 34 here), while further coupling concepts of community and childhood in presenting hopeful images of reform and celebrating local control. Yet by 2009, the exuberance underlying the effort had waned as goals remained unattained and visions unrealized. The effort's central narratives underwent important transformations as well, highlighting the vulnerabilities and uncertainties attendant to shifting forms of power.

Well-developed narratives can also serve as

a powerful justifying force for particular projects, obscuring their potential dangers and limitations. Kuymulu's examination of market-based nature conservation projects in Cockpit Country, Jamaica, expressly challenges the discourse of "stakeholder partnerships" and "community participation" permeating the entrepreneurial approaches that have supplanted state-led conservation initiatives since the 1990s. Kuymulu argues that, while advanced by well-intentioned NGOs committed to environmental protection and the economic uplift of local people, the discourse of stakeholder partnerships and democratic community participation masks the potential of these efforts to exacerbate existing and create new inequalities.

Molina's work on minuteman activity along the U.S.-Mexico border in San Diego County, California, further underscores the significance of narratives in advancing specific political projects, revealing how complex relations between minutemen and state actors produce and perpetuate legitimizing narratives around border security. Molina argues that minuteman activity further legitimizes state border security efforts – while gaining much of its own legitimacy from state institutions – even though these efforts have proved largely ineffective in terms of curtailing illicit border crossing. While minuteman border surveillance itself is largely theatrical, its nominal accomplishments in terms of stopping migrants entrench the narrative that border security is the most effective means of stemming "illegal immigration." Through participation in broader anti-immigration networks, minutemen are able to relay this narrative, alongside related discourses around the perils of immigration, to the broader public in ways that the U.S. Border Patrol cannot.

Actors and Agency

The narratives and discourses underlying particular projects are not free-floating but advanced by concrete actors for express purposes, though nevertheless subject to reconfiguration and intervention over time. Thus, Nybell describes the state-sponsored nature of the social services reform project, funded by federal agencies and a range of private foundations. Attention to narrative structures in conjunction

with the interests of those advancing them further highlights cracks and fissures in the reform effort's edifice: for instance, attention to the uneasy coupling of the state social welfare administration's policy agenda with the narratives deployed to incorporate service workers reveals vulnerabilities that, as participants faced new contexts, became open to potential challenge.

Careful attunement to the agents behind particular projects further highlights the complexities of scale and belies the falsity of simple top-down understandings of how policy reform operates. Nybell notes that local communities served as laboratories for larger efforts, with movement proponents carrying stories of local reform across a wide range of geographical contexts – from the U.S. national stage to the streets of Iraq. Kuymulu's work too illustrates the necessity of analysis along multiple geographic scales: while the transnational Nature Conservancy and Jamaica's tourism and bauxite industries all powerfully impact the nature conservation process in Cockpit County, community-based Local Forest Management Committees also mediate it at the local level in key ways. Further, as these developments are currently in their formative stages, continued focus on the experiences of local participants may, in light of Kuymulu's critique, reveal vulnerabilities in the broader, transnational conservation trends; emergent discourses may thus once again – through the efforts of distinct actors – transcend geographical scale, this time to challenge rather than entrench dominant approaches to nature conservation.

Historical and Contemporary Political Context

While neoliberal processes, albeit unstable and contradictory, may be powerful and widespread, they by no means operate in a vacuum. Highlighting the importance of historical context, Nybell shows that it was precisely the failures of the bureaucratic welfare state that set the stage for the appeal of neoliberal reform narratives to social service workers. These workers' ensuing investment in the reform project underscores the significance of examining further how and why neoliberal projects appeal to groups other than elites.

In terms of contemporary political context, we find a clear need in the literature for more robust understandings of how neoliberal projects articulate with other political formations and to what effect. Especially important are political projects that intersect with but are different from neoliberal projects; yet these are often subsumed by analysts under the vague rubric of "neoliberal contradictions." Molina's work identifies one path toward expanding this avenue of research by examining how illiberal anti-immigrant ideology interacts with neoliberal processes. Indeed, he argues that the minutemen – expressly opposed to some neoliberal initiatives such as corporate outsourcing and free trade agreements but strongly in support of others, including welfare state retrenchment and an end to "big government" generally – may in fact be partially undermining their own aims, further entrenching neoliberal processes in U.S. political life by lending support to border security efforts that themselves partly serve to protect neoliberal economic aims.

Both historical and contemporary political context shape the repertoire of actions available to participants in any given political project, with important implications. Increased attention to this aspect of grounded neoliberal processes – in conjunction with the others outlined here, which represent but a sample of potential directions of research – will contribute to more robust, nuanced understandings of these processes, as well as facilitate the identification of vulnerabilities and spaces for intervention. The articles that follow contribute to a growing body of work that draws on ethnographic methodology toward understandings of the complex particularities, instabilities and limits of neoliberal projects as advanced by distinct actors pursuing concrete, though certainly not predetermined, ends.

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Horror Stories, War Stories or (Un)Happy Endings: Locating Social Service Workers in Neoliberal Plots

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ABSTRACT: As a grounded account of a neoliberal reform project, this article explores efforts to shape and reshape the “conduct of conduct” in social services. To investigate the ways that neoliberal commonsense enters the life worlds of social service workers, this article explores the narratives disseminated in State-sponsored social movements, promoted by government insiders and contractors, funded by private foundations, and aimed at garnering support for reinventing the welfare state. The author argues for paying attention to the narrative structures that are deployed to enlist social service workers in “rolling back” or “rolling out” the often contradictory policy innovations of neoliberal reform. The narratives told to and by workers in the context of reform can be analyzed as “cultural schema” offered to serve as guides to action and sources of meaning for social workers. Tracing narrative structures can help to connect local and extra-local efforts at reform; following narrative threads and discontinuities may also help identify shifts and changes in neoliberal reform efforts over time. Finally, examining the stories of reform in context may shed light on the ways that neoliberal reform rhetoric that appears from a distance to be “self-actualizing” is in fact propelled by narrative; enforced through a related set of incentives, threats, opportunities and coercions; and thus, potentially vulnerable to challenge and resistance.

KEYWORDS: governmentality, narrative, neoliberal, social service workers

Introduction

In the 1990s, the State of Michigan became a laboratory for neoliberal social policy reform. This article draws on my ethnographic study of reform in Michigan – a project that I initiated in the mid-1990s. I focused my study on changes in policies and services to young people. Given the centrality of notions of childhood and youth to the U.S. welfare state, reconstructing the social contract in the 1990s required reshaping shared understandings of what the nation does and does not owe to young people. As the government eliminated children’s entitlements, tightened oversight of poor families, and intensified punitive intervention into the lives of youth, I began

fieldwork, motivated in part by curiosity about why opposition to these reforms was remarkably limited and ineffective. It seemed that even constituencies with historic commitments to child protectionism – social workers, teachers, judges, and struggling parents and caretakers – were resigned to reform that retracted care or harshened treatment of young people. While the appeal of tax cuts, program cut-backs and privatization to elite interests may appear self-evident, the question of what makes neoliberal reform appear compelling or at least acceptable to people with vested interests in the well being of poor and working-class children is more puzzling.

This article is an effort to contribute to an emerging body of ethnography that illuminates the transforming neoliberal movement and its processes, practices and relationships (Clarke et al. 2007; Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Kingfisher 2003; Li 2007; Nybell et al. 2009; Shore and Wright 1997). As a grounded account of the “messy actualities” of neoliberal projects (Larner 2000), this contribution explores efforts to shape and reshape the “conduct of conduct” in social services, focusing especially on efforts to “change the mindsets” of social service workers. To investigate the ways that neoliberal commonsense enters the life worlds of social service workers, I studied one State-sponsored social movement, promoted by government insiders and contractors, funded by private foundations, and aimed at garnering support for the express purpose of reinventing the welfare state. The particular movement I describe – which promoted an innovation called “wraparound services” – was one of several related efforts that explicitly took aim at changing the ways that social service workers viewed their roles and responsibilities (VanDenBerg 1999; Vandenberg & Grealish 1996).

Drawing initially on data from 1997, I document the way government insiders and contractors concerned with social service reform organized state-sponsored social movements that generated new narratives of social service work, disseminating stories that offered workers relief from “shame and blame” for the failures of the bureaucratic welfare state in exchange of participation in new, community-based, voluntaristic and entrepreneurial configurations of help. In 2009, I revisited the site of one of these movements to try to understand how stories of social service work have shifted or changed as neoliberal certainties are reconsidered as financial collapse, spreading social distress, and uncontrollable environmental disaster threaten the futures of the nation’s young people in 2010.

This article makes a case for paying attention to the narrative structures that are deployed to enlist social service workers in “rolling back” or “rolling out” the sometimes contradictory policy innovations of neoliberal reform (Peck and Tickell, 2002). The narratives told to and by workers in the context of social service reform can be analyzed as “cultural schema”

that serve as guides to action and act as sources of meaning (Ortner 1989:14). Tracing narrative structures can help to connect local and extra-local efforts at reform; following narrative threads and discontinuities may also help identify shifts and changes in neoliberal reform efforts over time. Finally, examining the stories of reform in context may shed light on the ways that neoliberal reform rhetoric that appears from a distance to be “self-actualizing” (Peck and Tickell 2002) is in fact propelled by narrative and enforced through a related set of incentives, threats, opportunities and coercions. Dissecting the stories of reform and examining the particular instruments and practices of power that instantiate them may open policy reforms to greater challenge and resistance by those expected to enact them.

But before describing the wraparound movement, and the stories told in it at two different historical moments, the next section of this article briefly places wraparound in the broader State policy context.

The Michigan Policy Context

In 1991, Michigan voters elected John Engler to the first of three terms as governor, an important landmark in the history of social service provision to the State’s citizens. Not yet midway through his 12-year governorship, Engler’s 1996 state of the State address celebrated a “tectonic shift” in policy-making of surprising speed and scope:

It was just five years ago that I stood here in this Capitol, this symbol of democracy, and addressed you for the first time. No one – including myself – foresaw how far we’d come, how much we’d accomplish and how dramatically Michigan would re-emerge as a national leader. The changes we have wrought are more than incremental; they are generational. [Engler 1996]

Engler also perceived that the change was not only in rolling back benefits or terminating programs but also constructing a new frame of reference through which to assess the work of government.

More important than changing any rule or law, we have changed Michigan – and in the process we have changed the terms of the debates. Our focus

is not only on what government should do...but what it should not do. Not on how to spend more money...but on policies that help families become independent...but on which to cut. [Engler 1996]

The success his administration experienced in the first five years of his tenure encouraged Engler to “advance on all fronts.”

Where taxes are still too high, we’re going to cut them. Where red tape still gets in the way, we’re going to roll it back. Where government is still too bloated, we’re going to shrink it. Where thugs and punks are still terrorizing our streets, we’re going to lock them up. [Engler 1996]

Under Engler’s leadership, Michigan pioneered approaches to tax reduction, privatization of state services, and welfare retrenchment. Boasting of a victory over welfarism, Michigan abolished its “Department of Social Services” and replaced it with a “Family Independence Agency.” The State installed “Work First” programs to supplant Aid to Families and Dependent Children (Public Sector Consultants 1998c). Public concern for poor children was supplanted by debates over and documentation of the work efforts of poor women (Schram and Soss 2001). From the perspective of citizens of Michigan, passage of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act in 1996 was a sign that the State’s policies were not exceptional but in fact the forerunners of national policy directions (Seefeldt et al. 2003).

As the government eliminated welfare entitlements for poor children, and dramatically reduced the numbers of young disabled young people who qualified for assistance, the State’s involvement in the lives of delinquent youth intensified and increasingly focused on punishment rather than guidance or rehabilitation for young people. In a mounting impatience with troubling youth, proponents of “get tough” and “zero tolerance” policies essentially evicted offenders from the conceptual category of “children,” treating them now as fully responsible for their actions. The State’s 1996 Juvenile Justice Reform package made it easier to try children as adults, stiffened sentences and funded the construction of a privately operated “punk prison” (Public

Sector Consultants 1998a). School districts across the country enacted school discipline policies that enforced “zero tolerance” in schools. In Michigan, a Mandatory Expulsion Law enacted in 1995 seemed to take on a life of its own, as evidence arrived of more and more districts removing children from school under the law on the basis of vague offenses with vague criteria for re-entry (Zweifler 2009). All of these reforms greased the skids that headed impoverished young people toward a prison-industrial system that has been expanding since the 1980s – substantially in advance of the rollback of benefits and entitlements under Engler. Exceeding national trends, Michigan’s incarcerated population exploded in the last decades of the twentieth century, leaping from 13,272 in 1982 to over 40,000 in 1996 to nearly 50,000 at the end of Engler’s term in 2002. While spending on higher education of the State’s young people increased by 27 percent between 1985 and 2000, Michigan increased spending on corrections by 227 percent during that same period (Justice Policy Institute 2002).

Much of this news supported the suspicions of some child-researchers that modern notions about the innocence and vulnerability of children were being replaced with “child-hostile” policies in the U.S. at century’s end (Jenks 1996; Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998; Stephens 1995). In fact, all neoliberal reform was not “child hostile” in tone or intent. However, the “second chances” and “special needs” once considered the perquisites of “normal childhood” were increasingly reserved for an expanding group of children considered disabled or mentally ill – a population whose ranks grew. In Michigan, provision for children who were disabled or mentally ill was the provenance of the Department of Community Health – a “mega-agency” which swallowed up the previously autonomous state administrations of Medicaid, mental health, substance abuse, and aging.

Under the leadership of Chief Operating Officer Jim Haveman, the Department of Community Health undertook a sweeping agenda, much of which didn’t directly address the needs of children but centered instead on remaking the way the State “did business” on behalf of its most vulnerable citizens. The Department eliminated thousands of public

human service jobs (Citizens Research Council of Michigan 2004); closed mental health institutions (Public Sector Consultants 1998b); and, following the Governor's order to "Fire, ready, aim," pushed through an ambitious managed care program for nearly 800,000 Medicaid clients in less than two years (Weissert and Goggin 2002). Under Haveman's regime, the State of Michigan limited the roster of drugs – or formulary – that physicians can describe for Medicaid patients and went to federal court to defend its right to withdraw federally mandated Medicaid screening and prevention services for children (*Westside Mothers v. Haveman*) – a key case in a broader national effort to rollback Medicaid entitlements (Rosenbaum and Sonosky 2002).

