

NEW PROPOSALS
JOURNAL OF MARXISM AND
INTERDISCIPLINARY INQUIRY

VOLUME SEVEN, NUMBER 2, MARCH 2015

New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry
Volume 7, Number 2, March 2015
ISSN 1715-6718

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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.

Volume 7:2 Issue Editor

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Introduction

Charles R. Menzies

New Proposals Editorial Collective

Navigating the Way Toward Social Justice

On the cover of this issue of the journal is a photo taken in the wheelhouse of a coastal British Columbia fishboat. It is dark out, the image is not in sharp focus, the man on the wheel is staring up at an electronic map display, and we can't see forward through the vessel's windows. For those familiar with navigational electronics you will know that the green display is of a GPS (Global Positioning System) assisted chart plotter. It shows where one is and aids in finding the way towards one's destination. On a vessel of this size we also had a radar that helped show other vessels moving around us, radios providing information on weather conditions, and devices to tell us how deep the water was underneath the boat's hull. All of that is meaningless, of course, if we didn't also know how to interpret the information. All of that electronic data is then compared with the sounds we hear and what we see when we open a wheelhouse window and peer forward into the dark, rainy night.

Early navigators travelling through these same waterways millennia ago did not have our electronic instruments. They did share a similar understanding of the physical sense of navigation and observational skills required to move through unfamiliar terrain. The old histories of navigating through these waters include references to landmarks and currents that

remain familiar to us today. Yet we see them slightly differently and we use them to purposes somewhat different than our predecessors did. We remain intent, however, upon finding our way from one point to another.

Łagyigyet, the old people or ancestors, made their lives in these waters. They struggled to find a balance between themselves and their human needs and the other social beings that inhabited these waters. While their world was not perfect, it was a world in which a certain sense of social justice pervaded. When the people lost their way from the path retribution was swift – floods, slides, death felled the prideful. Out of each crisis and collapse the old people rose again and reestablished themselves.

The most recent crisis, one that we have yet to find our way out of, was heralded in by the arrival of a new class of navigators: European merchant adventures. These sail powered ships arrived searching for new resources to exploit as part of the capitalist expansion out of Europe then underway. In addition to being instrumental in expanding capitalist relations of production, these newcomers brought devastating disease that led to massive depopulation at genocidal levels. Out of the ensuing melee came the imposition of a system of economic and politi-

cal governance that has prioritized greed, individual advancement, and dishonesty.

The 20th century was witness to several disastrous attempts to find an escape from the depredations of capitalism and capitalists. The revolutionary attempts at change fell prey to the poisoned global environment and crashed in on themselves. In their wake even worse examples of capitalist libertarianism have emerged.

Mistakes can happen. Knowledge, tools, skills don't guarantee that our journey is made without difficulty or mishap. I have stood in a wheelhouse of a boat when the seas were too rough, the conditions too dangerous to go forward. I recall one time when we were all gathered in the wheelhouse. We were heading out across a treacherous open body of water with the waves and wind coming up. A decision needed to be made. Did we keep moving forward, take the risk of that dangerous crossing? Ultimately the decision was made to turn back. Yet, even that decision was difficult to execute. To turn the boat at the wrong moment would capsize her. That I write about it nearly 40 years later testifies to the fact we made the turn and brought the boat around.

The journey toward a more just society is fraught with turnarounds, disruptions, and even loss of

faith in the possibility. The commentaries and articles in the opening section of this issue hold fast to the idea that a better world is not only possible but also desirable. From scholarly activism to feminist interventions we have a set of tools and a body of knowledge that can help as we navigate forward. In the cracks and fissures of an imperfect capitalism we can make spaces for collaboration and cooperation, even in the center of imperialist nations (see Shannon this issue on museum collaborations with Indigenous curators).

The papers in the second section of this issue provide additional content and analysis of the world that we must now navigate through. Here we see the role of information technology in shaping the early 21st century landscape of capitalism. A lot has changed since the days when a paper newspaper sold on a street corner could be a revolutionary instrument of change. Today the internet has superseded that older technology. Nonetheless the same configuration of capitalism remains at the heart of the problem: a patent disregard for human sentiment or dignity.

We can offer no certainty about the outcome. We can and will offer examples to follow. Read on and join the journey toward social justice.

Special Theme Reflections and Comments

Scholars and Activism: Can Progressive Scholarship Advance a Left Politics?

Steve Striffler
University of New Orleans

I begin this discussion with a distinction between, on the one hand, the relationship between activism and our role as scholars and, on the other, the relationship between activism and the scholarship we produce. I have been an activist and a scholar for over two decades, and although I find both roles, and the relationship between them, to be immensely frustrating (and rewarding) at times, I would not say being a scholar-activist is inherently problematic.

To be sure, it is frustrating to be an activist in a place and time where there is no effective left. It is also frustrating to be a scholar in the United States, a country that generally disdains intellectuals; in a public university system that is crumbling around us; in a society where more and more people find themselves unable to access higher education; and in a workplace where most of our colleagues are some combination of apathetic and scared.

And yet, bitterness aside (!), we find imperfect ways to do both. We participate in the politics of universities. Like other progressive faculty, I have

been involved in Students Against Sweatshops, on-campus labour unions, university governance, and a state-wide organization to defend higher education against budget cuts. We also engage in politics beyond the university. Our role as intellectuals occasionally allows us to intervene in targeted ways, as “experts” who can serve as legal witnesses, provide a good sound bite, or pen the odd editorial. Over the past two decades, I have participated in anti-war and immigrant rights “movements,” founded and helped run a Workers Center, worked on Latin American solidarity, and contributed to the labour movement’s effort to keep a local shipyard open. In all of these cases, my role as a scholar has contributed to the politics I have engaged in as an activist.

The relationship between activism and the scholarship we produce, however, is much more problematic. For many scholars, it is no longer sufficient to simply publish work that offers a cultural or political critique of the existing world. Championing the downtrodden, analyzing the powerful, and other-

wise producing “emancipatory knowledge” is all well and good, and something many anthropologists now embrace, but on some level it is profoundly unsatisfying. Increasingly nuanced, sophisticated, and radical accounts are not liberating anyone. For the most part, no one is listening to what we have to say, and the relationship between what we have to say and any form of meaningful political change is vague and tenuous at best.

This ivory tower critique of progressive scholarship has led both academics, as well as the subjects of our research, to ask: How can marginalized groups, those we study, benefit more directly from our “progressive” research? Implicit in such a question is the insistence that there should be a much more direct, conscious, and thought-out relationship between our research, the “subjects” of our research, and a progressive politics. This concern, in turn, has contributed to the development of “activist research,” a challenge to conventional scholarship that affirms

a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow[s] dialogue with them to shape each phase of the process, from conception of the research topic to data collection to verification and dissemination of the results. [Hale 2006:97]

Charles Hale pushes this point even further, in effect suggesting that a more overt and active political engagement will not only generate a research product that is more useful to those we study and are aligned with, but will enrich our intellectual contributions as well:

To align oneself with a political struggle while carrying out research on issues related to that struggle is to occupy a space of profoundly generative scholarly understanding. The resulting contradictions make the research more difficult to carry out, but they also generate insight that otherwise would be impossible to achieve. [Hale 2006:98]

There is by now a quite lengthy literature on “activist research,” or what is sometimes called participatory, action, or community-based research.¹ Such

1 Hale (2006 and 2008) is a good place to start. See also Sanford and Angel-Ajani (2006) and Beck and Maida (2013).

discussions, particularly within the last two decades, have offered a powerful *methodological* challenge. The emphasis has been on collaboration between the “expert” and various stakeholders, whereby the researcher is accountable to a particular group, there is a mutual give and take, and knowledge is produced in an “egalitarian” way in which marginalized groups are involved in every step of the research process. This research, in turn, is not only deemed ethically superior, but said to produce (a) better research outcomes and (b) a more effective politics.

