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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: "UNLIMITED GROWTH INCREASES THE DIVIDE" The Del Mar Hotel, 555 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, 2007. Photograph by Kenneth Campbell.

Del Mar Hotel owner George Riste refused to sell to British Columbia's power company, BC Hydro, when the corporation attempted to purchase the property for its new office tower. Riste was determined to keep the hotel to provide much-needed low-cost housing. Eventually BC Hydro altered its design and built around the hotel. The hotel building has long been home to significant art galleries, currently the Belkin Satellite Gallery, associated with the University of British Columbia's Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery. During negotiations with BC Hydro, artist Kathryn Walter created the word sculpture that remains emblazoned on the building. In her artist's statement, Walter said "The strategy behind 'Unlimited Growth ...' is direct. It is directed at those who operate our free-market economy in their own interests, while excluding those interests that would be 'responsive to the needs of the community'" ("The Interventions of Kathryn Walter" by Bill Jeffries, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, 1990).

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Contents

Introduction

Renewing the Vision: New Proposals for the 21st Century 1

A. Allen Marcus and Charles R. Menzies

Renouveler la Vision : Nouvelles Propositions pour le 21ème Siècle 6

A. Allen Marcus et Charles R. Menzies

Comments and Arguments

Remaking Marxist Anthropology 12

Gerald M. Sider

Articles

Towards a Class-Struggle Anthropology 14

A. Allen Marcus et Charles R. Menzies

A Critique of Popular Political Economies of Knowledge in
Cyberspace, An Alternative Political Economy of Cyberspace
Knowledge, and A Demonstration of the Applicability of the
Alternative to Study of Free/Libre and Open Source Software
in the Malay World 40

David Hakken

Reviews and Reflections

Louis Althusser And The Traditions Of French Marxism 81

Review by Hristos Verikukis

Renewing the Vision: New Proposals for the 21st Century¹

A. Allen Marcus

New Proposals Editorial Collective

Charles R. Menzies

New Proposals Editorial Collective

We join with fellow workers the world over in celebrating May 1st, the International Workers' Day, with the launching of our inaugural issue of *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*. We do so in honour of all those who have passed before us clearing the way for progressive intellectuals, community activist, and, of course, proletarian militants and intellectuals of every variety and tendency, across time and space. We join with fellow workers in remembering the martyrs of the Chicago Haymarket Rally of May, 1884.

Much has changed since 1884. Workers movements have arisen, succeeded, and then failed. The major socialist experiments of the 20th century have, for the most part, faded from view. The few that hold on—China, Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea—are either transforming themselves into capitalist success stories, clinging to nominal collectivist poverty and geopolitical self-justification, or have degenerated into bizarre and horrific shadows of whatever promise they may have held. As the 20th century drew to a close those of us who managed to take hold of the dream of a classless society found ourselves gradually pushed to the sidelines as market-mechanisms and acquisitive individualism became ever more triumphant.

Nonetheless we persisted. In the late 1990s we organized "Counter Flows: Marxist Anthropology in the New Millennium," a session for the American

Anthropological Association. We then observed that between the publication of Bridget O'Laughin's 1975 review article, "Marxist Approaches in Anthropology," and William Roseberry's 1988 review article "Political Economy," (published on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall), a sea change had occurred within social science and humanities disciplines. In an ironic (tragic may be more apt) twist, anthropologists had answered Kathleen Gough's call for "New Proposals" by a radical engagement with the 'text,' simultaneously subverting and adopting Gough's critique of anthropology as the "child of Western Imperialism" (1968:403-407). We have taken Gough's call to arms as the title of our journal—New Proposals—and, in so doing we dedicate this endeavour to her unwavering support of revolutionary and socialist action in the pursuit of a better world for all.

So, a Marxist online journal—why now?

We are at the beginning of a new millennium, looking back at a 19th century philosophy, with no significant anniversary to lay our work on. It is more than 150 years since the publication of the Communist Manifesto, 130 years since the Paris Commune, 85 years since the October Revolution, and slightly more than half a century since the Chinese revolution. It would seem forced to make this a celebration of 30 something years since the Sandinista revolution, 40 something since Paris 1968, or 50 something since the Cuban revolution.

1 Portions of this introduction were originally published in *Anthropologica* Vol 47, Number 1: 2005.

So why now?

To use the popular language of contemporary finance, we believe that Marxism is at an all time low and has the possibility for good long term growth.

Call it intellectual bargain hunting—and belief that a better world is possible and we still do have the world to gain.

Robert Brenner has said that “Marxist economists are famous for having accurately predicted seven out of the last one international economic crisis” (Brenner 1998). There is a strong argument for sharing Dr. Brenner’s scepticism and not claiming the many signs of renewed class struggle and social protest as an indicator of a vast and powerful re-composition of the world working class movement and a new viability for Marxism. There are always mass class struggles and the young are always restless.

As we enter the new millennium, the forces of capitalism and reaction are in ascendance. The dream of a communist society organized for human needs and not for profit is in tatters. A century of bourgeois state terror, social democratic betrayal, Stalinist retreat and appeasement, and many varieties of opportunistic devaluing of the coin of human liberation have left us with what German social theorist Jurgen Habermas has called an exhaustion of utopian energies (Habermas 1989).

Political leaders in every country in the world, who barely 25 years ago were committed anti-capitalist militants, have joined the bourgeois governments of their former enemies and traded their AK 47’s for elite appointments and government portfolios, while rank and file militants have been deserted. Everywhere individual solutions are posed to the collective social problems of daily life and everywhere economies get leaner, meaner and more competitive, pitting neighbour against neighbour.

We predict no coming upsurge.

The world proletariat has been bombed, conned, and misled into doubt and aimlessness. Marxism, communism, and socialism as alternative means of organizing society have little credibility for most of the world. There is no current political, economic, or social program of the world proletariat and most

of its twentieth century mass organizations are disbanded or hopelessly discredited.

So why now? Because we must!

As bankrupt and proven wrong as socialism appears to be after a century of failed experiments, the capitalist future remains even worse. Their side claims that it will create a competitive world that pits neighbour against neighbour in the relentless search for accumulation and greater economic efficiency. Unlike our side, they are excellent at keeping their promises. In defence of bad planning over no planning, it is worth pointing out the fastest growing economy in the world during the first half of the twentieth century was the USSR and in the second half China (starting in the late 1960s). However, these repressive, corrupt, and often barely competent governments were never as efficient as capitalism at convincing their working classes to work hard for the bosses and support relentless war and competition.

The current situation, now that the world bourgeoisie has an open field looks even bleaker. As the world lurches from crisis to crisis, trade war between Europe and the New World constantly sits on the horizon. People on all continents rage about clashing civilizations and “the West,” while historians lend credibility to these indefinable culturalist blocs by backdating them to suit the current political accounting, suicide bombers reify the fantasies by bringing destruction to ordinary people, and the old colonial powers use vast armies to police streamlined post-Thatcherite proxy states. When the millions protest, they are ignored. Meanwhile the daily global environmental holocaust created by the anarchy of accumulation, has suddenly been narrowed into the tiny corridor of global warming; a threat to the world working class that seems to be a big issue now that property and accumulation are finally threatened. You don’t have to be a Marxist to be able to wax lyrical about the miserable state of the world today.

And yet, the worst thing that they have taken from us is not our environment, our blood, our sweat, or our right to shed tears. The worst thing that they have taken is the hope of our race, the human race. That is why we must. We continue

to believe that the human race is the subject of history. It is not god, capital, or even the environment, which we would put ahead of the first two. The human is the subject. This is an area where the contemporary university has been particularly criminal in its theft of hope. Whether it is social scientists promoting the text as the subject, doubt as hip, or worse yet, the contemporary historical fashion of pissing on big moments when ordinary people attempted to use hope to take history into their own hands. What, we wonder, is the goal of trying to argue, as contemporary historians love to do, that the French Revolution was unnecessary or the wrong direction, that the US Civil War that decisively smashed slavery in the Americas was an unnecessary loss of life and property caused by miscommunication between white people; or that the Russian Revolution was a mistaken attempt to create a better world.

Again, you do not have to be a Marxist to believe that hope is a reason to give it a try and that the human being should be the subject of all these tries. There are humanitarians, communitarians, indigenous activists, feminists, environmentalists, religious social justice groups and all manner of people searching for a better relationship between humans and a better way of living than the ceaseless competition and universal commodification promised by capitalism. However, we remain convinced of the elementary anthropological understanding that a competitive market system is not the only way to mobilize social labour, the elementary Marxist understanding that those who toil must rule, and the basic commonsense understanding that history is very long and twenty or thirty years of ubiquitous “death of communism” triumphalism may be less important than currently thought. What gives us hope about Marxism is not that it answers all questions, or even most, but rather that it provides the best, and perhaps the only serious starting point, for ending what we continue to understand as a failed project—capitalism.

This journal is our attempt to participate in this starting point. It comes at the end of a decade and a half of hunting the corridors of anthropology meetings for co-thinkers and kindred spirits, organizing

our colleagues around issues of importance to our social class, and studying the lessons of the past.

We are compelled to confess that our project is not driven by the rising interest in labour issues on university campuses throughout the U.S., Canada, and Mexico,² the massive strike waves in Europe in recent years, nor the global opposition to neo-liberalism, free trade and “the war against terrorism” which brought nearly 15 million protesters into the streets of cities across the world during one weekend in February 2003. Our project is driven by the Trotskyist idea, brought to anthropology in the 1950s and 60s by Eric Wolf (1959) and Marshall Sahlins and Elmen Service (1960) of the privileges of backwardness. To trade our financial metaphor for one from football, there is an open field.

With social democrats and Greens throughout Europe imposing the kinds of privatizations that “right of centre” parties never could and stealthily rebuilding national armies, rump Stalinists recanting the left nationalism of their communist past for the ultra-right nationalism of their capitalist present and academic Marxists jettisoning the last remnants of Enlightenment universalism for the particularism of post-modern doubt and revisionist history, it is time to return to the program of proletarian internationalism, before economic competition and inter-imperialist conflict destroys our planet and extirpates the idea of “humanity” in a frenzy of national action.

A revival of what Edmund Wilson (1972) called “acting and writing history” is long overdue. The retreat of the structuralism of the 1970s and 80s has made such a project more conceivable than ever. Objectivist analysis that reduces the social scientist to a Ptolemaic forecaster of glacial movements in the mode of production or development of the

2 In particular it is worth drawing attention to the shutdown and occupation of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) for ten months from April 1998 to February 1999. This protest at the largest university in the Americas was explicitly over the question of working class rights to a free and easily accessible university education in Mexico. It became a prominent forum and organising pillar of Marxism in the academy and drew anthropologists in on both sides of the struggle and both sides of the US/Mexican border.

forces of production has been hopelessly discredited and replaced by the subjectivism of the particular. No longer certain that the contradictions of history would inevitably work themselves out and yield a new society, social scientists have come to see themselves as witnesses to “post-ideology” local phenomena, cheerleaders for culturalism, or crafters of grand Wittgenstein influenced deconstructive word games.

For Marxist scholars of the generation of 2000 whose god never failed us in 1939, 1956, or 1968³ we have been cursed by developing in a wasteland of doubt, despair and pessimism that leads the best among our mentors to laugh affectionately when we raise the question of praxis and social transformation. But we have also been blessed by the absence of gods. Rather than struggle to chart a course between structure and agency, history and theory, objectivism and subjectivism, or the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., we are developing in a fallow field. We can go back to the basics and do what Marxists have always done: wage an ideological battle in our own work place for a cooperative and proletarian vision. This journal is a modest attempt to renew the struggle for a proletarian centred and Marxist anthropology. We think that the field has been fallow for long enough. The time has come to start planting the old seeds of a new society in the fallow fields of the present.

We open this inaugural issue with a provocative commentary by our friend and mentor, Gerald Sider. Drawing upon research and political experiences that stretch from the civil rights movement to the contemporary moment Sider’s corpus of work challenges us to make our work count in ways more important than those normal measures of academic success—citation indexes or merit increments. As

a teacher, colleague, or comrade in struggle Sider leads us into thinking through the implications of what we are doing.

In his own work, which links field research with political activism and theorizing (see, for example, Sider 2003a, 2003b), Sider challenges anthropologists to conceptualize their commitments to those studied in ways that provokes a creative antagonism between those who ‘just want to get on with it’ and solve the world’s problems and others who remain locked in the ethereal worlds of text, theory, and reflection. Sider’s approach is notable for the way he picks up a concept, elaborates upon it via close ethnographic description, and ultimately stretches it beyond its normal configuration. Whether he is critiquing the notion of resistance, the everyday, or exploring the implications of hegemony for fisherfolk in Newfoundland, his underlying concern revolves around issues of power within a capitalist social formation. His commentary here, *Remaking Marxist Anthropology*, is no disappointment—it provokes and engages and urges us to reconceptualize our Marxist anthropology in a way that brings it fully into our contemporary world.

The opening article is a review paper by Marcus and Menzies in which we explore the dynamics and particularities of North American (Mexico, United States, and Canada) Marxism and Anthropology (originally published in *Anthropologica* Vol. 47, No. 1: 2005). In this paper our intention is to pull out the key themes and ideas that we see as critical for an engaged anthropology, a Marxist anthropology of the 21st century. As anthropologists we have a limited connection to the physical power of the working class, but we do have a public platform for exerting some small influence on the consciousness of the working class. Our opening paper is one small part of this project.

David Hakken’s paper fittingly, for an online journal, engages the new virtual world of work and communication. In what ways do social formations change when they take on the characteristics associated with “cyberspace.” Hakken challenges us to evaluate contemporary knowledge theories through his development of an alternative knowledge theory of value that draws inspiration from Marx’s classical

3 These dates refer respectively to the Stalin-Hitler pact which disoriented and disillusioned a generation of communist militants; the crushing of the Hungarian uprising and the revelations that accompanied the death of Stalin, leading communists to hæmorrhage from parties around the world; and the combination of the Soviet intervention in the “Prague Spring”, the betrayals of Paris 1968 by the Communist Party of France, and the eventual failure of the global social movements of the 1960s and 70s.

labour theory of value. Hakken then evaluates his alternative theory in relation to his current research on advocacy for and development of Free/Libre and Open Source Software in the Malay World and more generally.

Our final piece is a review of William S. Lewis's recent book, *Louis Althusser and the Traditions of French Marxism*, by Hristos Verikukis. The review highlights the importance of Althusser's work while also raising a series of critical points about Lewis' treatment.

We have seen that there are many Marxist anthropologists scattered among the generation of 2000 and though it could not, at present, be said to constitute a movement, we want to take this chance to predict an upsurge. To go back to Robert Brenner's sly comment about Marxist economists, we are ready to predict seven of the next one mass radicalization. None us will mind being wrong six times, if we get it right the seventh. With so many excellent scholars of the generation of 2000 working on the project of Marxist anthropology we are looking forward to eventually being right and contributing in some small way to consolidating and articulating the gains of whatever utopian energies are released.

Just as early 20th Century anti-racist Boasians in Mexico and the United States served the interests of big capital and sections of the petty bourgeoisie by helping to consciously articulate and rationalize the ethnic and cultural changes that were occurring in the make-up of North American capitalism, we Marxists of the early 21st Century can aid in the understanding and articulation of the changes in the world workers' movement and the struggle for a socialist future. We can, in classic anthropological fashion, question everyday commonsense and ask challenging questions about the existence, strength, and consciousness of the world working class. We can be both workers challenging our own conditions of production and supporting the struggles of our class brothers and sisters. We can be intellectuals fighting against bourgeois ideology that, diminishes the value of the working class in favour of individualism, obscures rationality with mystifications, views the world through the counter-enlightenment lens

of human ethnic zoology, councils passivity in face of so called human nature and naturalizes the market.

We can fight for the idea that history is what you make of it.

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Renouveler la Vision : Nouvelles Propositions pour le 21ème Siècle¹

A. Allen Marcus

Collectif Éditorial de New Proposals

Charles R. Menzies

Collectif Éditorial de New Proposals

À l'occasion du 1er Mai, Journée Internationale du Travail, nous nous joignons à nos camarades ouvriers en publiant ce numéro inaugural de *New Proposals : Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry*. Nous le faisons en l'honneur de tous ceux qui nous ont précédés, et qui ont dégagé la route à des intellectuels progressistes, des activistes communautaires, des militants ouvriers, bien sûr, et à des intellectuels d'horizons et de tendances des plus variés, de par le monde et l'histoire. Nous nous joignons à nos camarades ouvriers en souvenir des martyrs du Chicago Haymarket Rally de Mai 1884.

Beaucoup de choses ont changé depuis 1884. Des mouvements ouvriers ont vu le jour, se sont succédés et ont fini par s'effondrer. La plupart des grandes expériences socialistes du 20ème siècle ont déperit. Le peu d'entre elles qui se maintiennent—Chine, Vietnam, Cuba, Corée du Nord—sont soit en train de devenir les vedettes du capitalisme, soit en train de s'accrocher à une pauvreté nominale commune et une existence dictée par les enjeux géopolitiques, ou alors sont devenus les étranges et effrayants reliquats de toutes les promesses qu'elles semblaient proposer. Cependant que le 20ème siècle touchait à sa fin, ceux d'entre nous qui étaient parvenus à s'emparer du rêve d'une société sans classes,

ont été progressivement repoussés vers les marges alors que triomphaient, comme jamais auparavant, les lois du marché et l'avidité individuelle.

Néanmoins, nous avons persévéré. A la fin des années 1990 nous avons organisé une session pour l'American Anthropological Association intitulée «Counter Flows : Marxist Anthropology in the New Millennium.» Nous avons alors observé qu'entre la publication en 1975 de l'article synoptique de Bridget O'Laughlin, «Marxist Approaches in Anthropology», et celle de William Rosberry, «Political Economy», (publié la veille de la chute du mur de Berlin), un changement profond avait pris place au sein des sciences sociales et humaines. Par un renversement ironique (pour ne pas dire tragique), certains anthropologues avaient répondu à Kathleen Gough et son appel pour de 'nouvelles propositions', par un engagement radical avec le 'texte', renversant ainsi, tout en l'adoptant, la critique que Gough avait faite de la discipline en la qualifiant de «fille de l'impérialisme occidental» (1968:403-407). Nous avons adopté comme titre de notre revue le cri de guerre lancé par Gough—*New Proposals*—et, ce faisant, nous dédions notre entreprise au soutien inébranlable qu'elle portait à une action révolutionnaire et socialiste visant à promouvoir un meilleur monde pour tous.

Alors, une revue marxiste en ligne—pourquoi maintenant?

Nous voilà à l'aube d'un nouveau millénaire, le regard tourné vers une philosophie du 19ème

1 Certaines parties de cette introduction ont été originellement publiées dans *Anthropologica* Vol 47, Numéro 1: 2005.

siècle, sans aucun anniversaire de taille sur lequel fonder notre entreprise. Plus de 150 ans se sont écoulés depuis la publication du Manifeste du Parti Communiste, 130 ans depuis la Commune de Paris, 85 ans depuis la Révolution d'Octobre, et à peine plus d'un demi-siècle depuis la révolution chinoise. Il serait artificiel d'en faire une commémoration des 30 et quelques années de la révolution sandiniste, des 40 et quelques années de Paris 1968, ou les 50 et quelques années de la révolution cubaine.

Alors pourquoi maintenant ?

Pour employer le langage courant de la finance contemporaine, nous pensons que le Marxisme a atteint son plus bas niveau et jouit d'un bon potentiel de croissance à long terme.

Appelons cela une chasse aux bonnes affaires intellectuelles—motivée par la foi qu'un meilleur monde est possible et qu'il nous reste, encore et toujours, le monde à gagner.

Robert Brenner a dit que : «Les économistes marxistes se sont rendus célèbres pour avoir prédit, avec succès, la dernière crise économique sept fois sur une» (Brenner 1998). Il y a de nombreuses raisons pour partager le scepticisme de Dr. Brenner et pour ne pas interpréter les nombreux signes d'une recrudescence de la lutte des classes et de la protestation sociale comme l'annonce d'une vaste et puissante recomposition de la classe ouvrière mondiale et d'une nouvelle validité des approches marxistes. Il y a toujours des luttes de classes et la jeunesse est toujours révoltée.

A l'aube de ce nouveau millénaire, les forces du capitalisme et de la réaction sont en progression. Le rêve d'une société communiste organisée en fonction des besoins humains, plutôt que du profit, est en ruine. Un siècle de terreur étatique bourgeoise, de trahison social-démocrate, de recul et d'apaisement staliniste, et de diverses formes de dévaluation opportuniste du concept de libération de l'humanité nous ont laissés avec ce que le théoricien allemand Jurgen Habermas a nommé un épuisement des énergies utopiques (Habermas 1989).

Dans tous les pays du monde, des hommes politiques qui, il y a à peine quinze ans, étaient des militants anti-capitalistes convaincus, ont rejoints les gouvernements bourgeois de leurs ennemis

d'antan et échangent leurs AK 47s contre des postes d'élites et des portefeuilles gouvernementaux, désertant ainsi les rangs des militants populaires. Partout des solutions individuelles sont apportées aux problèmes sociaux et collectifs quotidiens et partout les économies se font plus fragiles, plus médiocres et plus compétitives, dressant voisins les uns contre les autres.

Nous ne prédisons aucune relance prochaine.

Le prolétariat mondial a été bombardé, dupé et fourvoyé jusqu'au doute et au désespoir. Le marxisme, le communisme et le socialisme en tant que modes alternatifs d'organisation sociale n'ont guère de crédibilité aux yeux de la majorité des gens de la planète. Il n'y a, de nos jours, aucun programme politique, économique ou social pour le prolétariat mondial et la plupart des organisations populaires de masse ont été dispersées et discréditées sans appel.

Alors, pourquoi maintenant? Parce que nous le devons!

Autant en faillite et dans le tort que le socialisme puisse paraître, après un demi-siècle d'expériences ratées, l'avenir du capitalisme s'annonce encore pire. De leur côté, ils proclament la création d'un monde compétitif dressant voisins les uns contre les autres, au travers d'une course acharnée vers l'accumulation et vers une plus grande efficacité économique. Contrairement à nous, ils savent très bien garder leurs promesses. Considérant qu'un mauvais planification est préférable à aucune planification, il mérite d'être signalé que l'économie à plus forte croissance dans la première moitié du 20ème siècle, de par le monde, était celle de l'URSS et pendant la seconde moitié celle de la Chine (à partir des années 60). Toutefois, ces gouvernements oppressifs, corrompus, et bien souvent guère compétents, n'ont jamais été aussi efficaces à convaincre leurs classes laborieuses de suer sang et eau pour le patronat et de soutenir guerres et compétitions acharnées.

Maintenant que la bourgeoisie mondiale a le champ libre, la situation actuelle semble d'autant plus sombre. Alors que le monde vacille de crises en crises, un conflit commercial entre l'Europe et le Nouveau Monde se laisse entrapercevoir. Des gens du monde entier s'égosillent au sujet des 'ci-

vilisations du choc' et de 'l'Occident', cependant que les historiens apportent à ces blocs culturels indéfinissables une fausse crédibilité en leur créant une histoire compatible aux agendas politiques du moment, des kamikazes rendent ces fantasmes concrets en apportant la destruction aux gens ordinaires et les anciennes puissances coloniales gendarment, à l'aide d'imposantes armées, les pseudos-Etats de l'ère post-Thatcher. Les millions de manifestants sont ignorés. Alors même que l'environnement mondial est envoyé à l'abattoir quotidiennement suite à une logique d'accumulation anarchique, ce véritable holocauste à été soudainement réduit à la maigre question du réchauffement planétaire; menace aux classes laborieuses mondiales qui ne prend seulement de l'importance maintenant alors que la propriété privée et le principe d'accumulation sont à leur tour menacés. Nul besoin d'être marxiste pour étendre sa verve au sujet du misérable état dans lequel se trouve le monde d'aujourd'hui.

Et pourtant, la pire des choses qu'ils nous aient dérobées n'est pas notre environnement, ni notre sang, ni notre sueur, ni encore notre droit de verser une larme. La pire des choses qu'ils nous aient retirées est l'espoir de notre espèce, de l'espèce humaine. C'est justement pourquoi cela que nous devons. Nous sommes toujours convaincus que l'espèce humaine est le principal sujet de l'Histoire. Ce n'est pas dieu, ni le capital, ni encore l'environnement (que nous placerions d'ailleurs avant les deux premiers). L'Homme est le sujet. C'est à ce propos que l'université de nos jours, en ayant dérobé l'espoir, s'est montrée criminelle. Que ce soit les chercheurs en sciences sociales qui font du 'texte' le sujet de recherche, du doute la tendance ou encore pire la mode actuelle en histoire de dénigrer les grands événements lors desquels les gens ordinaires avaient tenté d'utiliser l'espoir pour enfin prendre l'Histoire entre leurs mains. Nous nous demandons quel est le but de vouloir démontrer, comme les historiens de nos jours adorent le faire, que la révolution française n'était pas nécessaire et qu'elle a versée dans la mauvaise direction, que la Guerre de Sécession, qui a porté à l'esclavage aux Amériques son coup fatal, était un gâchis inutile de vies humaines et de propriété privée résultant d'un manque de commu-

nication entre blancs ; ou encore que le Révolution Russe était une tentative erronée pour créer un meilleur monde.

Encore une fois, nul besoin d'être marxiste pour croire que l'espoir est une raison suffisante pour essayer et que l'être humain devrait être le sujet de tous ces essais. Il y a des humanitaires, des communautaristes, des militants indigènes, des féministes, des écologistes, des groupes religieux de justice sociale et toute autre sorte de personnes cherchant à améliorer les relations entre humains et à atteindre un mode de vie meilleur que celui de l'éternelle compétition et marchandisation promises par le capitalisme. Nous sommes, malgré tout, convaincus de la validité de l'idée anthropologique de base ne voyant pas en un système marchand compétitif l'unique moyen de mobiliser les forces productives, de l'idée marxiste de base qui affirme que les travailleurs doivent gouverner, et du sens commun fondamental comme quoi l'histoire est très longue en rapport aux vingt ou trente dernières années, finalement pas tant significatives, de triomphalisme omniprésent de 'la mort du communisme'. Ce n'est pas parce que le Marxisme apporte des réponses à toutes, ou la plupart, des questions qui fait que nous y investissons tant d'espoir, mais plutôt c'est parce qu'il fournit le meilleur point de départ, et sûrement le seul sérieux, pour en finir avec ce que nous continuons d'envisager comme un projet défectueux : le capitalisme.

Cette revue a pour but de contribuer à ce point de départ. Elle arrive à la fin d'une décennie et demie passée à ratisser les corridors des lieux de rencontre de l'anthropologie à la recherche de co-penseurs, à rassembler nos collègues autour de questions d'importance pour notre classe sociale, et à étudier les leçons du passé.

Nous sommes contraints d'avouer que notre projet n'est pas motivé par l'intérêt grandissant pour les questions du travail sur les campus universitaires à travers les États-Unis, le Canada et le Mexique.²

2 Il vaut la peine d'attirer l'attention notamment sur la fermeture et l'occupation de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) pendant une période de dix mois, d'avril 1998 à février 1999. Cette protestation, au sein de la plus grande université des Amériques, s'est

Il n'est pas motivé non plus par les vagues massives de grèves de ces dernières années en Europe, ni par l'opposition mondiale au néolibéralisme, au libre-échange, ou encore à la « guerre contre le terrorisme » qui a amené près de 15 millions de manifestants dans les rues de villes à travers le monde pendant une fin de semaine de février 2003. Notre projet est motivé par l'idée trotskyste des avantages du retard historique, idée apportée en anthropologie dans les années 1950 et 1960 par Eric Wolf (1959) et par Marshall Sahlins et Elmen Service (1960). Pour passer d'une métaphore de la finance à une métaphore du football : le champ est libre.

Avec les sociaux-démocrates et les Verts qui, à travers l'Europe, reconstruisent furtivement des armées nationales et imposent le type de privatisations que les partis de 'centre droite' ne pouvaient imposer, avec les stalinistes croupions qui désavouent le nationalisme de gauche de leur passé communiste en faveur du nationalisme d'extrême droite de leur présent capitaliste, et avec les universitaires marxistes qui abandonnent ce qu'il reste de l'universalisme des Lumières pour le particularisme du doute postmoderne et le révisionnisme historique, il est temps de retourner au programme de l'internationalisme prolétarien, avant que la compétition économique et les conflits inter-impérialistes ne détruisent notre planète et n'éradiquent l'idée de 'l'humanité' dans une frénésie d'action nationale.

Une reprise de ce qu'Edmund Wilson (1972) a appelé « écrire et vivre l'histoire » se fait attendre depuis longtemps. Le recul du structuralisme des années 1970 et 1980 rend ce projet plus facile à concevoir que jamais. L'analyse objectiviste, qui réduit le chercheur en sciences sociales au rôle de devin ptolémaïque des mouvements de fonds agitant le développement des modes et des forces de production, a été discréditée sans appel et remplacée par le subjectivisme du particulier. N'étant plus

déroulée explicitement autour de la question du droit de la classe ouvrière à une formation universitaire gratuite et accessible au Mexique. Elle est devenue un forum important et un pilier d'organisation pour le marxisme en milieu universitaire, et a attiré des anthropologues des deux cotés de la lutte et des deux cotés de la frontière États-Unis/Mexique.

certaines que les contradictions de l'histoire doivent inévitablement se résoudre pour céder la place à une nouvelle société, les chercheurs en sciences sociales en sont venus à se voir comme les témoins de phénomènes locaux « post-idéologiques », les promoteurs du culturalisme, ou les artisans de grandioses jeux de langage déconstructifs inspirés de Wittgenstein.