However, the Department of Community Health under Haveman also spun a softer thread of reform that wove together notions of community and childhood. As the State rolled back and privatized the provision of benefits, it simultaneously and enthusiastically introduced new models of service that centered specifically on care for trouble or troubling children in the context of community. A range of community initiatives, models and demonstration efforts were enthusiastically disseminated to social service workers beginning in the 1990s, and wraparound was one example. In the context of cutbacks and retrenchments in public services and increasingly authoritarian and punitive interventions into the lives of poor families and children in the mid-1990s, social service workers were directed to attend to the hopeful potential of new "collaborative, seamless, locally-controlled, family friendly" community-based initiatives, described in compelling and sometimes sentimental terms. The proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" encapsulated a stream of reform that envisioned caring for troubled or troubling children wrapped within networks of local concern (for example, Clinton 1996; Comer et al. 1996; McKnight 1995; Schorr 1997).

Wraparound was one of 19 different collaborative community based initiatives that had been recently introduced in Michigan (State of Michigan 1995). With the support of the federal government and grants from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the State

launched a series of wraparound demonstration projects across the State (State of Michigan 1995). According to its proponents, wraparound was, on one hand, a value driven, grassroots movement. On the other, it was a model – a "team based planning process intended to provide individualized, coordinated, family driven care to meet the complex needs of children." As the adherents note,

Wraparound requires that families providers, and key members of the family support system collaborate to build a creative plan that responds to the particular needs of the child and family. Team members implement the plan and continue to meet regularly to monitor the plan and make adjustments. [National Wraparound Initiative 2007]

As a model of practice, wraparound is a collection of less than novel technologies, including teams, behaviour plans, flexible funds, risk assessments, satisfaction questionnaires, and so on. As a resource for generating new narratives of social service work, however, wraparound offered its participants considerably more.

Locating Human Service Workers in Neoliberal Plots

Despite the explicit celebration of local control in community-based initiatives, what was striking was the way these efforts drew local social service providers into novel state and nationwide networks. National consultants were enlisted to visit local demonstration project sites. Local wraparound team members attended quarterly training and technical assistance meetings and produced evaluations and reports according to state protocols. And it was the Annual Wraparound Conference, more than any other event, that energized Michigan's "wraparound movement" and circulated its stories. This three-day meeting was convened each spring between 1995 and 2006 and then revived in 2009. I attended the conference as part of my study of the wraparound movement in 1997, 1998, and 1999, and then I returned to the most recent annual conference in 2009.

1997

For over a decade, participants gathered each spring

for the Annual Wraparound Conference at Shanty Creek, a northern Michigan mega-resort with conference meetings halls, dining areas and guest rooms overlooking golf courses and ski hills. Shanty Creek was owned and operated by ClubCorps – the world’s largest network of golf courses, private clubs and resorts. The dramatic success of ClubCorps enabled its founder Robert Dedman Sr., to accrue a net worth of \$1.2 billion dollars (New York Times 2002) and to join Michigan Governor John Engler as a member of the elite team of “Pioneer” fundraisers for George W. Bush (Heller 2000). In the 1990s, the self-consciously remote, corporate and privileged resort space with its sense of collective retreat (“Shanty Creek – we overlook nothing but all of Northern Michigan”) was favoured by the State in the 1990s as a site for conferences and meetings. The setting provided a clear break from the structure of feeling in local human services offices, with their modest cubicles, closely monitored budgets and tightly supervised work days and from the often overstressed lives of parents struggling to care for children with serious problems. Experienced social service workers who spent the earlier years of their careers gathering for meetings in public buildings in the State’s urban centers now drove through rural northern Michigan to arrive at Shanty Creek’s stunning lakeside setting. Relocating social service workers in this way dramatically altered their perspectives on the State of Michigan, and conveyed new messages about their relationships and presumed desires within it.

The 400 participants who attended were a deliberate mix of paid social service workers, recipients of service and volunteers. In a State environment consumed with cost-cutting, managed care, and reducing public employment, the Annual Wraparound Conference conveyed a high-spirited, upbeat attitude. Participants enjoyed the views and free meals provided at breaks, crowded the bar in the afternoon, and celebrated on the dance floor at night. Meanwhile, the plenary sessions and smaller breakout meetings served as forums for story telling. National consultants spoke about children, families and communities they knew, and parents and children shared accounts of their personal experiences. Workers traded accounts of their efforts and struggles.

Gary Fine, whose work explores the role of story telling in social movements, argues that movements consist of “bundles of narratives” and suggests that movement stories are of three general types: (1) affronts to the movement actor, or “horror stories,” which are often recounted to justify one’s participation in the movement; (2) collective experiences within the movement or “war stories,” which are often told to encourage participants to continue the struggle; and (3) stories that affirm the value of the movement through accounts of “happy endings” (Fine 1995:135-136). Each of these stories typically centers on a different protagonist featured in overlapping and interconnected storylines. Examples of each of these kinds of stories circulated in the wraparound conference. “Horror stories” generally featured the child failed by the system. Horror stories mobilized support for the movement; workers were goaded into action, for example, by the tragic story of a young troubled youth who is imprisoned, and, who was, as the headline over his photo read, “Nowhere after \$1 million in care.” “Happy ending” stories centered on families reunited or sustained by wraparound, while “war stories” typically featured a practitioner who faced and sometimes overcame obstacles in the wraparound movement.

At the first National Wraparound Conference, one of the original “national wraparound consultants,” Karl Dennis, offered a story that serves as a prototype for the kinds of happy ending stories that consultants told in Michigan each year. Dennis’ story illustrates prominent patterns in wraparound stories. The story goes:

Allen was a young 16-year-old juvenile who had been rejected from several residential treatment centers. He was now being rejected from a correctional setting where he was considered too difficult to handle after tearing a door off an isolation cell. Everyone thought that he was incorrigible. Yet no matter where he was placed, no matter how far from his home or neighborhood, it was noted that his mother faithfully visited him twice a month. Based upon the strength of this apparent relationship, Kaleidoscope designed an individualized service plan for Allen.

Despite the fact that she was extremely devoted to this son, Allen's mother was adamantly opposed to his return home; in fact, her state caseworker also counseled her not to let Allen come home. Undaunted by Allen's mother's resistance, Dennis prevailed upon her sense of hospitality to let him come in and "play a little game." This game was: "If he could wave his magic wand, what would it take for Allen to be able to come home?" If she would just do this for 10 minutes, then Dennis would leave and not return. Eager to get rid of this uninvited visitor, Allen's mother agreed to participate.

With each wave of the wand, Allen's mother came up with another condition for her son's return:

- Someone to come to their home and get Allen up for school;
- Someone to be with Allen in school to help him control his temper;
- A therapist who wouldn't be afraid or give up on Allen, even if it meant having a companion sit in on each session to help control Allen's violent outbursts;
- Someone to give her a few free hours of time each day when she came home from work;
- A 24-hour crisis plan for evening, weekends, and holidays to ensure her safety when Allen became agitated.

Allen returned home the following week, but this time his mother had the support services that she had helped to design. There were still crises, but they were anticipated, and everyone had agreed in advance how they would be handled. Ultimately, Allen was able to move into transitional community housing and participate in a supported work program. [Katz-Leavy et al. 1992:5-6]

Dennis' story shared many characteristics of the schema offered to social service workers in the wraparound movement, particularly, an opening characterized by the oppressive and ineffective structure of government programs (with institutions serving as the metonym for those), followed by a transformation that takes place as clients are reconfigured as consumers – responsible for themselves, creatures of freedom and autonomy, making independent – and cheaper – choices. It is important to

note the ways that stories like these mobilized the guilt and shame of social service workers in relation to past failures – where they are entered into the plot as the state caseworker opposing Allen's homecoming. This dynamic of guilt and shame is illustrated in the story of John Bachman, a Michigan county agency administrator and wraparound proponent who took the podium and told a story of his own, inserting himself into the role of the misguided worker. John explained:

I was the worker that sent a child named Scott to Ohio. He was about five when he started getting in trouble. Somehow he stole a car and his family washed their hands of him. They sent him to his uncle. It's what happened to Scott that gives me emotion, passion, conviction about what's wrong with the system. What I should have done is ask his parents, what do you need to keep Scott at home? It is an art to interest them in this, not to provide solutions but to engage parents and kids as the leaders of the process... Unfortunately, Scott's uncle in Ohio tied him up and abused him. Scott descended into hell. When the social workers got involved down there, they found he had been abused. He didn't have a winter coat. I was part of the system that [brought this about]... When I began to work in Johnson County with wraparound it gave my life validity. I was beginning to think that my years in social work didn't make any difference at all. [Nybell 2002]

In this story, John evokes an experience that is both shared and feared by most social workers. Social work practice with troubled children and families requires managing the constant anxiety about making terrible mistakes that damage the lives, minds and bodies of young people that they aim to protect. This fear is given force by tragic reality when children come to harm and it is underscored by public outrage about the failures of child-caring bureaucracies. Wraparound stories gave public voice to a deep undercurrent of private anguish within social service work and linked this anguish to the project of neoliberal reform. And at the same time, the wraparound story offered workers the opportunity to "trade places," leave the "state caseworker" role behind

and re-imagining themselves as the family-trusting, wand-waving wraparound worker, a liberating and self-actualizing role which offers hope that the burden of social service work may be easily lightened. As wraparound worker Georgia explained:

I have been doing this for seven years. I have loved watching the results. I love being a part of a cause. It comes closest to fervor...to the 60's, a sweeping reform of the way that people are handled by the government. I have...a sense of cause. I feel like we are changing the world. It's not just us. What a cool thing.

I also have relationships. I feel like [in traditional services] families are treated disrespectfully. You went in and played God. This is such a different way. It's magic, it really is. It's success in little tiny pieces. I'm always celebrating. I think... Nobody's a failure. [In previous jobs] I had the weight of the world on my shoulders. With wraparound it's so much easier. When it is working. I care about people; I let them care about me. I think of clients as "my people." [Nybell 2002]

So while workers shared "war stories" within wraparound, their efforts were affirmed by all the indications of significance that the Conference provided – including the participation and presence of some of the State's highest-ranking social welfare administrators. Each year of the mid-1990s, Director of Community Health Jim Haveman closed the conference. In an illustrative address to the 1997 Annual Wraparound Conference, Haveman was introduced by one of his staff as a "creative man who does not tolerate bureaucratic or 'no can do' attitudes." Haveman proudly informed the audience that the Michigan Department of Community Health agency spends "7.1 billion dollars of public funds a year, 25 million a day, a million an hour." But, he explained, he was reshaping that budget. He recounted a story told by an employee who attended a weekend class on decoys given by a woodcarver. When asked how to carve a decoy, the artist replied, "Just carve away everything that doesn't look like a duck." "That," said Haveman, "is what we are trying to do. We're trying to cut away everything that doesn't look like a duck."

Haveman's attendance at the annual event

signified that wraparound was part of the new configuration of State social policy, along with institutional closures, privatization and cutbacks. Haveman turned to the attendees at the Annual Wraparound Conference for support for his efforts to close these institutions. "People who are advocating for these (institutional) programs are ignoring wraparound, and the other home-based, interdepartmental activities that are going on. We need you to help us with this. You have to advocate for your program." And Haveman offered an expanded vision for the future of wraparound, extending its reach that went well beyond children with mental illness to serve disabled people, and the chronically ill elderly as well. Haveman's message paired the "carrot" of expanded wraparound with the "stick" of competition. He hinted that if existing social agencies were ineffective, the competition would be extended to Michigan non-profit and profit-making providers. "People get so frustrated with these (mental health) programs that they just bid them out. Look at Texas, where Martin Marietta is bidding on the welfare system, along with EDS."

Despite Haveman's pleas for support, promises of expansion and threats of competition, his presentation did not inspire a warm reaction from the audience. The themes of cost containment, institutional closure and competition did not mobilize the community mental health workers, parents, or teachers who had gathered to talk about saving one troubled kid at a time through community-based care. Still, Haveman's presence at the State-sponsored Annual Wraparound Conference wedded the administration's broader policy agenda to wraparound narratives, however uneasily. Through this State sponsored social movement, these disparate agendas were assembled as a collection of "best practices" in an unstable and even contradictory arrangement of convenience.

2009

When I returned to the Wraparound Conference in 2009, the exuberant attitude that characterized the cause in its earlier years had waned. Though the views of northern Michigan from the resort at Shanty Creek were unchanged, the resort itself bore signs

of trouble that lurked just below the surface in 1997. ClubCorps sold the resort to local businessmen that year, just as the discovery of a vast underground toxic plume of groundwater contamination flowing from an old industrial site to just north of the property became known to local residents (Schneider 1999). By 2004, the new owners defaulted and Shanty Creek was bankrupt (McCool 2006). By 2009, the resort had found another owner, but shuttered resort shops, signs of wear and disrepair, and a small, overstretched and impatient staff indexed decline at Shanty Creek. Even the marketing strategists seemed to implicitly acknowledge hard times, as they plugged “Shanty Creek – Now more than ever.”

Former Director of the Department of Community Health James Haveman was missing, too. Haveman’s success in neoliberal policy-making had briefly boosted him into what became a controversial assignment far from his Midwestern home. In 2003, Engler recommended Haveman to deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz. Wolfowitz engaged Haveman to oversee the rebuilding of Iraq’s health system under Coalition Provisional Authority led by Paul Bremer. Haveman arrived a week after the fall of Baghdad, replacing Frederick M. Burkle, Jr., a physician recognized as one of the “most experienced post-conflict health specialists working for the United States government” (Chandrasekaran 2006). According to *Washington Post* reporter Chandrasekaran, Haveman replaced Burkle “because the White House wanted a loyalist in the job” (2006:239). In a stunning illustration of how local stories can be exported onto an international scene, Haveman centered his efforts on endeavours designed to “shifting the mindset of Iraqis” regarding health care (Chandrasekaran 2006:39). His plans included instituting co-pays for hospital visits and mounting efforts to encourage Iraqis to prevent their own health problems, through efforts like anti-smoking campaigns. He directed his energies toward limiting the number of approved drugs that doctors could prescribe in preparation for privatizing Iraq’s drug procurement system – a strategy for which he had won notoriety among advocates for the poor in Michigan. Chandrasekaran argues that Haveman focused on altering mindsets while more compelling

priorities – preventing disease, providing clean drinking water, improving care at hospitals and obtaining drugs and medical supplies – were neglected.