Most of the literature has defined “activist research” largely in terms of a more egalitarian and collaborative methodology, focusing overwhelmingly on research outcomes, and how collaboration can produce rigorous and innovative research. Larger political questions tend to get sidelined in such discussions, with the assumption being that research tied to an organized group will serve the community and contribute to the social good in some way. As long as the researcher is addressing a problem defined in conjunction with a marginalized group that possesses decent politics then the political/activist bar has been met. Additional questions become unnecessary, almost inappropriate.

This lack of attention to more political questions is no doubt due to a variety of factors, including: the reluctance to judge or evaluate the politics of marginalized groups and/or our colleagues; the difficulty of defining, let alone determining, what is politically effective or meaningful; an inferiority complex about the “rigour” of activist scholarship that has led proponents to focus more on the quality of research outcomes than the quality of political outcomes; the powerful desire to “give back” means researchers are inclined to jump on almost any request made by communities (i.e. thank goodness I can help in some way!), which in turn discourages critical thinking about political strategy or effectiveness (and encourages “activism” that more resembles social work or small-scale development aid than a left politics); and the fact that the methodological requirements of activist research are set so high. This last point is not inconsequential. It is hard enough to conceptualize, carry out, produce, and utilize research in collaboration with an organized group of people (even harder

when they are marginalized, have no resources, etc.). To then require that this research not only benefits a particular group, but advances a struggle that at least has the possibility of altering the political landscape in some meaningful way is setting the bar quite high.²

The danger, however, of avoiding these types of political questions is that we potentially put a lot of effort towards political causes that are going nowhere and do little more than make us feel good that we tried to help those we work with. This lack of political reflection also contributes to the tendency for activist researchers to attach themselves to well-meaning NGOs, or other minimally resourced organizations, that are best situated to collaborate and utilize the expertise of an academic, but are not necessarily in a position to advance a left politics.³

The following attempts to address these questions through examples from my own work. How does one produce collaborative research that advances a meaningful political struggle and is academically rigorous/satisfying? Does a close, thought-out, relationship between scholarly production and political struggle enhance both ends of the relationship? Based on my own experience, this answer is far from clear. It may even be that in many cases it makes sense to keep some distance between one's scholarship and one's activism.

Workers Center

In the early 2000s, myself, at the time an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Arkansas, along with a law professor, were approached by Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ) out of Chicago about the possibility of establishing a Workers Center in Northwest Arkansas. IWJ was looking to establish Centers in regions of the United States that had little

union presence and a glaring need for both progressive organizing and outside help. Home to Tyson Foods, the largest poultry industry in the country, a large and relatively new immigrant population, as well as the headquarters of Wal-Mart, Northwest Arkansas seemed ideal. The presence of a large university gave an otherwise conservative region a (tiny) bit of a progressive edge, which meant the Center had a slim chance of becoming self-sustaining once it was off the ground. For most of the next decade, then, I helped establish the Northwest Arkansas Workers Justice Center, including grant writing and fundraising, building an advisory board, hiring staff, directing the Center, finding lawyers, etc.

At roughly the same time, but with no direct or active connection to the Workers Center, I began scholarly research on the poultry industry, a process that would lead me to work for two summers in Tyson poultry plants, investigate the history of the industry, interview poultry farmers and processing plant workers, travel to Mexico, and eventually produce a book, *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food* (Yale University Press 2005). In the process, I became something of an "expert" on the poultry industry and immigration into the US South.

Here, the relationship between scholarship and activism is what I would call "informed." The two endeavours informed each other, but were never conceptualized or carried out with the other in mind. My research, and particularly my ethnographic work in poultry plants, immigrant communities in Arkansas, and in Mexico, clearly informed efforts to establish a Workers Center, but it was not conceptualized or carried out in collaboration with any organization (in part because the Center itself was just getting off the ground and in part because the research was not about a particular group). Likewise, my activism with the Workers Center educated me about immigrant life and thus facilitated my research in some general way.

Yet, the connections were quite loose. The scholarship certainly established me as "expert" and put me in a position to intervene within national debates about the meat industries. And I like to think the book, in some vague and limited way, con-

² This is particularly true because most anthropologists find themselves aligned with groups who are not involved, and do not have the capacity to engage in, political struggles that are even remotely designed to produce significant changes to the social order. Few anthropologists work with progressive movements that are in a position to advance a left politics in a substantial way. More typically, we are aligned with groups who are looking to survive a bit better under difficult conditions. They often want and need concrete things – like economic development – within a timeframe that most academic scholarship is not capable of delivering.

³ It strikes me that when many scholars say they are working with a social movement they are really working for an NGO, and often seem to conflate the two without much critical reflection.

tributed to public debates about food, agriculture, labour, and the like. In this sense, I would describe the research as “activist” in its critique of industrial agriculture, and what it says about workers, farmers, and the need to organize, but not at a methodological level in terms of the relationship between the research process and the people who appear in the pages of the book.⁴

The research was not conceptualized in relation to, or with the idea of advancing, the cause of the Workers Center or organizing local workers (though one of the messages of the book is that meaningful reform of the poultry industry would have to include and be driven by an organized labour force). To be sure, the skills I developed as a scholar were crucial in developing pamphlets, press releases, and grants, in building the Workers Center, but this activism was independent from any scholarship.

Likewise, my political work did not shape the research in a particularly direct way, either at the level of conceptualization or in the course of conducting the research. People I worked with through the Center played no role in the research I was doing on the industry. If they thought or knew about it at all, most probably wished I had been a lawyer instead of an anthropologist. In short, the book would not have looked fundamentally different had I never been politically engaged; and the political engagement would not have changed dramatically had I not done research on the industry.

In other words, the activism and the scholarship were largely distinct commitments. Such compartmentalization is not necessarily a bad thing. In this case, I would argue that it made both the scholarship and the activism better than had the relationship between the two been more intimately connected. My activism was never driven by any scholarly commitments, but instead flowed from the needs of the Workers Center. Likewise, the scholarship was not beholden to the immediate needs of a particular group, but was driven by a commitment to write a critical history of the poultry industry that was

accessible to a public audience.⁵ One caveat: A more critical, scholarly, examination of Workers Centers might have strengthened our political efforts, and forced us to think more about the place of Workers Centers in advancing a left politics.

Latin American Solidarity

From the mid-2000s until the present I have been working around the coal industry in Colombia, a project in which political concerns more directly drove the scholarly research. Northern Colombia is home to the two largest coal mines in the world, both of which were started by US companies, have interesting labour histories, and have displaced indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. I came to the project through a solidarity campaign involving Colombians, Europeans, Canadians, and other Americans. The campaign has been multifaceted, including annual delegations to the region, facilitating negotiations between communities and one of the mines, and putting public pressure on mining companies in the United States.

In the course of the campaign, we produced a book that local communities in Colombia requested. Published in English and Spanish, *The People Behind Colombian Coal: Mining, Multinationals, and Human Rights* (Chomsky, Leech, and Striffler 2007) contains reports, analyses, and commentary by scholars, activists, doctors, union leaders, and community leaders about the Cerrejon mine. The book was not scholarly in the traditional sense, and was not “activist research” in the sense of a collaborative research project conceptualized and carried out with local communities. It was an edited collection, requested by the communities, and produced with the express purpose of advancing the larger campaign. In part because the focus has been on developing the solidarity campaign, scholarly research has taken somewhat of a backseat, emerging out of political needs, or as a reflection about the process and politics of solidarity itself (Chomsky and Striffler 2009, 2014a, 2014b).

4 Which is partially an argument for a traditional notion of activist-scholars that emphasizes political critique and the absolutely vital task of finding ways to bring left scholarship to larger publics.

5 In some of the literature on activist research there seems to be the assumption that scholars have commitments to either the local communities they work with or the disciplines/universities they work for, and that these commitments come into tension with one another. I get this, but certainly some of us write less for our discipline/employer, and more because of a political commitment to influence public debates.