En tant que chercheurs marxistes de la génération 2000, qui n'ont pas été abandonnés par leur dieu en 1939, en 1956 ou en 1968³, nous avons été condamnés de nous développer dans un champ dévasté par le doute, le désespoir et le pessimisme, qui pousse les meilleurs d'entre nos mentors à rire affectueusement lorsque nous soulevons les questions de praxis et de transformation sociale. Mais nous avons également été bénis par cette absence de dieux. Plutôt que de lutter pour nous frayer un chemin entre la structure et l'action, l'histoire et la théorie, l'objectivisme et le subjectivisme, ou encore les États-Unis et l'URSS, nous nous développons dans un champ en friche. Nous pouvons retourner à l'essentiel et faire ce que les marxistes ont toujours fait : mener un combat idéologique au sein de notre propre milieu de travail en faveur d'une vision coopérative et prolétarienne. Cette revue se veut une humble tentative de renouvellement de la lutte pour une anthropologie marxiste centrée sur le prolétariat. Nous pensons que le champ est resté en friche depuis assez longtemps maintenant. L'heure est venue de planter les anciennes semences d'une nouvelle société dans les champs en friche du présent.

Nous introduisons ce numéro inaugural par un commentaire provocateur de notre ami et mentor Gerald Sider. L'œuvre de Sider, puisant dans sa recherche et ses expériences politiques acquises depuis

3 Ces dates font référence respectivement au pacte Hitler-Staline qui a désorienté et désillusionné une génération de militants communistes; à la répression de l'insurrection hongroise et aux révélations qui ont accompagné la mort de Staline, poussant des communistes à travers le monde à quitter leur parti en masse; et à la conjonction de l'intervention soviétique au « Printemps de Prague », des trahisons de Paris 1968 par le Parti Communiste français, et de l'échec subséquent des mouvements sociaux mondiaux des années 1960 et 1970.

le mouvement des droits civiques jusqu'à maintenant, nous met au défi de donner à notre travail une importance autre que celle habituellement attribuée par les critères de succès académique traditionnels —tels que les indicateurs de citations. En tant que professeur, collègue et camarade de lutte Sider nous amène à sérieusement réfléchir aux conséquences et implications de notre travail.

Au travers de son œuvre, qui à la recherche de terrain allie engagement et théorisation politique (par exemple : Sider 2003a, 2003b), Sider propose aux anthropologues de conceptualiser leur engagement avec les sujets de leur recherche au travers d'une dialectique, riche d'enseignement, qui oppose ceux qui veulent 'mettre la main à la pâte' et résoudre les problèmes de notre monde à ceux qui restent enfermés dans les mondes métaphysiques du 'texte', de la théorie et de la réflexion. L'approche de Sider est remarquable de par la façon dont partant d'un concept, qu'il raffine par de précises descriptions ethnographiques, il finit par en élargir le champ d'application au-delà de l'habituel. Que ce soit sa critique des notions de résistance ou du quotidien, ou alors son interrogation des implications qu'ont pour les pêcheurs artisanaux de Terre-Neuve la notion d'hégémonie ; sa recherche est fondamentalement motivée par les questions de pouvoir au sein de formation sociale capitaliste. Le commentaire qu'il apporte ici, *Remaking Marxist Anthropology*, ne fait pas exception à la règle. Il nous propose, nous défie et nous implore de réévaluer notre anthropologie marxiste de telle sorte à pleinement lui redonner une place dans notre monde contemporain.

Nous ouvrons ensuite ce numéro par l'article synoptique de Marcus et Menzies (initialement publié dans *Anthropologica* Vol. 47, Numéro 1 :2005) dans lequel nous examinons les dynamiques et particularités de l'anthropologie et du marxisme nord-américains (Mexique, États-Unis et Canada). Notre but est de dégager les thèmes et idées clés que nous considérons comme cruciaux pour une anthropologie engagée : une anthropologie marxiste du 21ème siècle. En tant qu'anthropologues, notre lien à la puissance physique de la classe ouvrière est limité, mais nous bénéficions bel et bien d'une plateforme publique pour exercer une certaine in-

fluence sur la conscience de celle-ci. Notre article d'ouverture ne constitue qu'une partie de ce projet.

L'article de David Hakken, qui tombe à propos pour une revue en ligne, se frotte au nouveau monde virtuel du travail et de la communication. Il se demande de quelles manières les formations sociales changent-elles lorsque qu'elles endossent les attributs généralement associés au 'cyberespace'. Hakken nous invite à réévaluer les 'théories des savoirs' actuelles au travers de son élaboration d'une 'théorie des savoirs et de la valeur', qui s'inspire de la théorie classique de Marx sur le travail et la valeur. Par la suite, Hakken réévalue sa théorie alternative à la lumière de ses recherches actuelles sur la promotion et le développement de programmes informatiques libres et gratuits (*Free and Open Source Softwares*), plus particulièrement dans le monde malais.

L'article qui clôt ce numéro est une critique du dernier livre de William S. Lewis, *Louis Althusser and the Traditions of French Marxism*, écrite par Hristos Verikukis. Il y souligne l'importance de l'œuvre d'Althusser tout en soulevant une série de critiques à l'égard de l'approche de Lewis.

Nous avons observé qu'un grand nombre d'anthropologues marxistes sont disséminés parmi la génération 2000. Et bien qu'on ne puisse pour l'instant affirmer qu'ils constituent un mouvement, nous voulons ici saisir la chance de prédire une relance. Pour revenir au commentaire futé de Robert Brenner sur les économistes marxistes, nous sommes prêts à prédire la prochaine radicalisation de masse sept fois sur une. Aucun d'entre nous ne se souciera de s'être trompé six fois, si nous avons raison la septième fois. Avec un si grand nombre d'excellents chercheurs de la génération 2000 qui travaillent sur le projet de l'anthropologie marxiste, nous sommes impatients d'éventuellement avoir raison et de contribuer de quelque façon que ce soit à consolider et à articuler les bénéfices de n'importe laquelle des énergies utopiques qui seraient libérées.

Tout comme les boasiens anti-racistes du début du 20ème siècle au Mexique et aux États-Unis ont servi les intérêts du grand capital et de certains secteurs de la petite bourgeoisie en contribuant sciemment à articuler et à rationaliser les transforma-

tions ethniques et culturelles alors en cours dans la composition du capitalisme nord-américain, nous, marxistes du début du 21^{ème} siècle, pouvons aider à la compréhension et à l'articulation des transformations, aujourd'hui en cours, au sein du mouvement mondial des travailleurs et de la lutte pour un avenir socialiste. Nous pouvons, dans une perspective anthropologique classique, interroger le sens commun ordinaire et poser des questions stimulantes sur l'existence, la force et la conscience de la classe ouvrière mondiale. Nous pouvons être des travailleurs qui remettent en question leurs propres conditions de production tout en soutenant les combats de nos frères et sœurs de classe. Nous pouvons être des intellectuels luttant contre cette idéologie bourgeoise qui diminue la valeur de la classe ouvrière en faveur de l'individualisme, qui obscurcit la rationalité avec des mystifications, qui voit le monde à travers le prisme anti-Lumières d'une zoologie humaine et ethnique et qui recommande la passivité face à une soi-disant nature humaine et naturalise le marché.

Nous pouvons nous battre pour cette idée que l'Histoire est ce que nous en faisons.

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Comments and Arguments

Remaking Marxist Anthropology

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To begin to say what a Marxist anthropology might now become we need to start with a brief review of the relevant changes in our social world. The point will be to situate a partisan anthropology both within and against major current processes.

1. The former hegemonic powers have decisively lost their ability to win or even to suppress conflict. They retain an extraordinary and increasing power to butcher and destroy, but that is all. This inability to control the consequences of their violent assaults has revealed the chaos that power has always in its routine operations imposed upon the poor and the vulnerable. All that is happening now is that this ordinary chaos is being reimposed by the victims within the domains of its origins. If we look beyond the theatrics and the spectacles of car and roadside bombs, we can sense the uncertainty, the chaos, the appeal to and of "luck:" in sum the unpredictability that can be simultaneously humorous and deadly, that always permeates ordinary daily life of those who have long suffered the routine assaults of domination and exploitation. What this should reveal to us, above all, is the arrogance and worthlessness of our major concepts: culture, social organization, social structure, kinship systems, and so forth. The one utility of such concepts is the way they reveal the fantasies of order and regularity that the powerful have concerning the social worlds they oppress and exploit.

2. As capitalism depends upon its ability to manage, somewhat effectively, the chaos it creates, capitalism is now increasingly in serious trouble at the very least in the former hegemonic powers. The centre of its troubles is the increasingly severe limitations on the ability of the rate of profit to expand,

and as Rosa Luxemburg decisively showed this ability to expand is crucial to the continuity of capital. More precisely, she demonstrated that capital must continually expand over its hinterlands, marshaling the extraction of goods and labor from non-, or semi-, capitalist systems. These are the social formations that we have wrongly called pre-capitalist, a word that conceals the fact that they are continually created while being continually destroyed in the same place and at the same time.

In the context of intensifying limits the continuity of capital increasingly depends upon turning on its own: by increasing domestic (internal) inequality of income, of wealth or material goods, and especially of well-being, including healthcare, education, housing, and neighbourhood facilities. After a domestically brutal start in the early Industrial Revolution, capital always sought to export the bulk of the misery it created. It still does, but it no longer is as able or willing to use what it extracts to sweeten the existence of a significant portion of its domestic working-class. Simultaneously, capital must, or thinks it must, ignore its own long and medium term interests in pursuit of current profits. That is the dynamic underlying global warming.

This affects anthropology in several ways: most relevantly in the production and social reproduction of locality. Thus the terrain of most of our work is changing, and we need to change our frame of reference from working in a locality or in several localities, to examine more closely the production of locality itself. This should include the production of local cultures, both in the hinterlands and in the heartlands, for the production of local cultures is completely integral to the production of local inequalities.

The characteristic feature in the organization of local inequalities is that these inequalities are used to support both local and non-local elites, both local and non-local processes of appropriation, and this conjunction of local and non-local brings incompatible needs and interests into one inescapable embrace. This incompatibility is not at all because local forms of domination and exploitation are more humane, but because they serve very different needs. The characteristic feature of locally specific cultures, necessarily dealing with social relations formed in the context of local and non-local processes of domination and appropriation, is thus the unavoidable and unresolvable contradictions and tensions that local cultures incorporate at their core. All cultures are exclusionary—that is what “shared” actually means—but these exclusions, which ordinarily specify who may be treated abusively, who may be forced to bear the brunt of appropriation and domination, however brutal and intense, do not solve the inescapable internal contradictions of any local culture.

The increasingly intense appropriation from localities ordinarily intensifies differentiation both within and between localities. Globalization does not homogenize or erase difference; to the contrary it intensifies political and social inequalities, and what is loosely called cultural variation. And the intensifying appropriation also means that these increasingly differentiated localities ordinarily have increasing difficulty reproducing themselves. As we learn to look at localities in terms of what they were and what is impending we will come to understand how intensely they can be organized around their instabilities. Those instabilities are also our doorways.

In sum, a reinvigorated Marxist anthropology might well situate itself not in terms of finding un-

derlying patterns or structures or processes but in the increasing difficulty of social reproduction in localities, in regions, and in nations: the increasingly intense production of locality and the simultaneous failure of this productive process. This is not at all a call to place ourselves in the midst of an abstraction, not even the useful abstraction “social reproduction.” In the most concrete terms the situation before us can be characterized by the fact that people’s own social relations are inadequate to reproduce their own social relations with their own means. The ensuing dependency and vulnerability might well be taken to be the framework for a pervasive and widespread depoliticization. But the increasing inability of capital and the state to harness the dependency and the vulnerability their own actions produce toward any productive or useful end leaves open a terrain for organization among the discarded and the dispossessed, as we come to better understand the expansionary tendencies within the ways the dispossessed become useful to one another.

The political point here is different than usual, in two ways: we are focusing on peoples who are not “elevated” to the status of proletariat, as much as on the regular, but deteriorating, working class, and we are suggesting that the core of organizing turns on their relations to one-another, as a precondition for opposition to the forces that exploit and dominate them. Anthropology, which had something to say about what it thought were orderly and patterned social relations now needs to look more closely at the social relations that emerge with chaos, uncertainty, and under the unpredictabilities of domination and intense appropriation, and find in these relations, these needs, these hopes, these fears, these terrors, ways that dispossessed and becoming-dislocated people reach toward different tomorrows.

Towards a Class-Struggle Anthropology

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ABSTRACT. Dancing between review and argument this paper lays out a foundation for a class-struggle anthropology—that is, an anthropological practice that can be linked to the ultimate goal of achieving a classless society. To this end we will review those anthropologists who have gone before us, pulling out those works of theirs that we see as critical in (re)building a class-struggle anthropology. As part of this process we discuss the relationship between what has stood as Marxist anthropology in North America, the idea of socialism, the political development of the world working class during the nine decades since the October Revolution, and the challenges of intellectual continuity in the face of differing generational experiences of Marxist anthropologists. Ultimately we argue that a progressive anthropology necessarily involves political activism in our work, communities, and schools.

Keywords: Marxism, class struggle, political economy, social justice

RÉSUMÉ. Alternant entre le synopsis et l'argumentation, cet essai met en place une fondation pour une anthropologie de la lutte des classes, à savoir une pratique anthropologique pouvant être reliée au but ultime qu'est la réalisation d'une société sans classes. À cette fin, nous faisons un survol des anthropologues qui nous ont précédé, et de ceux d'entre leurs travaux que nous considérons cruciaux pour la (re)construction d'une anthropologie de la lutte des classes. Ce faisant, nous examinons les relations entre l'anthropologie marxiste en Amérique du Nord, l'idée du socialisme, le développement politique de la classe ouvrière mondiale au cours des dix décennies qui ont suivi la Révolution d'octobre, et les défis de la continuité intellectuelle face aux différentes expériences générationnelles des anthropologues marxistes. Finalement, nous soutenons qu'une anthropologie progressiste implique nécessairement l'activisme politique dans notre milieu de travail, nos communautés et nos écoles.

Mots-clés: Marxisme, lutte des classes, économie politique, justice sociale

“The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles.”

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.”

Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*

For Marx social class is at the centre of understanding and organizing social change. As interpreted by Lenin the working class, organized by its politically advanced vanguard, constituted the

path toward emancipation and the realization of human potential. Rosa Luxemburg emphasized—among other things—the critical power of the combined force of the working class, engaged in a general strike, in overthrowing capitalism. Trotsky, through his analysis of combined and uneven development and the thesis of permanent revolution, pointed the way forward toward a global socialist society (even if the revolution began in the most backward of countries).

Anthropology, by contrast, has tended to draw upon the more conservative theoretical frameworks of mainstream scholars such as Emile Durkheim

or Max Weber to construct models of society that highlight ways of building and or maintaining “community” connections and social functions (Patterson 2001). This is not, of course, to say that there are no important anthropological contributions which draw upon Marx—there are some.¹ In this essay we detail in broad stroke the history of Marxist anthropology in North America (which for us includes Mexico, the United States, and Canada) and, in so doing, point the way forward towards a class-struggle anthropology, with the ultimate aim of achieving social justice and the elimination of a class-based society.

To carry out the task that we have set for ourselves we balance between review and argument. For our review we have selected pieces that are critical for engaging in our project of a class-struggle anthropology. Because we are social activists engaged in the social justice movement and practising professional anthropologists engaged in the arcane world of publish or perish we have focussed on those anthropological writers and works that we have found contribute toward our project in terms of their intellectual and practical contributions.

For our argument we draw upon the classical call for a class-struggle social science that is intent on reinvigorating hope for a better, more just world.² This is a social science that places its analytical eye and its political hopes upon the working class as the pivotal social agent of change and upon the ruling class as the agent of reaction and deception. In so

doing we draw directly from the corpus of theory inspired and informed by the writings and political engagements of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. In this essay we have attempted to avoid the endless internal debates within Marxism and focus instead upon the ways in which Marxism as theory and practice has informed anthropology. Nonetheless, it would be remiss if we did not at the very least lay out the core concepts of Marxist theory so as not to be waylaid later on in the paper over potentially unfamiliar phrases or concepts new to the 21st-century ear.

First and foremost Marxism is a theory and a practice united in the objective of achieving a classless society. As a theory, Marxism is a body of conceptual tools that allows an informed analyst an effective mechanism by which to make sense of the myriad ways and means the ruling class of a particular society deploy to hold onto their privileged position in society (see, for example: Ollman 1971; Mandel 1969). Chief among Marxism’s central concepts is that of social class—defined at its most basic as one’s place relative to the means of production, the tools, machines, and knowledge used to transform the world around us into things usable by humans. While primarily focussed upon the workings of capitalism, Marxist theory has also been used to understand the workings of kin-ordered and tributary societies (Wolf 1982, 1999).

As practice, Marxism, through the identification of the key problem of class-divided societies, which is the exploitation of the majority by a minority that controls the ability of society to produce goods and services, suggests ways and means of overthrowing the rule of the minority by the majority. Here the primary focus is upon the social conflict between and among classes. Marxism holds that conflict to be an inevitable part of the economic laws of motion of an expansionary system built on economic competition between capitalists for the social surplus and between workers and capitalists for the social wage.

However, this inevitable economic competition is ultimately underwritten by what Marxists often refer to as “leadership” or the political means and

1 For three key review articles see O’Laughlin 1975, Roseberry 1988, 1997. One may also wish to consult Wessman’s *Anthropology and Marxism* (1981) or Bloch’s more European focussed *Marxism and Anthropology* (1983). All of these reviews outline aspects of the relationship between Marxism and anthropology and, with the possible exception of O’Laughlin, tend to focus on the intellectual as opposed to the activist elements of the relationship.

2 We are critical of the fashion now popular in the “University of Excellence” that seeks novelty and innovation for its own sake. Excellence has come to be synonymous with innovation and novelty. Reworking or pulling forward old ideas to a new generation is not as appreciated as is riding the euphonious cutting edge of innovation (see: Readings 1996).

will to fight. There can be various aspects to this leadership. It can be over competing blocs of capitalists fighting each other by leading one working class to slaughter another in war. It can be a “race to the bottom” that reduces the percentage of the surplus that goes to use values (what Marxists refer to as the rate of exploitation). Alternatively, as Marxists advocate and fervently desire, it can be class struggle emerging from a conscious working class that has the political means and will to increase its power over production, eventually fighting for the eradication of classes and thereby the privileges associated with private property: what Marx called class for itself.

To this end we will review those anthropologists who have gone before us, pulling out those works of theirs that we see as critical in rebuilding a class-struggle anthropology—that is, an anthropological practice that can be linked to the ultimate goal of achieving a classless society. As part of this process we discuss the relationship between what has stood as Marxist anthropology in North America, the idea of socialism, the political development of the world working class during the nine decades since the October Revolution, and the challenges of intellectual continuity in the face of differing generational experiences of Marxist anthropologists. In so doing we recognize that much of what we say below is not new, not innovative, and not original in anyway except—perhaps—in its attempt to “confront the present” (Smith 1999), with a new synthesis that addresses the perpetual crisis, and growing economic disparities that characterize the current period.³

There are no road maps for what we are trying to do because there is so little in the way of contemporary attempts to synthesize Marxist anthropology into a coherent body of work. Ultimately we argue that a truly progressive, class-struggle anthropology necessarily involves political activism in our work,

3 As Michael Blim has so clearly and passionately demonstrated, even in the face of expanding economic and social capacity, the gap between rich and poor is wider than at nearly any previous point in human history (2005: 1-11). And, that group of rich are themselves becoming fewer and fewer relative to the growing masses (Blim 2005).

communities and schools. We are not attempting to provide the definitive synthesis of Marxism and Anthropology, nor finally resolve the contradictions between professional scholarship and political commitment, but rather to provide a provisional history of a present that needs, badly, to be confronted by class struggle. As anthropologists we would like to contribute to this project and hope that we can at least provide a prolegomenon for further research and a more complete synthesis of that which is both Marxist and anthropological.

The “Short Twentieth Century” and Marxist Anthropology

In 1995, Eric Hobsbawm coined the now well-worn phrase “the short twentieth century” to describe the period from 1914 to 1989, which, he argued, marks the boundaries of the major challenges, conflicts and ideological themes of 20th-century history. While we share Canadian writer Ellen Meiksins Wood’s (1998) concern with the excessive periodizing of contemporary social theory and the connected problem of multiple generations of “new pessimists” declaring an end to history and a crisis of modernity every couple of decades (Wood and Foster 1997), we also recognize the scholarly wisdom of Hobsbawm’s connection between a 75-year global class war⁴ that was the end result of the first inter-imperialist world war and the political, social, and intellectual alignments that emerged from the October Revolution.

It is, of course, easy to find harbingers of the October Revolution in the pre-World War I period and continuities between the challenges of the Cold War and the contemporary period (Wood 1998).

4 We use this term as a provisional replacement for the term “Cold War” which makes a number of assumptions that we explicitly reject: (1) that there was no military engagement and no shooting between the USSR and the imperialist countries; (2) that the nuclear Mexican standoff that characterised the post Korean War period can stand for the entire conflict over political-economic systems during the twentieth century; (3) that prior to the Korean War, when the imperialist countries were not united around a politics of global anti-communism the ideological and political challenges to the world working class were significantly different.

However, even if, as Ellen Meiksins Wood asserts, 1989 does not mark the end of an epoch of capitalism and its attendant class struggles, it does mark the collapse of huge states that covered most of the old world. It also marks the disappearance, degeneration, splintering, and ideological disorientation of political parties that wielded tremendous influence in the world working class and a crisis of legitimacy for viable alternatives to capitalism. The terrain of political struggle has changed in dramatic ways and we claim the right to join Eric Hobsbawm in using 1989-91 as a heuristic boundary.

As scholars for the Marxist generation of 2000, most of our intellectual development derives from the social science of this short 20th century that is now a decade and a half in the past. The scholars who mentored us through the process of doctoral studies were beneficiaries of the remarkable, nearly millenarian, optimism about progressive social change that characterized the period of early adulthood for what has come to be called the generation of 1968 (Kurlansky 2004). Having done their doctoral research during the heady days of the 1960s and 70s, their research was able to explicitly engage broad struggles for social change and even revolutionary transformation as it happened in the “traditional” field sites of anthropology—Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the so-called fourth-world of Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples.

Beginning first with India, China, and Korea the grand movements of decolonization and anti-imperialist nationalism forced anthropologists to reconsider anthropological practice. The existence of two global superpowers defined largely by their differing economic systems provided a geo-political space in which newly independent nations in Asia, Africa, and Oceania, and older, former colonial nations in Latin America and the Caribbean were able to negotiate political and economic advantages by pitting the USSR and the U.S. against each other. Crumbling Euro-American empires made it more difficult for anthropologists to gain access to the so-called Third World on their own terms, as the human subjects of anthropological inquiry were becoming agents in their own right and were claiming control over both the right to speak for their

peoples and the right to determine who had access to them (see Menzies 2001:26-29).

In particular, the unprecedented global expansion of access to education and the opening of universities to the working classes both of imperialist countries and of the former colonial world provided intellectual platforms and scholarly careers to those who might, in a previous generation, have simply been the subjects of anthropological, sociological and ethno-historical studies. Anthropologists could no longer take for granted the fact that their field informants would never read or publicly comment on their work; they often had to share a stage with them and fight for a place in the field site. This was as true for studies here in North America, as it was for exotic places where “servants of empire” had once studied “men in grass skirts.”

The expansive optimism of the day gave much room for progressive anthropologists to define themselves by and to participate in the political conflicts and struggles of the short 20th century, but the era of naïve fieldwork—if such a beast ever existed—was over. If one did gain access, the ethical content of one’s work was open to question. In North America, for example, the participation of U.S. anthropologists in intelligence activities during the Vietnam war threatened to break apart the American Anthropological Association (see Vincent 1990:310; Wolf and Jorgensen 1970), domestic disputes over “anthropology at home” touched off political firestorms over the culture of poverty in the United States (see Marcus 2005; Leacock 1971) and in Mexico, the 1968 generation challenged anthropology’s longstanding ties to the Mexican state (see Lomnitz 2001; Warman et al. 1970).

Perhaps most important among the many global political events that were coming together to democratize the academy, undermine old certainties and raise new questions about the relationship between ideas and action was the defeat of the U.S. army in Vietnam. By the late 1960s it was becoming clear to most of the world that the United States could not win its war in Vietnam. Several U.S. governments had done everything short of using nuclear weapons, yet the North Vietnamese government and the insurgency in the South were only getting

stronger. The emergence of a defeatist wing of the Democratic Party and the officer's corps in the U.S. army during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Burner & Marcus 1999), shook the intellectual foundations of world capitalist hegemony.⁵

In the anthropological profession the cracks in imperial hegemony yielded radical reappraisals of the discipline. Most notably, Dell Hymes (1972) *Reinventing Anthropology*, Talal Asad (1973) *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Arturo Warman et al. (1970) *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* and Kathleen Gough's (1968) important Current Anthropology article "New Proposals for Anthropologists" (Gough 2002) sought to redefine the field in such a way as to make anthropology relevant as an agent of social change. These critiques relied on the personal commitment of the anthropologist to radical change, exhorted the anthropologist to act as an agent of social change and warned of the dangers of doing anthropology too close to the influences of the state. It was these calls for a new and partisan anthropology that could contribute to broad and rapidly emerging progressive social change that drove the work of many of our mentors, and drew us and our colleagues of the generation of 2000 into the orbit of older scholars whom we regarded as part of the solution, not the problem.

5 See Burner and Marcus (1999). See also, the "it is difficult to ask a man to be the last to die" speech by recent Democratic Presidential candidate, John Kerry, before the U.S. Congress in 1971. Kerry was among a large contingent of mainstream Democrats in the U.S. who were advancing a defeatist position. Kerry was also involved with the Detroit war crimes inquest organized by anti-war veterans. He was not alone in his defeat at any cost position. There was a petition from the West Point officers' corps that stated a quick defeat in Vietnam would stop the U.S. army from a crisis of morale that could have serious implications for Western Europe. Navy ships were reporting near mutinies from crews who voted not to proceed into battle, and the "fragging," or killing of officers in the battlefield by enlisted soldiers, was increasing the difficulty of actually prosecuting the war on the ground in Vietnam. By the early 1970s more than 60% of Americans were opposed to continued U.S. presence in Vietnam (see, Kurlansky 2004; Kerry et al. 1971; Joseph 1981; www.moderntribute.com or www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1972VVAW.html).

While there was nothing as spectacular as the U.S. defeat on the battlefields of Southeast Asia during our coming of age, we did witness and participate in such events as the mass popular uprisings against U.S. cruise missiles in Europe during the early 1980s, the British coal miners' strike of 1984, Operation Solidarity in British Columbia in 1983,⁶ the revolutions, popular uprisings and guerrilla struggles of Central America and Southern Africa, and the worldwide battle against privatization and the withdrawal of the welfare state that occurred in the wake of the global economic contraction, following the collapse of the Mexican peso in 1982. Many of us came from student politics and sought careers that could accommodate and help sustain our political commitments. For those of us who had drawn Marxist lessons from the many defeats of the 1980s, the scholars who were most exciting to us were those who were explicitly working within the Marxist tradition and were concerned with key questions about the political development of the working class.

In particular two figures stand out as the intellectual progenitors of Marxist anthropology in North America: Eric Wolf and Eleanor Leacock. Wolf and Leacock shared an intellectual commitment to putting sound scholarship in the service of emancipatory politics. Taken together we would argue that they represent the two most significant Marxist anthropologists of their generation. Wolf has, in concert with his students, placed the critical role played by social labour in the production of culture on the anthropological agenda (1982, 1999). Leacock, a committed activist who paid for her politics, has been central to linking issues of gender and race to the power play of social class in contemporary society. Any serious attempt to build a class-struggle anthropology must necessarily come to terms with the work of these two Marxist anthropologists.

6 Operation Solidarity was a popular coalition of labour and community groups organized in opposition to one of the early neo-liberal attacks on the welfare state in North America (see Palmer, 1987). Though the agenda had been developed and refined in the 1970s, the new language of fiscal restraint, corporate downsizing, and deficit reduction caught like wildfire in the 1980s (for its impact on the managerial classes, see Newman, 1988).

Wolf stands as a founding figure of American Marxist anthropology for having forced the discipline to honestly engage the historical profession and for having published foundational Marxist, Marxian and crypto-Marxist anthropological analyses over six decades from 1952 until 2001 (Marcus 2003). However, it was his 1982 magnum opus, *Europe and the People without History* (1997), and the series of articles and speeches that preceded it on peasant revolution and the rise of capitalism (drawn together posthumously by his widow, Sydel Silverman, Wolf 2001), that drew aspiring Marxist anthropologists from around the world to study with him. Though Wolf was engaged in a variety of forms of political activism, including helping to start the anti-Vietnam war teach-in movement (Schneider 1999), risking his career over revelations that his colleagues had used field data to aid the U.S. war effort in Southeast Asia (Wolf and Jorgensen 1970), and supporting a variety of attempts to democratize the profession (Schneider 1999), his principle contribution was in making Marxist anthropology theoretically viable. Unashamedly Marxist in methodology, Eric Wolf's work in the last two decades of the short 20th century provided an intellectual guide book for scholars seeking their own Marxist explorations and explanations.

Wolf's emergence from the Marxist closet that the 1950s McCarthyite United States had imposed was a slow and painful process, the final results of which are just beginning to be debated (Barrett et al. 2001; Marcus 2003). However for Marxists of the generation of 2000, Eleanor Leacock provides an unambiguously activist influence, inspiration and intellectual genealogy. It was she who best defined the place of the Marxist scholar, engaged in political movements that informed her scholarly work and scholarly work that informed her political commitments. In an autobiographical reflection in the preface to her 1981 volume, *Myths of Male Dominance: Collected Articles on Women Cross-Culturally*, she reflects that "political activity" was "enormously important in helping me keep my feet on the ground both theoretically and personally." She went on to say in the same comment that it had "not let me forget, as academics tend to do (if they ever learned

it in the first place), that oppression and exploitation by sex, race, and class are fundamental in the contemporary world, and that theories which ignore this reality are meaningless if not downright destructive" (Leacock 1981:5).

Her groundbreaking work in the late 1940s and early 1950s on the ability of humans to exist in cooperative economic arrangements directly confronted the McCarthyite academy (Leacock 1954) at great personal expense to her career (Button 1993). In the 1960s Leacock contributed to the debate over poverty in the United States, taking up questions of education, training a generation of radical teachers in anthropology (Leacock 1969), and confronting what she believed was an attack on the black section of the American working class (Leacock 1971; also see Marcus 2005). Finally, in the 1970s and 1980s Leacock published extensively on the relationship between imperialism and gender inequality (Etienne and Leacock 1980; Leacock 1986) and ultimately raised questions that remain fundamental starting points for contemporary discussions of the relationship between capitalism, patriarchy, gender inequality and women's liberation (Leacock 1963, 1972).