By 2009, Haveman had long since returned to private life in Michigan. Wraparound continued to operate in Michigan but with less visibility or celebration. No member of Governor Jennifer Granholm’s cabinet attended the annual Wraparound Conference. Continuity depended on the mid-level bureaucrats who organized the Conference, as they had done in all the previous years, and in the mostly stable roster of “national consultants” who addressed important plenary sessions of the meeting. The program, with its national consultant keynotes, parent and family presentations and youth panel, were built closely on the structure of past efforts. Participants were fewer in number, but they still came identified as “parents,” “professionals” or “kids.” Most participants paid \$200 to take part in the Wraparound Conference in contrast to earlier years when participants’ expenses were fully underwritten. Some complained about the limited choice of food and lack of desserts. The bar was almost always empty, or nearly so. There was no music or dance floor.

In this context, it fell to Ned Bailey, a “national wraparound consultant” to offer the keynote – a talk that amounted to an extended explicit commentary on what might have happened, but didn’t, or what should be, but isn’t. Bailey’s keynote address began:

My topic is “Team: the illusion and the reality.” We celebrate the notion of team. As an illusion it is that shimmering place we want to get to. In reality, meetings get cancelled. We do not have interlocking aims.

My first reflection is that the illusion is that teams are a fun and easy way to get things done. We will get along. We will have easy meetings. But the reality is, it is hard work, we fight a lot, sometimes we fall apart. Three to ten people have that many different opinions. Teams fall apart. You have fewer people than you hoped. People begin to stop participating...

My second reflection is that the illusion is that teams make great decisions because there are more brains involved. But teams are capable of making

terrible decisions. Or no decision. Some teams have three months of no decision.

Illusion says we can; reality says I hope you can. Yes, keep your eye on the ball. But what if the ball doesn't go anywhere?

Reflection number 3. The illusion is that teams are indispensable elements of good planning. But the reality is that these are artificial arrangements trying to take the place of real community and real support. It is an artificial arrangement because we don't know what to do except act like it means something.

When we talk it has been undergirded by values. What we need to touch base about is, what is after the values? "Inclusive teams are good" is a value. But we need to move from values to stay clear about the tasks. It is the way we do the tasks that matters.

We need to work toward the illusion while we are grappling with the reality. [Nybell field notes, July 20, 2009]

In this talk Bailey was refusing the convention of story telling and the role that storytellers played in the government sponsored neoliberal movement that was wraparound. Bailey's talk seemed an effort at what Gerald Prince (1988; 1992) has called "disnarrating," referring mainly to a legacy of crushed hopes and erroneous suppositions.

The narrative progresses here by discounting as much as recounting (Prince 2003), by acknowledging dreams that had failed and goals that had not been reached. No longer a movement, wraparound becomes a model. Many wraparound conference workshops emphasized "fidelity" to the wraparound model – a goal that was determinedly set forth by national consultants but honored mainly in the breach in practice" (Suter and Bruns 2009).

But this emphasis on fidelity to the technical aspects of wraparound did not fill the emotional or narrative void that now occupied the center of the once vibrant wraparound movement. The question that Bailey raised, "What is after the values?" seemed to echo through the proceedings. I joined a "parents-only" session, where parents of children who had received wraparound services talked about their hope that their participation in this initiative might

generate employment opportunities for them, but there was no sense that they placed great confidence in this possibility. "What we have to think about," one parent said, to the affirmative nods of her colleagues, "is what comes AFTER wraparound?" One of the youthful speakers took this tack, too, and said the skills that he learned in wraparound were most helpful "after wraparound was over."

Wraparound, once a vision of the desired end state of reform, was repositioned in the 2009 conference as a technology – a model with an uncertain place in the unknown future of social services for children. In the face of the profound and spreading economic and social distress facing thousands of children and their families in Michigan in 2009, it is not surprising to document a loss of energy within a state-sponsored social movement promoting voluntaristic, community-based solutions. What was more unexpected was that commentary on the crumbling infrastructure of support for child well being – like income supports, or housing, or health care, or viable schools – was never offered, from the podium or from the floor. The leadership offered no account of what would come next, and the participants overtly expressed little anger or frustration or fear over conditions as they now stand. Instead, there was emptiness as wraparound proponents retreated from "movement" to "model." What resounded in the silence about the crushing evidence of children's material needs was the echoing presence of neoliberal goals unaccomplished, and visions unrealized.

Conclusion

This article has been an effort to illustrate that ethnographies of neoliberal projects can contribute to a more precise and nuanced understanding of how neoliberalism is conceived, imposed and reproduced. Thus, hopefully, situated ethnographic study can expose the contradictions and vulnerabilities of the neoliberal movement. In this brief contribution, I have turned to the stories told to and by social workers as a way to index the thickness, thinness, malleability and "ellipses" in the neoliberal "common sense" that has dominated social policy-making in recent decades. In the process, I have discovered the possibility of tracking the movement of narratives

across sites as a way to link local to extra-local developments. Attention to narrative connects local and extra-local projects of reform, and allows insight into how and where narratives are generated, introduced in local sites, potentially transformed and recirculated. While the assumption is often that reform agendas enter local spaces from “above,” a study of Michigan reveals the way local communities and governments served as laboratories for larger efforts. As revealed by Haveman’s effort to export “mindsets” forged in Michigan to Iraq, stories of reform flow from local sites to extralocal settings – as well as the reverse.

In addition, this brief account illustrates the ways that narratives are given authority by their association with power, and how they are potentially emptied of meaning and vulnerable to challenge. Stories of wraparound illustrate the ways that narratives of reform are revised and revamped as the storytellers and their listeners encounter new conditions. And, as the contrast between the halting stories told at the wraparound movement at present with its rich and generative earlier moments, studying narratives may help to illuminate the vulnerabilities, uncertainties and resistances as the messy project of policy reform transforms over time. The disnarration of wraparound in 2009 may signal a “non-hegemonic” moment that is ripe for new, more progressive stories to guide meaning and action for social service workers.

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From US with Love: Community Participation, Stakeholder Partnership, and the Exacerbation of Inequality in Rural Jamaica

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines and argues against the neoliberal assumption that local community participation in market-based nature conservation projects is democratic and leads to community empowerment through economic development. It does so by analyzing the formation of Local Forest Management Committees, instigated by one of the largest US-based environmentalist NGOs – the Nature Conservancy – and its partnering local environmental NGOs for conserving the tropical forests of Cockpit Country, Jamaica. The paper dissects, specifically, the notion of “stakeholder partnership,” frequently invoked in neoliberal conservation projects in the global south. Such flattening neoliberal terminologies imply a democratic platform, where different groups can express their political agendas and negotiate their differences with equal power. The language of “stakeholder partnership” flattens, this paper argues, the hierarchical set of power relations both inherited and exacerbated by free market-based conservation projects.

KEYWORDS: local community participation, stakeholder partnership, neoliberal nature conservation, rural Jamaica.

Introduction

It is in fact problematic to trace back ideologies of “democratization through community participation” in rural Jamaica directly to the influence of the US, as my title suggests. Ideas are generated and disseminated in rather complex ways with the participation of multiple actors. Hence the effort to link them to a powerful “elsewhere” in a simplistic manner might be misleading. However, ideas also do come from somewhere. The cultural, political and economic influence of the US has been increasingly hegemonic in Jamaica, especially after the latter’s independence from the UK in 1962 (Thomas 2002, 2004; Robotham 1998, 2006). This influence skyrocketed in the 1980s and 1990s, as neoliberal globalization rendered Jamaica’s borders porous in an unprecedented way, even though Jamaica’s neoliberalization process cannot be reduced to a US imposition (Trouillot 1992; Robotham 2001,

2003). Nevertheless, considering one of the largest US-based environmentalist NGOs – the Nature Conservancy (TNC) – and examining its practices on the ground to establish a nature conservation project in Jamaica, I want to argue, reveal a great deal about the ways in which lauded neoliberal notions of democratic decentralization, community participation and devolution of responsibilities to local entities are put into work.

The practices of TNC have been emblematic of how the dissemination and implementation of neoliberal ideologies through nature conservation projects materialize in the global south. While TNC’s origins go back to early 1950s, it is not until 1973 that TNC assumes its corporate character. Under the leadership of Pat Noonan from 1973 to 1980, TNC decidedly established partnerships with large US corporations,

and assumed a decentralized organizational structure to buy and sell parts of nature, now turned into real estate, for conservation purposes. As Noonan himself put it: “corporations and environmentalists were butting heads, but we knew the free-enterprise system was a fantastic motivator” (cited in Luke 1995:13). Thus, since the mid 1970s, the dawn of neoliberalism, TNC has been purposefully treating nature as real estate, and implementing market-based conservation projects in the global south, while diffusing this so-called fantastic motivator – alongside the system of private property – to rural areas, where many other forms of property and exchange relations had previously prevailed. As of 2010, TNC is implementing numerous conservation projects in more than thirty countries in South and Central America, the Caribbean, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region (Nature Conservancy 2011b). Since all ecological projects are inevitably social projects (Smith 1984; Harvey 1996; Coronil 1997; Castree 2001), and since the question of nature conservation sits firmly in the contested economic geography of land and resource use, TNC’s treatment of nature as private real estate has had enormous repercussions in the global south, including Jamaica.

In this paper, I examine the practices of TNC and partnering local environmental organizations in Cockpit Country in order to interrogate the neoliberal notion that democratic participation of local communities in conservation projects leads to community empowerment through economic development. I will primarily focus on the principles, plans and practices of Local Forest Management Committees (LFMCs) in Cockpit Country as TNC played a major role in their design and implementation. Most of the local-level information I analyze in this article comes from my fieldwork in Cockpit Country in the summer of 2008. During this time, I attended a series of LFMC meetings, each organized in a different village in Cockpit Country, which provided me with the opportunity to converse with many inhabitants of the area about their expectations from the conservation project and economic development. I also had informal conversations with the representatives of TNC and local environmentalist groups as well as with the staff of the Jamaica

Forestry Department about rural poverty in Jamaica, conservation of Cockpit Country and the ways in which these two intersect. Most of the documents I examine here on community participation in Cockpit Country’s conservation and LFMCs are derived from my archival research at the University of West Indies at Mona, conducted during the same year before my visit to Cockpit Country.

But before delving into the conundrums of community participation and the formation of LFMCs, let us draw the general contours of the environmental conflict in Cockpit Country, which prompted the instigation of TNC-led conservation project in the first place.

Tumultuous Cockpit

Cockpit Country is the largest tropical forest in central west Jamaica with rich biodiversity, home to many Caribbean endemic species. In fact, 27 of the island’s 28 endemic bird species dwell in Cockpit Country, which inspired the local environmentalist groups to call it “an island within an island” (Eyre 1995; Smith 1995; Windsor Research Center 2008).¹ Nevertheless, it is not “an island within an island” solely from an environmentalist perspective. It is also Jamaica’s last remaining major deposit of bauxite, which accounts for over half of the country’s annual exports, following tourism as the second biggest economic sector in Jamaica (Cockpit Country CAP 2006).²

The environmental conflict that triggered efforts towards nature conservation in the area materialized in 2006 when the Jamaican government extended the bauxite prospecting license of Alcoa, the third largest bauxite mining company in the world (The Economist 2007), to mine the tropical forests of Cockpit Country. Jamaican environmentalist NGOs – led by the Jamaica Environment Trust and Windsor Research Center – immediately launched a campaign in response, calling for the forest’s conservation by

1 Windsor Research Center is one of Jamaican environmentalist NGOs and the main local partner of the Nature Conservancy in the conservation of Cockpit Country. It focuses on conservation research and its staff works tirelessly on the ground for the conservation of Cockpit Country.

2 CAP stands for the Conservation Action Plan, collaboratively formed by the Jamaica Forestry Department, the Nature Conservancy, and partnering local NGOs, mainly funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

stressing its uniqueness and its potential to become a UNESCO World Heritage site. In 2007, a conservation “partnership” – note the preferred term – was established under the Local Forest Management Committee (LFMC) by TNC, local environmental NGOs, and the Jamaica Forestry Department, funded, to a large extent, by United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

What makes environmental politics interesting in Cockpit Country is the confrontation of big actors over a relatively small area. Indeed, several conflicting interests at a variety of shifting geographical scales – from local to global – are internalized in the process, which shapes this seemingly “out-of-the-way-place” (Tsing 1993) in such a way that renders the global-local dichotomy hollow (cf. West 2006; Dirlik 2001; Swyngedouw 1997; Latour 1993). To begin with, bauxite is the largest export of Jamaica, therefore an immediate concern at the nation-state level. Bauxite is the main ore of alumina in aluminum production, widely used in transportation and construction businesses, as well as in chief sectors of the military-industrial complex (Padel and Das 2006:55). Due to the fundamental role of the latter in the global economy, the demand for aluminum ranks second worldwide after steel, and its global production exceeds any other metal except iron (Hetherington et al. 2007). The Jamaican mining sector is dominated by bauxite and alumina, which provide nearly 97 percent of the sector’s value (Torres 1999:18.1). Jamaican bauxite production fluctuates around 10 percent of the total worldwide bauxite production, which makes it a fundamental economic asset for Jamaica (Bray 2010:10). It thus constitutes one of the few commodities, which Jamaica could exchange as a relatively influential supplier in the global market.

Cockpit Country also internalizes broader tensions that flow in from larger geographical scales than the salience of bauxite for the national economy would imply. Alcoa, for instance, is a U. S.-based multinational company while the demand for bauxite comes increasingly from China³ (Padel and

Das 2006:61). Furthermore, local environmentalist NGOs are financed by and working with North American institutions with global influence, such as TNC, USAID and the McArthur Foundation. The tourism sector, which is dominated by Spanish, North American as well as Jamaican capital, supports nature conservation against the incursion of mining interests in Cockpit Country, despite the tourism sector’s predatory environmental practices on the north coast of Jamaica. This is the case, because the water resources of high-end tourist resorts in Montego Bay depend on the five rivers running through the forest that could be contaminated by mining (Jamaica Environmental Advocacy Network 2007). In fact, Cockpit Country supplies 40 percent of the island’s fresh-water resources, which makes it the largest single supplier in Jamaica (Cockpit Country CAP 2006). Besides, the area provides an ideal investment opportunity for heritage tourism and eco-tourism, as it is rich in cultural history as well as in biodiversity. Runaway slaves defeated the British there in 1739, establishing long-standing Maroon communities (Patterson 1967, 1969, 1970), which have increasingly attracted numerous tourists. This tumultuous cockpit, then, is considerably shaped by the juggernaut of capitalist competition between the bauxite industry and the tourist-industry-backed conservation initiatives over access to nature for their own particular and conflicting socio-ecological projects. In short, any analysis of Cockpit Country’s contested political ecology should engage with the processes emanating from the conflicting interests of manifold actors, which flow into this particular locality from without.