In this case, then, the scholarship was not simply informed by an organized struggle, but was driven by it. Upon the request of communities in Colombia, and as part of a campaign, we produced a book that advanced the struggle to improve conditions around the mine by putting it under an international microscope (something our status as scholars facilitated). Skills and resources we had as academics clearly made this possible, and were put to use throughout a campaign that required reports, emails, letters of protest, speakers tours, and the like. We took action based on directives from locals, but for the most part they did not directly participate in the production of materials that were intended for international audiences. Yet, in part because the scholarship was largely determined by political needs, and not conceptualized or carried out independently of it, or even made a priority, the research outcomes have been slightly more sporadic because the research agenda did not drive the project from the outset.

Moreover, although the book played its part in the larger campaign, and was certainly appreciated by the communities, its place is not uncomplicated. First, more often than not, it has been our status as foreign scholars who possess the ability to publicize conditions at the mine (rather than the scholarship itself) that has been key to any pressure we have been able to put on the companies. Second, there is a temptation for at least some community members, as well as others, to conclude: if only a foreigner produces a study about x, y, or z, and gets the word out about the horrible situation, then surely our problem would be addressed. Put another way, there is a tendency to overestimate the impact that “reports” and “studies” can have on a situation, especially one where the balance of power is so skewed.⁶ Third, for every report we are asked to produce – most of which we cannot possibly do because we lack the expertise and resources to document the impact of mining on the region – there are a dozen requests for what would fall under the broad category of economic development. In other words, the impact of our “scholarship” is limited, it is often not the type of scholarship most

needed, and what communities really want is something our research cannot deliver in any immediate way: economic development and political influence.

In this sense, although this struggle is clearly a class struggle, it is very much a defensive one that is less about altering power relations in some fundamental way than it is about negotiating the best possible terms of a difficult existence. Regardless, one of the liberating, and I think effective, aspects of the political work is that it has been largely divorced from the pressures of academic publishing; scholarship has largely been produced as demanded by the politics.⁷

Save Our Shipyard!

In 2010 Huntington Ingalls announced that it would be closing the Avondale Shipyard and laying off some 5000 workers. Avondale, which had once employed close to 20,000 workers during the 1970s, had long been an important backbone of the middle class in the New Orleans region.⁸ It was, in a sense, one of the last vestiges of the region’s disappearing manufacturing base, a place where the working poor could achieve middle class stability without a college education. Avondale had also, during the 1990s, been home to one of the longest and most expensive union struggles in the history of the AFL-CIO. With declining demand from the US Navy, however, Huntington Ingalls determined that it would soon shutter the storied facility.

In response, the AFL-CIO decided – after considerable internal debate – to put up a fight and sent Nick Unger from the Strategic Campaign Center to organize the “Save Avondale” campaign. Part of the campaign involved a research component, which as Unger had conceptualized it, would involve about ten academics doing virtually any type of research on the Avondale shipyard. The AFL-CIO would facilitate the research in the sense of encouraging workers to participate and making documents available, but scholars would be free to investigate Avondale from any angle. There were two conditions: the research had to be done quickly and presented to a public audience (i.e. not published two years later in an

6 Academics are seduced as much as anyone by the notion that all politics are informational politics because it is what we do – produce information.

7 This, of course, is much easier to do when one is tenured and not at an elite research university.

8 I moved to the University of New Orleans in 2008.

academic journal). The AFL-CIO's reasoning was that any research would be good for the campaign in that it would put Avondale into the news and create a public debate about the shipyard's closing.

In this sense, the research was collaborative in that scholars were being asked by the AFL-CIO, and supported by rank and file workers, to conduct research that would hopefully advance the cause. As it turns out, a deeper collaboration made no sense strategically because more direct participation from the AFL-CIO in conceptualizing or carrying out the research would have tainted it as "union-driven" in the eyes of the media. The research had to be produced by "independent" scholars.

We, the scholars, produced a series of reports within three to six months about the history of the shipyard, the motives for closing the yard, and the potential impact of its closing on workers and the larger community. Our scholarship served its political purpose. Along with other aspects of the campaign, it helped garner media attention, generated a public debate about Avondale, and advanced the cause of keeping the yard open. The campaign made the proposed closing a debate as opposed to an inevitability.

From a scholarly perspective, the reports were not without issues. First, the activist research model adopted here required that ten or so scholars, from four different universities, put their own research projects on hold. The fact that Nick Unger was able to pull the group together is a testament to his organizing skills, but it is not an easily reproducible model. Second, we were asked to develop and carry out research projects on a topic very few of us knew anything about in a span of about six months. For the purposes of the campaign, and the local media who were more than willing to anoint a group of professors as "experts," this more or less worked. We came up with earth-shattering conclusions along the lines of: losing 5000 well-paid jobs will have a series of negative effects on the workers and the region! As scholars this may have been less than satisfying, and I suspect few of us would put the reports in the category of "scholarship" in the traditional sense. Finally, for better or worse, once the campaign was over so was the research. This was not a long-term commitment.

None of the above cases were originally conceptualized as "activist research," or even serve as particularly exemplary examples, especially in a methodological sense. In fact, what I think they suggest is that it may be useful to think about and define "activist research" (a bit) less in terms of methodology, less in terms of the power relations between a researcher and the "subjects" of study (and less in terms of the quality of the scholarship being produced), and more in terms of the broader politics being advanced, and how scholarship, produced through a range of different methodologies, can or cannot advance those projects (in part by reaching broader publics).

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Neoliberalism, GATS, and Higher Education in India: Moving Away From Its Original Objectives

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ABSTRACT: Privatization of higher education is not a new phenomenon in India. However, since India started embracing neoliberal policies in 1991, the objectives of higher education in India have increasingly shifted from philanthropy to profit-maximization. This paper is an empirical attempt to show how the higher education system in India is gradually changing with the demands of neoliberalism and leaving behind its original objectives of promoting national development through equity and quality. This paper will also suggest some possible solutions.

KEYWORDS: neoliberalism; GATS; privatization; higher education; India

Introduction

The five goals of higher education in India are: Greater Access, Equal Access (or Equity), Quality and Excellence, Relevance, and Promotion of Social Values (Thorat 2006). Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral, and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. In addition, it is also considered fundamental for both material and spiritual development, and serves to further the goals of socialism, secularism, and democracy enshrined in the Constitution of India (NCERT 1993).

However, the recent neoliberal privatization of higher education in India side-steps its original goals. Since India started opening its economy in 1991, the pervasive influence of neoliberalization has been seen

on all of its sectors, including education. Its most significant effects can be seen in the commodification of higher education and the corporatization of post-secondary institutions. This has created a three-pronged issue: elitism, standardization, and market-oriented education. This paper is an attempt to understand the politics of this process.

The Problem

Neoliberalism has been defined in many ways. David Harvey in his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* has given a wide-ranging definition of Neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills

within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. ... Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. [Harvey 2005: 4]

This definition of Neoliberalism clearly indicates that where a market does not already exist (i.e. in the areas of land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) it must be created by the state.

Market is created to sell commodity; however, education is not a commodity to be bought and sold. One can buy the means to an education, but not the hard graft of autonomous learning itself. Professor John McMurtry, among others, has noted that education and unfettered capitalism and globalization hold opposing goals, motivations, methods, and standards of excellence as well as standards of freedom. Another prominent scholar of education Prof. Dave Hill argues that market suppresses critical thought and education itself. Market does promote learning of skills, but only considers which are appropriate in the different markets (Hill 2011).