There have, no doubt, been many North American anthropologists who have been members of Marxist political parties, most prominently Oscar Lewis, who is reputed to have been a member of the Communist Party USA (see Marcus 2005) and there were several important founding figures of North American Marxist anthropology from the generation that came of age during World War II, in particular, Sidney Mintz, Stanley Diamond, Elman Service, Paul Kirchoff, as well as Leslie White and Alexander Lesser (who were somewhat maverick figures from the first decades of the short 20th century). However, it is our belief that to a certain degree virtually all the Marxist anthropologists of the generation of 1968, upon whose shoulders our efforts stand, are somewhere between Wolf the theoretician, fighting for Marxist methodologies in uncovering the strengths, weakness, and rhythms of the capitalist mode of production, and Leacock the activist, fighting for an explicitly proletarian political project that took up powerful counter-hegemonic names and strategies outside the academy.

If the generation that trained us had the best of parents in these two, we can probably thank what Eric Wolf might have described as the interstitial place that Marxism holds in the North American academy. Unlike European Marxists for whom the question of affiliation (or rejection of affiliation) to a powerful Moscow aligned communist party or a vast and bureaucratic socialist/social democratic party created remarkable opportunities to influence mass struggles, as well as powerful pressures towards intellectual adaptation to immediate political concerns, our professors grew up in something of a barren wasteland where there was little orthodoxy and much room for exploration. They benefited from the privileges of backwardness and explored a variety of issues in heterodox, counterintuitive and often highly original ways.

Amongst this group are several scholars whose work is of particular relevance for our project of a class-struggle anthropology. While the individuals that we have highlighted below are a few among many, they are representative of those aspects of what has passed as Marxist anthropology that have the most to offer our contemporary project of a class-struggle anthropology. While any such grouping is—to a certain extent—an act of arbitrariness, we would point to three key themes at the core of the contribution of this group of anthropologists: gender; nation building and national liberation; and class struggle.

Karen Brodtkin's theoretical work, like that of Leacock, helps us rethink the relationship between class, race, and gender in anthropological inquiry (Brodtkin Sacks 1974, 1989). Her empirical work demonstrated the centrality of "gendered" and "raced" sectors of the working class that have typically been ignored by the trade union movement. Stephanie Coontz's contributions to post-Leacock discussions of the relationship between family, private property and the state have set the theoretical standard by which all work on Marxism and gender should be measured (Coontz 1992; Coontz and Henderson 1986). Nash, in addition to helping invent the notion of an anthropology of work and having put the class struggle of indigenous, Trotskyist tin miners on our collective radar (1979),

has also made a contribution to a Marxist anthropology with her insightful study of impediments to class consciousness in the United States (1989).

Mexicans like Roger Bartra (1973, 1978, 1979, 1982), Luisa Paré (1977), Angel Palerm (1980), Hector Diaz Polanco (1977) and the Marxist pre-Hispanic archaeological school (Olivera 1978, Carrasco 1978; Nash 1980) contributed empirically and theoretically to our understanding of the rise of capitalism and the attendant problems of building nation states and working classes in the Third World, both through their scholarly work that has been translated into English and through their influence on Canadian and U.S. Marxists such as Wolf, Roseberry and Nash. However, this important influence is too often missed due to the lack of bilingualism among many North American academics. We still await an English translation of Arturo Warman and his colleagues' 1970 classic *De Eso Que Llamamos Antropología Mexicana* (On What They Call Mexican Anthropology—our translation), which helped start the critical anthropology movement.

Richard Lee, Joseph Jorgensen and James A. McDonald, the first working with indigenous peoples in Africa, the latter two with indigenous peoples in North America, have each contributed to a Marxist anthropology that is relevant for indigenous struggles of national liberation. Lee, most noted for his work in the Kalahari with the Dobe Ju/'hoansi (Leacock and Lee 1982) has played a critical role in advancing a Marxist anthropology of and for indigenous peoples. Jorgensen's pioneering work linking dependency theory to Native American Studies, challenged conservative conceptualizations of indigenous peoples as existing outside of history (Jorgensen 1972; Jorgensen and Lee, 1974). McDonald, working with members of the Kitsumkalum First Nation (a northern BC Tsimshian community), has demonstrated through nearly three decades of collaboration that a Marxist influenced anthropology has clear relevance for today's First Nations' struggles (McDonald 1994, 2004).

Kathleen Gough, Gavin Smith, and Gerald Sider have made significant contributions to our understanding of class struggle and the ways in

which these struggles manifest themselves in the “messiness” of real life. Cough’s work draws attention to the role that we, as practitioners, must play in the wider world within which our research and writing occurs. Long before it was popular to call attention to the reflexive role of the anthropologist, Gough called upon the professional guild to align self-consciously with the oppressed and exploited against the power of the imperialist state. Smith and Sider, both working with rural peoples, have elaborated the ways and means through which issues of struggle link to the material conditions of the everyday and either deflect or lead to explicit class conflict.

In Canada, Gavin Smith and Richard Lee have almost single-handedly created a vibrant pool of Marxist influenced Canadian PhDs.⁷ Smith’s work, first with peasant struggles (1989) and, more recently, on the possibility of a politically engaged anthropology (1999) has provided us with the theoretical and empirical basis upon which a class-struggle anthropology can be built. While others have focussed on the defeats of the 1960s and 1970s, Smith constantly reminds us that words must be backed up through action (1991).

Kathleen Gough is perhaps most noted for her political involvement in the 1960s/1970s anti-war movement and her Trotskyist political activism, though we should not overlook her more “traditional” anthropological work on kinship and the family (see, Gough 1981; Price 2004:307-326; Schneider and Gough 1961). At Simon Fraser University⁸ Gough’s name came to be identified with criticism of the McCarthyite tendencies of universities, displeased by what their more radical faculty might say

or do. One of a group of seven faculty members who were fired, or denied tenure, or refused contract renewal in the early 1970s, Gough’s experience should remind us that the gossamer web of academic freedom can be easily torn when the powerful take issue with what we may dare to say.

Sider’s work has explored the “messiness” of the social world and the play of human actors within and against the movement of history.⁹ Drawing on fieldwork sites as disparate as outport Newfoundland (2003) and rural sharecroppers in North Carolina (2003), Sider points to the ways in which historical processes intersect with the particularities of local contexts (see also, Sider and Smith 1997). Sider has done much to raise foundational questions about the self-consciousness of the working class, through broadening and deepening the relationship between anthropological and historical knowledge.

If the early scholarly life of the generation of 1968 can be defined by the almost millenarian optimism of that year which filled the space between Fidel Castro’s jeep rolling into Havana amidst cheering crowds in 1959 and supporters of the United States dropping off helicopters trying to escape Saigon in 1975, their later life seemed to be measured by defeats and disappointments. It is beyond the scope of this essay to describe the long retreat from the heady 1960s, or weigh in once again with a laundry list of the many communist parties of the world that went down in bloody defeat through attempts to co-exist with their capitalist enemies, or socialist parties that helped manage capitalism through a crisis. Suffice to say that on a global scale the political leadership that did exist and the mass consciousness that created it, was not prepared for

7 The edited collection by Lem and Leach (2002) draws extensively upon the circle of Canadian anthropologists from the Political Economy and Production of Culture working group. See Marcus (1996) for an equivalent collection of papers produced by CUNY trained anthropologists.

8 Menzies was an undergraduate student at SFU in the early/mid 1980s where the memory of Gough was still strong. The bitter fights of the late 1960s and 1970s, which had pitted administrators and conservative academics against radical faculty and students, reverberated long after the details of the fights had been forgotten.

9 As students of Gerald Sider, we have been influenced not only by him, but also by many of his other students. In particular Dombrowski (2001), Bornstein (2002), Carbonella (1996), and Striffler (2002) are all pieces which have helped us to define our own writing and political vision. Sharryn Kasmir and Kathryn McCaffrey, though not students of Sider, have produced works on nationalism, co-operative production and working-class consciousness (Kasmir 1996) and anti-militaristic social movements (McCaffrey 2002) that have been at least as important to our discussions as has been the coterie of students who completed their PhDs with Sider.

the extent to which the capitalist class and its states retained the ability and desire to use every resource up to and including atomic bombs to prevent anybody from getting in the way of the accumulation of capital.

A permanent employers' offensive began to shred the welfare state and ratchet up the rate of exploitation internationally in the late 1970s (Munck 2002).¹⁰ Such names as Thatcher, Reagan, and Pinochet were the stars of this new class struggle from above, but much of the world followed suit, with neo-liberal austerity often imposed by lesser figures, sometimes from the left or the communist milieu, such as Mitterand in France, Hawke/Keating in Australia, and most spectacularly Gorbachev and Deng in Russia and China respectively. Despite dramatic rises in overall social productivity and societal wealth, the job opportunities and funding possibilities for academics became much more restricted. Academe was, for the first time in human history, largely a working-class profession filled with wage earners primarily dependent on their salaries.¹¹

10 The unilateral abrogation of the Bretton Woods agreement by the U.S. can be said to mark the beginning of a concerted employers' attack against the meagre gains made by workers during the post-World War II upturn. The political turns that followed and, in more conventional accounts, are said to mark the dismantling of the welfare state can be dated to the election of politicians such as Margaret Thatcher in the UK (1978), Ronald Reagan in the U.S. (1980), and a host of likeminded politicians across the Western Democracies. The underlying economic factors were, however, present far earlier than the electoral victories of explicitly neo-conservative/neo-liberal politicians. As Tony Cliff methodically documented in his 1970s book. *The Employers' Offensive*, European and North America employers—allied with their respective state governments—were pushing hard to limit the gains the working class had managed to make in the workplace. To do this required combining new attempts to undermine what power workers may have in their workplace through new “productivity” contracts (in which workers were “rewarded” for increases in “productivity”) with increasing controls applied to labour by the state. Even in regimes with nominally left of centre governments, such as the UK, the state was engaged in realigning labour laws to the benefit of employers (Elliott and Atkinson 1999[1998]).

11 Thomas Patterson (2001) documented how the

As was the case with the rest of the working class, expectations declined and struggles often became mute or simply defensive.¹²

Despite the defensive quality of this period there were many important attempts to pull together and generalize the lessons of Marxist anthropology (Bloch 1983; Fluehr-Lobban 1989; Godelier 1978; Hakken and Lessinger 1987; Medina 1982; Mintz, Godelier and Trigger 1981; Nelson and Grossberg 1988; Palerm 1980). “While many of us studied these texts closely, the revolutionary optimism had gone almost before it started, and we found ourselves

growth of a contingent workforce—primarily female—across North American universities beginning in the 1970s played a significant role in undermining the economic security of the majority of practicing anthropologists. The development of a two-tiered workforce became commonplace in North American, unionized worksites. The core ingredient of the two-tiered contract was a first tier of original workers who maintained their wages and benefits and a second tier typically of part-time workers for whom the union negotiated a concessionary agreement usually at significantly lower wages and benefits. Union leaders saw such arrangements as ways to protect the economic conditions of those already working on the shop floor. By the 1980s this pattern of concessionary contracts was firmly entrenched.

12 Alex Callinicos reminds us, however, that the impact of the long downturn upon academic workers was delayed relative to its devastating impact upon the industrial working class. Since the mid 1970s workers' struggles have been defensive and the provisions of the welfare state have come under attack. Yet, the experience of intellectuals who had been radicalized during the 1960s and early 1970s was different from much of the workforce. As the economy contracted the 1960s radicals “began to enter middle age. Usually they did so with all hope of socialist revolution gone—indeed, often having ceased to believe in the desirability of any such revolution. Most of them had...come to occupy some sort of professional, managerial or administrative position, to have become members of the new middle class, at a time when the over-consumptionist dynamic of Western capitalism offered this class rising living standards (a benefit often denied the rest of the workforce: hourly wages in the U.S. fell by 8.7% between 1973 and 1986)” (Callinicos 1989:168). This is not to suggest that contemporary anthropology is simply the product of radical intellectual disillusionment and co-optation. It is, however, to suggest that the social context within which people live does indeed shape how they come to see the world around them.

looking more towards discussions by the best of the generation of 1968 for the reasons for defeat. Many of them went back to Marxists such as Mariategui, Gramsci, Lukacs, and Williams who had theorized the problems of transforming civil society (Crehan 2002; Lowy 1992). Others who had probably been less serious about their radicalism or perhaps more disappointed, took a turn towards Wittgenstein, retreating into a postmodern world in which the word trumped the act, thought preceded existence, and discourse defined the core of theorizing. One should note, for example, the work of Laclau and Moufee (1985) and the biting critique by Ellen Meiksins Wood (1986).¹³ Declaring the past as positivist and the present as contingent, they came to define social science as an almost purely Weberian struggle over meaning, often separated from history and the material limitations of human life. For some, who followed the path of Foucault, this took the form of a dark but socially progres-

13 It is, perhaps, misleading to suggest that the post-modernist turn to text and away from materiality is simply the by-product of revolutionary disillusionment. Certainly, if one were to follow the argument of A. Ahmad (1992), B. Palmer (1990), or A. Callinicos (1989), the reasons are more likely to be found in these scholars' lack of revolutionary commitment and understanding in the first place. As Ahmad points out the most radical of the generation of '68 didn't necessarily make it through the hoops and trials of graduate school or tenure review. While the more radical activists organized, wrote pamphlets, and sold revolutionary newspapers on the street corner, their more reserved peers wrote the academic pieces that granted them entry into the halls of the academy. Furthermore, as Callinicos carefully details, the material conditions did in fact change over the course of the 1970s and 1980s (1989). Following upon the heels of the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement real wages fell for the traditional working class and workers' struggles became defensive. This change in the tone of working-class struggle released the pressure from erstwhile radical academics so that they could focus on more reflective work (see, for example Rabinow 1977). Despite a growing contingent labour force within the academy those ensconced in positions of power and privilege did not feel the bite of cutbacks or the collapse of their real wages until the 1980s (Callinicos 1989). Disappointment, lack of willpower, and changing material conditions all combined to give us a generation of dilettantes more interested in playing with text than in resolving or intervening in the crises experienced by the rest of the working class.

sive Weberian struggle to deconstruct dominant discourses, building endless walls of sand to hold back the rough ocean of meaning (Butler, Laclau and Zizek 2000; Hardt and Negri 2000; Lyotard 1984).¹⁴ For others who were less tied to the soul of the generation of 1968 but more tied to the structuralist methodology, the end of "modernism" with its progressivist narratives, mass production, and giant "fordist" factories belching smoke and exploiting thick-necked industrial workers, released them from the bonds of working-class ideologies (Gorz 19832; Murray 1990; Touraine 1988) and allowed them to ascend like Kafka's bucket rider "into the regions of the ice mountains...lost for ever" (Kafka 1988) to any tie to materiality and the project of the working class.

A particularly interesting example of this post-modern tendency to cut anthropological writing loose from the moorings of material life emerges in Rapport and Dawson's *Migrants of Identity* (1998). In his essay in this volume, Dawson discusses identity and community in a devastated post-Thatcherite coal-mining town in England, through contrasting images of the parochial and the cosmopolitan, the local and the international, homogeneity and diversity, and movement and sedentarism. Wandering in the social wreckage of the great 1984-85 coal-mining strike that brought all of Britain to the brink of civil war and sealed the fate of such towns, Dawson de- and reimagines the British working class in its former central heartland.

In his discussion of the poetics of death and belonging, Dawson reduces social class to a performative and symbolic set of identity markers that are almost entirely mental. At the end of the essay, Dawson leaves us with a picture of an aging people whose approaching death neatly mirrors and acts as a stand-in for the death of a coal-min-

14 Some may well question our groupings, in particular that of Negri with Lyotard and other post-modernists. While we respect the progressivist intentions of Negri, neither of us see anything Marxist in Hardt and Negri's attempt to rewrite capital through the lens of Foucauldian relocations. From our reading Hardt and Negri have explicitly rejected social class as the central dynamic of analyzing capitalism and as the motor force of progressive change.

ing town: natural, inevitable and bittersweet; thus largely assuming the political, economic and ideological environment in which this poetics of death and belonging has emerged. For Dawson the most important characteristic in this town is its residents' agential abilities to imagine their own moving identities in the future and beyond the material confines of the coal town: "home bodies and migrant minds" (Dawson 1998: 220).

Where progressive British academics such as Rapport and Dawson were liberated from the constraints of "objectively defined" social class by floating off an empty bucket full of symbols, dreams and other working class chimera collected in the wreckage of defeat, scholars on the North American side of the Atlantic did not even have to return to the scene of defeats of the twentieth century in search of new and more motile identities. With little of the long-standing and deeply embedded political organization, social consciousness or "working class culture" of the British working class, the U.S. and Canadian working classes often simply vanished in anthropological writing into a seamless web of individual and particular meanings, "resistant" and not so resistant "identities," and the ever shifting deterritorialization (Appadurai 1991) and transience (Clifford 1992) generated from anonymous locales and de-historicized circumstances where the silence of the working class is less remarkable than at the site of battles between Thatcher's army and Scargill's miners. In an ironic twist, a whole generation of anthropologists answered Kathleen Gough's call for new proposals by a radical engagement with text, simultaneously subverting and adopting Gough's critique of anthropology as the "child of Western Imperialism" (1968: 403-407).

After the Fall

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 most historians agreed that it was the end of one period and the beginning of another. Some commentators called it globalization, others post-modernity, and U.S. president, George Bush Sr., described it as a "new world order." U.S. political scientist Francis Fukuyama (1989) attempted a more precise defini-

tion in his article "The End of History?" where he argued that mankind's evolution through monarchy, fascism, communism, and other political ideologies was finally over, and Western liberal democracy would be "the final form of human government." He went on to argue; "economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands" would replace the conflicts over big ideas of the past.

For a time it seemed that Fukuyama was right. The Soviet Union peacefully dissolved, Palestinians and Israeli Jews signed a peace accord at Oslo, Irish Catholics and Protestants agreed to settle some of their differences, and South Africa achieved black majority rule under the procapitalist, African National Congress. There was still, as Fukuyama had predicted, ethnic conflict, civil war, and a few isolated dictatorships, but the ideological battles that had characterized the mid-20th century seemed to have faded from memory. Though violent these conflicts appeared to be Fukuyama's "technical problems to be solved." In 1991, an international coalition of more than 20 countries, many of whom had been enemies only a few years earlier, joined forces to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, as multinational peacekeeping forces fanned out across the globe.

The "economic calculation" described by Fukuyama set the tone for the 1990s. Economists sharing his triumphalism claimed that cyclical economic downturns were a thing of the past. Trillions of dollars flowed into the U.S. stock market and into "emerging" economies like Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, and for a time Argentina, where free trade policies ended protectionist tariffs and forced the sale of state sector industries, drawing new capital to modernize aging inefficient productive facilities and forcing the layoff of redundant workers. As new wealth was created, skyscrapers and modern metropolises grew in places like Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta while many inner cities "gentrified" in the advanced industrial world (Smith 1996). The information superhighway created a "new economy," producing "dotcom" millionaires, software billionaires, and millions of CEOs, MBAs and workplace "day-traders."

But most of the world's population missed the boom, experiencing it instead as displacement, poverty and blocked ambition. Despite the triumphalist optimism over "the death of communism" and a "peace dividend" driven economic boom in the 1990s, tens of millions of people continued to die each year of preventable or treatable diseases. Neoliberalism and structural adjustment further institutionalized the war of everyone against all by raising rates of exploitation and pitting neighbour against neighbour for tightening resources. Many took the traditional path out of misery, leaving home and family to migrate to a wealthier region. Mexico lost millions of people to the United States, as the 1994 devaluation of the peso brought landless peasants, laid off workers and suddenly impoverished professionals to the United States (Camarota 2001; United States Congress 2004). In other parts of the world, millions of people joined ethno-nationally defined movements and militias that fought over whatever resources remained in the many desperately undercapitalized countries across the planet (Suny 1993).

As the battle between communism and capitalism—the two great universalist futures offered by modernity in the short twentieth century—began to recede people across the globe increasingly looked to what Eric Wolf has identified as the defensive alternate path to modernity: counter-enlightenment localism (Wolf 1999). For some, like Bulgarians, who elected their British born former king as prime minister in 2001, neo-monarchism promised the return of an imagined national past (Vassilev 2001). Others, like anti-globalization protesters at the 1999 "Battle of Seattle," wanted to return to a time when products and communities were more locally or nationally based. Ethnic and nationalist revivals like the Mayan movement in Guatemala seemed immanently understandable after a three decade war of extermination by the army against Marxist oriented indigenous guerrilla fronts (Friedlander 2000; Hale 1997, 1999; Smith 1991). Many yearned for a world ordered by ancient religious principles that could be imagined locally, rather than in corporate headquarters in the United States, France, Germany, Japan or the U.K.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, a series of co-ordinated suicide attacks by 19 fundamentalist Muslims in hijacked jetliners killed almost three thousand people and destroyed one of the great symbols of universalist modernity and the future, the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Suddenly Fukuyama's (1989) "centuries of boredom at the end of history" were being replaced by Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" (Huntington 1993). Though the people who had destroyed the World Trade Center and the Pentagon emerged from movements previously supported by the United States government that had fought the Soviets in Afghanistan,¹⁵ such terrifying symmetries were no longer important. Throughout the world Left and Right cast off much of the remaining language of Marxist internationalism, enlightenment humanism, and the rhetoric of compassion that often surrounded the welfare state and terms like "the West" and Islamic civilization became hegemonic in the absence of a broader belief that there might be a unification of humanity around "failed meta-narratives." Instead of endless centuries of boredom, dystopian predictions emerged for "war without end."

Now More than Ever

In face of this onslaught, many radical scholars have retreated from their ideals of a society based on justice not power and co-operation not competition, seeing little promise in the current period. Despite huge defeats of those who have claimed to represent these ideals, there is reason for hope. Now more than ever, it is possible and necessary for radical anthropologists to return to the source of Utopian energies since the 19th century: the world

15 These movements and individuals appear to have transformed themselves following the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 1991 and the very public establishment of U.S. army bases in Saudi Arabia. However, the very fact that the U.S. started these groups on their way points to the Machiavellian nature of Imperialist politics; as long as they were useful in fighting the Soviet Union people like Osama Bin Laden were granted carte blanche to prosecute a proxy war on behalf of the U.S. After that one supposes the U.S. thought they would simply fade away...

working class. In the cleared field of post-Cold War political consciousness there are new opportunities to draw balance sheets on past mistakes, strengthen the explanatory power of our work and write and make history.

If there is anything that is to be learned from the postmodern turn it is that all anthropological practice is aligned. Alignment is, in this sense, merely an admission that the participants of a particular social formation cannot separate their production (i.e., ethnographies) from the social relations of which they are a part. As Raymond Williams pointed out, several years in advance of postmodernism, alignment “variously expresses, explicitly or implicitly, specifically selected experience from a point of view” (Williams 1977: 199). He went on to argue that to deny alignment is to grant implicit commitment to the dominant social order, which is also an alignment. Commitment, if it is to mean anything “is surely conscious, active, and open: a choice of position...commitment is a conscious alignment, or conscious change of alignment” (Williams 1977: 200, 204).

For Marxists the relationship between consciously aligned theory and action is the principle purpose of social science. What Wilson (1972) referred to as “acting and writing history” is similar to Marx’s insistence, in “thesis 11” of his 1845 “Theses on Feuerbach” that “the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx 1969: 15). It is the goal of Marxist anthropologists to influence the development of society by contributing to the consciousness of the world proletariat, and contribute in some small way to its transformation from “a class in itself” to “a class for itself. This task has become both easier and more difficult.

It is obviously more difficult because of the crisis of legitimacy of Marxism and Marxian visions of how to order society. The world proletariat has probably not been so unable to constitute itself as “a class for itself” since the middle of the 19th century. However, it is easier because, as a class in itself, the world proletariat continues to grow in its size and importance. The existence of an objective working class in itself, defined by relationship to the means of production and bourgeois property relations, has

never been more clearly manifest or more internationally ubiquitous. If there is any validity to the Kautskyian idea of globalization that has become popular with contemporary leftists, it is its recognition of the internationalization of the world working class and the greater penetration of capital and direct market relations to the most distant capillaries of the world system, some of which are experiencing such phenomena for the first time, but many of which are ending long hiatuses from the market.

Along with the late 20th-century expansion of marketisation, there has been a concurrent increase in interdependence for the world working class. With the threat of communism removed, and in the presence of the most massive devalorization of capital since World War II, the technological downsizing of key industries and commercial concerns throughout the world, has come the impoverishment of the most educated and skilled working classes in the world (particularly those of the former communist camp). With each year the fears and weaknesses of one national working class directly brings down the wages of another. Whether the method of reducing the social wage as a percentage of the social product is accomplished through national currency devaluations, wage reductions, decapitalization of infrastructure in the form of factory closings or NATO bombing sorties, job sharing, starving of poor or ethnically defined populations, lengthening of the work day/week, reduction in funding for education healthcare and other collective use values, or other economic “shell games,” there seem to be few of the mid-20th-century complexities that previously bedevilled our analysis of the capitalist mode of production. In the new world order, the uneasy stalemate between capital and labour that was so often mediated by strong welfare or security states and the threat of communism is gone and everywhere there is directional, class-based action from the capitalists, where an injury to one is an injury to all, everyday and on a global scale.

But it is not just immiseration and vulnerability that makes the world working class look so much like an objectively definable social class. Despite the orgy of bourgeois pundits crowing about Marxism proven false and ex-Marxists declaring that strikes

do not work in the information age, the post-Cold War era has been a time of greatly increased class conflict and working-class rebellion. There are daily protests against neo-liberalism throughout the globe and relatively frequent general strikes since the end of the short 20th century. In the last few years there have been remarkable working-class fight-backs. There have been general strikes and national industrial actions in not so surprising places like Argentina, France, Nicaragua, Bolivia, South Africa, South Korea, Indonesia and Ecuador. There have been surprising actions like the successful International Brotherhood of Teamsters 1997 strike in the United States, the Puerto Rican general strike of 1998, and the many waves of *maquila* shutdowns in Northern Mexico.

Throughout the Americas there has been a level of labour disturbance and violent confrontation with the state over the social wage that in a previous era might have led to a currency crisis, capital flight and the use of napalm. This high level of social conflict has barely been noticed in world financial markets and has been treated with malignant neglect by capitalists and their governments throughout the hemisphere. An example of this is Argentine president Carlos Menem's response to the August 1997 general strike attempt and national march on Buenos Aires. Instead of revamping the death squads, he flippantly suggested that Buenos Aires could use the tourist dollars. Again, in 2001, when the Argentine economy collapsed and the country spiralled into anarchy, with burning, looting, and alternate currency systems springing up in barrios and regional towns, the United States refused to produce a genuine "bailout" and the Argentine army remained unfazed and largely uninterested in a process that removed presidents and destroyed all faith in the government. Even the recent election of left/populist presidents across "America's backyard" in Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina seems to only raise a few eyebrows in Washington.

The burgeoning anti-free trade protest movements, united in their opposition to liberalized trade and the international organizations that negotiate, finance, and govern such trade as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the World

Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary fund have been able to grab media attention. Multinational media corporations seem to revel in displaying images of youthful, energetic protestors gathered in carnivalesque displays of opposition to the economic agenda of the ruling classes. Yet, there has been a negligible response in world financial markets. As with the massive strikes and protests by working people, corporate and political leaders seem unconcerned and dismissive.

This is where the strange disjuncture between objective conditions and subjective consciousness comes in. There was a time when a few hundred peasants marching on a Latin American capital or a hundred thousand workers marching through Paris would cause a crisis of the state. However, in the post-Marxist world, the capitalist class is generally sure that no matter how disruptive a strike, social struggle, or act against the government, they can outlast the working class. After workers and students interrupted the meetings in Seattle the ruling class responded with a taller fence and a larger zone of exclusion in Quebec City.

This renewed confidence in bourgeois rule is probably not misplaced either. As one Paris member of a strike committee during the French working-class uprising of December 1995 was quoted as saying in a New York, Village Voice article, "we have got Paris, but where do we go from here?" With no viable alternative vision for social distribution besides the market and no other way of organizing production besides wage labour and capital, working-class struggles are defensive, even when they are victorious.

Materialism Unashamed and Unbound

As the world working class continues its uneven but inexorable growth, even such states as Israel and Pakistan, so deeply infused as they are with religious ideology and fratricidal nationalism, offer some cause for hope. They both have large and highly dissatisfied working classes with what we believe are objective material interests in turning on their leaders and recognizing commonality with their Palestinian and Indian class brothers and sisters. It certainly will not happen next Tuesday, but it

could happen. This is where we not only accept the label of economic determinism thrown at and often denied by Marxists, but actually embrace it.

For two writers who have spent the preceding pages and the last two decades waging an ideological struggle for a Marxist academy, we clearly are not suggesting that everything can be reduced to money and immediate economic interest. We reject the reactionary behaviourist fantasy that as the misery of the working class rises, so too will class consciousness and class struggle, or similarly, that rising standards of living necessarily yield declining class politics. Clearly ideas count and the present level of misery in this world is quite high enough, even in our own relatively privileged sections of it. In our experience the weaker and poorer our class is, the less ability there is to project class power and the consciousness that necessarily underwrites it (Menzies 1997). No political force has ever won a battle or a war by increasing its weakness and misery.

Instead we are attempting to ground the future society in the Marxian idea that to be human is to engage in conscious social labour that produces wealth. This is the social undercarriage of human life and we identify the crucial politico-ideological battles in which humans engage across the planet as, in some way, related to this underlying definition of being human. We remain convinced that if there are indeed clashes of civilizations on the horizon, it will only be because our social class is so deeply weakened by the 40 years of imperial unity in face of the post-World War II Soviet threat and the subsequent triumphalism of their defeat of USSR, that we are unable to create and disseminate our own counter-hegemonic ideological class projects in face of myriad large and small elites reorganizing us into rival armies and re-dividing the bounty of production.