Community Participation and Stakeholder Partnership

The conservation of Cockpit Country’s tropical forests, however, is not simply determined by political-economic conflict over market expansion between big capitalist actors, where the local is subordinate to the dominating forces of the global. One of the most

3 China’s massive urbanization and infrastructural development in the last decade is the primary factor behind its large demand for bauxite. The process of urbanization in China creates one of the few reli-

able markets around the world, where raw materials such as bauxite are continuously demanded. Along the similar lines, David Harvey, for one, notes that China absorbed nearly half the world’s cement output since 2000 (Harvey 2008:29).

advertised aims of TNC in establishing LFMCs is to augment the “community participation” of Cockpit Country’s villagers in the conservation project to counter the bauxite mining threat in the area. To this end, TNC organizes three LFMC meetings in three alternating villages every two months to bring together the conservation stakeholders with the villagers. These meetings typically take place at the church or the school of the village with the participation of around 30 people. This number is relatively low since TNC helps people from nearby villages to join the meeting, by carrying them on free busses to the village where the LFMC meeting is organized that particular time. The low turn-out was at first intriguing to me since all of the people I talked to in many villages around Cockpit Country were against bauxite mining in the area and very vocal about the need to protect the forest. In addition to what one might call people’s high environmental consciousness, one of the reasons behind such popular opposition to bauxite mining in rural Jamaica is the long-standing experience with displacement due to bauxite mining since the early 1950s. During my fieldwork, I met two families in Cockpit Country who were displaced from the parish of St. Ann and talked to several others who had a relative or a friend who had experienced displacement due to bauxite mining in different parts of the island. Many people also mentioned, as a reason to oppose mining, the fact that bauxite mining does not create jobs for the villagers. Additionally, on different occasions many villagers raised concerns about the loss of markets for their produce due to cheap agricultural imports from the US. These grievances, I thought, would motivate people to participate in LFMC meetings, where the main discussion revolved more around creating business opportunities for the villagers than conserving the forest.

However, as I participated in more meetings and talked to more people, it seemed to me that the conservationists and villagers were talking about different kinds of economic opportunities. As I will discuss in the following pages, villagers’ small scale farming was seen as a threat to the forest by the conservationists, who were aiming to stop what they called “encroachment” on the forest, “poor farming practices” and “peasant deforestation.” Therefore, the business opportunities

TNC and its partners pushed forth were more about converting peasants into petty-entrepreneurs in tourist and export industries, whereas the peasants were interested in opportunities that would – in the words of one peasant I talked to – “give the market back” to the peasants. Consequently, TNC’s aim to establish a partnership between local communities, NGOs, and tourism investors while wedding “environmentally friendly business practices” to nature conservation did not seem to get across well to the peasants.

My analysis of this process does not, however, seek to assess whether or not the communities of Cockpit Country are successfully incorporated in the conservation partnership, but problematizes what exactly the local communities are encouraged to participate in. The literature on local community participation in conservation projects is rich and has addressed such questions as how conservation practitioners can better assist and facilitate local participatory practices (Mahanty and Russel 2002) and how to create “authentic comanagement arrangements” that would augment community participation in conservation projects (Pinkerton et al. 2008). Along similar lines, how to incorporate “culturally appropriate requirements of legitimacy and accountability” (Brown and Lassoie 2010) and “local knowledge of indigenous populations” into conservation projects without causing further indigenous marginalization have also been examined (Goldman 2003; Shackeroff and Campbell 2005). Analyses of what constitutes a “good participatory process” (Webler and Tuler 2006), and of various evaluation criteria of communities’ “genuine influence on decisions” (Chase et al. 2004) to “achieve more effective community involvement” (Rodriguez-Izquierdo et al. 2010) also abound (Reed 2008). Furthermore, detailed typologies of stakeholder participation have been extensively discussed. Different forms of participation and their assessment in these accounts include “planner-centered” versus “people-centered” participation (Michener 1998), “political” versus “technical” participation (Beierle 2002) and several other participatory forms based on the degree to which stakeholders engage (Lawrence 2006; Richards et al. 2004; Tippett et al. 2007; Mannigel 2008; Reed 2008).

As much as these accounts may be illuminating, albeit from a technical managerial standpoint that seeks to increase the efficiency of stakeholder participation, they leave out important issues pertaining to the underlying logic and political function of such participation. In other words, by focusing on the question of how community participation can better be handled from an instrumentalist point of view, these analyses remain at the level of providing advisory on the governance and coordination of interests involved, without critically questioning these interests and what sorts of socio-ecological projects they imply. In a word, what I call the “performance of participation” analysis conceals scrutiny of the “ends of participation.”

In lieu of discussing the performance of stakeholder partnership, I want to interrogate the logic of its existence. Why does, for instance, the notion of stakeholder partnership occupy the dominant position it does in every policy circle of environmental management? What is the political function of the discourse of stakeholder partnership and its policy implementations? Both the concept of stakeholder and partnership were constantly invoked by TNC and local NGOs in Cockpit Country during the LFMC meetings I attended, and they are widely reflected in project documents. But, who is considered to hold a stake in the conservation of Cockpit Country? Who considers? What is the nature of the partnership among the stakeholders (cf. DeKoninck 2007; Fay 2007)? Are these terms simply invoked in the discourses of “win-win” scenarios, mobilized to justify conservation efforts that may be detrimental to the inhabitants of the area? In which ways are the diverse interests of the villagers, typically small-scale peasants, incorporated into conservation partnership? How is the asymmetry of power among the stakeholders reconciled in decision making? The language of stakeholdership actually comes from the corporate governance literature (DeKoninck 2007), and its lurking in neoliberal conservation discourses is neither an accident nor without a specific function.

Clues for answering some of these questions can be excavated from the documents distributed at the LFMC meetings. According to Cockpit Country Stakeholders Group, the stakeholders of the conser-

vation project include small-scale peasants, schools, churches, and community organizations at the local level. They are joined by powerful national organizations such as Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association as well as international organizations such as BirdLife International and TNC (Cockpit Country Stakeholders Group 2006). It is, therefore, hardly an exaggeration to presume that there will be some conflict of interests between so-called stakeholders due to the asymmetry of power among them, even if they all strive for a unitary end with a single purpose, which is by no means the case. Precisely by virtue of this asymmetry of power among the social actors involved in this project, the neoliberal discourse of “stakeholder partnership” begs close scrutiny. It lies at the heart of the question of who will have power to access nature and to what ends, hence is of utmost importance for understanding this conflictual process.

In this context, focusing the analysis solely on one geographical scale, be it local, national or global, would render partial and misleading results, of the sort that is captured in the “blind men and the elephant” folktale. Multiple actors operating at fluid and shifting geographical scales shape the process of nature conservation in Cockpit Country. Capitalist competition – between Jamaica’s two most dominant industries with clear links to global capital – over access to the tropical forests of Cockpit Country inevitably sets the stage on which conservation efforts materialize. Nevertheless, to claim that the process of nature conservation in Cockpit Country is solely *determined* by the class power of bauxite and tourism industries misses a crucial part of the picture. Without analyzing the formation of LFMCs on the local level and their function in the formation of neoliberal environmental governance, it is difficult to reflect upon what transpires in Cockpit Country. At this point we should take a closer look at the configuration of LFMCs, which mediate how this complex process *takes place* at the local level.

Formation of the Local Forest Management Committees (LFMCs)

Neoliberal globalization, increasingly hegemonic since the early 1970s, privileges export economies, privatization, and trade liberalization for flexible

accumulation, over any state-led development project centered on the notion of protecting national markets (Harvey 1989, 2005; Peet and Watts 1993; Smith 2002, 2005; Hartwick and Peet 2003). Jamaica's neoliberalization can be traced back to the first loan agreement signed between the Jamaican Government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1977 (Weis 2004). Three structural adjustment programs ensued and complemented the initial agreement, financed by the IMF, the World Bank and USAID between 1981 and 1985 (World Bank Report 2001). Under strict austerity programs, Jamaica's public sector shrank considerably, leading to public sector layoffs, privatization, decline in the provision of basic social services, and rapid price inflation coupled with multiple currency devaluations (Gordon et al. 1997; Carrier 2004, Weis 2006; Robotham 2006). Jamaica's neoliberalization process accelerated throughout the 1990s and 2000s, soaring its unemployment rate to 14.5 percent, increasing its foreign debt to 11.55 billion dollars, with a debt-to-GDP ratio of almost 130 percent at the end of 2009 (CIA World Factbook 2010).

The emergence of LFMCs in Jamaica should be grounded in this neoliberal context as part of a larger, widespread shift from state-led conservation projects towards ones privileging decentralized, participatory approaches in the 1990s (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Agrawal 2005; Agrawal and Lemos 2006; Buscher and Dressler 2007). With financial and political support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Jamaica updated its Forest Act in 1996, paving the way towards the first five-year National Forest Management and Conservation Plan, ratified by the Jamaican government in 2001 (Headley 2003). The new Forest Act underscores "stakeholder partnership" and "community participation" as key strategies in national forest management. It also specifies establishing LFMCs as a future goal in order to set up the institutional framework to facilitate decentralization and delegation of decision making to local entities, as well as to form public-private partnerships (Jamaica Forestry Department 2000). In early 2000, the Forestry Department decided to test the LFMC concept in

Buff Bay with a pilot project. Having been encouraged by its relative success, a second LFMC was formed in Northern Rio Minho in 2004, and a third one in response to then-emerging bauxite mining threat in Cockpit Country in 2007.

The political motivation behind the formation of LFMCs is to decentralize decision-making in natural resource management and to facilitate devolution of responsibilities to local entities by including diverse stakeholders of nature conservation in the governance process. Membership, according to the Forest Act, is open to "all community groups, organizations, NGOs and private sector entities, whose members are willing to participate" (Geoghegan and Bennett 2003). In other words, LFMCs serve as flexible institutions to encourage and organize public-private partnerships for conservation purposes. Their activities are also supposed to facilitate the participation of local community institutions, such as churches and schools, individual small peasants and private landowners, as well as larger private companies, willing to invest in "environmentally friendly business practices."

According to the Conservation Action Plan (CAP), which every LFMC constitutes with respect to their specific needs, some of the relevant objectives of LFMC in Cockpit Country are as follows:

To develop and implement an effective mechanism for *co-management* of the Cockpit Country conservation area.

To collaboratively develop and implement a long-term *funding strategy* for Cockpit Country's conservation.

To establish *self-sustaining* and effective LFMCs.

To develop an economic case for the conservation by conducting an *economic valuation* of the ecological and cultural services provided by Cockpit Country.

To develop an *Atlas* of Cockpit Country targets and *threats* in order to *quantify* them and guide and refine conservation actions.

To provide sufficient incentives for *private landowners*, such as offering tax exemptions or direct payments, to set aside *at least 40 hectares [100 acres]*

of forest as a reserve [Windsor Research Center 2008, emphasis added]⁴

Although TNC refers to the CAP simply as a “blueprint to guide biodiversity conservation,” it does more than that (Nature Conservancy 2011a). As it is often the case in other neoliberal conservation projects, here the emphasis is on creating conditions for financial self-reliance by commodifying nature and by establishing decentralized co-management of this process in public-private partnerships (West 2005; Igoe and Brockington 2007; Brockington et al. 2008). This is a strategic move, in other words, to turn Cockpit Country from a relational historical geography of use values into an absolute space of conservation with clear boundaries, now seen as a fixed economic asset in terms of its “ecological and cultural services” exchangeable in the global market. That is to say, the process of nature conservation in Cockpit Country cannot be sustained, under the coercive laws of neoliberal political economy, without alienating use values in favour of exchange values; without thus relegating its qualities of being a relational space of subsistence to a quantified, commodified and reified absolute space of “nature.” Nature as such, however, can only survive insofar as it is subsumed in the circulation of exchange value i.e., money.

This brings to mind what Marx said about money becoming the *real community* under capitalism. The development of money, he portends, smashes previously existing communities and their manifold ways of being by subjecting them under the single logic of exchange value. “Where money is not itself the community, it must dissolve the community” (Marx 1973:224). In this sense, money “becomes the *real community* since it is the general substance of survival for all [wage labour and capital], and at the same time the social product of all” (225–226). One might add nature into this picture. Neoliberal nature conservation projects, while vigorously aimed at “local community participation,” rely on the commodification of nature, hence subsuming it in the circulation of money i.e., *the real community*. *The real community* as such, if not “the local community,” becomes a

quintessential participant of the neoliberal conservation projects, a participant *par excellence*.

Community Livelihood Development Projects

In *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, David Harvey proposes to evaluate environmentalist movements, or more broadly, socio-ecological projects “not for what they have to say about the environment or nature, but for what it is they say about political-economic organization” (1996:176). In this respect, let us look at what TNC and its partners call “community livelihood development projects” in Cockpit Country. These projects seek to mitigate deforestation and biodiversity loss in the area by providing economic opportunities for the villagers, opportunities that lie outside the forest.

According to documents provided at the LFMC meetings I attended, LFMCs are composed of two units: the “environment protection unit” and the “business unit” (Small Business Association of Jamaica 2008). As aforementioned, the LFMC meetings are more about creating environmentally friendly economic opportunities for the villagers than the ways in which the forest can actually be protected. Therefore, in all of the meetings I attended, Small Business Association of Jamaica was at the center stage. This association is one of the stakeholders of Cockpit Country, mainly funded by USAID in the conservation project, and works closely with TNC. Its representatives organize presentations and workshops at the LFMC meetings for training villagers on “business planning and marketing,” “customer service” and the ropes in “hospitality business” as part of an effort to create “sustainable community livelihood development projects” (Small Business Association of Jamaica 2008).