Until not so long ago, education was mostly produced and consumed within national boundaries, and this was the reason economists used to describe it as “non-traded” (Nayyar 2007). However, the spread of markets and the momentum of globalization during the past three decades have transformed the world of higher education almost beyond recognition. Market forces, driven by the threat of competition as well as for the lure of profit, have led to the emergence of higher education as a core area business. This was bolstered by another factor, the technological revolution, which led to a dramatic transformation in distance education as a mode of delivery. “The internet has truly revolutionized how knowledge is communicated. In the world’s most developed economies, the presence of ICTs has expanded exponentially and touched all dimensions of the higher education enterprise”(Altbach et al. 2009). For example, in

India, currently 18 to 20 percent of enrollment in higher education is in the programs offered by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and State Open Universities (Sharma 2014).

There is another, more serious problem with corporatization of education as Tandon puts it:

Corporations operate on the principles of cost reduction and profit maximization. These require the introduction of standardization and the packaging of the product in compact, measurable, byte-like, configuration. Applied to education, these approaches would possibly negate its basic fabric and purpose. The values associated with education have always included encouraging the spirit of openness that represented inquiry, diversity, research and limitless learning. Corporatization of education has led to sharp polarizations in society by dividing the people in the receiving end on the basis of their capacity to purchase the service. [Tandon 2005:2-3]

Besides the problems associated with standardization and accessibility, another problem is the content of the education. According to Nayyar:

In the world of higher education, markets and globalization are beginning to influence universities and shape education, not only in terms of what is taught but also in terms of what is researched. In the sphere of teaching, there is a discernible departure from the liberal intellectual tradition where education was about learning across the entire spectrum of disciplines. In the earlier days, choices of students were shaped by their interests and/or by the priority of the society. There was never a perfect system. Even so, universities endeavored to strike a balance across disciplines, whether philosophy, languages, economics, mathematics, physics or life sciences. But this is changing fast, as students and parents display strong revealed preferences to demand higher education that makes young people employable. The popularity and the availability of courses are thus being shaped by markets. ... Similarly, markets are beginning to exercise influence on the research agenda of universities as resources for research in applied life sciences, medicine, engineering or economics are abundant while resources for research in philosophy, linguistics, his-

tory or literature are scarce as there is a premium on applied research and a discount on theoretical research. [Nayyar 2007:32]

Thus, the good students are not studying basic sciences, social sciences, or literature, creating a huge vacuum in basic research. This is now a very common phenomenon across the world as well as in India (Bevins et al. 2005; Varghese 2008; Lyons and Quinn 2010). According to Varghese,

Higher education, in the context of globalization, has become a market-driven activity to promote an international and multicultural outlook among graduates to suit the requirements of a global labor market centered on knowledge production. Institutions of higher education have not only become global in their orientation and operation but have also become yet another sector offering investment opportunities for producing and selling a good or service for the global market. Market orientation and profitability are replacing the national concerns and social functions of institutions of higher education. [Varghese 2009:17]

Treating education as a tradable commodity, especially in the international market, is also detrimental to the social fabric of a nation and a step towards “McDonaldization” as well as “Cocacolonization” of culture.

Not only that, a UNESCO (2003) paper on *Higher Education in a Globalized Society* states that the emergence of cross-border higher education provision and trade in education services bring education within the realm of the market and this may seriously affect the capacity of the state to regulate higher education within a public policy perspective. Declining policy capacity of the state could affect weaker and poorer nations and benefit the more prosperous ones.

We will now see the global education market and the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) and individual country’s autonomy to make rules in its education sector.

Global Education Market

Education services have become one of the single largest service sectors in terms of shares and employment in many economies worldwide. The

US\$2 trillion global education industry is the second largest industry after health care in the service sector. The recent annual growth rate of the education market is more than six percent, and globally some 150.6 million students have enrolled in higher education (Altbach et al. 2009). The higher education sector is the most rapidly growing sector in education services, employing about 3.5 million people and the total addressable global offspring market is approximately US\$300 billion (GOI 2006). In India, the higher education market is worth US\$15 billion and according to ASSOCHAM (Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India) is forecasted to grow to US\$30 billion in the next 5 years. It is the largest target market in the higher education sector in the world with 234 million individuals in the 15-24 age group (FICCI 2011). So, it is understandable that this is a very attractive market for private investment.

World Trade Organization (WTO) and Education

In this section, we will discuss the World Trade Organization’s mandate for education services, which will help us to understand member countries’ obligation to open up education services for foreign investment and its implications.

The WTO was established in 1995 to make international trade easier. It is a replacement for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), established after the Second World War along with two other “Bretton Woods” institutions, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The WTO agreements cover goods, services and intellectual property. They spell out the principles of liberalization, and the permitted exceptions. They include individual countries’ commitments to lower customs tariffs and other trade barriers, and to open and keep open services markets. The underlying intention of WTO is to open the vast market of developing countries for the goods and services of developed countries.

The World Trade Organization has agreements on three broad areas of international trade: GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariff) for trade in goods, GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) for trade in services, and TRIPS (Trade

Related Intellectual Property Rights) for trade and investment in ideas and creativity. GATS cover 12 service sectors, including education. As of March, 2013, WTO had 159 members. These member-countries could make individual commitments under GATS stating which of their services sectors they are willing to open to foreign competition, and how to open those markets. However, trade in the service sector has seen little progress. Education services seem to be the least committed sector: so far, only 57 countries have made commitments to the education sector under the WTO.

Article I.3 of GATS defines the scope of the agreement as follows: “Services” include “any service in any sector except services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority;” and “a service supplied in the exercise of governmental authority” means “any service which is supplied neither on a commercial basis, nor in competition with one or more service suppliers.”

There is an ambiguity as to whether the public post-secondary sector would be subject to GATS. If the public post-secondary sector were found to be providing education “on a commercial basis,” or if it were found to be providing education “in competition with one or more service suppliers,” then it is not a “service supplied in the exercise of governmental authority” and would be subject to the full provisions of the GATS.

The phrase “commercial basis” is not further defined in the GATS and would thus be subject to interpretation by a GATS dispute panel. The argument has been made that public universities and colleges that are charging more than token tuition fees, are providing education on a commercial basis.

On the question of public institutions operating “in competition with one or more service suppliers,” it is clear that there are a great many private providers of post-secondary education and training in almost all the countries, and thus public institutions would be subject to the GATS provisions.

GATS define services trade as occurring via four modes of supply, all of which are relevant to education (Article XXVII):

Mode 1: Cross border delivery: delivery of education services via the internet.

Mode 2: Consumption abroad: movement of students from one country to another for higher education.

Mode 3: Commercial presence: establishment of local branch campuses or subsidiaries by foreign universities in other countries, course offerings by domestic private colleges leading to degrees at foreign universities, twinning arrangements, franchising.

Mode 4: Presence of natural persons: temporary movement of teachers, lecturers, and education personnel to provide education services overseas.

There are some other very important issues like the principle of “Market Access,” “Most Favoured Nation” (MFN) and the notion of “National Treatment.” “Market Access” means the degree to which market access is granted to foreign providers in specific sectors. An individual country determines limitations on market access for each committed sector. The Principle of the “Most Favoured Nation” implies that each member treats all the other members equally as “most-favoured” trading partners. If a country improves the benefits that it gives to one trading partner, it has to give the same “best” treatment to all the other WTO members so that they all remain “most-favoured.” The notion of “National Treatment” implies an obligation to treat both foreign and domestic service suppliers in the same manner. Thus, it is implied that a foreign educational institution can demand subsidies similar to those received by public universities and colleges in a country.

However, “there are two options to protect public post-secondary education from the full provisions of the GATS” as suggested by Clift (1999). He suggested to close doors to private providers in higher education and declare higher education a government monopoly. However, that could not be defensible in international trade law if there is any existence of private institutions in higher education. So, the only way to protect public post-secondary education from GATS treatment is to withdraw it entirely from the provisions of GATS. That is, the national government would have to indicate in trade discussions that the higher education sector was subject to an “unbound

exemption” from the GATS. An “unbound exemption” means that no commitments have been made to include a particular sector in the GATS provisions, and that the government has maintained its ability to regulate the sector as it sees fit, despite general principles of the GATS.