The anti-fascist and anti-colonial “masses” that were often celebrated as the subject of history (as in Mao’s statement that “the masses make history, the party leads”) during the short 20th century have been replaced by the fanatic, nationalist logic of great protectors of our balkanized selves such as George Bush Jr., Jacques Chirac, Osama bin Laden, Ariel

Sharon and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. We have been left with little choice but to look for better, rather than worse protective masters. In such an era the mass of humanity is trapped in terrifying, tessellated political categories such as “the Muslim street,” “Schindler’s Jews,” “Old Europe,” and, of course, the pre-New World Order standards “nation,” “race” “ethnicity,” civilization and “the West.”¹⁶

In rejecting such ideological divisions in the world working class and looking to the deeper levels where we are united, we recognize the importance of the enlightenment and French revolutionary dream of a secular universal “humanity,” but stand at a critical distance from this ideology of expanding capitalism. As with the feudal/tributary mode of production (Amin 1980) which spread for thousands of years, eventually bringing most of the old world into its orbit, the capitalist mode of production has found its way to every spot on the planet. While productive forces continue to improve and fixed capital continues to grow, there is little geo-demographic room left for expansion. In two inter-imperialist wars and numerous anti-colonial revolutions the world has seen that the only way for newcomers to get into the imperial club is murder, and usually on a grand and ghoulish scale. Perhaps the last geo-demographic frontier for imperial capitalism is the “limitless markets” of mainland China, where it is easy to imagine a third inter-imperialist war starting over the spoils of capitalist restoration.

In such a world of uneven development, where the Anglo-American capital bloc resolves its governance problems “top down” from airplanes, European and

16 There is clearly a similar dynamic at work in the current retreat from political women’s liberation. The contemporary logic of gender politics seems to be heavily personalized, contained within the family, family based social policy, and family based political discourse. Privatized childrearing has returned to being a given and the abolition, or radical rearranging of the two principle gender roles of the epoch of class society, men and women, seems to be, at best, a subterranean footnote (in this case an endnote). The gender divisions within the world working class are, of course, hugely significant though generally pitched in terms of a far more intimate and personal form of paternalism than the aforementioned ones, which currently threaten the very basis of human existence with their projects.

Japanese national capital blocs quietly rearm and continue with their political economic war of position, and all manner of blocked elites and their political constituencies across the Third World froth with murderous rage, we believe that there are no Oskar Schindlers in the White House, in Downing Street, or anywhere else, who will genuinely protect an abstract “humanity” through what Hitler called “the night and fog of war.” We see this as an age of war, consolidation, and crisis for the world capitalist system. Following Wolf who looked at three modes of production in crisis and observed that “at this millennial transition, the human capacity to envision imaginary worlds seems to be shifting into high gear” (Wolf 1999:291), we expect the coming period to be one that is continually unsettled by purveyors of myriad “imaginary worlds” in both the heartlands of imperialism and the resistant provinces of the former colonial world.

Though we recognize the best of intentions in many, if not most, humans, such voluntary appeals to moral suasion as compassion, humanity, liberty, brotherhood and equality only go so far in face of a mode of organizing social labour and a logic of production and ownership that is built on the war of everyone against all in a race to accumulate capital. If we are ever able to fulfill the purpose of social science and consciously build a better “imaginary” world, it should be built upon the solid foundation of social class. We claim material interest and the struggle against economic, political, and “species being” alienation, based on the human being as conscious social labourer and political animal, as the only “realistic” future.

It may not seem likely in the present, but we are sure that it is necessary in the future, otherwise, we have the world to lose. Though many of the ideological concerns and conflicts have changed since the short 20th began, we stand on the same economic determinism that led Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Vladimir Lenin, James Connolly, John Maclean, and Kate Richards O’Hare to reject the first inter-imperialist war as an elite attempt to resolve who would own the social labour of the world capitalist system. People, who are so intimately, and more importantly, inherently interconnected in

their interests as the world working class, must find ideologies that enable them to fight for themselves, rather than against themselves.¹⁷

When a pharmaceutical factory in Iraq or the Sudan or an automobile factory in Serbia is destroyed from above, it instantly lowers the price of labour, as well as the productive capacity and the overall class power of a national working class, diminishing the power of the entire world working class by just a little. If this logic suggests economic determinism, then so be it. Many of us of the generation of 2000 watched in horror throughout the 1970s and 1980s as the national trade unions of the United States and Canada aided the U.S. government in purging so called “communist sympathizers” from the Latin American union movement. With each dead, disappeared or marginalized radical unionist the power of labour dropped just a little. When the tipping point finally came and quantity moved to quality, we found ourselves in a new world order, where workers of the South had lost so many of the gains they made in the short 20th century that the workers of the North came under threat. When the North American Free Trade Agreement finally appeared in 1994 the battle was already lost North American workers had no space in which to negotiate, little sense of solidarity and stood against the agreement with the ideologies of their misleaders and masters. Canadians protested losing their jobs and social system to low-wage U.S. workers who were portrayed as lacking civil culture or a healthy sense of entitlement. In the United States, the fight against NAFTA involved a similar rhetoric directed at Mexicans and compounded by traditional forms of Anglo-racism. Finally, in Mexico, which did have the lowest average labour costs in North America, Mexican trade unionists demonstrated against jobs

17 Here we would point to the renewal movement within U.S. trade unions as one path. The renewal movement seeks to expand internal democratic practice while simultaneously breaking down the walls of economic, bureaucratic business unionism. This is being accomplished through grassroots, social justice unionism. We would also point to the left tradition of shop-floor unionism that challenges the hold on unions by bureaucrats, many of whom have long been separated from the real material conditions of the shop floor (McNally 1980).

heading north to be “stolen” by what were portrayed as ignorant peasants rushing to U.S. owned *maquiladoras* in northern Mexico and compliant U.S. workers in the Southern United States, who lacked the class-conscious traditions of the Mexican industrial union sector that had won some of the highest industrial wages in the Third World during the short 20th century. In the days before agency became an issue of discourse, this was sometimes referred to as false consciousness. In face of such a tessellated working class, we pose the basic Marxist idea that, regardless of the small or large size of a salary, an injury to one wage earner is an injury to all.

Making Our Own Future

If there is one crucial fact of the post-Marxist academy it is the lack of predetermined historical outcomes. The evolutionist notion that history is an inexorable metanarrative, unfolding from here to there, has been laid to rest in a climate of global millennial pessimism and scaled back political expectations. This is one of the insights that post-modernists recognized even before the fall of the Berlin Wall: those all-encompassing structuralist theories that explained everything do not really work and tell us very little that would be useful for writing and acting history. It is time to bring back history, the soul of Marxism for theory and praxis.

We would argue that the USSR was not defeated by the inevitable superiority of a market economy, the lack of incentives under communism, or the Hegelian unfolding of the spirit, but rather by a group of historical actors who were more adept at creating and managing social consciousness, exerting political will and leading vast social forces. There was no inevitable capitalist victory, nor a teleological workers’ Utopia waiting over the horizon. There was history made by real humans in groups, exerting their wills under inherited historical circumstances, in the name of their interests or perceived interests.

For Marxists this lesson in the role of consciousness in history should force us to abandon the evolutionism, functionalism, positivism and unconscious behaviourist economic determinism that came to call itself Marxism for most of the short

20th century. For many years, Marxist method has been diminished by the positivist evolutionism deriving from the influence of the two main Marxist leadership tendencies in 20th-century history.

The first of these Marxisms was tied to one of any number of Workers’ States (Albania, Yugoslavia, Russia, China, etc.) or progressive experiments in national liberation. In its classic form this Marxism substitutes a chosen socialist or “anti-imperialist” Jerusalem for the interests of the world proletariat and posits an evolutionary track to communism based on that state’s outstripping capitalism in some combination of industrial production and progressive development as proven by life expectancy, women’s participation in the labour force, athletic prowess, or the number of doctors and teachers per person. This might be described as “the build a better tractor road to socialism.” In this road the forces of production reduce the working class to techno-environmental spectators, waiting for the efficiency of socialism to usher in the workers’ utopia. Any betrayal of the world working class is justified as long as it can be described as “providing space” for the chosen state and its people to evolve.

In anthropology this tendency has given us the muscular materialism of Leslie White and the scientific positivism of Marvin Harris, and in broader academic writing, structuralist theories such as “dependency” (Frank 1966; Rodney 1981; Wallerstein 1974), communist party “stage theory” typologies (Toledano 1944; see Lowy 1992 or Vitale 1972 for a critical discussion), “Kondratieff cycles” and “the long wave” (Kleinknecht, Mandel, and Wallerstein 1992; Kondratieff 1984; Shaikh 1992; Webber and Rigby 2001) and philosophical structuralism (Althusser 1977; Pbulantzas 1974) that suggest the possibility of an autochthonous road to Third World tractor heaven. The substitution of structure for politics and the extreme dependency on objectivist political economy that are connected to these grand portraits of structures of accumulation often missed exactly the question that Marxist academics should have been asking; who is organizing whom for what and how can scholarship be connected to the political life that “writes and acts history”? It is this underlying evolutionary approach that has en-

abled post-structuralists, who no longer see tractors and factories, to believe that socialism has arrived through the back door in the form of post-Fordist, post-working-class flexible specialization, and post-class mercantile driven consumerist Utopias (Gorz 1982; LaClau and Mouffe 1985; Murray 1990; Touraine 1988) or pose darker Durkheimian dystopias that present us with network societies and information feudalism (Castells 1996; Drahos and Braithwaite 2003).¹⁸

The second main tendency has generally been connected to social democracy and workers' parties. This tendency posed evolution as what E.P. Thompson called process. In this process there is a gradual evolution from capitalism to socialism based on increasing rationality and self-awareness of the working class. Thompson, in his introduction to *The Making of The English Working Class* actually went as far as to define the existence of the working class in terms of consciousness. Instead of building more tractors these Marxists tried to smooth the conflicts between capitalists and workers, with the goal of avoiding a direct confrontation. They feared that such a clash would result in a dramatic defeat, giving working-class rule a bad name and causing a devolution in socialist consciousness.

This tendency did not bleach out the political agency of the working class quite as much as the tractors to communism variety. However, the gradualist/culturist road to socialist consciousness implied that the world would one day wake up realizing that when it went to bed it was already socialist. In this case consciousness makes socialism grow in the fields as the tractors were expected to have in Stalin's USSR or "Great Leap Forward" China. It was the job of such social democrats to nurture this delicate consciousness, even when it has meant prioritizing the electoral fortunes of the World War I era German SPD over the lives of millions of French and English workers by voting war cred-

its or prioritizing support for the Unidad Popular electoral coalition in Chile over sharpening political contradictions and arming the workers who would eventually die in the *cordones industriales* while fighting General Augusto Pinochet's national army. In the current period, the absence of a working-class socialist consciousness releases those who follow this approach from their now thankless task and allows for the rise of "new labour" and the postmodern of the particular. In a phenomenological world, where theory can only emerge from the grounded aspects of everyday life, consciousness is what you make of it and how you use it.

What these two tendencies shared was a faith in evolution and an inability to envision creating fractures and historical disjunctures. As with the less patient and more subjectivist brand of Marxism that found its expression in Guevarist adventures in the jungles of the Third World, these two tendencies were fundamentally uninterested in the conscious political organization of the vanguard of the working class behind a proletarian political project that could imagine a break with the bourgeois present. This may be one of the reasons that capitalism is now triumphant: the conscious vanguard of the capitalist class has not believed in political evolutionism since World War I, which began the short 20th century. They were not counting on the spirit of history to save them from communism. They and their intellectual advocates acted and wrote history, by organizing to win, as if their lives depended on it. It is only now, after the collapse of the East Bloc that some of their more liberal intellectual spokesmen like Francis Fukuyama could timidly return to the evolutionist paradigm and hesitantly suggest a Hegelian "I told you so."

As Marx said in *Das Kapital*, "what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (Marx 1954:174). This was his way of identifying the importance of consciousness in all projects involving human labour. This also points to the relationship between scholarship and action. In this cleared field, where social democrats are embracing neo-liberalism and a global war on terror, guerrillas are coming down from the

18 This is not to suggest that structural Marxists have disappeared entirely. Writers such as Giovanni Arrighi, Anwar Sheikh, and Michael Webber continue to look at grand cycles, Kondratieff waves and other large movements in the development of the mode of production.

mountains to join their old enemies in managing the bourgeois state and ex-communist party bosses in the former East Bloc are creating “red/brown alliances” and helping to impose IMF austerity we can discard the notion that humans are techno-environmental bees building their atomic reactors while waiting for communism and the mind-over-matter textual fantasies of Thompsonian gradualists, “Weberian Gramscian Marxists” (Crehan 2002), and what Ellen Meiksins Wood disparagingly calls the “new true socialists” of postmodernism (Wood 1986). As Marxists, scholars, and sentient humans we are bad architects with free will, taking various historical projects from conception to reality. The future is only what we make of it.

Marxism: If It Doesn't Say It, It Isn't

What then can we do to sharpen our analysis and write and act history as Marxist architects in a post-Marxist academy? We can start by keeping our eyes on the new international working class and its new workers' vanguard that is inevitably emerging in regions with young and militant working classes. The current climate of race to the bottom global production seems to allow less and less room by the year for the creation and financial support of a large layer of trade union social democratic bureaucrats that have traditionally managed industrial working classes for their bosses. Where they do exist, they often ignore the most militant and strategically important areas of struggle that may not even be directly tied to production sites. This presents exciting opportunities for the development of new forms of struggle, new organs of political mobilization, and new anti-capitalist alliances.

We can also look to older sections of the working class, where hatred of the capitalist class and the dream of a co-operative, socialist society remain strong. It is easy to forget, in New World Order North America, that much of the world still remains loyal to the dream of a co-operative and equal society. In South Africa, for instance, the Communist Party, the African National Congress, COSATU and other pro-capitalist working-class leaderships are steadily losing legitimacy and rely-

ing on brute force to guarantee the accumulation of capital. In Korea, which remains a Cold War battlefield, it is often said that the South Korean government would not last an hour without U.S. soldiers, despite 15 years of economic catastrophe and a profoundly anti-democratic government in North Korea. Regardless of the veracity of this rhetorical claim, it reflects a widely held hatred for the U.S. imperial project and a counter-position of a variety of socialist, proletarian, and nationalist visions that are strong in the communities, worksites and political organizations on the Korean peninsula.

In Brazil, the recent election of Workers' Party leader and former industrial worker Luis Ignacio da Silva “Lula,” suggests a conscious working-class militancy that is threatening enough to have forced the Brazilian capitalist class to use a working-class party to manage austerity. Despite some recent successes by Lula in imposing austerity on the Brazilian working class, his election indicates important class tensions in Brazil that seem to have spread to Uruguay in the national electoral victory of the Frente Amplia in 2004. In China where a pro-capitalist Communist Party apparatus attempts to foist capitalism and neo-liberalism on a population schooled in various forms of official, state-sanctioned Marxism, the tensions are particularly acute. Massive industrial strikes break out everyday, while many call for the return of the “iron rice bowl” and everywhere pictures of Mao ZeDong, the founder of the communist state, have become good luck symbols and rallying banners.¹⁹

In “Old Europe,” the first homeland of the labour lieutenants of capital, in the form of early twentieth century social democratic parties that have managed capitalism during its most difficult moments and communist parties that slavishly followed Moscow's on-again, off-again attempts to

¹⁹ The continuing power of an Asian populist/communist vision connected to Mao ZeDong in Asia is particularly apparent in Nepal and what is currently referred to as the “Naxalite region” of India, where the intersection of caste, class and geo-politics has yielded a longstanding civil war. In addition to this, there are a wide variety of legal and semi-legal communist parties spread across India and Nepal that have recently seen increasing popularity.

make friends with the capitalist class, the working class is probably still better organized and more socially conscious than anywhere else in the world. From French industrial workers who retain a strong understanding of the value of blocking highways, shutting down airports, and burning overturned cars in the streets of Paris to Italian white collar civil servants, who go into the streets in defence of the social rights of the entire working class, to Scandinavia where the gender divisions of class society are probably most attenuated, the wealthy and well-organized European working class has many potentially positive features.

It is here in the realm of connecting subjective ideas to objective conditions that Marxist anthropologists can help to write and act history. With bourgeois ideology triumphant, it is necessary for those of us who continue to imagine working-class power to organize ourselves both as workers and as anthropologists. If we refuse to submit to the false god of passivity and look at the way that human history is made, we will see that there is still an important role for those of us who are willing to swim against the current. Both the physical power and the consciousness of the world working class are more important than ever.

As anthropologists, whom Gramsci might have called traditional intellectuals, we have only the tiniest connection to the physical power of the working class. We cannot shut down a city the way transit workers can. We cannot stop a war the way soldiers, dockworkers, and weapons factory workers can, but even the most marginal, sessional instructors amongst our cohort has a public platform for exerting some small influence on the consciousness of the world working class. In our goal of a class-struggle anthropology we must heed Jean Paul Sartre's challenge that: "commitment is an act, not a word."²⁰

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A Critique of Popular Political Economies of Knowledge in Cyberspace, An Alternative Political Economy of Cyberspace Knowledge, and A Demonstration of the Applicability of the Alternative to Study of Free/Libre and Open Source Software in the Malay World

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Abstract

The general social science issue addressed by this article is whether social formations change very much as they take on the characteristics popularly associated with “cyberspace”—that is, as their reproduction is heavily mediated by automated information and communication technologies (AICTs). It also inquires as to the extent to which the changes associated with cyberspace are a consequence of changes in knowledge. The article begins with an extended critique of influential scholarly ideas about the relationship between AICTs, knowledge and social formation reproduction, demonstrating how they all share a capital theory of value masquerading as a knowledge theory of value. An alternative, “real” knowledge theory of value is developed and argued for in relation to potential changes in reproduction dynamics that can be connected to AICTs. Finally, the alternative is evaluated in relation to the author’s current research, on advocacy for and development of Free/Libre and Open Source Software, in the Malay World and more generally. The ultimate aim of the theory developed is to help make studies of AICTs’ cultural correlates more comparative.

Key Words: cyberspace, Free/Libre and Open Source Software, knowledge theory, Malay World

RÉSUMÉ « Une Critique des Economies Politiques Populaires du Savoir dans les Cyberespaces »

La question générale, de l'ordre des sciences sociales, adressée dans cet article est de savoir si les formations sociales changent de façon importante lorsqu'elles endossent les attributs généralement attribués au 'cyberespace' – c'est à dire, lorsque leur reproduction est lourdement relayée par des technologies d'information et de communication automatisées (AICT en anglais : automated information and communication technologies). L'article cherche aussi à comprendre dans quelles mesures les changements associés au cyberespace sont les conséquences de changements cognitifs. L'article débute par une critique des idées académiques très répandues concernant les liens existants entre les AICTs, les savoirs et la reproduction de formations sociales. L'article démontre alors comment ces idées partagent toutes une théorie de la mascarade de la valeur centrée sur la notion de capital en lieu d'une théorie cognitive de la valeur. Une alternative et 'réelle' théorie cognitive de la valeur est élaborée et défendue ici, en relation avec les modifications, liées aux AICTs, des dynamiques de reproduction. Enfin, la théorie alternative est réévaluée à la lumière de la recherche actuelle que mène l'auteur au sujet de la promotion et du développement de programmes informatiques libres et gratuits (Free/Libre and Open Software), plus particulièrement dans le monde malais. Le but fondamental de la théorie élaborée ici est de permettre des études plus comparatives des corrélats culturels des AICTs.

Mots-clés: cyberspace, monde malais, programmes informatiques libres et gratuits, théorie cognitive,

Introduction

Do social formations change very much as they enter cyberspace? If so, are changes in knowledge a central cause of the change; indeed, is the mediation of knowledge processes by automated information and communication technologies (AICTs) the primary source of substantial change in the way contemporary social formations reproduce?

My recent (2003) book on *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace* is an attempt to answer these “knowledge questions in cyberspace.” My aim was to interrogate the social presumptions behind ideas like, “The Knowledge Society.” As in my other anthropological writing, the book mostly reports on studies of existing, “proto” aspects of cyberspace, those amenable to field research and analysis. In the book, I offer three main answers to my questions about socio-cultural changes, their connections to AICTs, and in the role of knowledge in social formation reproduction. First, field studies demonstrate the great potential of AICTs to change the dynamics of knowledge networking. Second, while it is this potential that opens the way to social transformation, there is at this point insufficient reason to conclude that the long-term implications of AICTs for change in the quality of social formation reproduction are extensive, although they may still be in the future. For example, new forms of knowledge networking do sometimes broaden social participation, but at other times they obscure the process by which the criteria for redeeming knowledge claims are established, in which case they inhibit the extension of social reproduction. Despite all the potential, the degree of transformation has not, yet, been significant. Third, research on the actual implementation of knowledges helps explain why, despite considerable frothy rhetoric, this is so: Substantial improvement in technologies to support knowledge networking, and thus bring about extensive transformation, await the integration into their design of the proper, and properly, social perspectives. The bulk of the book was devoted to saying what these perspectives should be. It concluded with a section critiquing currently popular political economies of knowledge (PEK)

and outlining an alternative PEK on which attempts to deliver on the transformative promise of AICTs could be based.

In this article, I summarize the critique, outline the alternative, and then evaluate it in relation to my current research. Specifically, I am studying advocacy for and development of Free/Libre and Open Source Software, in the Malay World and more generally, to help make studies of AICTs’ cultural correlates more comparative.

The first part of my argument addresses the weaknesses in currently popular analyses that do attribute structural agency to AICTs changing of knowledge. It critiques three influential knowledge-related theories of change in basic social life patterns—that there is a new economy, that we are now a network society, and that a Cybernetic Revolution has fundamentally changed class relations. These theories’ structural explanations of the direction and scope of general social change in the future are critiqued by contrasting them to the ethnography of actual knowledge networking systems contained, among other places, in *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*. The theories’ common error is to decentre the importance of capital, a social relationship that they all presume will continue, to social formation reproduction.

While not themselves persuasive, the popularity of these three theories indexes the widespread search for more compelling structural accounts of value, the problem central to any political economy of employment social formations. I next place the theories in the context of previous labour and capital answers to the value question, thereby showing why these alleged knowledge political economies are so often expressed as metaphorical extensions of capital, such as “intellectual capital” and “social capital.” I also explain why these extensions are bad ideas. These steps are necessary to clearing away intellectual ground for a truly independent, rather than “in drag” capital dependent, knowledge theory of value and the role of technology in it.

Next, I articulate the alternative, actual political economy of knowledge promised by the above. While the evidence of a knowledge-driven transformation is not yet sufficient to justify calling ours a Knowledge

Society, there are good indications that technologized support systems, if adequately informed by social design, could change knowledge networking substantially enough to affect social reproduction substantially. Something like the alternative I outline is an essential part of making this happen.

To specify the kind of knowledge society worth striving for, we need truly independent structural perspectives on knowledge, so I also articulate a political economic perspective that theorizes knowledge in cyberspace independently of capital theories. The first analytic step is to account for the most recent social changes not in terms of knowledge but in terms of a vibrant but vulnerable “turbo-capitalism” (Hutton & Giddens, 2000). The second step is to indicate the really different political economy of knowledge (e.g., pointed at by Nick Dyer-Witherford 1999), as well as the knowledge theory of value, whose realization is, for the moment, blocked by turbo-capitalism and distorted by capitalist value mythologies.

It makes sense to be thinking about what kind of knowledge society we want. To approach this question concretely, I conclude with a brief discussion of what my current field research on knowledge networking suggests. My aim here is to illustrate the utility of these alternative structuralistics by illustrating what they suggest about the reproductive preoccupations of social formations in the foreseeable future.

Macro-Structures and Structural Explanation in Social Science

In sum, my goal is to extend Marxist theory to address a key contemporary conjunction and indicate what can be done with it when so extended; e.g., to illuminate F/LOSSing in the Malay World. My account is a structural account, the kind normally associated with the term “political economy.” It accepts the possibility that trajectories of general social change exist and that they can be affected by, for example, adoption of new technologies.¹

1 Much contemporary social thought is suspicious of general talk of this sort, especially that invoking structure. Brackett Williams is typical of those anthro-

Most expressions of a knowledge change-induced transformation of social formation type are quite structural/political economic. Consider, for example, Peter Drucker’s articulation of the Knowledge Society idea (2001): Because they profoundly increase/decrease the social power of particular occupational groups (e.g., manufacturing workers), changes in knowledge usher in a “post capitalist” social formation. Drucker’s notion of a post-capitalist knowledge society is “structural” in that it articulates a fundamental change in the character of social reproduction. Like his, analyses of the structural sort usually include an element of compulsion, evoking, e.g., determining large “systems.” While some talk about cyberspace stresses its voluntary character, knowledge society talk generally posits a new framework for social life, a set of macro-social relations with wide ambit.

Macro-social relations are large, greater in scale than community, organizational, or even regional ones, involving “high level” forces that precede and thus limit human volition, both individual and collective. Any connections between macro-relations and people’s immediate actions or experiences are highly mediated, possibly by the very large structurations (Giddens 1991) that other social scientists call “Totalizing totalities.” Such entities may reach beyond the nation. Macro-social relations involve “systems” that are “general” even if they may function in open, quasi-“organic,” rhizomic, and/or evolving ways. Structural rhetoric evokes forces that function, as it were, “behind our backs.”

The typically totalizing slogans for the primary social formation in waiting—“Information Society,” et cetera—frequently deploy the structural speech forms characteristic of economics. Despite occa-

pologists who, in a Postmodern register, are skeptical of the idea of structure, claiming that, “There are only people and their practices” (personal communication). Sociologist Craig Calhoun similarly uses “post-structural” to describe his influential social theory (1995). Before social cybernauts can decide which among the structural accounts best accounts for the likely direction of future social reproduction, they need good reasons for the kind of structural analysis generally referred to in social science as political economy. While some have attempted to develop non-structural Marxisms, these are atypical.

sional demurrals about how, for example, it is “the local” in which it is actually manifest, such talk (like many uses of the term, “globalization”) often has a strongly foundational or essentialist quality.²

I think it is possible, instead of concluding that social life has no discernable structure and thus that analysis itself might have to be abjured, to ground structure talk non-essentially. Generally I aim to do this through reproductionist readings of social dynamics (Hakken 1987). On social reproduction, since human social arrangements don’t perpetuate themselves automatically (i.e., they are not carried in our genes), frequent intervention is necessary if arrangements are to extend in time. Study of deliberate activities to promote social arrangements’ continuation from one period to the next should provide insight into how continuity is accomplished, denied, or mitigated.³

A reproductionist account avoids essentialism by distinguishing between practices that merely

2 The ease with which structural terms become foundational opens them to the Postmodern critique of essentialism, the erroneous treatment as permanent of characteristics better understood as transient or highly contingent. On anti-essentialism, features normally considered to be part of an object’s “nature” are better understood as artifacts of particular interpretive framings. Discomfort with “structure talk” also follows from its frequent association with discourses of mastery, whose hegemonizing concepts facilitate domination. Postmodern critiques of knowledge talk, like what I call the Knowledge Regression—that we begin with embodied knowledge, rather than with “raw data”—build on various criticisms of the structuralistics of classical social theory. These include, in sociology, the Symbolic Interactionism of George Herbert Mead (1962), the Ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel (1984), or the Social Constructivism of Berger and Luckman (1972). Anthropologists like Williams echo these critiques when they claim that there are only actors and their projects, not discernable interests, let alone structures. If its impacts only take place “behind peoples’ backs,” structure is irrelevant to experiential analyses that privilege human perceptions mediated by cultural constructs.

3 Chapter 2 of my *Cyborgs@Cyberspace?* (1999) addressed the need for a theory of social formation reproduction if one is to address successfully the “Computer Revolution” hypothesis, while the sixth chapter of that book put forward the case for developing a macrostructural discourse on cyberspace.

replicate macro-social relationships—simple reproduction—from those that for reasons of context transform them—extended reproduction (Hakken 1987). Practices do sometime have dynamic, structure-transformative implications, but these are to be accounted for in terms of conjunctions of particular circumstances, not essences. On social reproduction, effective structural analysis of cyberspace is not only possible; it is for several reasons also necessary.⁴ To offer a full answer to the knowledge ques-

4 Some at least loose notion of structure is implicit in the very idea that there is a legitimate analytic moment in social studies. In order to take the idea that there may be a transformation seriously enough to examine evidence relevant to it, as *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace* did, one must admit at least the possibility of something like structure.

Similarly, some minimum notion of structure is necessary to ethnography. To do it, one must presume general things, practices (e.g., knowledge networking) present in enough social formations that their different manifestations can be compared. To communicate across languages/cultures, ethnographers must have available for use categories with substantial overlap in meaning, the kind of overlap that enables meaningful talk about what is or is not generally the case. To explain things holistically—that is, to account for specific practices in terms of broader contexts, the characteristic explanatory trope in ethnography—similarly requires a capacity for general discourse. For example, it is common to speak of “ages” or “eras,” above and beyond specific places or spaces. Differences between “times like these” and “times like those” are frequently explained in terms of the dynamics indexical or at least indicative of different types of social formations. Ethnographers and social theorists are not the only ones compelled to presume the existence of things that have structure-like regularity; to construct policy, one also invariably deploys general concepts.

The cost to social life of labelling as essentialist all discussion of regularity in social dynamics is too high. To do so dooms one to unending ad hoc accounts of discrete events. Such knowledge can only be “local.” However, this presumption itself is essentialist. It can only be rhetorical because it cannot be demonstrated to be true: To establish that every social formation’s reproduction has total local autonomy, one would have to engage in structural discourse. Without identifying structures that generally support local autonomy, the idea remains mere premise. Most attempts to avoid theorizing structure end up merely masking it.