LFMC’s main role in these projects, the villagers are told, is to function as an intermediary to lease property from property owners, hence facilitating the process of establishing businesses. In the summer of 2008, the primary agenda at the LFMC meetings was to turn the LFMC from an “unincorporated association” organizing informal meetings for the conservation of Cockpit Country, into a “limited company” so that it would become a proper actor

⁴ This document can be reached online at <http://cockpitcountry.com/LFMP/CAPCC.html> (Accessed on May, 10, 2010)

functioning in the free market. This would then facilitate the conservation of Cockpit Country by restricting the market only to “environmentally friendly business practices,” while enabling the economic uplift of local communities by creating jobs.

According to the “business selection criteria” for “community livelihood development projects,” the most important condition for obtaining assistance is that the participants need to be both residents of Cockpit Country and members of the LFMC. Membership in LFMC is voluntary. However, it requires the payment of monthly membership fees, which discourages the already-marginalized poor from participating. The proposed business of the participants should also “demonstrate sustainable resource use and good environmental practice” while employing at least “two persons from the communities of Cockpit Country.” Although the business criteria document promises to support any business proposal that fits these criteria, in the end, it abruptly declares that “the businesses selected should serve tourism or export industries” (Small Business Association of Jamaica 2008).

Both the conservation project and LFMCs are recent developments in progress, and at this early stage it is only possible to make inferences about their outcomes. It is difficult, in other words, to analyze the objective consequences of the integrated conservation and development practices, as they have not yet fully unfolded. Nevertheless, some of the policies advocated by TNC at the LFMC meetings as well as those reflected in conservation documents such as CAP are instructive about the direction conservationists are going. To begin with, the majority of the residents of the area are poor, small-scale peasants (Barker 1998; Miller 1998), who are increasingly forced to go into the forest to find arable land, and are therefore seen as threats to conservation (Windsor Research Center 2008; Cockpit Country CAP 2006; USAID 2010). TNC’s website ranks “small-scale agriculture” and “poor farming practices” as the second gravest threat to the conservation of Cockpit Country after bauxite mining (Nature Conservancy 2011a). The production of inhabitants around the conservation area as threats is not unique to Cockpit Country (see West 2005, 2006) and relies on a strategic overlook of the

historically formed material circumstances under which peasants are producing their livelihoods.

One such condition in Cockpit Country is the lack of suitable land for agriculture. The unavailability of arable land in and around Cockpit Country is such a problem that the angle of steep and inaccessible slopes peasants utilize for farming may exceed 40 degrees, making food production extremely demanding (Barker 1998; Harrison 1998). Recent estimates also suggest that more than half of the Jamaican rural population live below the national poverty line (Weis 2000:300). According to the Jamaica Human Development Report, 72 percent of the poor in Jamaica live in rural areas and agriculture is their main source of employment (Planning Institute of Jamaica 2005:4). The concentration of poverty in the island’s rural interior is due to a long history of colonial and post-colonial land-use matrix. The monopolization of fertile coastal plains by plantations since the 17th Century, which were largely replaced by high-end tourist resorts in 1970s, constantly pushes peasants into the rugged interior to find available land, which is often covered with forests (Mintz 1989; Besson 1998; Weis 2006). According to the World Bank report of 1993, 3 percent of landowners controlled 62 percent of arable land, dominating most of the fertile coastal plains, whereas 80 percent of all peasants possessed less than 20 percent, concentrated in the hilly terrain of inner Jamaica (cited in Weis 2000:302; see also Weis 2004). Therefore, the problems of so-called “peasant deforestation,” and “poor farming practices,” which TNC refers to as an obstacle to conservation, are indeed problems of landlessness and extreme rural poverty, rooted in the historical consolidation of colonialism, plantation slavery and global capitalism.

Examining the conservation documents, and the development projects that were presented to villagers at the LFMC meetings, one can infer that the solution of TNC and LFMC to this problem is to convert peasants into market actors as petty-entrepreneurs in tourist and export industries. Even if this highly ambitious project of producing neoliberal subjects is successful, moving peasants away from food production will have its own local and national consequences, as Jamaica is rendered highly dependent on food imports from the US by neoliberal impositions on

the country to cease agricultural subsidies and to open its borders for trade liberalization. As a matter of fact, the US Department of Agriculture calls the Caribbean the “world’s most food import dependent region” (Weis 2007:112). It is not unrealistic, therefore, to expect that should the TNC-led conservation project succeed in inhibiting local food production to mitigate deforestation, the unequal food trade relation between Jamaica and the US, as well as the former’s soaring agrot-trade deficit – the product of three decades of trade liberalization – would be intensified.⁵

The poverty of small-scale peasantry, which springs from landlessness in and around Cockpit Country, is in effect further intensified by the TNC-led conservation project. The main reason behind this is the fact that the logic of conservation practices privileges private landowners, especially those who own large tracts of land in and around the forest. For instance, as I have already mentioned, the CAP sets forth an objective of providing private landowners with tax exemptions or direct payments, if they own and are ready to set aside at least 40 hectares (100 acres) of land as a forest reserve. The implications of this set-aside program go well beyond the obvious inequality it generates by giving big landowners an opportunity to profit from setting aside their land as a forest reserve, while small-scale peasantry cannot enjoy such a treat. In Cockpit Country, a relatively large amount of land is concentrated in the hands of big landowners, and the majority of the small-scale peasants need to lease land in order to subsist (Barker and Miller 1995). If TNC’s set-aside program proved to be more profitable for big landowners than leasing their land to small-scale peasants, then the problem of finding arable land for the peasants would be amplified, hence reproducing aforementioned problems concerning local food production while deepening economic inequality.

In addition to the set-aside program, small-scale peasantry is further marginalized by the conservation

enterprise due to the ways in which TNC and its partners organize “community livelihood development projects.” The business opportunities that TNC plans to create through LFMCs rely essentially on leasing land from property owners, thus only marginally and indirectly aiding peasants, if at all, most of whom either do not own private property, or do not have clear ownership rights to the land they occupy. “In several instances where people actually own land,” a United Nations (UN) assessment report complains, “many have been unable to utilize these lands for productive gains, as they are unable to prove ownership. Inability to prove ownership affects access to funding from established lending agencies,” of the sort the USAID and TNC represents in this case, “posing a barrier to economic improvement through working of the land” (United Nations Country Team 2010:63). Confirming this, Jamaica’s Ministry of Land and Environment declares that more than 50 percent of small-scale peasants have no clear ownership rights to their farmland (Peart 2004).

Even among those who have clear private property rights to their land, there are very few in Cockpit Country who can benefit from development projects by leasing their land to the LFMC business ventures. Due to the aforementioned scarcity of arable land, 85 percent of peasants own small plots of 5 acres (2 ha) or less. What is more, among these small-scale peasants “54% cultivate very small plots of 2 acres (0.8 ha) or less” (Barker 1998:359-360). In addition to class differences between small-scale peasants and big landowners regarding the land size they command, there is a stunning unevenness to the numbers of individual landowners in terms of gender and age. According to the 1998 Census of Agriculture, the number of male landowners is more than three times the number of their female counterparts (Rowen-Campell 2000:5). Most women who own property, especially those heading households, are also poorer than their male counterparts. If we look at the numbers of landowners by age, we see a similar disparity: the number of landowners who are older than fifty triples the number of those below thirty (Rowen-Campell 2000:5-6). Since TNC’s notion of creating “alternative livelihoods” through LFMC projects relies for the most part on leasing

⁵ Historically, Jamaica’s agro-exports always exceeded its agro-imports, hence the source of handsome profits pocketed by the planter class (Mintz 1985). However, this traditional trend was reversed as neoliberal economic policies became increasingly hegemonic. Agro-imports balanced agro-exports in the early 1990s, and by the middle of 2000s, the agro-exports amounted only to 60% of agro-imports, hence putting an extra burden on already debt-ridden Jamaican economy (See Weis 2006).

privately owned land from property owners, one can only expect further marginalization of the already marginalized through the amplification of existing inequalities pertaining to class, gender and age in Cockpit Country.

The conservation of Cockpit Country and the way LFMCs are organized bear the stamp of neoliberal environmental governance. LFMCs are, indeed, public-private partnerships that aim to find market solutions to environmental problems by attracting investment from the tourist and export industries. In this context, the idea of community participation, constantly invoked and idealized by TNC as *ipso facto* proof of democratic progress, and a prerequisite to economic development, should be taken with a grain of salt. It is obviously difficult, if not impossible, to democratically incorporate small-scale peasants with “equal voice” into a “conservation partnership” composed of powerful actors such as TNC, USAID, and the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association – the last of which has clear links to global capital and is very well represented within the Jamaican State. But there is more: the ways in which LFMCs are organized allows full participation only to *some* members of the local community, privileging older, large property-owning men. Thus, far from creating the conditions for democratic environmental governance, it creates fresh inequalities among rural Jamaicans, already deeply scarred by historical and extant inequalities.

Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that the uncritical affirmation of local community participation in neoliberal conservation projects as *ipso facto* democratic, and the twin assumption that community participation leads to community empowerment, are both misguided. Far from forming a solid base for the democratic management of natural resources or the facilitation of poverty alleviation, decentralized neoliberal conservation projects that are obsessed with “community participation” often lead to the exacerbation of existing inequalities and to the further centralization of power among diverse social actors involved in these projects. In order to understand this process, one should be wary of the homogenization effected by the notion of “the local community”

in discourses of neoliberal conservation projects, a notion which couples the *fetishization* of “community participation.” In such discourses, the incorporation of a homogenized local community – divorced from its historically formed internal tensions and inequalities – into a “conservation partnership” is treated as a panacea for any problem, reducing thus the conundrums of political economy to a question of democratic participation. This fetishization conceals larger questions. What do local communities in effect participate in? What are the ends of these projects? Which groups within these communities are in better position to take advantage of them? Who has the privilege – to put it in Mark Noonan’s language – of being “fantastically motivated” by free market-based conservation? Who is left out and marginalized? Flattening neoliberal terminologies such as “stakeholder partnership” imply a democratic platform, where different groups can express their political agendas and negotiate their differences with equal power. The language of “stakeholder partnership” flattens, in other words, the hierarchical set of power relations inherited and reproduced by market-based conservation projects. In so doing, this terminology conceals actual and potential frictions that are aggravated by rampant inequalities of power among so-called stakeholders. In which sense can a landless small-scale peasant and the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association have “equal voice” as “stakeholders?”

There is no doubt that both TNC and partnering environmentalist NGOs care about the unique socio-ecological qualities of Cockpit Country, and work for their sustenance. It can also be argued that they attempt to create alternative “community livelihood development projects” for the economic uplift of rural Jamaicans. However, as I hope to have shown, their fundamental reliance on free market-based conservation, on privately owned land for development projects, and on establishing public-private partnerships for governance processes exacerbate raging inequalities rural Jamaicans have long suffered from. In short, this integrated conservation and development project presents a typical case, where the means are fundamentally antagonistic to the ends.

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A Comment on the Minutemen Militia of the U.S. and Neoliberal State Activity

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the emergence of the minutemen and other private border patrol organizations as both a response to and outgrowth of neoliberalism. The minutemen oppose many of the effects of neoliberal economic policies such as permeable borders, but support many of its ideological underpinnings and outcomes such as ideologies of personal responsibility and opposition to “Big Government.” While the minutemen and the state engage in collaborative efforts to interdict and apprehend undocumented immigrants at the border, the minutemen do not effectively broaden the state’s ability to successfully stem illicit flows across its borders. Instead, minuteman activities provide valuable ideological and discursive support to the state that further legitimates failed border security efforts. Thus, the minutemen often work in ways that diminish their ability to achieve their organization’s political aims. On the other hand, because the minutemen rely exclusively on Border Patrol agents to apprehend and deport undocumented immigrants, the state empowers minuteman action. Understanding how the minutemen operate and their relationship to the state can thus provide insight into the relationships between civil society and the state under neoliberalism. Doing so can highlight the ways that neoliberalism remains a dominant yet incomplete process rife with contradictory pressures.

KEYWORDS: neoliberalism, border security, immigration, minutemen, the state.

Introduction

The year 2005 marked a turning point in the immigration debate in the United States. In that year, the Minuteman Project and Civil Homeland Defense joined forces to conduct a month-long border watch near Tombstone Arizona. Since then, minutemen organizations throughout the United States have continued to participate in border security operations, surveillance efforts at day labour hiring centers, and political protest and advocacy at the municipal, state, and national levels. The minutemen share their ideological positions on immigration and border security with other anti-immigrant groups. Like other groups, the minutemen blame immi-

grants for a variety of social ills, including welfare dependency, deterioration of schools and hospitals, and increased crime. They also fault unprecedented levels of immigration with dramatically altering the political and cultural makeup of the United States. Moreover, they argue that the government is willfully disregarding its duties to protect national sovereignty, secure the borders, and defend U.S. citizens from what they believe is a foreign invasion. They point to neoliberal free trade agreements such as NAFTA and GATT, corporate outsourcing, and corporate demand for cheap and disposable foreign labor as indications of a government that puts foreign and corporate interests before those of its citizens.

At the same time, immigration opponents, as with other members of the Right, have lobbied hard for neoliberal legislation that supports welfare state retrenchment and the end to “Big Government.” Promoting neoliberal moralities of personal responsibility, immigration opponents demand punitive solutions to the complex social problems that neoliberalism often fosters, such as permeable borders, social dislocation, heightened social and economic stratification, and the deconstruction of homogenous national groups (Wacquant 2001).

Accordingly, the minutemen focus their efforts almost exclusively on conducting border security activities. As they observe and report illicit border crossings, the minutemen are engaged in a dual project. On one hand, the minutemen seek to exert political pressure on the state to enact harsher border security efforts; on the other, they potentially extend the reach and gaze of the state, thus expanding its ability to exert coercive force on migrants as they cross into the United States (Chavez 2008; Walsh 2008). However, as scholars have noted, the contemporary border security effort is not only largely ineffective, but may be a primarily symbolic effort aimed partly at protecting neoliberal economic aims (Andreas 2001; Cornelius 2001; Massey 2005; Massey and Singer 1995; Purcell and Nevins 2005). In this sense, the minutemen’s insistence on securing the border may in fact only increase the neoliberal effects that they oppose.