The Indian Scenario

India has the third largest higher education system in the world (after China and the USA) in terms of the absolute number of enrollment, which is about 23 million, and is the largest in terms of the number of institutions with 35,539 colleges and 700 universities (UGC 2012; Sharma 2014). Out of these, only 8,288 colleges are recognized by University Grant Commission (UGC), and they are mostly public colleges, and 182 universities are private, established by various provincial governments (UGC 2012). UGC is the national regulator of standards. There are various reasons why such a large number of private higher education institutions are not recognized by UGC including quality of faculty, curriculum and infrastructure. In regards to enrollment, around 40 percent of the students are enrolled in private unaided colleges. The rest is either publicly funded or receives some aid from the government. The share of enrollment in all kinds of private higher education institutions at the end of 2012 was 58.5 percent (GOI 2012). Even with such a huge system in place, higher education in India is in a despondent condition. During the period 1950- 51 and 2012-13, the total enrollment at higher education level has increased at an average annual growth rate of 7 percent, yet even after nearly six and half decades of independence, the gross enrollment ratio (GER) in India is lower (around 18 percent) compared to the world average (26 percent). This poses a severe constraint on the supply of qualified manpower.

In addition to the overall low GER, there are significant differences in enrolment ratios across regions, provinces, rural-urban, male-female, social groups, occupation groups, poor and non-poor populations in India (Thorat 2006; GOI 2012). This contradicts one of the goals of higher education in India, i.e. the equal access.

The central and provincial governments share the responsibilities for financing higher education

as education is on the Concurrent List in the Indian Constitution. However, “nearly 50% of the higher education expenditure comes from private sources” (Agarwal 2006). India spends one of the lowest public expenditures on higher education at \$406 per student, which compares unfavourably even with the developing countries like Malaysia (\$11,790), China (\$2728), Brazil (\$3986), Indonesia (\$666) and the Philippines (\$625) (K. Sharma 2007). In the period from 1990-91 to 2004-05, the government expenditure on higher education actually fell from 0.46 percent to 0.37 percent in a total of 3.72 percent spending on education as a percentage of GDP (V. Sharma 2007). In fact, per student, in real terms there was a 28 percent decline in public expenditure from 1990-91 to 2002-03 since liberalization of the Indian economy has started (Mukherjee 2008).

This low spending on higher education is severely affecting quality of education. A recent report by FICCI (Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) states that there are huge shortages of faculty: 45 percent of the positions for professors, 51 percent positions for readers, and 53 percent positions for lecturers were vacant in Indian universities in 2007-08; 48 percent of universities and 69 percent of colleges are deficient in infrastructure and the system is plagued with outdated curricula and ill-equipped libraries (average 9 books per student vs. 53 in IIT Bombay) (FICCI 2011). Universities and colleges are run by part time and temporary teachers who are paid only a paltry Rs. 5,000-10,000 as against Rs. 50,000 per month salary of an assistant professor. Forty percent of college teachers are temporary in India (Times of India 2013).

So, it is beyond a doubt that India is facing multiple problems in the higher education sector and the incidences of low public spending on higher education and low GER and wide variations across different groups are both signs and symptoms. In addition to that, India is witnessing the harsh reality of growing unemployment among its graduates that co-exists with skill shortages in many areas. According to the Labour Bureau’s Third Annual Employment and Unemployment Survey 2012-13, the unemployment amongst the graduate youth that was at 19.4 per cent in 2011-2012 increased to 32 per

cent during 2012-2013 (GOI 2013). The emergence of a neo-liberal global economy due to increased trade, investment, and mobility of people and more recently work across borders have forced nation states to adapt their systems of higher education to the changed global realities. In an interview in Kolkata former HRD (Human Resource Development) Minister said that his ministry has aimed to increase the enrollment in colleges and universities from the current 15 percent to 30 percent, which would translate to 40 million students by 2020. To support the 40 million students, an estimated 800 new universities and 40,000 colleges are said to be required according to HRD ministry's calculation (India Education Review 2011). Raising seats in higher education by about 50 percent of the present enrollment ratio would require about US\$40 billion. The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) also estimated the country needs 1,500 universities by 2015 (NKC 2010).

Public institutions without adequate funds to hire good faculty, offer scholarships to disadvantaged groups, and expand enrollment are finding it harder to meet the growing demand. So, there is a steep hill to climb.

To fulfill this ambition in accordance with the goals of higher education in India, in the recently concluded five-year plan (2007-12), which was described as an Educational Plan, allocation to higher education was scaled up and major expansion was planned. As many as 30 new central universities were to be set up, six new Indian Institutes of Management, seven Indian Institutes of Technology, 20 National Institutes of Technology, four Indian Institutes of Information Technology, nearly 2,000 colleges of engineering and technology, 1,300 polytechnics, 400 undergraduate colleges, and many other institutions (Tilak 2012). However, the government aims to realize the promised expansion of higher education with the active participation of the private sector and through various modes of public-private participation (PPP). According to the Planning Commission of India, 88 percent of the funds required for the expansion were to be generated through different modes of PPP. The approach paper to the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012-17) states, "Private initiatives

in higher education, including viable and innovative PPP models, will therefore be actively promoted. The current 'non-profit' prescription in the education sector should be re-examined in a pragmatic matter" (Government of India 2012).

The National Knowledge Commission has recommended diversifying the sources of financing to encourage private participation, philanthropic contributions, and industry linkages in addition to increased public spending in higher education (NKC 2010).

India and GATS

Since this huge amount cannot be provided by the existing trend of public financing, and under pressure from international trade along with domestic economic compulsions, the Ministry of Commerce is arguing that the higher education sector in India should be "freed" and the country should open its doors to foreign investment. This prompted the Government of India's approval for 100 percent automatic Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in higher education in April 2000. Now, foreign educational service providers can enter India without any regulation as long as they do not want UGC/AICTE (All India Council for Higher Education) recognition. As well, India had also included higher education services in its Revised Order of GATS in August, 2005. However, later on, it was withdrawn possibly due to the differences between the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Commerce.

Besides, the Government of India introduced the Foreign Educational Institution (Regulation of Entry and Operation) Bill, 2010, in the parliament and was very keen to pass it. The bill seeks to regulate the entry and operation of foreign institutions, which would set up centers and offer degrees in India. Although 100 percent foreign direct investment through an automatic route has been permitted in higher education since 2000 as mentioned above, this does not allow granting of degrees by foreign educational institutions from abroad. This bill would clear this obstacle. However, the opposition, primarily the Left (CPIM, CPI, FB, and RSP) and other non-Congress parties, repeatedly postponed the

tabling of the Foreign Universities Bill. According to the Left, allowing foreign direct investment and foreign teaching staff into the country will distort the already elitist educational structure in the country. It will make education more commercial and there will be no regulation and control over such institutions. One important concern of this bill is that the quota (reservations for backward sections of the society) laws will not be applicable to foreign universities setting up campuses in India. The proposal was then sent for study to a parliamentary committee and was never revived because the UPA did not have the numbers to get it cleared in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of the Parliament of India).

Thus, as the former UPA government (United Progressive Alliance, led by the Indian National Congress) was unsure whether it would be able to pass the bill in parliament, the Human Resource Department (HRD) Ministry asked the UGC to identify possibilities within the existing laws of regulating and allowing the foreign educational institutions. The two possible ways of going about it are allowing these institutions to enter as “deemed universities” under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956, or as private universities under the provincial laws.

Even with these two ways, there is still one most important barrier to make higher education a for-profit sector: the court ruling for not-for-profit prescription. To overcome this barrier, it is reported that the HRD has sent proposals to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion and the Department of Economic Affairs to permit foreign universities to open their campuses in the country as companies as provided under Section 25 of the Companies Act. In fact, many institutions are already set up as private limited entities under this Act. Although these institutions cannot offer degrees since they are not recognized by AICTE or UGC, they can run professional programs (Mathews et al. 2013).