A fourth, still “weak” justification for talk about structure is that a large proportion of humans/cyborgs currently extend their own social reproduction by using

tion in cyberspace, we must consider ways in which knowledge change might result in new reproductive dynamics. At the same time, we need ways to talk about this that don't presume automatically that it does so. This means general talk, discourses capable of accounting for the notions about the structural with which people operate, the consequences of these notions, and the inertiae/momenta that potentially are manifest in "systems as wholes." Finally, we need to be clever enough that our talk does not presume that which needs examination.

concepts that presume structure. At a minimum, structure-based experiential relating engenders structure-like effects. For example, since the late 19th century, most public intellectuals in the West have used models of social formation reproduction framed in the formalisms of neo-classical economics. A notion of "productivity" developed within these models has taken on meaning outside the model's direct use—e.g., in social policy. Similarly, all the talk about cyberspace "causes" certain connections to be made; "Knowledge Society" talk itself engenders quasi-formal, must-be-related-to-as-structural effects. Structure-presuming practices, like policies based on the "human capital" notions analyzed later in the chapter, influence experience irrespective of the concepts' analytic validity. To address the possibility that there may be a gap between talk and reality, ethnographers must generate possible alternative accounts. To open space to criticize dominant discourses, one must hypothesize alternative structuralistics rather than reject political economy a priori.

The arguments for structuralistics made thus far follow from meta-discourse over the possibility of structural talk. They are ethnographically "weak," not derived from demonstrated structural regularities in the reproduction of actual social formations. There is a "stronger" case for thinking structurally: Especially when supported by self-conscious, collective articulations, human action itself produces structure. Human interventions often produce something like inertia, and deliberate action develops momentum, in ways that have a cumulative, material impact on social formation reproduction. On Actor Network Theories of technology (Latour and Woolgar 1979), for example, as particular technology actor networks become central to social reproduction, they incline reproduction in some directions, while making others more difficult. In Langdon Winner's phrase, "Technologies have politics" (1977).

Some New "Structures" Popularly Held to Be Induced by Knowledge Change in Cyberspace

The idea of knowledge change, one so important to intellectuals and scholars today, takes many specific forms. To illustrate the breadth of its articulations, I examine below three diverse contemporary political economics, each of which presumes that new social reproduction dynamics are related to AICTs in ways in which knowledge change is central.

1. The "New" Economy

Many mainstream social theorists champion the "new economy" alleged to have emerged in the 1990s, especially during their second half (Lee and Shu 1999). For example, the emergence of a new "knowledge economy" is taken by British sociologist Anthony Giddens as structural "proof" that we are now a "Knowledge Society" (Hutton and Giddens 2000).

Any notion of a "new" economy implies a pre-existing, "old" one. Especially in the U.S., the case for a new economic dynamic was the long-time, simultaneous presence of several positive economic phenomena: continuing expansion, fast growth, low inflation, and low unemployment. According to the "old" neo-classical economics academically regnant in the U.S., these factors couldn't co-occur for long periods of time. A related, apparently also outmoded, "old" law was that of the inevitability of business cycles, of alternating growth and decline. Since the co-presence of the first four phenomena, and the absence of the last, indicated that the old "laws" of economics no longer applied, the new economy demanded a new economics.

As on Giddens (Hutton & Giddens 2000) and Friedman (2005), AICTs are generally treated as one of if not the most important factor responsible for the new economic dynamic. For example, by raising productivity faster than income, profits could continue to increase, and AICTs allow continuous expansion. However, attempts to justify empirically such connections between the new economy and AICTs were stymied for a long time by a problem

that came to be called the “IT productivity paradox.” From at least the 1960s, increased investment in AICTs was associated with declining rather than increasing productivity statistics (Attewell 1994). In the words of Nobel laureate Robert Solow, “You can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics” (1987).

The embarrassing absence of the expected, AICT-induced increase in productivity was explained, unhappily, by various ad hoc means, indicative of which is the “old” idea of “convergence.” On convergence theory, for a firm to be the application leader is risky because it costs a lot and other firms can quickly take advantage of your efforts at much reduced cost. Such economic calculations mean that the advantages of applying new technologies thus tend to dissipate: It is easier, and much cheaper, for most producers to wait to adopt an innovation until a few have worked out the bugs.

Convergence is not a very satisfactory explanation of the IT productivity paradox. Convergence would predict a slow pace of technology deployment, but firms deployed AICTs quickly in the face of declining productivity statistics. Moreover, convergence predicts declining profits, but these were generally increasing. From its perspective, the actual correlates of AICTs look even more paradoxical.

In any case, about 1995, US productivity statistics started up, and the embarrassing “IT productivity paradox” could be (temporarily, it turns out) put to rest. In particular, “new economy” advocates seized upon the argument that the latest corporate knowledge technologies—inventory control, demand forecasting, flexible scheduling of production, Computer-Supported Collaborative Work, intranet knowledge bases, inter-organizational data sharing—had narrowed the gap between supply and demand so much that a truly epochal productivity surge had finally overcome whatever (e.g., convergence effect) had slowed them (Lee and Shu 1999).

Even skeptics like Federal Reserve Chairman Allen Greenspan began to speak of an AICT-induced productivity increase. The idea of a “new economy” need no longer be treated as hype, because the increase in productivity really did indicate

dynamics quite different from the old ones. These dynamics could be connected to new characteristics/functions of knowledge brought about by use of AICTs. In this way, a positive answer to the cyberspace knowledge question became central to new economics.

2. The Network Society

A review of any large circulation Western newspaper with a business section during the late 1990s would have established the centrality of AICTs to “new economy” popular thought. Arguably the articulation of the links between knowledge and social change most influential in both scholarly and politically liberal policy circles, through his influence on both Tony Blair’s and Bill Clinton’s policies, was that of the geographer/urban sociologist Manuel Castells.

In his notion of the “network society” (2000), Castells strives both to name and to account for the general dynamics for a new type of social formation, one that he believes now dominates social reproduction.⁵ On Castells, in substantial part, the new dynamics derive from a profound shift in the locus of social process. A “space of flows” displaces the grounding of human activity in “particular places”—or, in the phrasing I prefer, space is “decoupled” from place. With globalization, the salience of units like “cities” and nations to social reproduction substantially decreases. If geography is no longer a particularly meaningful framework against which to organize accounts of social relation and interaction flows, what alternative framings replace it?

⁵ At least, he usually does. In line with the title he gives his recent (2000a) British Journal of Sociology article, one could read his intervention as more tentative: “Materials for an *exploratory* theory of the network society” (emphasis added). There is thus some ambiguity re: Castells’ theoretical project (Webster 2002). However, for some twenty years he has been making statements like the following: “The network society is the social structure characteristic of the Information Age... It permeates most societies in the world... as the industrial society characterized the social structure of both capitalism and stateism for most of the twentieth century” (2000:5). Similarly, he characterizes his recently republished (2000 Millennial Edition), three volume *The Information Age* as making the empirical case for this analysis.

“Networks,” Glaser and Straussian (1967) “grounding points” replace geographic ones is Castells’ alternative structuralistics. His justification for calling the new social form “the network society” is not that networks themselves are new. Rather, new forms of networks re-emerge and displace the hierarchical forms so characteristic of organization and governance in the Industrial Society. The new networks can do this because of AICTs, which, even under conditions of capitalism, disperse activity, distribute intelligence, and unhinge knowledge-making from place.

“Network enterprises”—intra- but especially inter-organizational networks—replace firms as the chief unit of capital accumulation and states as the chief units of governance, creating a new, globally operating economy. Network Society has very different dynamics from Industrial Society. Electronic networks facilitate a more individuated identity formation and replace the collective units of organic solidarity so important to Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. The result is consummately Blair- and Clintonite, a capitalism with neither a capitalist nor a working class:

In the last analysis, the networking of relationships of production leads to the blurring of class relationships. This does not preclude exploitation, social differentiation, and social resistance. But production-based, social classes, as constituted, and enacted in the Industrial Age, cease to exist in the network society. [2000:18]

Castells has only recently substituted “network society” for “information society” as his rubric for the new social formation type. On the anthropological ground that “knowledge and information were central in all societies” (p.10), he now feels that the “information society” label is misleading.⁶ Generally deploying network theory in a contemporary sociological, Barry Wellman (1999) mode, Castells holds

6 See Chapter 2 of *Cyborgs@Cyberspace?* for an extended development of this point. For Castells, it was interestingly not misleading enough to require renaming (e.g., from The Information Age to The Network Age) his three volume magnum opus! Below I sketch out similar problems with the “network society” label, more accurately describable as the “automated information and communications technology network-driven society.”

networking to have been the most typical form of human interaction until displaced by the historically recent rise of hierarchies like states and corporations. However, by undermining these latter forms, AICTs compel networking’s re-emergence: “But for the first time, new information/communication technologies allows [sic] networks to keep their flexibility and adaptability, thus asserting their evolutionary nature.... Networks de-centre performance and share decision-making.”

A Castellian network is an oddly autonomous, even self-determining entity: It works on a binary logic: inclusion/exclusion. All there is in the network is useful and necessary for the existence of the network. What is not in the network does not exist from the network’s perspective, and thus must be either ignored... or eliminated. If a node in the network ceases to perform a useful function it is phased out from the network, and the network rearranges itself – as cells do in biological processes.

Despite the last biological analogy, Castells’ networks are essentially informational, not organic, entities (see the dialogue from *The Matrix*): “A network is a set of interconnected nodes. A node is the point where the curve intersects itself.” (All quotations Castells 2000:15.)

Here, as at many other points, imprecision in language, especially about the causes of these dynamics, impedes understanding. Nonetheless, these quotations capture the “foundational” quality of Castells’ account of the implications of AICTs for social reproduction. Liberated from the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of hierarchy, on the one hand, and place-boundedness, on the other, AICT-compelled networks manifest their underlying potential to evolve and remake social reproduction in their own image. The resulting social formation is driven by a “flow, flow, flow!” imperative, replacing the dynamic to which employment social formations were heretofore bent: “Accumulate, accumulate, accumulate—this is Moses and the Prophets!” (Marx 1871).

Like other cyber-enthusiasts, Castells views these changes in epic terms: “[The] new set of in-

formation technologies represent a greater change in the history of technology than the technologies associated with the Industrial Revolution.” (2000: 10).

Most importantly for my purposes, Castells, following Bell (1973) assigns a key place in the ascension of the network society to change in the social functioning of knowledge:

[Characteristic of] this new technological paradigm is the use of knowledge-based, information technologies to enhance and accelerate the production of knowledge and information, in a self-expanding, virtuous circle. Because information processing is at the source of life, and of social action, every domain of our eco-social system is thereby transformed. [2000: 10]

Knowledge changes (predictably fudged to include informational ones as well) generalize their social impact via the network enterprises described above. These new forms (replacements of the firm?) are found “[a]t the heart of the connectivity of the global economy and of the flexibility of informational production” (p. 10).

3. Change in Worker Power?

Knowledge has also recently attained a privileged place in some radical as well as mainstream and liberal political economies. In 1994, once New Leftists Carl Davidson, Ivan Handler, and Jerry Harris (1994) launched *cy.Rev: A Journal of Cybernetic Revolution, Sustainable Socialism & Radical Democracy*. In contrast to leftists critical of AICTs-related knowledge changes (e.g., Noble 2001, Stoll 1996, Aronowitz and de Fazio 1995), *cy.Rev* celebrates the computer revolution. Indeed, for it, the key to the revival of an American left is not to critique cyber-knowledge rhetoric but to embrace it:

An important revolution going on in the world today...[is] being driven by new developments in information technology...Digitalized knowledge has now become the major component in the production of new wealth. The information society is supplanting industrial society as surely as industrial society replaced agrarian society. The depth of

these changes, however, has been largely ignored by much of the left community. [Davidson et al. 1994: 31]

Once their importance is recognized, previous Marxist notions must be revised in light of changes in knowledge:

New insights into the nature of changes in the economic base [occur because] knowledge has become the most important tool of production...[in] what we'll call 'information capitalism.'

The changes here are having a dramatic impact on both the relations of production and the nature of work. There are new social divisions being created along with a realignment of classes and strata around many critical issues. The ground for organizing the class struggle is shifting; there are new dangers of prolonged joblessness, repression, chauvinism and war. But there are also new opportunities creating new possibilities for a democratic and ecologically sustainable socialism. [Davidson et al.1994: 34]

Like Castells and so many others (e.g. the US National Science Foundation), here Davidson and Harris elide the information/knowledge distinction. They go on to add Alvin and Heidi Toffler to the list of important contemporary political economists, taking from them the idea that:

The main reason for today's ongoing revolution in the productive forces was the invention of the microchip. This revolution began in the 1950s with the merging of transistors, themselves the first major practical application of quantum mechanics, with the mass replication of miniaturized integrated circuits... The microchip's impact is changing everything about our world and the way we live. Civilization is undergoing a quantum leap on the order of the agricultural revolution launched 6000 years ago and the industrial revolution launched 200 years ago. We have now entered a third period of human history.

Intellectual capital, developed and held by knowledge workers and encoded in software and smart machines, is the key element of wealth in today's

information capitalism. Physical labor and industrial machinery are now secondary to the value added by information. [Davidson et al. 1994: 29 & 36]

“New challenges for Marxism and radical theory” follow from changes in basic class structure:

Knowledge workers today are in the position of the old industrial proletariat. They are key to the enhanced production of surplus value. Just as blue-collar workers contained two sides—the conservative labor aristocracy as well as the most progressive sector of labor supportive of democracy and socialism—knowledge workers will divide into two as well. One sector will form the social base for the defense of information capitalism regardless of its excesses. Others will deeply understand the potential the new technology has for creating and sustaining a new social order. This progressive side also is born from the conditions of its own labour, which are enmeshed [sic] in the most advanced forms of capital. [Davidson et al. 1994: 30, 31]

As a final jibe at those unable to appreciate how radical the knowledge-induced changes are, *cy.Rev* warns:

What is worse than the dangers posed by the third wave is the attempt to ignore or stifle the information technologies fuelling it. This was a deep flaw in the structure of the ‘command economies’ of the Soviet block... The growth of the new technology requires open, accessible, and decentralized sources and outlets for the flow of information. [Davidson et al. 1994: 31]⁷

7 I suspect a rather more complex picture would emerge of the considerable AIT efforts of the Soviet era in Eastern Europe; this at least was my suspicion when I began in 1987 to develop a project on computing in Bulgaria. Subsequent events wiped out much of the indigenous AIT infrastructure, which is perhaps now, as in places like Gujarat in India, re-emerging as part of the Open Source movement.

Why the “New Economy” Became “The Economy Formerly Known as ‘New’”: The Weaknesses of “Knowledge Society” Political Economies

I am not an economist, but I here intend to point out rather obvious empirical weaknesses of this broad range of economic discourses on knowledge. On a new economy account, in an old economy, any tightening of the labour market would tend to produce inflation and “overheating” of the economy, requiring higher interest rates. With enough increase in productivity, however, employment and wages can rise without setting off inflation. The fact that wages and employment rose while prices didn’t in the late 1990s was taken as “proving” that productivity could increase so much that convergence was no longer a problem.

What New Economy?

Early 2002 was several years after the “Asian economic flu,” two years after the bursting of the “dot.com” and roughly one after the telecom “bubbles,” and just as the last of the (first wave of the?) for-profit on-line universities or “dot.edus” were being bought out or declaring bankruptcy. In a time of continuing economic retrenchment, talk of a “new economy” had more or less disappeared, replaced by a nervous “looking over one’s shoulder,” as in the February 14, 2002, edition of the Wall Street Journal article in which I first encountered “the economy formerly known as ‘new’” phrasing. Yet by 2003, economists’ talk had again become largely Panglossian. It focused again on why the continuing recession wasn’t an “old style” one, why AICTs weren’t the real reason for it, and how in fact they would rescue us from it.

Two related dynamics help account for these rapid changes in patterns of talk. One was that the power of both corporate and individually held capital to promote its own reproduction continues to grow, as manifest in Bush The Second’s energy policies and tax cuts. The second was the increasingly anarchic quality of the world’s economy, especially the gap between economic developments and the

ability of corporations, the US state, or the World Trade Organization to influence them. Rather than being a stable economy in which markets clear and reach equilibrium more quickly, “economic diseases” continued to spread chaotically. Disastrous ecological change was generally (but not universally) acknowledged to be a direct consequence of economic activity. Even computer use had been recognized as a substantial contributor to energy shortages. A social movement against corporate globalization, one highlighting the inability of remaining political structures to influence events, had emerged, one more ambivalent than either Castells or Davidson et al., let alone mainstream economics, about AICTs.

The increased ambit of capital reproduction, anarchy, and economic distress may all be linked. In the age of the Enron revelations, the impression one had was of a world increasingly beyond control. The shrinking ambit of both “old” nation-based and “new” multinational tools to influence shifts in economic dynamics, let alone cushion their effects, engendered a sense of narrowed rather than extended prospects for influencing social reproduction. While not yet displaced by “mythinformation,” this term’s connotations seem as appropriate a characterization of the new millennium as “Knowledge Society.” These conditions revealed (perhaps only temporary but still empirically observable) inadequacies shared by the three political economies examined in the last section. Why, for example, were they not predicted by “new economy” structuralistics?

Productivity

The beginnings of an answer emerge through reconsidering productivity. Its changed dynamics in the mid’90s were taken, as argued above, as the decisive explanation for the new economy. The basic idea was that increased knowledge increased worker productivity so much that, sometime about then, the pent up but yet unrealized potential for increased productivity in AICTs broke through. Because the new AICTed knowledge technologies were being first deployed about this time, the correlation was taken as a causation, the increase in productivity seen to follow from their applications. The “information to knowledge barrier” was finally

breached, and Chairman Greenspan need no longer be an IT skeptic.

Beginning in the summer of 2000, however, productivity statistics in the U.S. began to fall again. One is tempted to attribute this to “knowledge management fatigue syndrome,” but this view, like the argument described in the previous paragraph, assigns too much influence to knowledge technologies. Rather, like the increases after the mid-’90s—and, indeed, the declines from the ’60s to mid-’90s—the 2000 decline is more likely an artifact of the bizarre ways that productivity statistics are calculated than a “real” phenomenon. The measurement problems are most obvious in the service sector. There being no service sector equivalent to the “widget,” the countable, generalized unit of the manufacturing sector set against hours worked, measuring productivity in service remains a fundamental problem for formalists. Productivity economists have therefore generally treated salary as a proxy index of productivity in this sector. Salaries in the service sector, adjusted for inflation, declined through much of the ’60s to ’90s. Consequently, the decline in general productivity statistics of the late 1960s-95 era may be an artifact of the pronounced shift from what to economists counts as goods to services production. This alternative explanation makes even more sense when one recognizes that this was an era of high unemployment and declining trade union power, leading to stagnant/falling wages in both goods and service sectors. Wages in service finally rose only with the general economic expansion of the mid 1990s. After 1995, but especially in the “Y2K” run up of 1999, expansion even slowed the rate of corporate downsizing. The subsequent statistical decline in 2000 productivity makes sense in relation to falling manufacturing employment, especially in the computer industry, and the consequent increase in the proportion of service employment, where salaries returned to stagnation.

In August 2001, second quarter U.S. economy productivity statistics ticked up again. Some Panglossians interpreted this as a sign that the economic decline was “bottoming out” and predicted that convergence effect would again disappear. Other economists pointed out, however, that if, as

was the case in 2001, employment declines while output remains stable, “productivity” statistics always rise. This happens, as it did in the period in question, when massive corporate downsizings reappear.

In short, changes in productivity statistics reflect shifts in employment and social, and therefore economic, power. They do not necessarily directly reflect changes in production technology, including knowledge technology. At the time of writing, Greenspan had not yet re-invented himself as a productivity skeptic. Perhaps were he a mere economist, he would. Because, however, his slightest hesitation can cause a market decline, Greenspan, like other mainstream economists, tends to “get stuck” in celebratory mode. This is particularly true with regard to productivity, even though analyses like that immediately above suggest that what productivity statistics actually measure is not at all clear.

Irrespective of their analytic shortcomings, their ideological importance to the legitimation of existing social reproduction patterns means new economy rhetorics give momentum to the *status quo*. Once performed, the rhetoric of productivity’s alleged automated information and communication technologies (AICT)-induced increase came to play a role in economic discourses, and in the broader social arrangements they justify, one too important to be easily abandoned. That AICTs increase productivity is just too good a story to be deflected by mere statistics. Mainstream structural accounts continue to echo new economy thought, even if the slogan is abandoned.

Instead of the really different dynamics of a new economy, however, we got knowledge management fatigue. To be able also to see around rather than only in new economy structuralistics, one needs heightened critical sensitivities. In particular, alternative conceptualizations are needed if the actual role of knowledge change is to be evaluated empirically.

Network Society?

Talk of a “network society,” like that about a new economy, had drastically fallen off by mid 2001. The rise of the former is explicable in terms

of the struggles of disciplines—and “schools” within disciplines—for space in the “marketplace of ideas,” long an adjunct of capitalism. (See Abbott 2001 and also *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*, chapter 6.) The sudden silences in regard to them are interpreted more parsimoniously as “rhetoric fatigue syndromes” than as reflective of important subsequent changes in general reproductive dynamics.

Besides, “network society” is not an empirically useful notion. In essence, Castells confuses the increasing ideological value of computing’s knowledge relationships, an admittedly significant cognitive terrain, for structural change in social reproduction. “Flow, flow, flow” is good rhetoric but not an analytically justified replacement for “Accumulate, accumulate, accumulate.”

This is not the only echo of Marx in Castells. In his Parsonianized but still recognizable “stages” account of cultural evolution, hierarchies displaced networks, the “natural” forms of social expression of early social formations. “Rationalized, vertical chains of command and control” “outperformed” networks “as tools of instrumentality,” (Castells 2000:15) only themselves to be displaced in turn by newly-energized-because-AICTed networks. Through the dictatorship of the proletariat, the mature communism envisioned in *The Communist Manifesto* replicates “primitive communism,” but on a higher level. This is structurally parallel to the relationship that AICTed network societies are supposed to have to “pre-modern” ones.

Two generations ago, we Marxist anthropologists were arguing for attention to “really existing” different social formations, like gathering/hunting, as a remedy for rigidly essentialist Marxist accounts of social evolution (Hakken and Lessinger 1987). We were critical of deterministic, arguably teleological, cultural evolutionary formulations then, and we should be similarly critical of them in Castells. We can acknowledge transformative possibilities without assuming, like Peter Pan re Tinkerbelle, that believing in them makes them so. To argue that society really is profoundly transformed via the new focus on knowledge, one must ignore the embarrassment of knowledge management fatigue, the disinclination to even talk about this management fad after

it peaked in 2001. If knowledge technologies were responsible for the new economy, shouldn't knowledge management's failure, and therefore the "un-networking" of organizations, be held responsible for the world economic slowdown? It seems most reasonable, however, to remain skeptical about the strength of the link between knowledge technology and world economic dynamics.

There is an alternative, less foundational and more descriptively accurate way to conceptualize the changes in production at which Castells points. This is the possibility of an emerging "cyberfactory" stage in the history of the labour process under capitalism, one potentially as distinct as factory-based manufacture was from putting out, or later Fordist manufacture was from manufacture. Theorizing a new stage within the same social formation type, rather than a new type altogether, means focusing on shifting arrangements within the same basic underlying institutional pattern. It is more parsimonious, albeit of less rhetorical power, than "network society" hype.

Technicist Political Economism

Postmodern social theory properly alerts us to be suspicious of facile transformative determinisms of overly structuralist theory like Castells'. To develop effective alternative structuralistics to the dominant neo-classical ones, one must be equally cautious of the political economism of Davidson and his colleagues.⁸ While to my knowledge *cy.Rev*

8 While these scholars are right to frame their work, as does Alvin Toffler (1983), in terms of evolution, the specific sequence of technological forms they offer, however, is questionable. Like most sociologists, they foreshorten human history prior to the "industrial revolution" into one long, effectively a-technological, "traditional" period. A metaphysical leap in dialectics brings them into an antithetical, "modern, technological" era, the synthesis being the "third wave."

Chapter 2 of *Cyborgs@Cyberspace* outlined a more varied set of evolutionary options for cyberspace: as a new, cyborgified, species; a new mode of production or social formation; a new, "fourth" form within the labour/commodity mode of production/social; or merely another, perhaps more concentrated, manifestation of the existing manufacture stage of the labour process. Equally important was the notion that cyberspace might

is no longer being published, its structuralistics influenced debate in, for example, the anti-globalization movement.

As argued in *Cyborgs@Cyberspace*, political economic structuralistics interfere with being empirical about computing and social change, whether anti- or pro-capitalist in their foundationalist techno-determinism. In the "lite," Davidson version, knowledge change-inducing AICTs cause a revolution in the forces of production which in turn moves social dynamics onto new terrain. *cy.Rev* adopts the same knowledge theory of value as the pro-capitalist Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): "Digitalized knowledge has now become the major component in the production of new wealth." Its naive positivism about AICTs echoes Bernal and the other inter-war socialists committed to a scientific-technical revolution, for whom this "way forward" substituted policy for politics (Hakken with Andrews 1993).

While more pessimistic about techno-scientifically induced changes, political economic "dark siders" Stanley Aronowitz and Phillip DiFazio (1995) are equally presumptive about the determining force of new technology. They see an "ineluctable"

just as logically "devolve" to a prior form. This framing provides much more space to capture the many possible nuances of change than the Castells or Davidson/Toffler options. More nuanced structuralistics enhances our capacity to identify which account best describes the actual, empirically observable relationship between AIT-based actor networks and broader cyberspace-related social changes. Are these highly correlated? If so, what are the implications of their most likely causal links?

Our mid-80s research convinced Barbara Andrews and I (1993) that the cyberspace-related patterns of Sheffield culture were similar to pre-Fordist social patterns of unemployment and class degradation, more compatible actually with a devolution to a previous form of the labour social formation than with some new stage or a non-labour form. At the same time, some interesting interventions and people's general willingness to appropriate AIT discourses in new identity work seemed indicators of potentially new social arrangements. Perhaps the most typical correlate of AIT, however, was to shift the terrain of class power. New skills and jobs rarely carrying the same gender, trade union, class cultural, and/or workplace-based political power as the ones they replace.

tendency in AICT toward the destruction of jobs, especially good ones.

Involvement in the neo-Marxist battles over political economy of the 1970s taught me two lessons. One, from the Althusser wars (Althusser and Balibar 1970), can be stated, if overly simplified, as the priority, in the long run, of social relations over technical relations of production. A second was to emphasize the extended rather than simple moment in social reproduction, to stress the recurrently transformative, richly dialectical character of social dynamics, as well as the relative autonomy of multiple moments within them (Hakken 1987). These lessons are equally lost on Davidson et al. and Aronowitz-DeFazio.

There are occasions when it makes good explanatory sense to abstract the mechanical elements out of an economic congeries, and it may be appropriate to describe the momenta (and inertiae) of reproduction in structural terms. This is only justified, however, as long as one keeps in mind that structural abstraction means simplifying the reproductive complexity of actual social formations. Abstraction is thus a legitimate moment in social analysis, but it should not be taken for the totality of social analysis.

On Actor Network Theory, to give any abstraction analytic permanence, as when one identifies a social property as a part of a machine rather than the broader Technology Actor Network (TAN) of which it is a part, invites essentialist distortion. The technical capability of a TAN is only a potential that must be concretely actualized, not an easily separable “factor.” Further, technical capability, like knowledge, is contested, constantly requiring reproduction, which, in the process, is extended and reconstructed differently. Since TANs vary greatly in their degree of stability, it makes little sense to speak of anything, whether disemployment or free flow of information, as an “ineluctable” implication of AICTs. It is better to concentrate on the various ways in which social groups differentially appropriate artifactual potential and, in the process, actively transform the relevant TANs.

To treat social dynamics as technologically determined while ignoring the processes through

which some technologies are rejected and others implemented is an example of what sociologists call “hypostatization.” There are strong disemploying potentials in contemporary employment-based social formations. However, accounts of these tendencies that trace them largely or fundamentally to something inherent in knowledge technology are facile (Hakken 1999).

These Popular Knowledge Theories as Based on Capital Theories of Value

While there are good reasons to be skeptical of the popular political economies of cyberspace knowledge critiqued above, their popularity is indicative of a need for better structural accounts of contemporary social change. Before a more satisfactory account of how to realize the knowledge potentials of AICTs can be given, the flawed political economy they share must be analyzed.

Employment Economies and Political Economy

In the West, structural accounts tend to begin with the economic. The social science that invented the idea of an economic moment in social reproduction was itself created, about 250 years ago, as a meta-discourse on the rise to reproductive dominance of a particular kind of activity, that associated variously with “markets,” “commodity production and distribution,” “industry,” and/or “employment.” In social formations of this new sort, the employer/employee relationship tended to displace older ones, like that between the serf and the lord or the believer and the church. To call it the “employment social formation” is to label it in terms of its most salient social relationship.

The rise of employment social formation fostered a new discourse that recognized and celebrated the relative autonomy of this new activity. In this discourse, employment’s displacement of other relationships was justified as a new, superior source of “value,” or the *Wealth of Nations* (Smith 1991 (1776)). The task of this new science of moral sentiments, the foundational project to distinguish it from social philosophy, was to account empirically for value’s creation (Toulmin 2002) and thus its cen-

trality to social formation reproduction. Its accounts were to avoid the moralistic approach (Williams 1985) of older discourses, to replace “ought” arguments with “is” descriptions of new “laws of value” determining human events.

The knowledge produced by this project came to be known as “political economy.” Adam Smith and his Scottish moral philosophy colleagues, its chief advocates, believed they were constructing foundational accounts of social value, accounts that broadly paralleled Newtonian understandings of matter.

The Value Question and Labour Answers

In Smith’s 18th century, figuring out where value came from was also a pressing public policy issue. Such knowledge would determine the legitimate activities of the state in a social formation bent to an employment dynamic. Since initially posed, three basic answers have been given to the question of where value comes from: first labour, then capital, and, more recently, knowledge. Until the late 19th century, political economists in general, from Smith and Ricardo to Marx and Mill, adhered to a labour theory of value. This was the idea that the increased value in an employment social formation came from a new productive factor, labour power, analyzed by Marx as a commoditized form of the capacity to do work.

Constructing labour socially as labour power enabled comparison of a wide range of diverse activities. Labour power was perceived as generally displacing land, raw materials, or rent as the most dynamic element of value creation. This new approach to labour was in the common view the factor most crucial to the capacity to accumulate value, now taking the form of profit. Enabling more buying and selling, employment institutions could foster more rapid accumulation of a social surplus than mercantilism or rent-producing agrarianism. Employment allowed commoditization of new markets and exploitation of new productive instrumentalities (e.g. technologies).