In this paper, I analyze minuteman activity along the U.S.-Mexico border in eastern San Diego County, California. I argue that the minutemen combine anti-immigrant ideology with border security tactics in ways that challenge *and* support state action. While the minutemen and the state engage in collaborative efforts, the minutemen do not effectively broaden the state’s ability to successfully stem illicit flows across its borders. Instead, minuteman activities provide valuable ideological and discursive support to the state that further legitimates failed border security efforts. In addition, because the minutemen rely exclusively on Border Patrol agents to apprehend and deport undocumented immigrants, the state in turn empowers minuteman action. Understanding how the minutemen operate and their relationship

to the state can thus provide insight into the relationships between civil society and the state under neoliberalism. Doing so can highlight the ways that neoliberalism remains a dominant yet incomplete process rife with contradictory pressures.

I begin with a brief description of minuteman ideology and activity, paying close attention to the way that it is both a response to and an outgrowth of neoliberalism. Then I describe two Minuteman “operations” that took place on consecutive weekends in April 2008, arguing that minuteman and state activity mutually constitute each other in ways that highlight the contradictions inherent in neoliberalism.

The Minutemen as Response to and Outgrowth of Neoliberalism

The emergence of the minuteman movement can be understood in part as both a product of neoliberalism and a response to the myriad economic, social, and political dislocations that neoliberalism produces. Neoliberalism is a totalizing, though never completed, logic – a political, economic, and ideological process that fuels globalization (Kingfisher 2002; Morgen and Gonzales 2008). Under neoliberal regimes, markets are freed from government regulation and interference, including reduced or eliminated corporate taxation, the protection and expansion of private property rights, and the elimination of barriers to trade. Markets rather than states are believed to best organize economic, political, and social life.

The transformation of the market is thus accompanied by the transformation of the state and society. Welfare spending is reduced while the state trains its focus on securing the rights of capital. The state increasingly relies on the private sector to provide public services such as education, health care, welfare, and policing. Keynesian logics of state activity that once promoted state intervention aimed at protecting citizens from the negative effects of unregulated capitalism are replaced by ideologies of personal responsibility that force the public to absorb the economic and social costs of neoliberalism (Duggan 2003; Giroux 2008).

Between 1986 and 2003 cross border flows between Mexico and the United States increased dramatically with the largest growth occurring after

the passage of NAFTA in 1994 (Massey 2005). By 2003 trade between the two countries totalled over \$235 billion. Individuals crossing into the United States for work and vacation numbered in the hundreds of thousands and millions respectively. Total border crossings increased from 114 million in 1986 to over 290 million in 2000 (4-5). At the same time, both documented and undocumented migration steadily continued to rise. Whereas legal immigration averaged 330,000 per year in the 1960s, by the 1990s that number had climbed to over 1 million per year (Massey 1999:316). Similarly, for the period of 1965-1989 undocumented migration grew from only 87,000 per year to between 1.2 and 1.5 million entries per year (Massey and Singer 1995). Today undocumented immigration averages 500,000 entries per year (Passel and Cohn 2008).

According to the minutemen, when Mexican and Latin American immigrants cross into the United States, they bring with them poverty, crime, a different language, and cultural norms that are fundamentally and drastically different from our own. The introduction of Third World poverty that Mexican and Latin American migrants represent threatens to dramatically alter the cultural, political, and economic fabric of American life. That many Latin American migrants apparently flaunt the rule of law by crossing into the United States without authorization provides the minutemen further proof of the threat that unchecked immigration poses: the breakdown of the “rule of law.” The minutemen thus participate in a discursive project that not only positions immigrants outside the bounds of the nation, but also positions them outside the bounds of proper personhood (Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008). The minutemen thus lay claim to a neoliberal morality that valorizes their “service” as a volunteer force in defense of the nation against an exterior threat.

Immigrants are not the minutemen’s only or perhaps even the primary target of their vitriolic attacks. By tying undocumented immigration to a neoliberal morality, the minutemen further demonize those who fail to or refuse to participate in the defense of the homeland. According to the minutemen, immigrants, their supporters, and an apathetic government are equally to blame for the current immigration “crisis.”

The minutemen view U.S. participation in neoliberal free trade economic agreements such as NAFTA and their participation in international organizations such as the World Trade Organization as an abdication of the state’s sovereign duty to protect its citizens’ interests and its own national and territorial integrity. At best, the state has failed to secure the border; at worst it is deliberately trying to weaken national security in the interests of global capital. The failure of the U.S. government to secure the border thus represents the primary impetus behind minuteman activity. Filling the gaps left by the state is therefore the primary tactical logic employed by the minutemen to put pressure on the state to enforce the “rule of law” and to stop the foreign “invasion.” In some ways the minutemen’s opposition to the government is a product of neoliberal ideologies, namely that the government is incapable of effectively governing. In other ways the minutemen oppose what they view as government policies that limit the state’s ability to secure the nation from outside threats.

The minutemen thus argue that unchecked mass migration from Mexico and Latin America poses a serious threat to national security. Whereas typical anti-immigrant calls for the exclusion of Latin American immigrants are based on the perceived economic and cultural impacts that immigration poses, the minutemen differ by emphasizing border security as the primary method of controlling immigration. For them, terrorism and “illegal” immigration are two sides to the same coin. An insecure border allows terrorist and immigrant alike to challenge the state’s ability to protect its borders and thus diminish state sovereignty. Merging conspiracy theories such as the Mexican *reconquista* with nationalistic paranoia, economic alarmism, and white supremacist constructions of the nation, the minutemen believe that mass migration is therefore not only a drain on the economy and a challenge to the American nation as a white Protestant nation; is also a direct and immediate threat to national security and national sovereignty. Thus, the minutemen call for the expansion of state policing activities on the border and an expansion of the punitive capacities of the state vis-à-vis immigrants.

To better illustrate these points, I now turn to a

brief description of a series of events that took place over the course of two subsequent weekends at Camp Vigilance, the Minuteman Corps of California's (MCC) headquarters, in April 2008. I focus on how minuteman definitions of success highlight the way that minuteman and state activity mutually constitute and legitimate each other in service to the broadening of an already repressive border security regime.

Camp Vigilance

Camp Vigilance is an 8 acre private site located approximately 50 miles east of San Diego and two miles north of the border. Since 2006, members of the Minuteman Corps of California have been “mustered” at Camp Vigilance for one weekend each month and for the entire months of April and October. Camp Vigilance functions as a headquarters for minuteman border patrol operations. During these operations, armed members, utilizing a variety of surveillance technologies such as binoculars, night vision scopes, and thermal imaging cameras, observe, track, and report unauthorized border crossers to the Border Patrol. Camp Vigilance consists of an office trailer that serves as the communications center (Comm. Center) where a volunteer operates a two-way radio and coordinates each operation relaying observed border incursions to the Border Patrol, and a bunkhouse. There is also a number of RV hookups and ample space for tent camping.

I woke at approximately 4 a.m. to the sound of a minuteman outside my tent urging me to wake up. A team up at the “Eye in the Sky” – a makeshift Mobile Surveillance Unit (MSU) consisting of a thermal camera mounted atop an SUV and operated via remote from within – had spotted a group of twenty migrants heading towards camp. As they tracked the group through the camera their quarry had disappeared from view as they neared Camp Vigilance. The team at the Eye requested aid in finding the group. I, along with everyone else who was not currently out on ops, was mobilized to go out and find the “illegals.”

Upon waking, I headed to the Comm. Center where Carl Braun, head of the MCC at the time, asked if I wanted to join him in the search. I agreed as did a long-time and highly active female volunteer,

Tara. Carl drove us south past the Camp Vigilance entrance. The truck shook violently as we traversed the unpaved and poorly maintained local roads. Carl proceeded with caution, slowly inching his way towards the site where the group of migrants was first spotted. Carl told me that he wanted to head back south of the property so that we could prevent the “illegals” from “TBSing” or turning back south. As we drove, Carl and Tara searched the desert scrub to either side of the road for signs of people hiding. They also looked for trail sign, footprints that they could later use to track their quarry. Tara was using a new night vision scope that she had recently bought for over a thousand dollars. The moonless night and the bouncing truck made it difficult for Tara to see so she periodically told Carl to slow down. Other than that Tara did not say much, preferring instead to let Carl do most of the talking.

When Carl is not busy running the largest minuteman organization in California, or hunting “bad guys,” he is an executive recruiter who specializes in minority hiring. A prolific writer, Carl has self-published two techno-thriller novels about international terrorism and military special operations, a non-fictional account of his experience at the border that chronicles the first two years of the California Minutemen, and a huge body of news reports for Examiner.com. As head of the MCC he has also spent a great deal of time speaking to the media and the public on immigration and border issues. As a result, Carl speaks with an easy, if slightly rehearsed, demeanor. The strength of his convictions comes through not as a passionate appeal to one's emotions, but as a carefully considered and rational appeal to “common sense.” Even when Carl would delve into the realm of conspiracy theories about a New World Order that is designing to overthrow U.S. sovereignty in favour of a global state, the cadence of his delivery and the timbre of his voice never changed.

As we drove in search of the group of “illegals,” Carl told me that the minutemen are simply a neighbourhood watch organization. As with any other neighbourhood watch, they are on the lookout for criminals and trespassers. Carl admitted that given the size of the “illegal immigration” problem, looking for twenty illegals would not seem to be worth

the trouble. But, he told me, we're not looking for a bunch of "strawberry pickers." According to Carl, twenty percent of "illegals" are deported criminals and statistically speaking, four to five people in this group were probably criminals. To prove his point, Carl told me about a woman who lived in Northern California. Married to a minuteman who was the head of a Northern California chapter, she was the victim of a hit and run committed by an "illegal" who was driving drunk. The driver smashed into her, pinning her between two cars that severed her legs. This, he said, was indicative of the problem we had: criminal aliens with no respect for the rule of law.

But illegal immigration was just a symptom of a larger problem, he said. Banks and corporations, he said, are in a conspiracy to destroy our economy and move us into a depression so that they can form a North American Union. They are manufacturing a money crisis that will usher in the end of America as a sovereign nation as Mexico, Canada, and the United States become part of one borderless nation. This story was one that many minuteman members told me. One member insisted to me that the Amero, the North American Union currency, was already being minted. Another told me that there were FEMA refugee camps already being assembled in Texas to deal with the victims of the coming economic crisis.

These two narratives, though less than mainstream, are remarkable not because of their resemblance to fact, but because they reveal how the minutemen conceptualize the problem of immigration. According to Carl, immigration and criminality are necessarily linked. Images of the hardworking, poorly paid, and highly exploited immigrant labourer merely mask the true dangers of immigration. Moreover, immigration is just part of a broader pattern which includes corporate desires to conduct business freely across international boundaries and free from governmental influence, a sentiment that is shared by individuals across the political spectrum. According to Carl, the failure of the government to secure its borders is a sign that the government has become beholden to corporate interests at the expense of its citizens and its own sovereignty. This, he told me was why we were out at four o'clock in

the morning searching the high desert of eastern San Diego County.

As time passed and it became increasingly clear that we would not catch our quarry, Carl and Tara began to lose hope. Carl's mood vacillated between optimism and frustration. He joked, "at least we ruined their day a little." But then his voice took on a hard edge as he defiantly spoke to the night: "You don't belong in my country buddy."

A Border Patrol jeep approached us and stopped next to us. The agent, a young male in his twenties, told us that they had been busy all night. They had already caught three groups of "illegals" in the surrounding area, but were still searching the ones that had passed through Camp Vigilance. He did not seem optimistic that they would be found.

We headed back to Camp. As he drove, Carl began to strategize out loud and came up with a plan for the next time groups of immigrants try to cross the border through Camp Vigilance. The plan consisted of trapping the "illegals" on the property by closing off all exits and surrounding them on the property. Without a way to get to their destination or TBS, they would voluntarily sit down when confronted by the minutemen and wait patiently for the Border Patrol to come and pick them up.

A week later Carl and the rest of the Minutemen got a chance to put their plan into action. A team at the Eye in the Sky spotted two groups of about twenty migrants marching down the same road as the previous weekend's group. This time they tracked the migrants until they reached the MSU at which time they "lit up" the group with their headlights. Startled, the groups scattered in every direction. At this point the entire camp was alerted. Someone rang the dinner bell. Bedlam erupted as individuals sought their firearms, protective clothing, and their vehicles. As they waited at their assigned locations, Carl's voice came through on the radio informing the Camp that they had caught twenty-eight individuals. Within minutes a single Border Patrol agent escorted a man, his hands tied with a plastic zip tie past our position. Less than a minute later, out of the darkness followed a group of fourteen men tied to each other and walking in a line. All told, Border Patrol confirmed that forty-four migrants had been

apprehended on or near the Camp Vigilance property. Back at Camp what began as a chaotic morning settled into a calm yet euphoric mood that infected everyone. Each individual told and retold their part in the successful capture of such a large group. Carl and the Eye in the Sky team returned with a video taken from the thermal camera.

According to Carl and the other minutemen, this operation, unlike the previous weekend, had been a complete success. It remains unknown how many individuals attempted to cross through the property. What the Minutemen did know was that by adopting new tactics they turned what had been an abject failure the week before into a successful effort. They had thus played a primary role in the “capture” of more than forty individuals.

To demonstrate their success to others, the minutemen posted the video onto YouTube and posted details of the night’s events on the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps website. The purpose of taking the video and posting the report was to highlight the severity of the “illegal immigration problem,” to highlight the minutemen’s apparent success, and to request assistance from other minuteman volunteers.

The preceding examples suggest that the Minutemen do not determine organizational success solely by their ability to stop “illegal immigration.” As with state border surveillance efforts, minuteman activity is a largely theatrical endeavour that projects an image of both an out of control and a secure border (Andreas 2001). Lacking any institutional structure designed to maintain comprehensive statistics about their impact and recognizing their own tactical limitations, minuteman activity represents a collection of snapshots that create a collage of collective memories tied to the *legitimacy of border security strategies*. These momentary victories give truth to the lie that “securing the border” is the most effective way to stem “illegal immigration.”

The minutemen further claim success despite having relied on state agents to ultimately carry out the apprehensions. What would have happened if the Border Patrol refused to answer the minutemen’s call? What if, as is often the case, the Border Patrol was not able to apprehend the groups of immigrants that the minutemen observed? As the above example

shows, the minutemen depend on a responsive state in order to achieve their organizational and political goals. Ultimately, the efficacy of their activity depends in large part on the Border Patrol’s willingness and ability to translate observed activity into apprehensions.