All these factors are linked with developments intrinsic to the process of liberalization, and were accelerated during the 1990s, with the UGC appointed Punnayya Committee (1992-93) recommendations that 25 percent of the recurring expenditure be recovered from the students, and the 1997 Ministry of Finance proposal that higher

education, including secondary education, be designated a “non-merit good” for which subsidies must be drastically cut.

In 2000, the Prime Minister’s Council on Trade and Industry appointed a committee on higher education, headed by noted industrialists, Mukesh Ambani and Kumarmangalam Birla. In their report *A Policy Framework for Reforms in Education*, they suggested that the government should confine itself to primary education and the higher education should be provided by the private sector including FDI except those areas of education involving “liberal arts and performing arts.”

This report clearly indicates the rhetoric of “market efficiencies,” in which the state should restrict itself towards non-profit and non-market sectors like primary education and the “liberal arts and performing arts” areas of higher education, and leave the for-profit sector for private investors.

These are the primary reasons for the crisis in higher education today. State withdrawal has contributed to privatisation and commercialisation, while Indian courts have contributed to this trend by giving conflicting and ambiguous judgements (see appendix).

The implications of various courts’ rulings, committee’s recommendations, and government’s policies resulted in an upsurge of private educational institutions, first begun in southern India.

In the 1980s, there was a phenomenal rise in the number of private engineering (and to a lesser extent medical) colleges that was peculiar to the southern states. These colleges were set up primarily by land owning middle-caste groups that had capital that was internally mobilized to establish colleges and universities with significant state support and subsidies (including in the form of assets such as land at subsidized rate). These caste groups organized themselves into charitable education trusts that provided special scholarships to students from their caste group and charged high fees to students from other caste groups (Kamat 2011). Thereafter, the number of private higher education institutions has increased exponentially and their presence is seen across India, particularly in the North and the South, not, however, on the basis of caste, but on profit.

There were 6651 new colleges established in 40 years from 1950-51 to 1990-91; however, within the 10 years of liberalization from 1990-91 to 2000-01, 5460 new colleges were established and a phenomenal number of new colleges – 20,217 – were established in the last 10 years from 2001-02 to 2010-11 (UGC 2012). Thus, in the 20 years of liberalization (1990-91 to 2010-11) 25,677 new colleges were established. The enrollment in higher education has also been increased during this time: almost 3.5 fold increase from 4,925,000 in 1990-91 to 16,975,000 in 2010-11 (UGC 2012). For understandable reasons most of these new colleges are unaided private colleges, and almost all of those private institutions were established after India started embracing neoliberal economic policies.

The latest recommendations for privatization vis-a-vis corporatization of higher education came from the report on Corporate Sector Participation in Higher Education by the Narayana Murthy Committee established by the Planning Commission of India in 2012. The recommendations focused on three core areas: a) an enabling environment to attract investments, b) corporate support for research and faculty development, and c) corporate investment for existing institutions and creation of new institutions and knowledge clusters (Mathews et al. 2013).

There are certain reasons why privatization of higher education is lucrative in India for the investors. India's import interests in Education Services are explained as follows:

Mode 1: Prospects for distance education and degrees from foreign academic institutions.

Mode 2: Every year around 160,000 Indian students go overseas each year (Mainly USA, Australia, UK, Canada, and New Zealand) and spend around 5.5 billion US dollars.

Mode 3: Foreign institutions entering India through twinning and franchise arrangements: Indian students getting foreign degrees, doing professional courses at local branch campuses of foreign institutions in India.

Mode 4: Foreign faculty and scholars teaching in India.

In 2005, the Ministry of Commerce came out with a consultative paper, *Higher Education in India and GATS: An Opportunity* (GOI 2006). Making a strong case for foreign participation in higher education in India, it says: "GATS could provide an opportunity to put together a mechanism whereby private and foreign investment in higher education can be encouraged subject to high quality standards and efficient regulation." According to this paper, in 2004, nearly 14 percent of all international students in the US were from India. It therefore asserts that there is a huge excess demand in India for quality higher education, which is being met by "foreign campuses." The Ministry of Commerce thus recommends: "Services negotiations (in the WTO) could be used as an opportunity to invite foreign universities to set up campuses in India, thereby saving billions of dollars for the students traveling abroad." This paper also advocates for a "balance" between "domestic regulation and providing adequate flexibility to such universities in setting the syllabus, hiring teachers, screening students and setting fee levels." The latest available research on this reported that about 220,000 students go abroad from India (Hill and Chalaux 2011) spending US\$13 billion in 2011 (Booker 2011). There are several reasons why so many Indian students go abroad every year for higher education. It is not only the scarcity of seats in higher education, but also the wide variation in the quality of higher education, the latter probably the more important reason for that, besides better job prospects in developed countries. In India, a few institutions are on the top, some are in the middle, but most are on the bottom compared to international standards, which creates a wide variation in the quality of higher education.

The McKinsey-NASSCOM (2005) report on "Talent Shortage Survey" (GOI 2006) said that 75 percent of India's engineering graduates were unemployable. Another survey by ASSOCHAM (2013) found that only 10 percent of graduates from Indian business schools – excluding those from the top 20 schools – get a job straight after completing their course, compared with 54 percent in 2008 and about 160 schools offering Master of Business Administration (MBA) courses are expected to close

this year (ASSOCHAM 2013). A recent survey endorsed by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Association of Indian Universities mentioned that “Even as the country would produce over five million graduates next year, only 34 percent of them would be employable as most of them lack necessary skills required for any role in the industry” (DNA 2013).

The Mirage of Foreign Direct Investment and Privatization

There are three models through which a foreign educational provider can establish its presence in another country. Those are: Franchise Model, Articulation Model, and Campus Model.

In the Franchise Model, local institutions would provide physical infrastructure and administration and the foreign institution would provide intellectual property such as curriculum and teaching materials, conduct examinations, and award degrees.

The Articulation (Twinning) Model is about joint degrees. Students would study a major part of their studies in a local institution and the rest in the home country of a foreign institution. Here, academic responsibility is shared and the degrees or diploma are awarded by foreign institutions.

The third model is the establishment of local campuses by foreign providers. Here, everything – the responsibility of infrastructure and administration, as well as intellectual property – is provided by the foreign institutions, using the local faculty and others.

The Government of India has permitted 100 percent foreign direct investment (FDI) in higher education through the automatic route since 2000, thus providing a huge opportunity for investment. Despite this, the FDI remained zero in the first three years, increasing up to Rs. 1033.36 crore till 2008-09 and then falling again. In the past 11 years, the total FDI in higher education has stood at US\$395 million, the yearly average of \$35 million being one-tenth of one percent of what the central and provincial governments annually spends in this sector. Only one institution of India has received more than half of this investment and over 75 percent of the FDI in the past 11 years has come from Mauritius, a tax haven

country (The Telegraph 2011). While the total FDI in education since 2000 has been only about US\$376 million (Rs. 2,051 crore), the outflow of money from India through the expenditure incurred overseas on education by Indian students is estimated US\$5.5 billion (Rs, 30, 000 Crore) a year during the same period, as mentioned above.

There are approximately 631 foreign education providers operating in India. Of these, 440 were functioning from their home countries, five opened their own campuses in India, 60 had programmatic collaboration with local institutions, 49 were operating under twinning arrangements, and 77 had arrangements other than twinning or programmatic collaboration according to Association of Indian Universities (The Hindu 2012). Fee levels are uniformly high in all arrangements. Both “twinning” and program-based collaborations corroborate the low-investment-higher turn model of foreign provision mentioned above, suggesting that the current scenario of foreign participation in the higher education system in India is still not significant.

How some of those foreign educational institutions are functioning can be understood from the following discussion.