In addition to a labour theory of value, these scholars also generally accepted some corollaries about the dynamics of employment social forma-

tions. One was that the capacity of the new arrangements to expand value was not permanent. In the long term, employment-based profits rates had a tendency to fall. As long as there was competition, employers would tend to bid up wages until wages approached the selling price of the commodities produced (an earlier form of the convergence problem discussed above).

Via monopoly, accumulation could be extended into the medium term. In the end, however, the pace of commoditization would inevitably slow, and surpluses would tend to shrink. Smith was enthusiastic about how innovating new technologies of production could further postpone the slowdowns, but, like the other classical political economists, he accepted the long-term tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Thus, on classical political economics, the new society would only enjoy periods of accumulation; it was doomed to both periodic crises of profitability and ultimate decline. This political economy was dismal science.

Capital Answers to the Value Question

An alternative theory of value traced it not to labour but to invested profits, or “capital.” A minority of political economists (e.g., Marx’s target Senior) argued that, when wielded knowledgably, capital was a value-creating factor independent of labour. What one got via a bank loan to buy, say, newer machines or more raw material was control of an entity that had an independent, inherent tendency to expand.

In the late 19th century, political economic revisionists like Walras and Marshall rose to prominence with a new “economics” based on such capital theories of value. “Modern” in its use of formal models, their neo-classical “Revolution” provided the foundationalism that has dominated Western academic economics ever since. The models presume that the political economic structure of all societies is similar, because they all tend to respond to the universal condition of limited resources or scarcity with the same allocation mechanism, the market. Neo-classical models also presume psychologically that individual exchange of commodities is the prototype human action, and individual exchanger’s

actions are predictable (in terms of what are today called “preference curves”) because one can read them from the choices they make.

On neo-classical economics, the reason economies are not all the same is the existence of complicating mediators “external” to the core market relations. While some externalities can improve market dynamics, these theorists stress the inherent tendency of markets to achieve equilibriums in supply and demand. Consequently, this means neo-classical economics tend to regard collective human intervention as an externality likely to distort the “natural” market. They discourage state policy in principle.

Like classical political economics, neo-classicals think economies are analyzable in terms of laws and can be treated as being not abstractions but “really existing” deep structures. Unlike the classical political economists, however, neo-classicals asserted that the inherent capability of capital to expand frees employment economies from the tendency of profit rates to fall. This is “good time” economics.

AICTs and Capital Theories of Value

Predictably, given their dominance, neo-classical economics were the ones one initially mobilized by accounts of the AICT/macro-social change relationship. Because conditions of scarcity still obtain, the arrival of cyberspace did not mean revising the basic economic model. Like state intervention, new technological developments are market externalities. However, because they create unprecedented opportunities for entrepreneurial virtuosity (new chances for capital to work its value-generative magic), new technologies are generally applauded, as they were in Smith’s political economy.

Consider, for example, the structuralistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD is a kind of “think tank” for leading capitalist economies. Its Jobs Study (1994), conceived as a strategy document for the world’s twenty-five most powerful economies, was the focus of the Spring 1996 meeting of the G7 nations. “Apply new technologies to create new jobs...” is how the US Chamber of Commerce summarizes the Jobs Study, application of new technologies be-

ing primary among the “strategies recommended to overcome rigidities that cause unemployment” (1996). New technologies create jobs because economic growth is attributable to the development of technology and industrial research and development (R&D): “Research and development—and protection of the intellectual property R&D produces—raises living standards, thus boosting demand for labour and generating high-wage jobs” (US Chamber of Commerce 1996).

This is only one example of how capital theories of value privilege enthusiastic performance of Computer Revolution rhetoric. Cheery optimism about cyberspace is possible because technology is “black boxed”—that is, technologies feed real economies’ dynamics but do not independently affect the operation of formal economic laws. While technologies like AICTs change the content of actual economies, their structure remains unchanged. As an externality, technological change does not demand structural explanation.

If capital is more responsible than labour power for extending a society’s reproductive scale, theories of value should privilege the moment of capital’s reproduction over that of labour. Indeed, all other reproductive moments (work, knowledge networking, social interaction) should be subordinated to those social arrangements that facilitate the expanded reproduction of capital. This is usually accomplished by commoditizing these other moments, increasing the proportion of the range of activities under their ambit that is mediated by the employment relationship. In this way, more capital is created. Privileging capital’s reproduction also privileges those who own it. On capital theories of value, general social formation reproduction is mortgaged to the reproduction of capital.

Critiques of Capital Value Theories

Capital theory was the theory of value that Marx critiqued in *Capital*. In his view, capital should not be viewed as value generative in itself because it was really just congealed surplus labour, ripped off from workers. They were forced to give it up because of the vulnerability consequent to not having independent access to means of production.

According to the 19th century critique of political economy, capitalism was not all that different from rent-based feudalism, both possible only via the differential power of social groups. A sharecropper pays part of her crop to a landlord because the collective landlord has the power to force starvation, not because the land produces something on its own. Similarly, an entrepreneur pays interest on a loan because she has no better way to finance her business, not because the loan qua loan adds value. (This of course is the root of the Muslim conviction that all interest is usury.) Similarly, workers accept less in wage than the value of what they produce because they have no preferable choice. Profit comes from this surplus value, not because of any magical value-generative powers of capital.

It was the “something from nothing,” magical quality of capital theories that led Marx to coin an anthro-talk term, “commodity fetishism,” to caricature them. “Fetishization” is the attribution of independent agency to things humans have made, like goods, or made up, like spirits and “capital.” The fundamental critique of capital theories of value is that they treat capital as an independent thing capable of generating its own consequences. This essentialist attribution obscures capital reproduction’s dependence upon an underlying social contradiction, the unequal social relationship between worker and owner. This inequality must be maintained in order for capital to appear to work its magic and the social power of its owners be reproduced, but the same inequality prevents any ultimate social stability.

The radical political economists of the 19th century heard considerable class propaganda in capital theories of value. Rejecting the idea that capital has any essence, they saw capital theories of value as mythic, even mystical. Recently, the interest on the capital theory mortgage has risen. Consider the renewed influence during the economic turmoil of the 1990s of Joseph Schumpeter’s notion of “creative destruction” (1976). On a Schumpeterian reading, a capitalistic social formation can avoid implosion only through periodically destroying the technical basis of the regnant regime of capital accumulation. Innovation is the necessary vehicle for accomplishing survival through this necessary destruction.

Schumpeterianism is a capital theory of value. Like Senior’s, it postpones indefinitely the secular profit decline predicted by labour theories of value. “Creative” destruction, however, means massive institutional dislocation, which in turn undermines the reproduction of many groups and social forms, including important forms of capital. The imposition of an automobile economy marginalizes the foundations of a horse one, taking down the makers of buggies as well as buggy whips. On-line shopping promotes “disintermediation” and endangers fundamental aspects of existing commercial business.

Interestingly, by linking theoretically the extended reproduction of capital to technological upheaval, Schumpeterianism compromises the neo-classical presumption that the economic is autonomous from other moments of social formation reproduction. Schumpeterian capital theories of value lead back to substantive, institutional economics.⁹ The value that capital was alleged by the neo-classicals to produce on its own instead looks quite similar to the admittedly non-productive social relationship of rent.

Expanded Capital Power and Critiques of Capital Theories of Value

If AICT-induced changes in knowledge are not the chief causes of turn of the 21st century social changes, how are we to account for the prominence of knowledge in popular structuralistics? In locating the reproductive dynamic inside of technology, the theories critiqued above divert attention from capital’s problems of reproduction. The alternative political economy of knowledge presented below does not locate the source of dynamism internal to and inherent in AICTs but in change in capital reproduction.

The structural links between technology and the reproduction of capital are not only highly complex; they also stimulate new accounts of value. The growing power of capitalist institutions like trans-national corporations to influence their own

⁹ Users of Schumpeterian perspectives also tend to foster other unwarranted assumptions, such as the notion that new technologies necessarily produce more value than the ones they replace.

reproduction is one recent development that has fostered much theorizing (e.g., globalization). On a capital theory of value, an increase in the power of capital over social formation reproduction is likely to be interpreted as additional evidence of capital's contribution to value, and therefore of the validity of capital value theories.

However, an alternative interpretation is also possible, that the increased influence of capital over social reproduction is a response to the greater reproductive difficulties capital now encounters. On this view, capital's increased power is necessitated by its vulnerabilities rather than its value-generativity, that capital has to exert more influence on the dynamic of social formation reproduction because otherwise it could not reproduce itself.¹⁰ Continuing corporate downsizing and disemployment strengthen capital vis-a-vis labour. Selection of technology continues to be, as Braverman (1974) argued, regularly filtered through a class sieve. These are only two of several ways in which capital appears to be of even more, not less, relevance to current social reproduction. Such economic and technical phenomena are on their face more indicative of changes in the reproductive imperatives of capital than of a decline in its importance. Such an

10 It might well be objected that the phrasing I have chosen here hypostatizes capital—it attributes agency to an abstraction and, in the process, marginalizes human agency. However, more convoluted phrasing, such as “The character of social formation reproduction appears to suggest that the reproduction of capital is the strongest influence on its course,” just makes agency more ambiguous. The problem with any phrasing that attributes central influence to conscious human action—as in, for example, the idea of a class of humans centering social reproduction on the reproduction of capital in order to reproduce their social privilege—is that this kind of account seems to falter in the absence of a general conspiracy.

The value of the phrasing chosen is that it communicates an important Marxian insight, the extent to which things really are in a certain kind of control. That is, the capitalist who fails to maximize his capital by demanding the highest possible return on his investment really does find his capital shrinking. It is in this sense that it is humans who serve capital, even though capital is just a fetishized social relationship.

account is not compatible with “post-capitalist” notions, which imply a reduction in capital's influence on social formation reproduction. On the alternative, instead of indicating the demise of capitalism, the resurgence of Shumpeterianism indicates a discourse problem, a crisis on the legitimating power of capital theories of value.

Popular Knowledge Theories of Value as Capital Theories “In Drag”

Similarly, the emergence of alternative knowledge value discourses like those critiqued above, ones that only apparently trace value to things other than capital as historically understood, may be read as another indicator of this crisis. That is, they may be an indirect acknowledgement of capital's reproductive troubles and subsequently its necessarily greater efforts to impose itself on social formation reproduction. The critiqued political economies of knowledge only appear to be alternatives to capital theories of value. They do not arise because capital reproduction is less important but in response to a need for new accounts of value that overcome the theoretical deficiencies of 20th century accounts.

A critique of approaches that implicitly presume a capital theory of value is a necessary pre-requisite to constructing a valid political economy of knowledge in cyberspace. Terms for talking about value are needed that are less subservient to capital. A critique of knowledge talk concepts like “intellectual capital,” in which the popular political economies trans-dress underlying capital theories of value, will clear the way for a truly new knowledge theory of value.

Intellectual/Knowledge Capital

Indeed, another indication that defence of capital may be entering a manic phase is the burgeoning set of metaphorical extensions of capital—e.g., “Knowledge capital,” “intellectual capital” (sic)—fostered by “new” political economies like those critiqued above. Invention of such notions, like the Knowledge Society idea itself, seems indicative not only of a broad ideological search for more compelling justifications for the role of capital in employ-

ment social formations. Their adoption of “capital” as their constant element underlies the theoretical centrality of capital, not knowledge.

“Knowledge capital” is only one of several metaphoric extensions of capital, but it is the one in which a capital theory of value is most directly glossed by a veneer of a knowledge theory. In conceptualizing knowledge as a kind of capital, “intellectual/knowledge capital” frames knowledge as a thing. This talk encourages thinking of “getting a return from knowledge” in the same way one might “get a return from investing money.” Also implied is that, if benefits can arise from knowledge as a factor of production, it like capital merely needs to be added. Construed along capital theory lines, knowledge, too, “magically” creates value, yet of course talking about it in this way makes it impossible to separate knowledge from capital.

Unfortunately, such terminology exacerbates the impoverishments of the “thing” conceptions of knowledge critiqued in *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*. For example, it suppresses recognition of knowledge’s dependence on the collaborative activity of the people having and using it, of the centrality of knowledge networking to knowledge use.

“Knowledge” capital is only one of several forms of capital that appear to have been “discovered” in the “new” economy. To highlight the absurdity of this astonishing terminological effusion, I now refer to resources invested with the intent of making a profit as “capital capital!”

Human Capital

Human capital theory is another extension of the capital theory of value masquerading as something else. It is a concept coined by neo-classical economists to help explain why women, people of colour, those with disabilities, working class people, etc., receive lower wages. On human capital theory, the wage I command is primarily a consequence of my investment in myself, so those who are badly paid are in this situation because they did not take advantage of opportunities for education and training. Were they to forego the gratification of consumption and enroll in higher education, they would be trading small immediate for greater long

term benefits, “maximizing their human capital.” Those who didn’t do so wouldn’t maximize their personal potential to work value magic in the way “capital capital” is supposed to.

On a human capital account, a person’s capacity to network knowledge is also “thinged” and individuated. There is of course a point of view from which one can metaphorically view going back to school as “investing in ones’ self,” but this point of view is limited. Reducing a self to “human capital” has broad identity project implications. It tends to create important silences by diverting attention from a broad range of other considerations equally relevant to such a decision. By placing the onus of responsibility on individual choice, human capital framings marginalize awareness of structural impediments to opportunity, like discriminatory structurations (Giddens 1991). By individuating value discourse, human capital perspectives generally ignore the social institutions that determine why some skills—as well as some peoples’ skills—are valued more highly than others by labour markets.

To judge the extent to which human capital constitutes a reasonable model of how value is produced, consider the situation of white male heterosexuals from at least a middle class background. Even such individuals don’t behave in the manner described by human capital theory, because, as with other microeconomic presumptions, to do so would require possession of perfect information of labour markets. To behave in this way would also mean to ignore other important information. Even the most career-fixated student at SUNY Tech where I used to teach considers other factors, such as his family situation or work schedule, when making his schooling decisions.

Human capital conceptions of value distort perception of social dynamics. Its framings encourage workers to blame themselves for their unpleasant experiences at work. Performances of metaphors like “investing in one’s potential human capital” also facilitate capital reproduction. They do this by making capital (and therefore capital theories of value) appear more “natural,” just what people do. In addition, they indirectly help prevent questioning of capital capital’s “magic.”

As described some time ago by Stephen Marglin (1974), in a corporation, management's chief function is to facilitate the reproduction of capital. It is not to facilitate an individual's redemption of her human capital, and it often interferes with production and even profit maximization (see Kusterer 1978). Braverman's primary message about technology—that corporate decisions about investment are more a function of the long-term reproductive needs of capital than of their technical impact on production—remains as suggestive in the new millennium as it was in the old (1974). Channeling talk about the decisions of individuals or the practices of institutions via “human capital” illuminates little and obscures much.

Cultural Capital

To my chagrin, a social scientist, Pierre Bourdieu, contributed directly to the metaphorical metastasis of “capital”; he might even be described as its “ur” practitioner. He did so in his effort to explain the presence of “distinction” as an important dynamic in modern society (1990). Briefly, Bourdieu asked how it is that, in social formations (like France) formally dedicated to inhibiting the inter-generational transmission of privilege—through, for example, estate taxes—considerable privilege gets so transmitted anyway. That is, the children of high status parents tend themselves to be high status.

Such privilege, Bourdieu answers, is now reproduced indirectly via distinction. Through taking them to museums, reading them books, and in general preparing them for entry tests and other prestige activities, privileged parents “invest” in their children, provide them with additional means to access advantage. The privilege potential is redeemed through apparently egalitarian, meritocratic institutions like schools, universities, bureaucracies, and corporations. The term Bourdieu coined to label the value thus given, his word for the means by which distinction reproduces privilege, was, unfortunately, “cultural capital.”

A confirmed radical and progressive, Bourdieu's intent was to critique the inequalitarian results of this process and its institutional forms, especially in the academy. In its malleability, its capacity to be

latent and even disappear as a consequence of institutional change (say as a consequence of change in elite taste), class privilege does appear to have some mythic properties similar to capital capital. The metaphor Bourdieu chose might be acceptable, were it not so easily co-opted into the general legitimating project of capital value theory. Some schools now regularly refer to their superior “cultural capital” in recruiting students. In the context of “knowledge capital,” “human capital,” etc., “cultural capital” ends up reinforcing that which it would critique.

Bourdieu makes a strong case that the social support of museums, recital halls, and colleges disproportionately afford means to already socially advantaged individuals to privilege their children. These means supplement other institutions—networking introductions, socialization into facile performance of social graces and artful exercises of taste, and admissions into private universities of “legacies”—that already support the generational reproduction of privilege. Both sets of institutions have other value for extending social reproduction, and determining how to support them collectively without reproducing privilege is a significant social policy issue, beyond that of an individual choosing whether to be seen at a concert or stay home and watch TV.

Once again the simile—seeing the taking of your kids to a museum as somewhat like investing capital in a firm on the expectation of profit—may have some descriptive value. As a parent I would urge others not to bet their future welfare on this kind of analogy, however. Focusing functional explanation of support for educational institutions in terms of a similarity to capital also feeds into the cynical, anti-intellectual discourses through which the supporters of unfettered capital like Rush Limbaugh critique “cultural elites.” Moreover, it diverts attention from more direct forms through which such institutions support the reproduction of capital, such as the use of university endowments of stocks to concentrate capital and make it more mobilizable. In conjunction with the other extensions of capital analyzed above, “cultural capital” is an unfortunate concept.

Social Capital

In his famous article and recent book *Bowling Alone* (2001), Robert Putnam metastasizes capital further, tracing much contemporary social malaise to “a decline in social capital.” Even though more frames are bowled than ever before in the United States, a much smaller proportion of them are bowled in league competition. This empirical pattern is presented as a synecdoche for a broader decline in sociality. Americans increasingly spend their time outside of the organized social relations that were previously an important support for col-laboratory activity, whether aid in an emergency or “garage” development of new commodities.

As we celebrate “self” more than group or community, our networks become dangerously less dense. As we individually spend our time commuting to work at a distance or surfing the Internet, our places of residence lose resilience. Much of this used to come through collective experiences, like working with those who live in our neighbourhood or spending time in Oldenbergian “third places” (2000). Our ability to handle difficulty, individual and collective, is indeed generally reduced.

By framing this decline in sociality as “a decrease in social capital,” however, Putnam commodifies its solution. What we need is not more social capital (read, “contributions to charity”) but social relationships of a different, more multiplex quality. Together with the other capital metaphors, Putnam’s extends the reproductive ambit of the value myths of capital and its attendant distortions. The concept “social capital” too closely associates sociality with capital. In doing so, it obscures the relative autonomy of other aspects of social formation reproduction from the reproduction of capital. It shares this property with “cultural capital.”

I understand and sympathize with Putnam’s and Giddens’ desires for more community to moderate the dynamics of both state and market (or more accurately, the reproductive imperative of capital). As a parent, I depend upon other parents paying attention to their kids; when they don’t, my children, too, are at greater risk. To capture the attention of these parents, I might even try the rhetorical ploy of comparing their actions to those of a company that fails to buy new equipment.

However, I would be very unlikely to choose the alienating activity of capital reproduction as a general model of how to approach the problems of raising children. The analytic damage of treating such moderately useful metaphors as core constructs parallels that of accepting the transcendent value of capital reproduction. Places of residence need community, and community comes from voluntary extensions of sociality. Your time and your self are as important as your wealth, and much more important than that portion of your wealth ripped off from others in sufficient quantities to be invested.

Deconstructing “Capital”

The foregoing has critiqued metaphoric extensions of “capital” to other construct realms. In their “thingness,” “cultural capital,” “social capital,” “human capital,” “personality capital,” and doubtless other similar terms, narrow thought and, like knowledge capital, tend to mislead. The thing about a metaphor, as Ulf Hannerz argues (personal communication), is that, like a horse, one needs to get off before it is too late. With a hammer in one’s hand, one sees nails everywhere.

Metaphorically extending the ambit of capital might be defensible if this had analytic value, promoted something more than mere awareness of similarity. The notion “capital” does have some worth. Indeed, understood as investment for profit, “capital” is a construct essential to understanding contemporary social reproduction. “Capital” is not a cultural construct like “ghost,” whose conceptual existence is clear but whose actual impacts are hard to detect, except perhaps in the behavior of those who believe it. There is no doubt that capital matters. In most current social formations, if I wish to bring a commodity to market on any but a modest scale, I really do need access to, in a quite legitimate use of the notion, “venture capital.”

Still, it is not easy to state a “vanilla” notion, a capital “in general.” For example, “money” and capital are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same thing. Nor is it easy to identify the point at which it makes even metaphoric sense to think of capital as “productive.” Not only can one invest one’s capital badly; one can do so deliberately, as

in a tax dodge. But is it then still capital? If it is, then what other forms of “unproductive” capital are there, and how does one separate unproductive capital from any valued thing used badly? Is “capital” just another term for any entity of worth?

The intent here is not merely lexical, to straighten out definitional conundrums. Rather, it is to illuminate how, just as “content” approaches obscure the social dimensions of knowledge, an important range of social phenomena are obscured by “knowledge thing” representations of capital. Consider, for example, what capital has in common with “authority,” or “charisma.” Under the appropriate conditions, the wielder of each of these forms of power can compel the activity of other humans. Like Marx, I think it important to note that, for capital, in contrast to these other forms of power, this capacity depends on its fetishization, upon a collective “forgetting” of from whence it comes. In simple terms, the medieval ruling class became a capitalist ruling class, converting its relative monopoly over land and raw materials into a relative monopoly over access to machinery and markets. Workers accept less for wages than the value of what they produce, because this history means that they have no real alternative. Their relative powerlessness is the reason a substantial portion of the value they produce is alienable from them.

It is true that individuals ripped off in this way tend to become annoyed or “alienated” psychologically. The point of critiquing “thing” capital constructs is not psychological but sociological, to show how they institutionalize the forgetting of indignity (Sennett 1993). Capital theories of value induce worship of capital as a magical thing; they thus obscure how capital is based on institutionalized alienation. To frame capital as a “thing” of any sort is to be complicitous in this alienation. Without this alienation, capital would cease to be: If workers in general had independent access to markets and the means of production, capital would not be necessary to put production in motion, and it would “disappear.” As wealth, of course, money would still have value.

The situation of capital is in some ways similar to the promise carried for years on each U.S. dollar

bill, that it was “redeemable for silver.” For many years, this promise was no longer valid—it was in fact illegal for private citizens to hold “specie”—but most of the US citizenry “forgot” this fact, and a myth served a useful circulatory purpose.

As with money, we perform capital via a collective Wittgensteinian language game. The capital game requires us to ignore alienation and accept its claimed self-generative properties. This game is performed, for example, each time we accept the notion that underdeveloping nations require outside capital, that without it, they have nothing with an inherent tendency to grow. The attempts of Cuba, Brazil, etc. to operate on an alternative view, that “more freedom” for capital means less freedom for peoples, showed how, unless they worship the fetish of capital, nations are frozen out of the world economy.

The authority of a police officer depends upon the sovereignty of a state, and the wealth of a TV preacher depends upon his ability to project certain personal qualities. So, too, the power of capital rests upon certain social arrangements themselves dependent upon acceptance of some myths. Its reproduction is best served when the applicability of its fetishized self image is accepted unquestioningly, when “Accumulate, Accumulate, Accumulate!” is indeed treated as the message of “Moses and the Prophets.”

Of course, those individuals and groups who depend upon the reproduction of capital for their wellbeing tend to advocate social arrangements favorable to the reproduction of their privilege. To the extent that power needs to be exercised culturally (“behind the back” in social formations committed rhetorically to democracy), such social inequality cannot normally be argued for directly. It is in this sense that those who extend the metaphor of capital to other realms contribute to the reproduction of its social hegemony and therefore the dominance of groups highly dependent upon it.¹¹

Instead of giving analytic value, however, the metaphors examined here obscure. While indexing

11 I don’t think this was Bourdieu’s intent, but it is, as manifest in the frequency of citation of his work in organization studies, a consequence for which he has some intellectual responsibility.

important social issues and legitimacy problems, as a group these concepts have a negative analytic impact. Given the extensive complications of this social history, this negativity is perhaps inescapable. Like vanilla capital, its metaphorical extensions' overuse and underauthorization are suggestive of a rear guard defence of a mythic pattern of thought, of capital value theorizing under stress.

The over-enchantment of contemporary social science with capital metaphors undermines critical faculties: The more they are used, the harder it is to see their limitations. When all resources are presented as alternate forms of capital, social science becomes social apologetics. These new, noxious weeds in social science's conceptual garden are indexes of the stresses on capital reproduction. We can acknowledge their limited rhetorical value, but, in order to clear ground for a real alternative knowledge theory of value, not a capital theory "in knowledge drag," they need to be uprooted.

Toward a "Straight" Knowledge Theory of Value

Just as social science originally congealed around a new answer (labour power) to the value question, talk of a new economy has often pointed at potentially new characteristics and roles, including in value creation, for knowledge in cyberspace. Searches for a new knowledge structuralistics are also responses to the shortcomings of the dominant theories of value, such as their failure to account for important, Shumpeterian, institutional phenomena.

Unfortunately, popular cyberspace knowledge talk holds over discourse conventions from the regency of capital theories of value. Instead of offering truly new political economies, they merely place a knowledge gloss on what remain basically capital theories of value. Just as skepticism was warranted with regard to the new economy, it is proper with regard to theories that merely dress capital theories of value in "knowledge drag."

At the same time, although knowledge may be labelled a form of capital ("knowledge" or "intellectual capital") in accounts like these, one can also perceive in them a strong impulse to make

knowledge a replacement for rather than a form of capital at the center of production. As argued in *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*, a quite liberating resocialing of work, one facilitated by expanded use of knowledge technology, is indeed possible. This possibility is an important reason behind the refocusing of the value debate on knowledge. The switch in the focus of value discourse to knowledge is further facilitated, perhaps even compelled, by all sorts of ideas about teams, dispersed work, virtual organizations, participatory design, collaborative work, etc.

A clearer, thorough perspective on knowledge and value would have other consequences. It would force a new discourse on management, one in which the necessity of management was no longer presumed a priori. Management's place in production would become narrower and more contingent, dependent upon its success at mobilizing expertise in particular forms of labour. With management reduced to the labour of coordination, thorough development of more comparable notions of management and workers, knowledge would change class dynamics as well as our understandings of them.

Such accounts, however, put at risk current legitimations of management that associate it with the self-generative magic of capital. Instead of risking a thorough rethinking of management in knowledge terms, some may wish to retain the idea that management possesses privileged knowledge about how to unlock the magic of capital. They might be inclined to deploy notions like "knowledge capital," either overtly or metaphorically, in ways that presume the inevitability of the social relations of (capital) capital. As long as management is tied to a capital theory of value, the liberatory potential of organizational knowledge technologies will be severely limited.

Approaches that link knowledge to capital, including those that construct knowledge as capital, obscure rather than illuminate the potential of knowledge in the transition to cyberspace. To take advantage of the potentials of AICTs to facilitate knowledge networking, as well as to foster the broader social development that this would make possible, we need truly independent knowledge theories of value. These in turn could generate po-

litical economies more appropriate to the extension of contemporary social formation reproduction.

To create such knowledge theories, it is necessary to liberate knowledge constructs from enslavement to capital reproduction. Freedom will not come by restating capital theories of value in terms of knowledge. Once “knowledge capital” has been deconstructed, knowledge structuralistics like those critiqued above are recognizable as first steps toward articulating a third, distinct, neither labour nor capital but knowledge, theory of value.

New knowledge theories should be evaluated in terms of whether they offer a more satisfactory discourse on where value comes from. Indicating what a genuine knowledge theory of value would address is the task of what follows next.

Current Capital Reproduction

The Place of a Capital Theory in a Knowledge Theory of Value

Several of the theoretical critiques of capital theories of value outlined in the previous section have been around for a long time, yet capital theories remain dominant. While the chapter raised the possibility that interest in knowledge political economies is a manifestation of problems in the reproduction of contemporary social formations, it also acknowledged an increase in the overt influence of capital reproduction in general social formation reproduction. The notion that the power of capital over social reproduction is increasing seems to contradict the idea that capital-based economics should be replaced by knowledge ones.

I suggested above, however, that capital’s increasing ambit may be necessitated by new weaknesses in its ability to reproduce itself. The rise of new knowledge theories of value, even if they turn out to be ultimately based on capital theories, is nonetheless an indirect recognition of problems in capital value theorization. But doesn’t the expanded centrality of capital in contemporary social formations empirically justify capital theories of value?

Were this so, the search for new, knowledge-based alternative theories of value would make no sense. Moreover, the influence of capital on the

marketplace of ideas may itself have compromised discussion of value. The failure of critiques of capital theories of value to become economic orthodoxy may have less to do with their analytic quality than with economics’ ideological service to the reproduction of capital. An inability to recognize directly the momentousness of capital’s contemporary problems would also explain the contradictions in the knowledge theories of value identified above.

In short, to specify what a knowledge society would really be like, and thus what a knowledge theory of value would have to account for, we first need an adequate account of the contemporary role of capital in general social formation reproduction. This account must explain capital’s current power at the same time as it avoids being dazzled by, e.g., metastasizing capital metaphors.

The Recent Expansion of Capital’s Reproductive Ambit

Throughout the history of employment social formations, capital’s influence on general social formation reproduction has tended to grow. It is arguably greater now than at any other time. The increased centrality of transnational, corporate capital to most social formations today is arguably the most distinctive aspect of what is called “globalization.”

Computing Myths, Class Realities, Barbara Andrews’ and my 1993 study of Sheffield new technology, examined various predictors of the social correlates of computing initiatives. The best predictors of outcomes were the workspace groups that a computing initiative mobilized and whose interest it served. In the second decade of the 1980s, even in “Labour’s Home” in the North of England, the group most able to influence the technology/employment nexus remained the private owners/controllers of means of production. It was workers who most strongly felt their effects.