Not only could the minutemen not function without the state, but the minutemen derive much of their legitimacy from state institutions. State activity provides both the template upon which minuteman activity is based and the logic which informs its tactics. Minutemen are limited in their capabilities because they lack the authority of the state to apprehend and deport undocumented immigrants. This dependence also creates tensions. Driven by neoliberal logics that value their ability to be “self governing” people “who operate independently of formal state structures” (Hyatt 2001:206), the Minutemen nonetheless require the formal state apparatus designed to apprehend, process, incarcerate, and deport unauthorized border crossers to achieve their organizational and political ends. To do this, the Minutemen take steps to act *like* the state, even if they cannot ever act *as* the state. One way they do this is by adopting tactics that will position themselves in situations that will guarantee apprehensions while avoiding actually arresting individuals (an act that is illegal). It was for this reason that Carl insisted on trapping the groups of migrants on the Camp Vigilance property.

Due to their participation at both organizational and individual levels in broader Right and anti-immigrant networks, the minutemen can more effectively articulate the dangers of an unsecure border to the public in ways that the Border Patrol cannot. The minutemen, rather than operating as the state’s “eyes and ears” (Walsh 2008), instead act as its voice. In order to act as the state’s voice, the minutemen must insert themselves into classificatory processes that take place at the border. According to Josiah Heyman (1999), border security agents participate in innumerable classificatory interactions daily. Agents enact legal classifications as they make snap decisions about who can and cannot legally enter the United States. These judgments are based in part on covert classificatory systems that judge the “moral worth” of a subject. Knowledge production about the

good/bad immigrant takes place through the actions of border security agents and their interactions with border crossers.

In the example I provide, the Minutemen were able to successfully insert themselves into this classificatory process. That the Minutemen limit their action exclusively to border security efforts means that they primarily encounter immigrants that are in the process of or have already broken the law. By focusing on border security – instead of for example worksite enforcement or other forms of surveillance activities – they take much of the guesswork out of classification. *Immigrants are always already criminals.* As part of a broad network of anti-immigrant and conservative organizations, the Minutemen are much better suited than the government to translate those classifications to a broader audience as part of a comprehensive statement about the perils of immigration and the merits of border security efforts.

CONCLUSION

Whether or not the minutemen are able to stop the flow of people across the border – they are not – or substantially increase the ability of the Border patrol to do its job – they do not – is irrelevant when we consider how dominant modes of border security impact their activities. Like the Border Patrol, the Minutemen are engaged in symbolic border policing activities that are nevertheless articulated through the use of force and the threat of force. This complex of interaction legitimates the participation of the Minutemen in border security activities. Interestingly, the closer they come to acting *like* the state the more legitimate and accepted their actions become by the Border Patrol. As their actions become more routine, as they successfully insert themselves into the classificatory system at the border, and as they carry out border security operations that parallel in substance, and on occasion by result, those enacted by official representatives, the Minutemen are able to routinely

call on the state agents to enact their anti-immigrant aims. What is more, by participating in similar border security activities to those of state institutions, the minutemen further legitimize an increasingly powerful security apparatus designed to exert coercive force on marginal populations. Acting as engaged witnesses of daily border crossings, the minutemen articulate both the immigration problem as well as the need for more security resources at the border. Detailing the interactions between the Minutemen and the Border Patrol reveals the way that already powerful forces of border securitization combine with anti-immigrant ideologies to set the parameters within which the Minutemen operate and how they determine their efficacy. A significant result of this process is the routinization of minuteman behaviour as an extension of border security operations that further articulates the supremacy of border security as immigration control.

When situated within a political economic analysis, this interaction between state and non-state actors reveals the complex ways that illiberal anti-immigrant ideologies collide and combine with the expansion of the state's policing capabilities to promote and protect neoliberal formations such as permeable borders, the production of proper personhood and state activity, and the production of new markets and the deregulation of old ones (most notably the labour market). This research thus suggests that understanding the minutemen's dependence on the state might explain how a social movement that at first glance appears to be opposed to (at least some aspects of) neoliberalism and that seeks to mitigate its effects might ostensibly act in ways that actually augment the ability of neoliberalism to further penetrate into the fabric of American life. Understanding how the minutemen and other reactionary groups like them are engaged in activities that both support and undermine their own political aims highlights some of the contradictions inherent in the neoliberal project.

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Transition and Transposition: Genocide, Land and the British Columbia Treaty Process¹

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ABSTRACT: This paper situates the British Columbia Treaty Process within a brief discussion of the role of land in genocidal processes and transitional justice. It does so as a means to highlight the potential destructiveness of colonial land appropriation and the dangers of transitional justice processes that seek to forcibly transpose onto Indigenous persons the dispositions and practices of European property regimes.

KEYWORDS: Treaty making; land; transitional justice; transposition; genocide

Introduction

In the genocide studies literature, the relationship between land and genocide is often noted (Bergen 2003; Jones 2010). However, the emphasis tends to be upon land as a source of intergroup competition, whereby a scarcity of arable land, or a desire for group-based control over resource rich lands, can lead to mass violence and even genocide. Such a perspective is in keeping with a tradition of thought that views genocide and colonialism as intimately related (Arendt 1973; Barta 1987; Bischooping and Fingerhut, 1996; Lemkin 1944), as is clear in this passage from Raphael Lemkin's (1944:79) *Axis Power in Occupied Europe*:

Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group: the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the

oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization of the area by the oppressor's own nationals.

Here, territory is positioned as an object for control and competition within potentially genocidal intergroup conflicts by a state-driven utilitarian notion of land's value.

A different emphasis can be found in the literature on colonial genocide in instances where Article II.c of the *United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide* (UNGC 1948) is drawn on to support a charge of genocide against a colonial power (Annett 2001; Churchill 1997 and 2000; Davis and Zannis 1973; Neu and Therrien 2002). This Article of the UNGC lists as one of its genocidal acts "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life

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calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part” and thereby registers the fact that, once deprived of land and resources, a group can experience great difficulty in sustaining itself. Under this interpretation, land is also utilitarian, but in the sense that it is essential to intra-group survival as a source of a group’s physical well-being.

Unfortunately, both of these approaches are founded on a modernist and European “constitution” that assumes the stark separation of culture from nature. Bruno Latour (1993) notes that this act of purification is quickly coming undone as hybridic formations of nature and culture, ranging from HIV/AIDS to bedbugs, are demonstrating the complex braiding of the natural and cultural worlds. And, certainly, Indigenous peoples have long resisted such acts of purification. Taking Latour’s argument as a starting point, and drawing on the understanding of land expressed by Indigenous leaders in interviews I carried out when researching the British Columbia Treaty Process (Woolford 2005), I argue that land is more than simply a resource for inter-group competition or intra-group sustenance when considering Canadian colonial injustices. What is needed when evaluating the injustice of land appropriation is an understanding of land as part of the group; that is, as a key *participant* in the relationships that allow for the self-reproduction and ongoing negotiation of Canadian Indigenous group identities. Land, in Peter Kulchyski’s (2005:18) terminology, is an “embodied inscription,” which suggests not a mere closeness to nature, but rather the extent to which our natural surroundings are part of a group life that is inculcated into the physical being of group members (see also Monture-Angus 1999). As one of my respondents puts it:

We have so much more connection to this land than any other piece of land in the world. We have been here since time out of mind and we are not going anywhere. We need governments to recognize that that is our connection. [Interview 12/15/02]

Connection here represents the linking of identity and territory and not just a familiarity with place. The speaker is unable to imagine herself as a Coast Salish, Tseil Waututh person in any other

territory, since her territory, in her view, is part of who she is, and it is in interaction with this territory that she defines herself. Within such a worldview, I argue, an assault on the territory of the group can be experienced as an assault upon the group itself, and therefore our definitions of genocide must push beyond limiting human-centred notions of groupness.

Based on this reconceptualization of genocide, one can examine land appropriation in a different light. The harm of colonial land appropriation is not simply an illegal seizure of land and resources; it is also potentially an assault on the group as a group. Such an understanding also has consequences for the type of justice we attempt to establish in the aftermath of land appropriation. Today, attempts to move societies beyond a genocidal past are most often addressed through the language of “transitional justice” (e.g., see Teitel 2000 or the *International Journal of Transitional Justice*) – a broad and loose term intended to capture the various mechanisms that can be implemented to assist a society in forming more peaceable future relations between former antagonists. The remainder of this paper will re-examine the practice of land claims negotiations in British Columbia as a form of transitional justice that seeks to move British Columbia from a period of wrongdoing into one of justice and certainty. It will be argued, however, that contemporary land claims fail to address the deep injustice of colonial land appropriation, and instead offer a conflict resolution process that seeks to forcibly transpose European notions of land and property rather than provide a justice that adequately transitions or transforms Canada’s settler colonial society.

In this paper I revisit the research that was the basis for my 2005 book, *Between Justice and Certainty: Treaty-Making in British Columbia*, re-reading it through the lens of two more recent areas of interest, genocide studies and transitional justice. Between 1998 and 2002 I carried out 55 interviews with participants in the BC Treaty negotiations and made over 200 hours of field observations at negotiation tables and community consultation meetings that were open to the general public, as well as at First Nation Summit (FNS) meetings through the permission of the FNS Executive. The result was

a book that criticized the symbolic violence of the treaty process and its fixation upon achieving legal and economic “certainty” at the expense of a deeper notion of justice. This paper seeks to follow-up these earlier ethnographic findings by contrasting them with some of the more recent outcomes of the BC Treaty Process, but also by taking more seriously the potential destructiveness of the BC Treaty Process. In very bald terms, I view treaty making in BC to be more a continuation of than transition from an earlier colonial genocidal process. I have argued elsewhere for the application of the term genocide to the colonial relations imposed in Indigenous peoples in Canada, which include events of physical destruction, unchecked disease spread, forced assimilation, and land appropriation (see Woolford 2009 and Woolford and Thomas 2010). This paper examines some of the ways in which Canada has failed to correct these injustices, and risks repeating them (albeit in a different form), through the context of treaty making.

The Limitations of Transitional Justice

The language of “transitional justice” appears to be winning the battle for naming the field of reparations politics, a field that is generally concerned with how societies heal and recover from historical injustices (Torpey 2003). More and more, the term is applied to any number of justice mechanisms intended to move a society from an authoritarian or violent present to a future prescribed by some authors to be defined by democratization (Nagy 2008) or liberalization (Teitel 2000). Transitional justice mechanisms are those that help facilitate a new set of more just relations between former antagonists and include truth commissions, compensation, symbolic atonement, lustration, peace and land negotiations, and other efforts directed at encouraging a societal shift away from an unsavoury past. These mechanisms are typically intended both to symbolize a sense of societal atonement and to provide recognition or resource redistribution as means to offset the harm inflicted on a targeted population.

Given the liberal predispositions of many of the authors working in this field of study, one is often forced to justify why land claims negotiations in Canada fit under this rubric. Those skeptical of the

need for transitional justice in Canada wonder: Is a liberal democratic society like Canada really exercising a transition when it attempts to address the wrong of land appropriation committed against Indigenous peoples? For Nagy (2008), to make such a claim would be to broaden the concept of transition in an unhelpful manner since processes such as land claims do not involve a dramatic shift in the form or content of government. However, one could instead argue against the tendency in transitional justice studies to view the state as a monolithic entity. Although the state may be liberal-democratic in its general design, it still may possess colonial and authoritarian qualities that are in need of transition, such as in the form of antiquated pieces of legislation like the *Indian Act*, which continues to assert paternal control over Canadian Indigenous peoples. Similarly, the situation in British Columbia, where very little of the land was formally ceded to non-Aboriginal governments during the late 20th century period of colonial expansion, represents an authoritarian moment in Canadian history where land was removed from Indigenous peoples in British Columbia in violation of the laws of the British Empire. For honest liberals, it should be difficult to argue that Canada has fully shifted toward liberal democracy in terms of Indigenous/settler relations.

But it is more important that we challenge the teleology of transitional justice, which holds such notions of liberalization to be the ideal end goals for transitional processes rather than an alternative goal that may be equally valued, such as decolonization. Moreover, the moral certainty that comes with the conviction that liberalism is the right way to govern has proven quite destructive to Indigenous peoples. In Canada, the liberal approach to colonial settlement followed Locke’s (1970 [1689]) notion that property ownership is derived from the ways in which human labour transforms the land, such as through agriculture or mining, which has long been the basis for expropriations from Indigenous territories. Because Indigenous peoples in Canada were viewed to be unproductive in their relationships to land, the liberal response was to either obtain from them their land or to teach them to make “effective” use of land-based resources. Even today, contemporary treaty-making

occurs through a liberal discourse of property in which Indigenous ecologies are translated to complement European understandings of land ownership so that Indigenous title and jurisdiction can be reformed to fit under a Canadian land regime (Nadasdy 2002). As Nadasdy notes,

There is also a serious political danger inherent in the attempt to universalize the concept of property. In our desire to legitimize certain types of non-European social relations by calling them “property,” anthropologists and others are helping to subject those very social relations to new and powerful forms of social change. After all, the term *property* does have a very specific set of meanings in European legal and political discourse, and these meanings are both created by and reflected in the complex legal and political institutions of the state. We may claim that some specific set of non-European social relations in fact constitutes a set of “property relations,” but the moment we do so, we authorize politicians, judges, and other agents of the state to act on them as they would other more familiar forms of property. It gives them the conceptual tools and justification for imposing (yet again) their view of the world on aboriginal people. To translate the ways in which aboriginal people relate to one another and to the land into the language of property is, in essence, a tacit agreement to play by the rules of the game as set out by the state.” [Nadasdy 2002:251]

Thus, a liberal notion of property imposes its meaning on Indigenous understandings of the land-society relation. Here, and elsewhere in Indigenous experiences of injustice, liberalization cannot be a viable goal of transition, since a specific modality of liberalization has been, and continues to be, experienced by Indigenous peoples as an injustice that calls for transition.