There are instances of foreign institutions partnering with unapproved domestic institutions. Degrees awarded under such programmes are not recognized in India. There are also instances of false marketing of foreign programmes, wherein institutions claim to have resources that they don't really possess or give employment guarantees when there is no international equivalence of degrees. At times, students in twinning programmes fail to obtain visas to study abroad at the foreign partner's campus. It's also interesting to note that there has been little or no foreign participation in India's higher education sector through franchises and subsidiaries. In the last 10 years though 150 odd programmes are being offered through twinning programmes, none of them invested money in India. A survey found that 44 out of these 150 odd programmes are unaccredited and unrecognized in their own countries. [K. Sharma 2007:4]

Developing countries do allow foreign educational institutions, but in accordance with their

national interests and priorities. In China, Malaysia and Singapore, the entry of foreign institutions is by invitation only and under the conditions put forward by those countries (GOI 2006).

Studies on education reveal that the advanced countries after achieving an enrolment ratio of 35 percent and above in higher education with state support, go for privatization (Gadekar 2008). This typically shows the two-facedness of the global north to push for the privatization of higher education in developing countries through the World Trade Organization to expand their own market even when the enrollment ratios in developing countries are very low.

The private providers minimize costs by compromising the quality of education provided in their institutions to maximize their profit. Besides compromising academic standards, misrepresenting courses, hiring low quality faculty, and practicing corruption in admission process, they are also increasing their revenues either through very high tuition fees and/or capitation fees. A capitation fee refers to the collection of large amounts by educational bodies not advertised in the prospectus of the institution, usually in exchange for admission to the institution. A medical student intending to graduate from a private medical college has to bear a cost of US\$200,000-250,000. Some private universities are getting “deemed university” status by the provincial governments even before admissions are open; thus institutions with no track record are getting autonomy.

At the beginning of 2010, the HRD Ministry of India decided to de-recognize as many as 44 “deemed universities,” spelling uncertainty for nearly 200,000 students who are enrolled with them. The ministry’s decision amounts to an acknowledgment of irregularities in conferring the “deemed” status to these institutions.

There is another problem with the provincial approval of private universities. An educational institution recognized in a particular province does not need to limit its operations only to that province. This meant that universities approved by the government of one province are not accountable to the government of the provinces where they have set up their branch campuses. “This is increasingly becoming a trend with foreign universities, especially

among those who do not want to set up their own shop here, but would like to benefit from the degree-purchasing power of the upwardly mobile classes of India” (Reddy 2008).

A study on the partnerships between Indian and foreign institutions in higher education by Kim Weerts (2009) states that among the 19 institutions in Delhi under study and which were actively involved in partnerships, most of them are not recognized and have not received any accreditation. In regard to foreign institutions, though she mentions that most institutions are not found on important ranking lists, she assumes that they are of good quality, which is doubtful as there is no reason why a good quality foreign institution would collaborate with an unrecognized, unaccredited institution of a developing country.

The growth of the private sector also shows a skewed pattern within a field such as engineering. Private engineering institutes mostly offer courses on computer science, information technology, communication, and electrical and electronics to cater to the need of the new urban economy. They do not offer courses which do not have an immediate market. Not only that, almost all of these private institutions were established in urban areas and in the wealthy areas of the provinces. This is obvious for them as they are investing for profit. However, this resulted in serious decline and devaluation of basic knowledge and accessibility for poorer sections of the population.

An official report by the Government of India described the vast majority of colleges as merely serving the needs of “academic squatters.” And several official reports note the adverse impact on quality during the high growth phase of private higher education institutions (Carnoy and Dossani 2012).

If we look at the statistics of the background of the students, India’s present success in engineering and information technology, scientific research and medicine should be attributed to its publicly funded higher education system, not to the newly mushroomed private colleges and universities. Among the 183 private universities, only nine feature in the top 50 by India Today Higher Education Survey. All these nine private institutions have been in existence for many years (India Today 2013).

With the new policies of commodification of higher education, India's global rank in publications output has slipped from 8th in 1985 to 14th in 2006 (Kapur 2008). However, in science and technology, India's global publication rank was 10th in 1996 and has slightly improved to 9th position in 2010, but its global citation impact rank is 18th, which is lower than that of Brazil (16th) (Gupta 2012).

Conclusion

Formal modern education in India gained ground only in the 19th and the early part of the last century, mainly through non-governmental effort. It is therefore not surprising that private institutions comprised a considerable part of the sector at the turn of independence, more so in higher education. The non-governmental providers of higher education (mostly in the form of charitable trusts and societies) were arguably impelled by a variety of motives including religious teaching, but principally these were non-pecuniary in nature (Srivastava 2008; Sharma 2014).

In a country like India with its population of 1.25 billion and with an emerging, aspiring, and the world's largest youth force, the needs of the hour are the inclusion, expansion, and excellence of education. But, the future scenario in the education sector is highly uncertain. In a FICCI background paper *The Higher Education Summit: Road Map for the Future* (Bhushan 2004), Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan points out:

Earlier all over the world, education, especially higher education, was available only to a privileged few. In the context of a knowledge society and the goals of sustainable development, higher education needs to percolate to the masses, not only just in terms of quantity, but also quality. In the last few years, this shift has been slowly taking place. Still, glaring deficiencies remain in the access to higher education, overall development of the student, sensitivity to human needs and equality in our society. [Bhushan 2004:4]

It is not that all the court rulings, recommendations of the committees, and political parties in India blatantly support privatization of higher education. There are mixed rulings, recommendations in

favour of privatization. Among the political parties, the Left, because of their ideological position, are always against the privatization of anything, be it a public sector enterprise or educational institution. However, the Left is a minority in Indian politics, though at times they managed to exert qualitative pressure on various issues. There are other political parties in India, the rightist and the centrist, who are more powerful and supporters of liberalization. Some of them are also confused on issues like whether the government should subsidize rich students considering the huge cost of higher public education, and some of them are not fully aware of the complex rules and regulations of GATS.

Withdrawing fully from GATS and discarding the Foreign Education Institution Bill could save higher education from direct foreign intervention, but as discussed previously, India needs to increase its public funding significantly to stop the mushrooming of unqualified private institutions, which not only are unable to produce adept workers, but also will increase inequality further as only the children of rich parents can afford to go to these private institutions.

The Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended that government should spend six percent of its GDP on education. However, even 45 years after this recommendation, India spends only around 3.9 percent of its GDP on education. Eighty percent of this cost is borne by provincial governments. Out of this meager 3.9 percent, the portion of higher education expenditure is only around 0.6 percent. The Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education recommended that a quarter of the six percent, i.e., 1.5 percent, be allocated to higher education (Tilak 2013). So, it is beyond any argument that public funding, particularly the central government's allocation has to be increased as nearly 80 percent of the public expenditure on education is borne by the provincial governments.

Recently (2011-12 budget) India has increased its public funding in education as well as in higher education. The increase is significant in regard to the percentages: 24 percent overall increase in education which includes 34 percent increase in higher education. However, there are also some other lacunae in public funding, which need to be addressed.

Almost two thirds of this amount will go to UGC and Centers for Excellence including IITs (Indian Institute of Technology) NITs (National Institute of Technologies), and IIMs (Indian Institute of Management) (FICCI 2011; Mishra 2011). The UGC mainly provides grants for central universities and the public colleges in Delhi leaving responsibilities of other public universities and colleges with the provincial governments as education is on the concurrent list. Most of the provincial governments with their meager resources find it hard to allot adequate funds for education. Another aspect is nepotism. If an institution has a strong network in the government, it is likely to receive more funding. Annual funding is considered on the amount of funding an institution has received in the previous year (Agarwal 2006). The system of student scholarship has its own shortcomings too. At present, funding for scholarship is institution- based. Instead, student- based funding is much more egalitarian as more poor students can avail those scholarships irrespective of their institutional affiliations.