Thatcherism and Reaganism were two very visible examples of a general 1980s tendency, the use of state power to accommodate the expanding reproductive ambit of transnational capital. In *Cyborgs@Cyberspace?* (1999), I described a prodigious expansion of the influence of capital over general social formation reproduction in the

Nordic countries. This expansion was an important reason for the declining influence of Nordic Working Life legislation on the way AICTs were actually used. Both books made similar points about unemployment, especially that the alleged disemploying/job creating tendencies in new information technologies were so highly mediated by the reproductive dynamics of capital as to have little independent effect. Similarly, chapter 8 of *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace* described local government projects in the Upper Mohawk Valley of the US unable to use public means to influence how technologies get institutionalized.

The current situation is illustrated clearly by 1990s changes in Wallenberg family-controlled—which is to say virtually all—capital in Sweden. Early in that decade, the Wallenberg corporations abandoned the national-level bargaining that had purchased social peace since the 1920s. Instead, they reoriented directly to a world market. This development was indexed vividly by the emergence of the trans-national firm ABB, particularly its chameleon-like attempt to be “the best corporate citizen wherever we happen to be.” This was a very different face for what some anachronistically insist on still calling “Swedish” capital. Danish and Finnish social formations similarly accommodated to the more globally exercised ambit of capital. Despite the potential for relative autonomy provided by nationally owned oil, even Norwegian enterprises and state institutions increasingly adapted themselves to the demands of capitalist institutions.

As loci of decision-making have accommodated to increasingly assertive supra-national corporations, the influence of nation state structures, including state-sponsored participatory institutions to promote economic democracy, has contracted. Capital’s increasing influence contrasts with the decline of trade union power and the narrowing of the range of options available to previously influential working people’s (e.g. Labour, Social Democratic or, in the US, Northeast Democratic Party) politics. Ideologies inhibiting working-class influence also gained wider ambit.

Turbo-Capitalism, not Knowledge, as Dominant

The structural theories of cyberspace critiqued at the beginning of this article asserted that knowledge was the generative source of recent change in social reproductive dynamics. Is it reasonable to trace developments like those described immediately above to new knowledge technologies? This is the view of knowledge revolutionary Anthony Giddens, who exercises a substantial theoretical influence over British “new” Labour. Giddens highlights “the new role of knowledge as a factor of production” (Hutton and Giddens 2000:4). He speaks of the “new knowledge economy that almost certainly operates according to different principles from the industrial economy” (2000:1), one that is “changing the very character of how we live and work” (2000:5). Like Davenport and Prusak, Giddens accounts for revolutionary change in terms of something more broadly spread: “Most companies know pretty quickly what other companies are planning, because of the general profusion of information. Secrecy is much more difficult. Given the global nature of contemporary communications, there is no geographical isolation any longer” (2000:26).

Here Giddens, like so many of the writers already examined, blurs the difference between information and knowledge and invokes popular but simplistic space/place contrasts. More substantively problematic is his ignoring of how the chief ostensible task of corporate knowledge technologies was to prevent general dissemination of company knowledge! On Giddens, world-transformative changes are traced to the abject failure of knowledge technologies to accomplish their intended goals.

Giddens’ interlocutor Will Hutton offers a different structuralistics. For Hutton, knowledge’s influence is not causative but instead is mediated through its role in what he, following Edward Luttwak, calls “turbo-capitalism.” This “very particular kind of capitalism” is one that “has emerged victorious from its competition with communism.” It is a triumphant form,

a capitalism that is much harder, more mobile, more ruthless and more certain about what it needs to make it tick. ...It’s overriding objective

is to serve the interests of property owners and shareholders, and it has a firm belief...that all obstacles to its capacity to do that—regulation, controls, trade unions, taxation, public ownership, etc.—are unjustified and should be removed. [Hutton and Giddens 2000: 9-10]

Hutton regrets the eclipse of forms of capital alternative to this share- (stock-) oriented turbo-form:

I would say that communism, although it failed, did have one good impact; it kept capitalism on its guard—in a sense it kept it aware that it had to have a human face. [9]

The alternative tradition of Catholic capitalism, social market capitalism, or stakeholder capitalism...is [also] retreating. [10]

Hutton does acknowledge a connection between this resurgent capitalism and AICTs. Unlike Giddens, he stresses that turbo-capitalism drives technology rather than being driven by it. Steroidal capital takes advantage of the opportunities to extend its reproductive ambit that are opened by technological change. In a Schumpeterian register, Hutton comments that Turbo-capitalism

is particular powerful at a time of great technological change because not only does it encourage new entrants into markets, it also shakes up the sometimes powerful but sleepy companies who currently hold a lot of market power [13]

Technological change sometimes has the effect of producing a sort of quantum leap, forcing a sort of restructuring of the whole of the capitalist economy. A quantum leap of this kind is happening through the impact of the information revolution at the moment...although...it has as much to do with the spread, character, and ambition of capitalism as the march of science. [20]

Thus, while for Hutton there is a connection between change in knowledge technology and turbo-capitalism, the connection is not the simple, one-directional, “cause-effect” one described by Giddens. Indeed, to present knowledge as if it commanded capital is to obscure what is taking place:

Of course I agree that there is a dynamic sector of the economy where knowledge is very important, and all firms can access and use the new processes to some degree. But I am also not sure that the inference we are meant to draw—that everything is cleverer and more knowledge-based and therefore that the fundamentals of capitalism have wholly changed, is right[,]...that the rules of the capitalist game have changed. [23-24]

Hutton’s analytic point is that knowledge-related phenomena are bent to the reproduction of capital, rather than that capital is being bent to knowledge networking. He goes on to comment that “although commoditization is an ugly word,... it does capture the process by which capitalism tries to turn every relationship into a commercial exchange. (17). Intellectual capital is not a new form of capital. While “intellectual property rights are increasingly what makes capitalism tick,” it is “control of the idea rather than what the idea gives to production” that counts. “All the difficulties about exploitation, private ownership, and instability remain remarkably the same” (25).

Instead of a Knowledge Revolution,

what really took place in the 1990s was a great power play: Asian capitalism versus American capitalism. US capitalism wins, with the Asia crisis of 97/98 actually being the flashpoint and the financial markets working in a way that furthers US interests... I think it puts an important question mark over globalisation. There is a dimension of globalisation that is about opening up the world to American interest in particular and Western capitalism in general. ...[U]nderneath the glitz there remains the exercise of raw power. [Hutton and Giddens 2000: 41]

Hutton rejects the idea that new technologies are the primary force for change. For him, this remains capital, a still nation/region-linkable but newly active form of it. Capital’s increasing active role has developed because, contra neo-classical economics, capitalist systems don’t tend toward neo-classical “equilibriums”:

The rationality of capitalism doesn't lie in any ... tendency to produce a stable equilibrium. Its rationality lies in its inherent capacity to accommodate risk, to experiment over investment for the future, and to be creative about new forms of production and consumption. [19]

In the relentless pursuit of its reproduction, turbo-capital especially is generative of instability, the chief driver of and problem for extending social formation reproduction:

The notion that capitalism should be seen as a creative process rather than tending to unimprovable equilibria is one of the great strengths of the [Second, late 20th century] Austrian school of economists' championing of capitalism. Friedrich Hayek says that markets are brilliant means of capturing the collective judgments of individual intelligence because they allow decentralized decision-making, but we should not think of them as stable. [20]

Rather than "markets working to produce a self-correcting equilibrium, what you have watched is a wild process of experimentation and overshoot involving some crazy and avoidable risks and economic pain. Heaven knows what will happen next and to whom" (40).

One casualty of the accelerated instability of turbo-capitalism was the institutions of social democracy, including the "welfare state": "It was more or less inevitable that the whole policy nexus would become unsustainable as soon as the financial deregulation caused asset price booms—bubble economies really—property booms and the rest of it" (40). Hutton consequently is critical of those like Giddens, those whose knowledge theory encourages a "naive trust in markets" that provides ideological cover for greater capital power. Rather,

the injustices you [Giddens] want to correct are not independent of the capitalism you admire – they result directly from its operation. [45]

Beneath the technological change some rough and tough old capitalists truths are being reasserted... [and] beneath the glitz of modernity a lot of people are as exposed as ever to some hard brutalities. [30]

Calling for structural reform of labour markets and the welfare system as stand-alone recommendations...really mean...that non-wage costs should be lowered, work made more insecure, and the...system of social protection weakened. [35]

In sum, on Hutton, phenomena like globalization are not caused by an emergent political economy of knowledge before which all must fall, but by contingent changes in the dynamic of capital reproduction. Technology change, the increasingly global reach of the corporation, and increased competition—all of these are real. However, they do not follow from any particular inevitable dynamic "laws" endogenous to knowledge technology. Rather, they follow from deliberate policy interventions, including the weakening of nation-based trade unions (the only effective trade unions there are, yet) to control access to labour. These interventions have also weakened the capacity of geography-tied capital to enhance the conditions of its reproduction, e.g., through tariffs. Forceful performance of knowledge "mantras" do impact social reproduction, but not because they reflect structural "truths." Rather, they are an ideological influence in policy discussions, one that diverts attention from the increasing ambit of capital and therefore of any attempt to mitigate its undesirable consequences.

In Marxist terminology, readings like Hutton's stress "social relations" rather than the "technical relations of production" of central interest to Giddens and the theorists critiqued initially in this article. The contemporary era is one of renewed, very great if not unprecedented, capital dominance and hegemony, certainly comparable to the 1920s in the US, Britain, and even the Nordic countries. This centrality is associated with several phenomena, including defeat of the Soviet Union, new limitations on states' actions, and assertion of new capitalist cultural legitimations (e.g., intellectual property) in the face of the challenges of the '60s.

Turbo-capitalism does take advantage of the Gideon Kunda (1992)-type AICT-enabled reorganizations of the labour process explored in *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*. Yet while AICTs add options for reorganizing the labour processes, they do not compel them to take place. It is

only ideologically, via the notion that such reorganization is necessitated “ineluctably” by technology, that AICTs influence comes to appear structural.

A Cultural Theory of Contemporary Value Contradictions

While AICTs clearly can be used (as they have) to legitimate reimposition of a strong capital regime, they do not have to be used in this way. Their obvious ideological value alone should prompt doubt about “knowledge as technological imperative” lines of argument.

Hutton more parsimoniously analyzes the dynamics of contemporary social formations than social revolutionaries like Castells. That is, he properly attends to capital’s expanded power capital without extending it mythically, by giving capital knowledge clothing or by deploying metaphors that terminologically exaggerate its influence while also diverting critique.

Hutton’s kind of analysis can be restated in more anthropological terms. Doing so allows greater specification of the responses that distinguish the reproductive dynamics of contemporary employment social formations from previous ones and thus the actually new challenges to capital accumulation.

Value and Culture in General

On a general social reproductionist account (Hakken 1987), human social reproduction depends on cultural reproduction. That is, what differentiates the dynamics of the reproduction of human from other types of social formations (whether species specific plant or animal, or general ecological) is the extent to which human ones depend upon culture. Human social formations only last if existing humans convince new ones (whether “recruited” through sexual reproduction or immigration) to adopt compatible sets of cultural constructs. That is, the “newbies” are convinced to accept, or at least to act as if they accept, that the cultural constructs of their elders accurately describe actual social reproduction. This is one example of the kinds of deliberate interventions necessary to promote social formation reproduction.

Moreover, for any particular human social formation (what anthropologists call “a culture,” as opposed to the general human type of social formation) to perpetuate itself, it must withstand both natural and cultural “selection.” That is, it must meet the (culturally structured) biological needs of its adherents as well as the threats to its reproduction in its cultural environment, the other cultures with which it is in contact. This is equivalent to saying that new types of social formations arise by displacing older ones.

Anthropologists use “myth” to describe the stories that humans tell that account for cultural dynamics. Because, as argued above, human social formations must reproduce socially, myth development is a necessary component of cultural and therefore of social formation reproduction. To an anthropologist, the political economics developed to account for the rise of the employment social formation constituted the early mythologies of capitalism. As described above, it was neither money, markets, production of goods for sale, nor even forms of mass production that were the distinctive feature of the new “employment” type of social formation that came to prominence in the 18th century; all existed in previous social formations. What was new was the extension of the commodity form (mediation by markets) into two new arenas of social practice:

1. Actual human labour became labour power (the capacity to do work), and
2. The difference between the value of what workers produced and the value of their wages and other costs of production, or profit, became open to mobilization for investment, or capital.

That is, once the institutions of labour and capital markets came into existence, one could buy and sell work in the form of labour power, and lend out surplus value (profit) in the form of capital.

The Cultural Contradictions of Capital Mythologies

To become widespread, mythologies must provide convincing, if not necessarily accurate, accounts of the dynamics of social reproduction, accounts convincing enough that they themselves are also reproduced. A contradiction at the heart of the repro-

duction of capital has limited the cultural reproductive ambit of employment social formations' myths, particularly the labour theory of value. On the one hand, sellers had to convince potential buyers that the things they wanted to sell were worth the asking price. On the other, producers had to convince workers to produce these things at pay rates lower than the sale price.

In the social formations in which the institutions of labour and capital first developed, the markets were largely in luxury goods, and de-serfed uncommoned new workers had little alternative but to accept the wages offered. As the commodity form penetrated more aspects of social reproduction, however, workers became important as consumers as well as workers. They extended their collective ability to influence general social reproduction, specific labour markets, and states.

Capital markets require stability. This was initially provided by states that, e.g., promoted sufficiently transparent banking and meaningful exchange rates (the necessity of which is vividly illustrated by the experience of the ex-Soviet Union). States also periodically served as crucial sources of investment, first in canals, later in Internets.

As 19th century workers were able to exert influence, the contradiction at the heart of the labour of value became more pronounced, and the theory's value as a justificatory myth correspondingly declined. The capital theories of value that displaced labour theories mythically resolved this problem. Under them, value arose not from ripping off workers, but from value-generative qualities inherent in capital. Moreover, freed from having to be moored in the real worth of things produced—that is, as its reproduction became mediated by ever more dense narratives and thus decreasingly corresponded to events in the real world—the mythically powerful entity, capital, also becomes more malleable.

However, as illustrated in the capital metaphors critiques offered above, this mythic malleability has engendered new contradictions. If public entities can lower interest rates to stave off recession, why not keep rates low so small business stay afloat? If public moneys can be used to guarantee the profit level of military contractors, why can't they also fund

worker cooperatives? If they can rescue Savings and Loans, why not communities?

Such questions indicate how vastly extended myths of capital reproduction are more difficult to control. Its continuing actual dependence upon labour to produce the value turned into profit makes capital increasingly difficult to reproduce in the real world. It can only do so by bringing more and more domains of existence within its ambit, as is fitfully now happening in education. The gap between the cultural reproductive potential of "capital" in its latest mythic forms and the reproductive demands of so-called "late" capitalism as a social form increases, threatening the reproduction of entire social formations.¹²

Why Reconstructing Capital as Knowledge Doesn't Work

We now can see why knowledge has recently been theorized both as capital and as value. Encouraging and feeding off twenty years of actively "metaphorizing" capital, its theorists developed "knowledge capital" as a way to help organizations address a serious problem, one that becomes obvious as soon as one acknowledges a place for knowledge in production.

Once one has analyzed the "knowledge resources" of one's organization and acknowledged them to be significant, it makes cultural sense to think of them as "capital" and therefore as something to be protected from the competition. However, knowledge is hard to secure. For example, given that it can be transferred without being lost, one's security department can't even rely on its presence to indicate that it has not been stolen. One can't prevent leaving employees from taking it, either. Indeed, if knowledge really were the chief form of capital, the capitalist system would probably be doomed.

12 A number of radical political economists have followed Ernest Mandel (1978) in referring to the current era as "late capitalism." This terminology is intended to suggest that contradictions like the above are so overwhelming that capitalism's state is one of senility at best. I do not choose this terminology because the last decade has surely demonstrated capitalism's resiliency, in both symbolic and political economic domains. Its long-term fate remains doubtful, but its demise not imminent.

Indeed, however much cultural sense it makes, theorizing knowledge as capital is a conceptual trap. Knowledge theories in an “intellectual capital” register merely further extend the ambit of an apparently infinitely malleable, and therefore increasingly, mythic substance—witness, e.g., the “value” of dot.coms and the “vaporware” on which many were based. Saturating the world with capital metaphors only increases the difficulty of reproducing actual capital.

Steps toward a “Real” Knowledge Theory of Value

If knowledge is to be recognized as having a central role in cyberspace, it will not be by treating knowledge as capital, either overtly or effectively (as capital in knowledge drag). The promise of a knowledge theory of value can only be realized if it resolves rather than further complicates the contradictions of capital theories of value.

A first step in constructing a knowledge theory of value is to acknowledge the important contribution of labour to value, as theorists like Davenport and Prusak do. An important additional intellectual source of the shift of value attention to knowledge is the “turn to the social” of the institutional “neopolitical economics” of the 1960s. One important aspect of this development, the anthropologies and sociologies of work described in *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*, underlined the knowledge similarities between what workers and managers give to production; each, for example, depends on “know-how,” albeit of different sorts—how to coordinate vs. how to habituate (Kusterer 1978).

Recognition of the interdependence of capital and labour would inhibit the metaphoric effusion of increasingly empty capital forms, but this is not enough. This section develops a knowledge theory of value in cyberspace alternative to both labour and capital theories.

A Summary of Elements Already Presented

Many parts of this “real” knowledge theory of value were presented in *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*. These include the negative practi-

cal consequences of knowledge management’s efforts to treat knowledge as fungible, as composed of discrete, easily equatable and transformable bits. This tendency follows from analogizing knowledge too closely to capital. Instead, a practice approach to knowledge was proposed, a process one built on deeply contextualized knowledge networking.

This practice approach to knowledge can be situated in the multiple intellectual contexts that any knowledge AICT structuralistics must take into account (Section II of *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace*), and this complex theorization of knowledge has been applied in multiple research and practice domains (Section III). Finally, by indicating the major drawbacks of trying to fit contemporary social formation reproduction dynamics into a “capital” straightjacket, the argument presented thus far indicates the theoretical benefits of an alternative value account.

Just as the output of individual workers varies with their competence, so the group output depends upon how well work is coordinated. As neo-institutional work social science showed, both labour’s and capital’s reproduction depends on what individuals and groups know and their ability to put this knowledge to use. If, under genuine competition, productive units were to have access to similar labour powers and comparable machines and raw materials, “know-how” could easily be the main factor differentiating one firm from others.

Framed as “know how,” knowledge is a substantial factor in production. Awareness of the potential of new automated information technologies to “leverage” deployment of know-how, in part a consequence of the publicity surrounding the preoccupation with knowledge in informatics, certainly contributed to the resurgence of general interest in knowledge. This interest was also a consequence of the entry into markets of knowledge products overtly based in informatics.

Another source of knowledge value interest is recent organization theory, especially its increasing acknowledgement of the dense sociality of organizations and of organization itself as a process. Abandoning the effort to identify a rational, positivist management science based on discovery

of ONE BEST WAY, organization theory has recently moved beyond mere grudging recognition of the modicum of informal organization that inevitably accompanies formal organization. Instead, theorists have come to view not the knowledge that an organization holds but its capacity to learn new knowledge as its chief asset. With recognition of the profound sociality of this capacity to learn comes acknowledgement that organization knowledge is not merely a nominal collection of knowledges bounded by the heads of individual organizational members. Knowledge has an important locus in individuals, but its locus in organization is perhaps even more profound. Moreover, because the non-formal knowledge of individuals, work groups, and the organization is substantial and often decisive, it becomes difficult if not impossible to separate organization knowledge from organization itself.

Organization as Knowledge Networking

In other words, at base, organization is knowledge networking. This is the key point in a political economy of knowledge. Further, to the extent that organization dynamics are bent to some other imperative—whether the reproduction of capital or labour—knowledge networking is “distorted.”

In the possible new phase in the employment social formation that I refer to as “cyberfactory,” organized knowledge networking would initially still be bent both by computerization and turbo-capitalism. Still, like other new stages in an evolving social formation type, cyberfactory may nonetheless lead to a more profound transformation in organizational knowledge networking. Some current knowledge networking strategies respond to the contradiction between “deplating” work, on the one hand, and reliance on more collaborative (e.g. “team”) forms of coordination on the other. In my view, these have real potential to compel a “resocialing” of work. By loosening the ties of know-how to current worksite politics, these strategies could open the way to overt recognition of the substantive skills of all workers, including the unskilled. This recognition would logically lead to pay schemes that compensate individual workers for all they actually contribute to value, rather than schemes that primarily reward or-

ganization members (disproportionately managers) for their contribution to profit. Were such schemes broadly applied, they might well indicate a “post-capitalist” social formation (to borrow Drucker’s phrase but not his argument).

Such developments are not out of the question. The “Call” to the OECD Conference discussed above acknowledged concerns about the new economy. These included how “innovation destroys some jobs” and how the “technology equals jobs” formula has a down side, such as the social psychological costs to workers of lost workplace identity. These are identified as reasons for wanting alternative narratives: “There is a need for a debate on alternative ways of organizing labour and the use of technology.”¹³

At least some participants saw the conference as a breakthrough in the introduction of alternative perspectives in the jobs/technology debate. Keith Smith, head of an important policy group funded by the Norwegian Research Council and chief conference rapporteur (1996), summarized the conference as:

- Presenting innovation as a learning process, one cumulative over time, which leads to the idea of spatially differing technology paradigms;
- Viewing technology as flexible; e.g., much of it is tacit, not easily constrained, so there are questions to be asked about how or even if it can be codified;
- Seeing knowledge as not individual; rather, it’s creation is collaborative, inhering in organizations as much as people; and therefore
- Recognizing how the use of knowledge rests on specific, even cultural, infrastructures, on concretely different systems of innovation.

With their increasingly strong economy and oil wealth, the so-called “Sheikdom of the North” was in a position to think very differently about jobs and technology. In his conference paper of 1997, Norwegian economic historian Francis Sjersted

13 By defining “innovation” in purely neo-classical terms, as “the creative process through which additional economic value is extracted from the stock of knowledge,” the conference organizers did themselves no favor in the search for alternatives, however.

argued for a radical experimentation with ways to conceptualize social participation in which the job was much less central, beginning the process of decoupling access to social wealth from the particular job one finds oneself with (or without).

Sjersted's argument seems to have had little effect so far. Still, the explanatory strategies of these institutional economists in Oslo were not oriented toward identification of the presumed formal, machine-like processes "built in" to all economies. Rather, the search was for new capacities for and exercise of alternative social power based on different national/cultural dynamics. It is for such projects that knowledge theories of value hold most promise.

A Classical Knowledge Theory of Value

"Knowledge as the key productive force" perspectives like those outlined above can be alternative, rather than subordinate, to capital theories of value. One example of an attempt to theorize such notions explicitly is Nick Dyer-Witherford's *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-technology Capitalism* (1999). The book's chief relevance to the current era is its presentation of what Marxism offers to answering the knowledge question in cyberspace.

Dyer-Witherford begins with a footnote in *Capital* on the work of the early informatician Charles Babbage:

Commenting on capital's ever-increasing use of machines, [Marx] notes that "mechanical and chemical discoveries" are actually the result of a social cooperative process that [Marx] calls "universal labour...all scientific work, all discovery and invention. It is brought about partly by the cooperation of men now living, but partly by building on earlier work." The fruits of this collective project are, Marx argues, generally appropriated by the "most worthless and wretched kind of money-capitalists." But the ultimate source of their profit is the "new development of the universal labour of the human spirit and their social application by combined labour." [Dyer-Witherford 1999:3-4]

One can see here the germ of a theory of value that gives substantial weight to knowledge while still tying it to the collective and social dimensions

of labour. Dyer-Witherford describes how, in other comments in the *Grundrisse*, Marx

foretells the future technological trajectory of capitalism...At a certain point, Marx predicts, capital's drive to dominate living labour through machinery will mean that "the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed" than on "the general state of science and on the progress of technology." The key factor in production will become the social knowledge necessary for techno-scientific innovation—"general intellect." [4]

Contrasting Marx's attention to universal labour to Babbage's allegiance to the reproduction of capital, Dyer-Witherford poses a "contest for general intellect" between Marx and Babbage. The contest was, in essence, over how a theory of knowledge was to be inclined—toward capital, or toward labour.

In concluding his general defence of the relevance of Marxism in a high-tech world, Dyer-Witherford glosses Marx's view of intellect as an evolutionary account of employment social formations. That is

at a certain point in the development of capital, the creation of real wealth will come to depend not on the direct expenditure of labour time in production but on two interrelated factors: technological expertise, that is, "scientific labour [sic]," and organization, or "social combination." The crucial factor in production will become the "development of the general powers of the human head"; "general social knowledge"; "social intellect"; or... "the general productive forces of the social brain" [Dyer-Witherford 1999:219-220]

Thus, in the mid 19th century, Marx began to develop a knowledge theory of value. "What Marx describes is eminently recognizable as a portrait of what is now commonly termed an 'information society' or 'knowledge economy'" (221). However, just as both labour and capital would decline in importance as society developed, this knowledge theory would not only supersede the labour theory of value; it would also obviate any need for a capital one.

A Contemporary Knowledge Theory of Value

However, as articulated, this Marxian knowledge theory of value is ambiguous, having very different implications depending on which of the “two interrelated factors” is stressed. Modernistically, in the vein of the “scientific” Marxism of Engels, the theory could emphasize the content of “the general state of science and the progress of technology.” Indeed, “the power of knowledge” could even be “objectified” against labour and for capital. On first reading one might indeed see Marx as stressing how “the accumulation of knowledge” gets “absorbed into capital.”

Alternatively, non-Modernistically stress could be given to the social side, neo-pragmatically critiquing scientism and emphasizing “social application by combined labour.” Dyer-Witherford prefers this latter reading, an “optimistic” Marx:

However—and this is the whole point of Marx’s analysis—such a level of technological advance... contains within itself the seeds of a capitalist nightmare. By setting in motion the powers of scientific knowledge and social cooperation, capital ultimately undermines itself... First... as advances... reduce the requirement for direct labour,... the very basis of capitalism’s social order... is eroded...

This is reinforced by a second tendency, the increasingly social nature of activity require for technoscientific development, which unfolds not on the basis of individual effort but as a vast cooperative effort... [B]oth private ownership and payment for isolated quanta of work time appear increasingly as irrelevant impediments to the full use of social resources. [Dyer-Witherford 1999:220]

An Extended Contemporary Knowledge Theory

Dyer-Witherford argues that the contemporary case for transformative optimism is most fully developed in the theoretical work of the largely European journal group *Futur Antérieur*. For them, it is true that “the revolutionary tendencies Marx identified... are occurring, but [still] in forms prescribed by an order that continues to organize itself on the basis of the wage and private ownership,” the reproduction of capital. They go on to critique Marx:

In this situation, it is not enough to focus, as Marx did, on the objectification of social knowledge in new technologies. Rather, the critical issue is that of the nature of the human activity required to create, support, and enable this technoscientific apparatus... [H]ere... we encounter [a] paradox. While capital has developed machines to subordinate and reduce labour at the point of production, this development itself demands the emergence of a new range of social competencies and co-operations—the cultivation of ‘general social knowledge’... [or] ‘mass intellectuality.’

“Mass intellectuality” is the ensemble of “know-hows” that supports the operation of the high-tech economy. It is “the social body” as a “repository of knowledges indivisible from living subjects and from their linguistic cooperation...,” “immaterial labour.” [Dyer-Witherford 1999:221]

On Dyer-Witherford’s reading, for social formation reproduction today,

the crucial question thus becomes how far capital can contain... “this plural, multiform, constantly mutating intelligence” of mass intellect within its structures... [I]t “appears to domesticate general intellect without too much difficulty.” But this absorption demands an extraordinary exercise of “supervision and surveillance,” involving “complex procedures of attributing rights to know and/or rights of access to knowledge which are at the same time procedures of exclusion.” [Dyer-Witherford 1999: 221]

As opposed to the dialectical idealist views that dominate current thinking on management, debilitating because contradictory, *Antérieur* offers the following critique:

Good “management” of the processes of knowledge consists of polarizing them, of producing success and failure, of integrating legitimating knowledges and disqualifying illegitimate knowledges, that is, ones contrary to the reproduction of capital. It needs individuals who know what they are doing, but only up to a certain point. Capitalist “management” and a whole series of institutions (particularly of education) are trying to limit the

usage of knowledges produced and transmitted. In the name of profitability and immediate results, they are prohibiting connections and relationships that could profoundly modify the structure of the field of knowledge. [Dyer-Witherford 1999:222-223]

Interestingly, the writers of *Anterieur* go on to analyze “teams” and “participative management” as sites in which these contradictions are particularly manifest. Beginning in a Kundaesque vein, they speak of how sometimes

new team organization is even more totalitarian than the old assembly line...

However...[i]n delegating...certain managerial responsibilities to workers, capital is partially relinquishing its claim to act as the mediator and coordinator of production. There is a potential tension between capital control of enterprises and the increasingly self-directed nature of work...

[A] massive contradiction arises for capital: it has to stimulate and harness subjectivity by encouraging increasing worker responsabilization, even creativity, in order to grasp a social and communicational surplus value in the workplace... This...comes to constitute a competitive edge in the global fight for shrinking ...markets. But in doing so, capital has to be careful in depriving worker subjectivity of any implication in terms of power and control...In this way, capital silences subjectivity just at the same time it calls it into life. Capital has not found, yet, the ways to deal with this contradiction.” [Dyer-Witherford 1999: 224]

Knowledgers of the World, Unite!

The *Anterieur* writers go on to argue, like good Marxists, that some workers have been able to mobilize “cooperative” aspects of the new work organization to create a social movement for counterpower. In my view, Free/Libre and Open Source Software (F/LOSS) development and advocacy shows some aspects of such a movement. On Dyer-Witherford’s reading, the *Anterieur* group also provide a theory of what might lead such knowledge networking to be transformative. This they see as arising via the heightening of the contradictions of “general intel-

lect,” as these are worked out in

media and communication. General intellect is “a labour of networks and communicative discourse; it is not possible to have a ‘general intellect’ without a great variety of polymorphous communications...communications to use in a creative fashion the knowledges already accumulated, communication to elaborate and record new knowledges.”

Capital has developed technologies of information—mass media, telecommunications, and computer networks—to consolidate markets, an ideological control. But here too it has been unable to develop the objective, fixed, machine side of “general intellect” without also involving the subjective, variable, human aspect...[*Anterieur* writers] reject media critiques framed only in terms of “manipulation.”