In sum, if the notion of transitional justice is to reach past a Eurocentric emphasis on liberalization and take seriously the harms of land appropriation experienced by Indigenous peoples, it must avoid prescribing a set of desired outcomes without regard for the specific nature of the conflict at hand. What is at the core of transitional justice thinking is the idea

that societies burdened by a set of unjust relations must address the claims of those violated by these relations in order to secure a just future. The justice claims advanced by Indigenous participants in the treaty process, as well as those First Nations that remain outside the process, clearly ask for a form of “transition” in the sense that they seek both recognition of Indigenous autonomy and the redistribution of land and resources (Woolford 2005). Therefore, one can argue that, in a most basic sense, a grave injustice has been perpetrated against the Indigenous peoples through the illegal seizure of their territories, thereby requiring a justice remedy that will help transition British Columbia toward new relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The question of what these future relations might look like is what is most at stake in this case of transitional justice in British Columbia.

From Transition to Forcible Transposition

Given that transitional justice mechanisms place great emphasis on the future, one must be wary of the constitutive force of transitional justice, which is its power to fashion new forms or reinforce old forms of unjust social relations. Nadasdy’s statement above alerts us to the problem of forcible transposition, which threatens to impose a form of transition that makes only minimal change to the cultural and economic patterns that first led to the initial injustices. The term transposition is drawn here from a Bourdieusian lexicon in which the habitus provides the dispositional material that allows an individual to both participate in the collective life of the group and to stand out and earn distinction in relation to other group members. Habitus are

systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of

the orchestrating action of a conductor. [Bourdieu 1981:94]

The dispositions of habitus operate akin to a toolset that practitioners can automatically draw upon to seek success within their appointed terrain. They allow us to fit into a social context, but also to stand out and differentiate ourselves through the competent and creative application of available dispositions. These may be dispositions developed through long involvement in the field, which can be subsequently adapted to new challenges, or they may be “transposed” or imported from other fields of activity when it is recognized that they are potentially useful within a separate field. It is the habitus that provides the actor with a “feel for the game” and allows him or her to function in a meaningful and competent manner (Bourdieu 1990). For example, the educational field in which universities operate has long been an arena where individuals possessing cultural capital, which is a form of power derived from one’s store of cultural values and knowledge, are better able to manifest the dispositions valued in the educational field. Their ability to demonstrate both broad and specific knowledge and communicate this knowledge in a competent and articulate manner allows such individuals to distinguish themselves in the academic milieu. Yet, with neoliberal restructuring of the academy afoot, we also see the transposition of values more strongly associated with the economic field into the educational field, so that academics more and more pride themselves on being effective and efficient managers of a student’s educational experience.

The transpositional efforts of treaty making in British Columbia involve attempts to familiarize and invest Indigenous groups in the *illusio*, or taken-for-granted rules, of the economic field and its specific forms of property use. The process fosters, in this sense, a forcible or coercive transposition, in that it compels Indigenous persons to adopt and bring into treaty processes the habits and dispositions of actors in the non-Indigenous economic field. In my earlier book, I described this forcible transposition as part of a system of symbolic violence within treaty making, whereby the normative requirements of treaty negotiation (e.g., a focus on future relations rather than past wrongs) tended to impose an outcome

of “affirmative repair” on the treaty process, and treaty tables were hamstrung from the beginning so that they could press toward only those resolutions that allowed for the affirmation and continuation of existing economic and political relations (Woolford 2005; see also Fraser 1997). But it is worthwhile to look more closely at those practices of forcible transposition through which, under the guise of helping Indigenous groups ready themselves for treaty, an attempt is made to foist upon Indigenous leaders economic and political dispositions oriented toward better fitting Indigenous groups to dominant societal and economic conditions rather than transforming these conditions..

Transpositions in the BC Treaty Process

The “land question” in British Columbia has been a long-standing source of discontent for Indigenous groups in the province. It has been the source of petitions, commissions and court cases since the beginning of colonial settlement; however, the political will to seriously address Indigenous grievances did not manifest itself until the latter part of the 21st Century. In December 1990, under growing economic, social and political pressures, the federal and provincial governments at last heeded the requests of Indigenous groups and the tri-partite (Canada, British Columbia, and Indigenous groups) British Columbia Claims Task Force was formed.

On the basis of the Task Force’s report, the *British Columbia Treaty Commission Agreement* was signed on 21 September 1992, which enabled the British Columbia Treaty Process to begin its work in December 1993. The British Columbia Treaty Commission, as the “keeper of the process,” was charged with the task of ensuring that the three parties obey the 19 recommendations of the Task Force. It was required to do so, however, without any adjudicatory power, relying solely on moral suasion to ensure fidelity to the Task Force’s recommendations.

This new era of treaty making was heralded as a source of both justice and certainty for British Columbia. Justice would arrive in the form of land redistribution, resource rights, self-governance, and a “fiscal component” or “capital transfer”. Certainty, in contrast, would be the product of a “legal technique

that is intended to define with a high degree of specificity all of the rights and obligations that flow from a treaty and ensure that there remain no undefined rights outside of a treaty” (Stevenson 2000:114).

As the treaty process progressed, however, the justice component became more and more secondary to the desire for certainty (Woolford 2005). Indeed, in the interests of jurisdictional clarity and economic productivity, the justice afforded by the BC Treaty Process sought to achieve greater certainty by attempting to coercively transpose a specific set of property relations and approaches to land ownership to Indigenous peoples in the province. The driving rationale for the treaty process, that of creating new boundaries and land dispensations in British Columbia, was itself the transposition of a vision of land that was inimical to that possessed by some Indigenous groups. As Thom (2006:21-22) notes, Coast Salish members

see boundaries and borders as arbitrary and artificial at best, and at worst a part of a recurring colonial mechanism of government to create a division between communities and kin and weaken the potential strength of the Coast Salish people as a Nation. These people are concerned that the power of such maps and terms will have the effect of severing their connections to place, framing the future of engagements with the land exercised as rights negotiated under land claims settlements firmly in western ontological terms.

This sentiment was captured in one of my interviews, where a member of the Tseil-Waututh First Nation complained about the rigidity of non-Indigenous government negotiation mandates and their inability to permit a more fluid conception of land ownership. She noted that the government wants

to be able to put a nice strong fence around what a First Nation is. An approach that we have taken is that there would be an opportunity for the Tseil-Waututh to participate in different ways throughout the whole of the traditional territory, whether it be management of the resource, participating in development, or co-managing a park, or in fact looking after the smaller parcels of First Nation land. And the response to that was that we could only deal

with settlement lands and all of the rest of it would fall outside of treaty. [Interview 10/24/00]

In this manner, a Tseil-Waututh proposal to transform property relations in British Columbia to allow the First Nation to remain connected with its broader traditional territory and to enter the mainstream economy on their own terms was rejected outright by the non-Indigenous government negotiators. The proposal failed to meet their rigid mandates and notions of certainty, because it failed to address itself to dominant Canadian property relations. By seeking to find ways for a broader community connection to its traditional territory, the proposal violated non-Indigenous goals of, among other things, creating jurisdictional clarity to ease corporate access to desired resources.

Indigenous resistance to these negotiation mandates has resulted in the deployment of a host of measures re-deployed to coercively transpose the habits of property ownership to Indigenous leadership. These techniques go by various names: for example, capacity building and interim and treaty-related measures. Their original purpose was to prepare Indigenous leaders and communities for the new wealth to be distributed through treaties and to provide protection of and access to resources prior to treaty settlement. But they can also be redirected toward spreading the neoliberal message that “there is no alternative” to current patterns of property ownership and economic participation.

Interim measures, for example, were sought by Indigenous groups involved in treaty making as a protective measure to ensure resources on Indigenous traditional territories were not exploited in full prior to the signing of a treaty. Treaty-related measures were developed as a more specific form of interim measure that would be tied directly to items under negotiation at the treaty table. However, the non-Indigenous governments were slow to introduce such policies, and when they did, these measures tended to be small-scale, piecemeal agreements that were directed toward immersing First Nations in land, resource, and park planning and management in a manner consistent with existing federal legislation and dominant economic practices (see, generally, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2009). For First

Nations groups struggling economically and facing large debt repayment for their involvement in the treaty process, there is an obvious attraction and necessity to participating in such deals to provide some immediate economic relief for their communities and to ensure that resources are not fully developed on potential treaty lands prior to settlement. But many did so with the realization that this compromise was not without negative repercussions. Indeed, one respondent spoke of the “Catch-22” of treaty making:

In recognition of the non-Aboriginal people not going away, in recognition of the resources being exploited right in front of our eyes and not having access to the benefits of those natural resources, we have involved ourselves in a treaty process with the respective governments to make sure that we have access to some benefits of those natural resources of that traditional territory for future generations. [Interview 12/20/99]

The respondent earlier in the interview contrasted this involvement with the goals of Aboriginal title and sovereignty, which he felt to be most crucial for Indigenous peoples, but unlikely to be realized in the Canadian colonial context, thus making the treaty process and its interim and treaty-related measures the “lesser of two evils” in his eyes, since it at least allowed some modicum of protection for Indigenous territories, albeit still under the sovereignty of the Crown and with specific expectations of how these measures will be implemented. It is a compromise made by such Indigenous leaders, because the alternative is the uncompensated exploitation and development of their traditional territories.

If the Nisga’a’s treaty, negotiated outside of the BC Treaty Process, but referred to by former Premier of British Columbia Glen Clark as a “template” for the process, is any indication, the transposition of the economic dispositions of property ownership will not end through the signing of a treaty. The treaty between the government of Canada and the Nisga’a First Nation, which was implemented in May 2000, has given the Nisga’a control over a vast territory and opened Nisga’a members to taxation – a burden they were spared prior to treaty settlement. As well,

reservation lands, previously under government control and collectively owned by the First Nation, were transferred to the Nisga’a Nation, thereby allowing them to implement fee simple land ownership for individual Nisga’a (Findlay 2010). The transition from collective to fee simple ownership has long been a goal for Canadian government, the rationale for which is to provide individual Indigenous persons with a source of equity so they can access loans. However, in tough economic times, and in a context where the Nisga’a are struggling financially, this transition also leads to fears that desperate Nisga’a members, burdened by debt, will be compelled to sell their territory, resulting in more Indigenous peoples leaving their traditional territories, and more Indigenous territory falling into the hands of developers and resource extraction industries (e.g., logging, hydro-electricity, and mining).

This pattern persists in the BC Treaty Process. To date, after nearly two decades of activity, the BC Treaty Process has only managed to produce two final agreements. One of these was with the Tsawwassen First Nation, a group whose treaty table I observed regularly. When the Tsawwassen spoke at the table about the impact colonial land appropriation had had on their community – for example, the destruction of their longhouse to build Highway 17 and of their foreshore due to the construction of a ferry terminal and coal port – they were reminded by the non-Indigenous governments that treaty making is a “forward-looking” process and not one focused on the past.

The forward-looking treaty arrived at through these negotiations seeks to redress this past without directly referring to the colonial harms noted by the Tsawwassen. The treaty does so by providing the Tsawwassen with, among other things, greater control over their lands. But as was the case for the Nisga’a, this control includes the power to sell, dispose of, or partition their remaining territories:

Under this Agreement, the Tsawwassen Constitution and Tsawwassen Law, Tsawwassen First Nation may:

- a. Dispose of the whole of its estate in fee simple in any parcel of Tsawwassen Lands to any Person; and

- b. from the whole of its estate in fee simple, or its interest, in any parcel of Tsawwassen Lands, create or Dispose of any lesser estate or interest to any Person, including rights of way and covenants similar to those in sections 218 and 219 of the *Land Title Act*, without the consent of Canada or British Columbia. [Tsawwassen Final Agreement 2006]

Lands disposed of or partitioned in fee simple remain under Tsawwassen legal jurisdiction, but a separation of group from territory is still effected, since territory becomes real estate and something to be governed rather than an essential component of group life. Thus, a governmental relationship to land is transposed through the treaty process, requiring the Tsawwassen to adjust their approach to land, thereby achieving the long-held government goal of transforming the Indigenous land/culture worldview in this region.

With respect to the specific injustices voiced at the treaty table – the destruction of the longhouse to build Highway 17 to the ferry terminal and the loss of shellfish life because of the construction of the ferry terminal and coal port – the legalistic language of the treaty is mute. Highway 17 remains under provincial jurisdiction and reverts to the Tsawwassen only if the province opts to no longer use it. With respect to their seashore, the Tsawwassen did gain the right to harvest aquatic plants, fish, and intertidal bivalves, subject to the allocations set by the Minister of the Department of Fisheries. The Tsawwassen harvest will, however, need to be expressed in a yearly fishing plan and fully documented. As well, a “capital transfer” of \$1,000,000 will be made to the Tsawwassen for purposes of fisheries conservation, management and stewardship. Through these mechanisms an effort is made to responsabilize the Tsawwassen to treat aquatic life in their territory as a resource to be managed in accordance with a federal management scheme. But unacknowledged here is any reference to the harmful past and its impact on the Tsawwassen and their territory.

Conclusion

In Bourdieusian theory, the habitus is what bonds the group. It is the dispositional material that allows

an individual to assert his or her distinctiveness, yet also to contribute to the structural reproduction of group life. By embodying the inherited, malleable dispositions of group life, the individual participates in both the dynamism and regularity of group life. Efforts that seek to shift the habitus and to transpose new dispositions, can thus be perceived as harmful to the group’s power to self-determine its sense of identity. In the case of Indigenous land claims in British Columbia, where forcible transpositions are used to alter an “essential foundation” (Lemkin 1944) of group life, namely the group’s relationship to its territory, such efforts can reflect a continuation of a destructive pattern of land appropriation initiated under settler colonialism. What we see then is transitional justice deployed for purposes of forcible transposition, and this forcible transposition represents the mutation and re-articulation of a genocidal logic rather than its correction.

It is worthwhile to consider these matters of genocide and transition not only in the light of the BC Treaty Process, but also the global push to transform Indigenous property relations. As the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, joined locally by Manny Jules of the First Nations Tax Commission, pushes Indigenous communities to unleash the “dead capital” tied up in their lands so that they may access the equity contained therein, there exists great risk that these efforts to provide Indigenous peoples more access to mainstream economies will also threaten the ways in which they constitute themselves as groups. And, although one must remember that groups have long changed themselves and adapted in the face of shifting historical conditions, if these changes are the result of a forcible transposition, one is required to examine the intentional or neglectful destructive consequences of these actions. We have not yet created a transitional strategy for British Columbia that is designed to maximally foster creative forms of intercultural communication that open space in which ontologically different approaches to economics and land can thrive and coexist. Quite the opposite, we have built into our treaty process forcible transpositions that threaten to limit or even destroy alternate ways of knowing and being in the world.

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