Nowhere has [the need for such rejection] been more apparent than in the field of computer-mediated communications...[I]n the development of this extraordinarily powerful technology capital has depended on a mass of informal, innovative, intellectual activity—“hacking”—on whose creative commerce [it; sic] constantly draws even as it criminalizes it. It was out of capital’s inability to contain such activity that there emerged the astounding growth of the Internet. This is surely the quintessential institution of “general intellect... [or]... collective intelligence.” [Dyer-Witherford 1999: 227-228]

Dyer-Witherford finds substantial grounds for optimism about “the capacities of mass intellect to reclaim advanced capital’s means of communication.” A potentially explosive

volatility arises not only from a dynamic of emiseration [as in classical Marxism]—with more and more people being expelled from production by automation—but also from a reappropriative process in which ‘mass intellect’ begins to fold back into itself the organizational and technological knowledge necessary for the running of society... [Such a] “constituent power” ...[means]...the task of radical politics [is] the creation of a “republic” that dissolves both capitalist command and state

authority. [Dyer-Witherford 1999: 230]

Dyer-Witherford concludes,

In the era of mass intellect, a purely Luddite stance is not enough. To grasp the tactical and strategic changes present by capital's failure to control the technological dynamics it has set in motion, activists must be...Luddites on Monday and Friday, cyberpunks the rest of the week. [Dyer-Witherford 1999: 236]

Free/Libre and Open Source Software in the Malay World and the Knowledge Theory of Value

As indicated above, I concluded my initial field studies of AICTed knowledge networking convinced that, if there was one of its forms that was most figurative of what a real Knowledge Society would be, that form is advocacy for and development of Free/Libre and Open Source Software. Since 2002, I have been carrying out virtual and in situ field research on F/LOSSing in the Malay World while also encouraging comparative study of F/LOSSing grounded in other non-North Atlantic contexts. In other texts (e.g., Hakken, submitted) I have made the case for why the study of F/LOSSing should be privileged for those interested in AICTs, knowledge, and social transformation, and I have discussed at length the patterns of the F/LOSSing in the Malay World that I have observed and participated in. In these accounts, I have drawn attention to overt regional patterns, such as the general availability of access to F/LOSS projects, and the strongly held opinion that the number of F/LOSS developers in the region is insufficient to sustain a sufficiently vibrant "community." I have also drawn attention to aspects of the context of southern Southeast Asian computing that appear to be equally relevant to the patterns of F/LOSSing, including the large presence of the state in the economies of the region, distinctive ethnic and gender patterns, and the relative weakness of civil society institutions.

Both overt and context factors must be attended to if we are to understand what the experience of F/LOSSing in, say, the Malay World suggests

about what the F/LOSS experience indicates about movement toward social formations in which value is based on knowledge rather than capital or labour. This is of course not the place to offer a full account of the Malay World patterns or to make general comparisons between "Western" and non-Western F/LOSSing. Nonetheless, I think it appropriate to give at least a flavour of what such an analysis might look like.

Malaysian F/LOSS in Cultural Context

For example, assessment of F/LOSS community dynamics depends upon understanding their connections to broader economic dynamics. A recent survey of F/LOSS firms in the Kuala Lumpur area established that there were close to 200 of them. A similar survey was carried out in Penang during the in situ fieldwork (5 months in early 2005), oriented, as was the KL survey toward the question of whether F/LOSS was an economic sector likely to become big enough to justify substantial public support. While the presence in the regional AICT market of big OS-oriented organizations like IBM, Novell, and Intel does help demonstrate F/LOSS market viability, it also tends to make things harder for small, independent F/LOSS businesses. While indigenous organizations can claim more familiarity with the regional context than transnational ones, they are inconsistent in their localization activities, both actual and potential, beyond mere translation of existing F/LOSS code (e.g., Open Office). Their market marginality, in combination with lack of clarity about what and how to "localize" F/LOSS, means the Malay F/LOSS community has less leverage. Exacerbating the business problems is the large role of the state in the economy and thus the extent to which IT procurement decisions are state dependent, which informants described as like having to depend on "patronage" to win contracts.

The available research indicates that another characteristic of F/LOSSing is its dependence upon the kinds of open discourse characteristic of a public sphere. Unfortunately, the small number of cosmopolitan discourse sites in the Malay World with a F/LOSS tinge are regularly threatened. Award-winning blogger Jeff Ooi has twice been under po-

lice investigations prompted from within the state. Despite laws banning Internet censorship, on-line news service Malaysiakini has had its servers seized, as were those of the publisher of “MalaysiaToday.com.” The nation’s draconian security laws are still in use, and their existence is regularly pointed to as part of discouraging a broad range of activities, from religious groups to those who would protest hikes in the price of petrol.

There are several reasons why Malaysia’s civil society is generally underdeveloped. Controlled print and mass electronic media and weak civil networks mean a restricted space for “free” culture. On several occasions while in the field, I heard leaders of important state and state-sponsored organizations argue against the very idea of a public sphere, saying that Malaysian multiculturalism and racial pluralism was too fragile to withstand the pressures that might result from open discussion.

In part, I regrouped my cyberspace ethnography in southern Southeast Asia because of an interest in the Islamic connection. I was particularly interested in whether the debate over Islam and knowledge would impact on the general debate over technology policy and specifically on F/LOSS. While Malaysia had been a key site in the vigorous debate over Islam and knowledge during the last quarter of the 20th century, I encountered very little during the field period that indicated that this debate had fostered alternative conceptualizations of technoscience. The closest thing to a debate in this area was the discussion surrounding “Islam Hadhari,” a term used by Prime Minister Badawi to characterize the Malaysian approach to Islam. Translated as “civilizational Islam,” and projected as an alternative to fundamentalist forms of Islamism, Islam Hadari was arguably an initiative in llobalization, an intervention with local roots being projected on an international scale. “Debate” on Islam Hadari, however, was mostly over traditional areas of policy concern, only tangentially related to technology. The impressive array of Islamic Institutes, both the independents and those associated with public universities, intervened in public discussions primarily to reinforce generally conservative, text-based interpretations of Islamic law and learning.

“Knowledge society” rhetoric had figured heavily in justifications for major state investment in development projects like the building of Putrajaya, the new administrative capital, and its neighbour Cyberjaya, whose Multimedia Super Corridor, as the names imply, were to become the Malay “Silicon Valley.” However, I was unable to identify any concerted effort to spell out in detail what the Malaysian Knowledge Society would be, beyond simple indicators like an increase in the number of university graduates. Nor did I find any materials in which discussions on the particularities of Islamic knowledge intersected with those about the knowledge society; my queries in this regard were met with bland comments about how good Muslims were highly educated and conversant with the latest developments in science and technology. On several occasions, I suggested that, were one interested in developing a specifically Malaysian/Islamic approach to AICTs, F/LOSS would be an excellent way to do this. Informants generally responded by saying that, while they could see what I meant, they hadn’t thought in those terms. I inferred that they didn’t expect to. (I have elsewhere spelled out this argument and attempted to figure out why these silences exist (ms)).

Malaysian F/LOSS in Comparative Political Perspective

These are among several substantial issues regarding the Open Cultural Imaginary, issues relevant to F/LOSS anywhere, which can be glocal-ized¹⁴ in Malaysia.

Further light was cast on this complex of conjunctions by what went on at a political event that took place during the field study. The occasion was formally a series of presentations on “Reformasi” in the region. This term, used to address similar political movements of the late 1990s, was addressed

14 “Glocalization” refers to a process whereby activities taking place on a broad, trans-national (global) scale are grounded in a particular area. This term, along with its obverse, “llobalization,” in which a process distinctive on one place or community takes on global purchase, have been introduced to broaden discussion beyond the “global-local” dichotomy.

by activists from Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. The general assessment was that the movement had been most successful in Indonesia, where an authoritarian state had been overthrown and substantial progress made toward political freedom (rule of law, a free press), although much remained to be done. While the movement in Thailand had managed to eliminate a military dictatorship, authoritarianism was again on the rise, with potentially devastating consequences for the Islamic minority in the south, just across the border from Malaysia.

The speaker who addressed Reformasi in Malaysia was Anwar Ibrahim, making his first public speech in Malaysia after recently being released from six years in prison. (Testing his ability to speak in public on politics was arguably what the event was really about.) Ibrahim had taken off the mantle of leading Malaysian Reformasi after having been cast out of his position as Deputy Prime Minister in the ruling coalition. In his view and that of the other panelists and the audience, Reformasi had made the least progress in Malaysia. The meeting was sponsored by Keadilan, a political party led by his wife, which was part of the opposition coalition.

In general terms, the relationships among Islam, technologies like F/LOSS, and civil society are refracted in the first instance through a sieve of politics, like the one displayed at this meeting. As several of the speakers commented, there was good reason to expect that the meeting would be disrupted by the police, as it might have been in Thailand but not, at least for the moment, in Indonesia. I left Malaysia feeling that a working out of an “Islamic way to compute,” one that would make sense throughout the region, awaited resolution of several, more pressing matters. Some, like many of those pointed out above, were national. Others are arguably global, the world’s reproductive dynamic—at least rhetorically—being dominated by the dialectic between a new American Empire and Islamic fundamentalism. These are additional indications of how the character of F/LOSSing in this region is dependent upon a wide variety of socio-cultural contexts, most obviously but not only the histories of the region’s post-colonial states.

Conclusions

The goal of this article has been to sketch out a knowledge theory of value appropriate to analyzing the structural dimensions of cyberspace. While not generally seen as a core political economic discipline, anthropology is a practice that in general aims to recognize the importance of both emics and etics, the cultural elements with which humans collectively construct their world and the multiple physical, biological, and material conditions that limit what is culturally constructible. As such, anthropology shares more with institutional/political economic perspectives than with neo-classical economics. A group of self-identified anthropological “substantivists” arose in the 1970s (e.g. Sahlins 1972) to counter the simplistic adoption of neo-classical terminology by ethnographers. These scholars, for example, critiqued the presumption of a universal “social surplus” whose allocation was the scarcity-driven, necessary preoccupation of economic activity (Hakken 1987).

Because a satisfactory ethnology of cyberspace has to account for both dynamic change and the form that change takes, it, too, is more properly grounded in such substantivist political economics. What Michael Blim (1999) calls socio-cultural economy, an approach that acknowledges a plurality of capitalisms, is a more promising engagement with cyberspace than Castells’ theoretical project. Anthropologists should relate to Castells’ ideas as suggestive hypotheses demanding critical evaluation, not as ethnologically demonstrated propositions. Such evaluation may support some of Castells’ arguments. For example, the deplacating affordances of AICTs-in-use do in my view justify Castells’ developing disenchantment with analytic categories, like “cities,” that privilege geography of the old style.¹⁵ Mimi Ito’s (1999) efforts to theo-

15 Such a contention is quite debatable. Saskia Sassen (2000) has argued that the globalization of finance re-privileges a small number of core cities that effectively facilitate the face-to-face interaction that is paradoxically essential to the high level of trust required. Similar arguments have been made in regard to the small number of “hot house” loci (the Boston Route 128 corridor; Silicon Valley, Fen, and Glen; the Grenoble region of France; Kista in Sweden; etc.) of apparently central importance to the “new economy,” whatever it turns out to be.

ribe “networked localities” is suggestive of another strategy for coming to terms with the “decouplings of spaces from places,” the glocalizations as well as llobalizations, that are new in social relations.

In use, AICTs can support diverse tendencies, including that of capital markets to “go global” and new forms of workplace deskilling. AICT-based technologies of surveillance at work can tilt power even further toward capital. At the same time, AICTs are technically just as compatible with expanded work humanization, expanded state intervention (e.g., computerized monitoring of the environmental effects of production), and expanded worker control, as demonstrated by, for example, Nordic systems development projects. Elsewhere (Hakken 1999, Chapter 5) I have discussed data suggesting that analyses of the wellspring of value added are shifting toward the collective performance of the workforce. Chapter 8 of *The Knowledge Landscapes of Cyberspace* similarly argued that already the successful organization is held to be the one able to realize capital by getting its workers to participate most actively while at the same time convincing customers of the genuineness of workers’ performance. Such organizations eventually confront the conflict inherent in all attempts to promote worker control while still keeping work subjugated to the reproduction of capital. A unionism less tied to collective bargaining would find here terrain on which a social activism for the contemporary era might be built. Social activism on these grounds, combined with social experiments which de-couple income from labour, would be indicative of a truly different cyberspace political economy.

The Knowledge Theory of Value and the Future of Social Formation Reproduction

In short, the approach to knowledge developed here can provide the basis for a viable knowledge theory of value. If it were applied to policy and in organizations, what would be the result? Could such knowledge theories of value extend the reproductive ambit of employment social formations into the future? The obstacles to be overcome are formidable. The commodity form continues to expand its long march through the institutions of social

formation reproduction, colonizing new arenas like education. Turbo-capitalism eliminates or severely weakens institutions with some independent ability to influence social formation reproduction (educational institutions, governments, families, voluntary organizations/not-for-profits).

Because it continues to foster anarchic practices, capital’s continuing dominance does not bode well for humans. Our capacities to extend social formation reproduction via AICTs depend upon reversing the dominance of one social relationship, that of capital, and ultimately displacing it by a process, that of knowledge networking. In Sheffield, Barbara Andrews and I saw the beginnings of something like this (1993). When the computers came, the most important determinant of what happened was not the technology qua machines, social relations in the abstract, nor the iron laws of the market. What was most important was how the technology was perceived and which potentials were actually appropriated by the people in actual social relations. While the dominant social relations clearly marginalized some constructions, and economics and mechanics certain others, there was still a broad range of interpretive flexibility in the actual performance of AICTed actor networks.

How momentous is the task of replacing a capital with a knowledge political economy? Does it necessarily mean ending capitalism? Like Megnad Desai (2002), Hutton doesn’t think so:

Obviously globalisation favours shareholder [US: stockholder]-value-driven capitalism and...is being driven by it, so it’s hardly surprising that variants of capitalism that try to balance the other interests in the enterprise, like those of the workers, and to behave more ethically – stakeholder capitalisms – are under pressure. But that doesn’t mean that the principle of stakeholder capitalism is wrong; it means rather that some of the means of achieving it have to be updated and modernized. [Hutton and Giddens 2000: 31]

For Hutton, “stakeholder capitalism” is a form of capitalism in which capital reproduction doesn’t run rampant. Instead, it is designed and disciplined in a manner that equally benefits all social

stakeholders. Because turbo-capitalism is neither a technologically-driven inevitability nor an unstoppable structural imperative, there remains considerable opportunity, as well as pressing need, for the “greater governance of the global economy...” The question remains

to what extent we can modify capitalism so that it can live with other values like quality and social justice. [19]

Every form of capitalism must possess a legal framework in which to do business...[C]orporate, banking, pension fund, employment, trustee, contract and commercial law reflect conscious choices about what kind of capitalism any particular society wants – and my contention is that it can be biased significantly to favour interest other than property owners and private shareholders” [34-35]

On Hutton, it is possible to re-domesticate capitalism. Such a project could use knowledge technologies to construct substantial counters to the reproductive influence of capital.

One need not share Hutton’s optimism about pushing the turbo-capitalist genie back into the bottle. Nor, in theoretical terms, does acceptance of interpretive flexibility with regard to the political economics of AICTs mean, “Anything goes.” Just as turbo-capitalism and “post capitalism” are not the only possible social formations of the future, so Cyberspace structuralistics are not forced to choose between neo-classical capital mythology, political economic technological determinism, or chaos. One can be subtle about causation without abandoning it altogether.

AICTs are better viewed as terrains of contestation than as ineluctable, independent forces. Technologies do have politics, but like all politics, they manifest multiple, contradictory tendencies. Their role in particular situations depends upon how multiple constructions play out, and contexts influence, through conflict. Capitalism is an inherently anarchic political economy, the “new economy” a mirage, but contradictory forces and conflicting constructions mean the future is yet to be determined. Such moments of under-determination can be moments of opportunity.

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Book Review

LOUIS ALTHUSSER AND THE TRADITIONS OF FRENCH MARXISM. By William S. Lewis. New York: Lexington Books. 2005. 250 pp., \$70.00 (cloth) \$24.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-7391-0983-0 (cloth) 978-0-7391-1307-3 (paper)

Louis Althusser is considered one of the most influential Marxist philosophers of the 1960s and '70s. During that time, his writings attracted a lot of attention and enjoyed an extraordinary dominance within Marxism not only as a philosophy but also as a research program in a wide range of social scientific fields. The quick rise to the top, however, was followed by a precipitous fall. The shortcomings that marred his initial attempt to reformulate Marxism in terms of its philosophy and science discredited his whole project. Those problems have already been well documented by, among others, Benton (1984), Callinicos (1976) and, most authoritatively, Elliot (1987).

Althusser was not oblivious to those problems. He revised parts of his theory (his metaphilosophy and ideology), he made his self-criticism (though it was not very detailed) and tried to regenerate interest in his approach. Nothing, however, was the same; the movement that he initiated, it seemed, had spent its force. And from November 1980 until his death in 1990, Althusser's fate oscillated between the incomprehensible and the tragic with the murder of his wife, his companion of thirty-five years.

Althusser never really followed through with reformulating his views after the self-criticism. It was left to his disciples to reconstruct his thought, especially his philosophy of the sciences. Suchting (1992, 1994, 1995) and Baltas (1986, 1992, 1993) were the two Althusserians who did the most to provide an Althusserian philosophy of the sciences as an alternative to the mainstream philosophy, based on Althusser's revisions. But Althusserianism, it seemed, had had its day.

However, in the past several years and the subsequent publication of hitherto unpublished essays,

a renewed interest in Althusser has surged; new book-length commentaries have been published by a new generation of Althusserians (Montag 2003, Ferretter 2006), and a re-evaluation of his work is under way. This is much needed for several reasons: Althusser's newly-published writings may shed a new light on his thought, and the old commentaries may have to be revised under these circumstances. In this sense, the publication of a new book that attempts to rethink and situate Althusser's work within its political and theoretical context, and, additionally, provide a reconstruction of his philosophy of the sciences, is very welcome.

William S. Lewis is one such thinker who attempts to re-evaluate and reconstruct Althusser's work. He is part of a generation that is sympathetic to Althusser, though he is not an Althusserian. He is Roy Bhaskar's disciple (p. 211, n. 39). Louis Althusser and the Traditions of French Marxism "seeks to argue that the work of Louis Althusser provides interesting solutions to problems of Marxism such that those solutions might hold contemporary relevance" (p. 15). This is attempted by showing "how his philosophy emerges out of the concerns of French Intellectual Marxism and of the French Communist Party" (p.15). It is "a narrative detailing the relationship between Marxist thought and Marxist politics" (p.16). The larger concern behind this endeavour is to "champion Marxism as a political philosophy with contemporary relevance" (p. 3), and the historical approach is employed in order to understand the theoretical and political errors that marked prior interpretations of Marxism, and, if possible, avoid and correct them. Althusser's work, it is claimed, will fit the bill. But not before it is reconstructed by Lewis who ventures to criticize

its original formulation in order to present a philosophy of science free of the past rationalist and conventionalist errors, a philosophy of science that will defend Marxism as a science and guide political action.

Lewis finds himself in the unenviable position of being measured against figures such as Benton, Callinicos and Elliott (among others) who provided detailed critical commentaries on Althusser's thought; or, against figures such as Suchting, Lecourt and Baltas (among others) who explicated and/or reconstructed Althusser's philosophy of science—works which he should have consulted more carefully (the first three), or should not have ignored (the last three).

The strengths of the book are that the author knows and explains a great deal. He is diligently detailed in his sources and presents the general outline of the theoretical positions of the French intellectuals with competence.

The weaknesses of the book are in the inadequate account he provides of the most central assertions of the argument: the potential of Marxist political philosophy after Althusser's intervention, the concern that animates the book; and the reconstruction of Althusser's thought in terms of its philosophy of the sciences which, allegedly, provides solutions for the central concern. One could say that where the thesis is at its most aggressive, it is least substantiated, in both the argument devoted to the points and in the lack of connecting arguments relevant to them.

Before I turn to a more detailed consideration of the above points, I will offer some brief comments on Lewis' related theme—that Althusser responds to the French intellectual scene in general and to the Parti communiste française (PCF) in particular.

Lewis is clearly right in claiming that Althusser's work is a response to the debates within the PCF and the Marxist trends among the French intellectuals. Althusser (*Radical Philosophy* 1975 12:44) himself had already indicated that his work is a response to Stalinism and Khrushchev's right-wing destalinization, a humanist deviation. Lewis, taking his cue from this, shows that the former was the

creed of the PCF (and led to political disasters), while the latter ran rampant among the French intellectuals in the forms of Hegelian (Lefebvre, Cornu, see pp. 96-108 and 127-135) and Existential Marxisms (Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, see pp. 135-148). The author displays a balanced view, moving across the different positions of these forms of Marxism but the space devoted to this part as a whole is unnecessarily long; it occupies two-thirds (the first five chapters) of the text and is disproportionate to the part devoted to Althusser (the main figure of the text) which occupies one-third (the last two chapters). A good deal of it seems also unrelated to the main argument dealing with the origins and foundations of the PCF (pp. 29-47), while the rest is a routine exposition of the main features of those Marxisms and adds little to what is already familiar. Moreover, Lewis fails to show the historicist nature of those interpretations of Marxism and connect with Althusser's criticism of it—a criticism that is one of Althusser's legacies.

Lewis is most effective when discussing the theoretical and political positions of the PCF (the epistemological privileging of the working class, the inevitability of proletarian revolution, pp 54-65; the notion of 'two sciences', pp 122-126) tracing the theoretical roots to (Stalinist interpretations of) Lenin and Engels. Lewis, however, does not make this distinction and displays a particular hostility towards Lenin. This is quite strange given that Lewis adopts Althusser's revisions which come directly from Lenin (that is, philosophy as class struggle, spontaneous materialism of scientists). Nevertheless, the author is able to show the easy adoption by the PCF of the 'orthodox' Soviet Marxism. In consequence, what was hardly more than a sketch of a theory became effectively frozen in dogma, immune from the often facile but sometimes trenchant criticisms levelled against it, and impervious to theoretical elaboration or even clarification. Adopting Althusser's position, Lewis criticizes those Marxisms for being "empiricistic... ascribing laws to history and essences to historical 'subjects' (whether this be the party or Man);" those theoretical errors "also led to misguided political practices" (p.166).

Turning now to Lewis's treatment of Althusser, one can only be puzzled by the omissions in presenting the latter's positions and the unsubstantiated claims that Lewis makes. In the last two chapters of his text, Lewis focuses on Althusser's philosophy of the sciences aiming firstly at presenting it, detecting its errors, and criticizing them; and then secondly by reconstructing it. The discussion, however, raises certain aporiae because it is quite problematic. There are four such aporiae I would like to touch upon.

1. Althusser is taken to offer solutions to Marxist political philosophy (pp. 4, 15, 17, 158, 159, 190). The problems that plagued Marxism (for example, p.164 and alluded to throughout) have to do with (a) erroneous philosophy of science ('reflection' theory of knowledge (p.165), which, however, is never shown) that led to a false substantive theory (science) and, consequently, misguided political practice (the errors of the PCF); (b) lack of a viable philosophy of science to defend the scientificity of Marxism and guide political action (Hegelian and Existential Marxisms). The task Lewis sets for himself then is to show that Althusser does provide a sound philosophy of science, and to show how this could guide political action (these are also the tasks Althusser had set for himself, according to Lewis, p. 189). However, the second task is never really discussed; Lewis devotes only one page to it—the concluding sub-section of the last chapter—and never shows how Althusser could provide a guide to political action. The claim stands as if it is self-certifying. Such a strong claim requires some persuasive reason within the text to support it—which I do not deny it can be given in some form—but it is missing. Lewis simply states that new possibilities open up—which is true, but what are they? He fails to specify any possibilities and, in this sense, he is unable to deliver on the core claim of his text, that "Althusser's reinterpretation...resolves certain contemporary problems in political philosophy" (p.15).

2. The second aporia relates to the first task discussed above. In ch. 6, Lewis attempts to present Althusser's original philosophy of science and evaluate it. Remarkably, he ends up emasculating

Althusser: there is no mention of the distinction between theoretical/real object, 'knowledge effect,' problematic, open and closed problematic; no discussion of Althusser's notion of empiricism (though there are two references to it in the same paragraph on pp.165-6) which is different from the standard use in philosophy and includes both empiricism and rationalism; no discussion of Spinoza or Bachelard, some of whose ideas Althusser appropriated. Lewis constructs a straw-man in order to dismiss it (with no critical examination) as rationalist and conventionalist (pp.170, 175) because the criteria of scientificity are internal to a scientific discourse and there is no 'external check,' no 'external verification' (no extra-scientific guarantees?). But what did Althusser mean by 'internal criteria of scientificity'? Why did he reject any 'external check'? How did he define/demarcate science? What are the criteria for such a demarcation? What does Lewis mean by 'external verification/check'? How does this differ from positivism? And many other questions that are left unanswered. As a result, the author is unable to evaluate and discuss Althusser's original philosophy of science, unless we take the charge of conventionalism as a discussion of limitation. But this by itself will not be sufficient. The questions which the author should have been concerned with—'does Althusser provide criteria of demarcation?'; 'what are those criteria?'; 'do they demarcate science from ideology?'; 'what makes a theory scientific and what makes a theory ideological?'—these questions are never raised, let alone discussed. The author is unable to explain how Althusser demarcates science from ideology (and discuss, consequently, its limitations) because he never refers to what he has omitted from his presentation of that philosophy of science, that is, the distinction between an object constructed within a problematic (science) and a given object (ideology). As it stands, this presentation of Althusser's philosophy of science lacks any credibility.

3. The third aporia regards Lewis' attempted reconstruction of Althusser's philosophy of science and is deeper in significance for Lewis' text since the idea is to provide a firm scientificity upon which to base

political action. Right off the bat, he claims that Althusser, after the revisions he made, is “willing to promote the position that reality itself provides an external check on science’s findings” (p. 192). This corrects the conventionalist errors but it is not “the renunciation of conventionalism.” To begin with, the author fails to explain how those conventionalist errors are corrected; how conventionalism (even in a modified form) functions within a reconstructed theory of science; and if conventionalism is not renounced, why is it a charge? Moreover, Lewis is unable to provide any textual evidence to support his claim that Althusser changed positions regarding the notion of science, which leaves it suspended in the air. Did Althusser change his view of science? The materials we have at our disposal do not warrant such a claim. Althusser changed his metaphilosophy (from the ‘science of the sciences’ to ‘class struggle in theory’) and his theory of ideology (from the opposite of science to something that permeates everything, including science)—Lewis records those changes in ch. 7. Those revisions do affect the concept of science but Althusser did not say much about it. It was as if everything else remained the same. What science would look like and how it would be demarcated from non-science were left to his disciples to reconstruct. Moreover, there is evidence (in *Lenin and Philosophy*, in *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, and in *Essays in Self-Criticism*, based on the new definition of philosophy which cancels all guarantees of knowledge and, thus, affects the notion of demarcation) that Althusser is moving away from the traditional problem of demarcation (i.e., choosing between theories) to a new one (i.e., choosing between philosophies that foster the development of science and philosophies that inhibit the development of science) to completely abandoning it (i.e., choosing neither theories, nor philosophies but problems to be solved; in this sense, Althusser provides a problem-oriented philosophy of science that Lewis misses all together). Lewis simply ascribes a position to Althusser that the latter, it seems, did not hold—he provides no evidence to the contrary; the ensuing discussion regarding demarcation is confused and constitutes a throwback rather than

an advance. Lewis suggests (he provides no argument for his suggestions) that science is demarcated from ideology in terms of testability (p. 192, he gives reference to Resch but the problem is that the latter does not talk about testability there). This is an ‘objective’ criterion established independently of scientific practice, and applied to theories in order to evaluate them in terms of their formal characteristics. It is an Archimedian topos from which one could judge the merits of theories. And taken together with Lewis’ complaints about lack of ‘external verification/check,’ they point to a different direction: positivism. Now apart from the problems such a criterion poses (which are all too well known), Lewis manages to emasculate his own criterion, in the same sentence, when he states that it is “science...that uncover[s]” the difference between science and ideology, claiming in effect that one must be inside a theory, not outside it as testability suggests, in order to judge another theory! Philosophy of science, it seems, is not Lewis’ forte. To add to the total confusion, he claims that concept formation proceeds inductively: observation, abstraction, generalization (p.195)! In any case, some argument must be provided to substantiate those claims because they are not self-evident.

4. The fourth aporia is related to the role philosophy plays in Althusser’s writings after the revisions he made. Lewis attempts to explicate this role but, remarkably, manages to obscure it. It is clear in Althusser’s later writings that philosophy (as class struggle in theory) does not intervene in science and thus, is not responsible for demarcating it from ideology (*Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, pp. 99, 141-2). Lewis, however, claims that its role is both to demarcate science from ideology (pp. 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197) and demarcate the ideological appropriations of science from non-ideological ones (pp. 193, 194, 195); sometimes the two notions occur in the same sentence and are employed interchangeably. Those two notions of demarcation are neither equivalent nor complementary; the first takes place in science, the second in philosophy. The author simply (con)fuses them and uses them interchangeably.

In effect, he fails to explain the difference between ‘science’/‘the scientific’ and ‘ideology’/‘the ideological’ that Althusser makes (*Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, p.107) according to which, the terms in each pair are not identical. This leads him to mistake philosophy as providing the foundation (the role of a referee, p. 197) to guarantee the scientificity of a theory. Moreover, philosophy is endowed with the capacity to transform class relations (p.194), and this is how, Lewis claims, it intervenes politically—an idealist lapse.

The topic of the book is certainly interesting but the treatment of it is not. The first five chapters are quite long with a good deal of it unrelated to the core claims while the rest consists of summaries of standard accounts of French Hegelian and Existential Marxisms. The last two chapters on Althusser do not provide an adequate account of Althusser’s notion of science and consist of claims that are not substantiated. It is quite legitimate for Lewis to claim that Althusser’s thought should be reconstructed in terms of testability and verification, but a persuasive argument must be provided for this. As they stand, they are arbitrary and open to any interpretation.

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