It is already seen that privatization failed to bring quality to higher education in India. Allowing foreign investment in education is also detrimental to national identity. So, a middle ground could be worked out: increasing fees for the affluent students and more scholarship for poor students could be an option. The first part of this option was already in practice through self-financed professional courses in many public universities in India, but poor students do not have access to those courses. So, it is very important to introduce the second part of this option. Last but not the least, along with the government, banks should come forward to ease the student loan system and should sometimes act as a guarantor for poor students, as less than five percent of students are availing themselves of an education loan at present. And finally, as always good governance and strict regulations are needed to implement those policies.

Appendix

Key Supreme Court Judgments on Fees in Private Institutions:

Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka (1992): Fees charged in private institutions in excess of tuition fees in government colleges is deemed to be capitation fees.

Unnikrishnan, J. P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1993): Banned capitation fees and devised a scheme, which allotted 50 per cent seats in an unaided professional institution as free seats (fees same as a government institution) and 50 per cent as payment seats (fees higher than 'free seats' but have to be approved by a state-level committee).

T. M. A. Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka (2002): The decision regarding the fee to be charged must be left to the private institution that does not depend on any funds from the government. The object of an institution should not be to make profit. However, it can generate a reasonable revenue surplus, for the purpose of development of education and expansion of the institution.

Islamic Academy v. State of Karnataka (2003): A committee in each state, headed by a retired High Court judge, should approve the fee structure, which shall be binding for three years.

P.A. Inamdar v. State of Maharashtra (2005): The committees regulating admission and fee structure shall continue to exist, but only as a temporary measure until the central or state governments are able to devise a suitable mechanism for such regulation.

(Source: V. Sharma 2007; Madhaban et al. 2013)

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Locked In: Feminist Perspectives on Surviving on Academic Piecework

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ABSTRACT: While increasing media attention is given to examining the status of contract faculty on university campuses there is little note made of the pervasiveness of women in these positions. This paper, by drawing on Marxist and feminist theory ties the gender precarity faced by academic contract female workers to the historical practices of industries to use female labour to reduce labour costs. The textile piece worker system of the 19th century has found a 21st century form represented in the unlikely position of the female academic contract worker. The argument builds on the autoethnographic narratives of two contract women to demonstrate how the university administration's "economic pressure" justification is an economic myth to occlude the exploitation of female workers.

KEYWORDS: labour exploitation, gender and class oppression, capitalism

As long time academics, we have both taught women's studies and feminist issues. One of the topics we often teach as part of this field is the topic women and work. In teaching the history of women's labour we would always come to discussions of the female pieceworker. We would spend many classes talking about piecework as a feminist issue, often imagining piece workers as garment workers slaving away in their basements stitching together such items as designer coats or elegant party dresses. But in the past few decades, with technological innovations piecework has morphed into other professions such as telemarketing or data entry. At the core of piecework workers are paid for the piece of work performed, regardless of the amount of time to complete such work.

In the past few years it has dawned on us that we too are piece workers, and we are not exempt from Marx's observations on piecework and alienation

(1975). We are like the many women who have gone before us, getting paid per completed piece. But instead of this piece being a luxurious coat or a set amount of telemarketing calls, our piece is a university course at a postsecondary institution in Ontario. Here we earn our livelihoods each semester by trying to string together a series of pieces/courses. We are paid per completed course with as many students as possible slotted into tiny spaces. And like other forms of piecework, it is precarious labour often performed by female workers. It is also a system of work that offers little creditability which functions as a means to lock workers into a system of continued exploitation.

It is curious that in these times of expanding neoliberalism, contract academic work is quickly classified as precarious and yet there is little analysis of it as gendered piecework. The gender dominance of women in this segment of academic work is ignored

but so too are critical analyses of how this type of work parallels the piecework performed in manufacturing industries where women have been forced to eke out an economic life since the beginning of industrialization. In the following pages, we identify the fissures of intellectual inquiry when it comes to precarious work based on our own work. Building on a long tradition of feminism to question the realities of women's participation in paid labour, this paper will explore academic contract labour as a form of piecework. The underlying purpose of this paper is to critique how the institution of the university uses piecework as a way to reinforce a class based system of exploitation which functions to maintain layers of power for regular academic faculty (RAF) who are deemed credible scholars, while contract academic faculty (CAF), the pieceworkers, are positioned in financial and social distress unable to access such credibility.

What follow are our stories that tie the notion of piecework to the profiteering of education systems. We tell these stories not because we feel they are unusual or worse than others but rather, they reflect the commonness of these corporate systems. What all histories that tell the tales of challenges to dominant systems suggest is that resistance comes from the telling of stories in spite of the risks. Our experiences in this case are a reflection of a system that is now the norm but functions successfully because of the alienation and exploitation of a group designated as lesser. The heart of the success of this system is how labour costs are radically kept low, and yet the reputation that is marketed is one of its advanced practices as a teaching institution all achieved through the work of devalued pieceworkers. Ultimately the large number of students who have paid their tuition fees passing through the classes of teaching pieceworkers indicates that universities profit from our devalued status.

Helen's Story

As a middle-aged contract female academic I (Helen) find differing attitudes permeate in terms of my value as a worker in academy. In the broader non-academic world I am a confirmed university professor. On the inside of Academia I am reminded that I'm a sub-standard, failed academic. Why failed? I don't have

the accoutrements of value like tenure. Apparently after fifteen years I'm still perceived as "just passing through." While some regular faculty can admit the system is flawed, there are persistent verbal and structural evaluations of the lesser and more flawed identity of the contract worker or as Natalie and I see it – the pieceworker. I still experience a level of assessment that is shockingly explicit about my purported lower performance. The message I get is that I would have gained the coveted tenure job a long time ago if I had done it right. And doing it right means, somehow, producing a large output of publications in juried journals and books, getting research funding, being an extraordinary teacher and a committee member. All this assumes an objective and equitable hiring process. Of course the culture in academia functions so RAF feel at risk themselves for the same reasons but handle this threat by defining themselves against the most vulnerable – their contract colleagues. As long as they can exercise some power over another group they can take on the identity of being more deserving through a covert suggestion that they are smarter and more accomplished.

When I began the process of getting a PhD it never occurred to me that I would inhabit a secondary status or that I would have to justify my insecure income and work conditions. Increasingly academic work conditions have become more precarious for more people but for those of us moving into that later part of our careers, our age raises enormous concerns about what old age will afford us. Here I am in my 50s in a system that builds its status by producing more PhD graduates. More and more contract faculty graduate each year. I am also in a field that is threatened with closure because we aren't close enough to providing students with the security of a job once they have graduated. My regular faculty colleagues feel desperately tied to the demands of the administration. They want to be loved by the system to ensure the future of the program. What this means to someone with my status is that I can be sacrificed. They are not willing to fight for more equitable conditions for the contract faculty who teach the vast number of the students passing through the program and actually signify the economic reason for why the program should be maintained.

In terms of what this economic climate produces I am seen as too old to be hired into a permanent position, and not “current” enough. Why, in fact, would they want to hire me into a permanent position when I fulfill the needs of the institution and the program more cheaply as contract? I teach the big classes at a portion of the wages of regular faculty and while I build the program I get neither credit nor security for any of it.

I am a middle-aged woman. I raised two children who are now adults on my own. I have done so with no access to health care benefits or knowing from one term to the next how I would pay the rent and put food on the table. Today I am feeling increased stress. I know that the need for benefits and a pension is critically important for the health and living circumstances that are fast approaching. And yet as I write this, I know the likelihood of secure work is nil. And I would argue that I bring to the program I teach in and the university where I teach greater research and pedagogical skills from all my years of work. I am a practiced scholar and teacher. I have no voice on the decision-making committees of my program or the university. I have sat on many committees but have been locked out of voting processes. I have been told that contract faculty can't be trusted on curriculum committees to look toward the growth of departments and programs. We are an enemy depicted as self-serving and selfish. And because I am a woman who has had children the judgment leveled at me is replete with gender biases that go unaddressed or ignored. I have been told I can be on the fundraising committee or the events planning committee for the program but not in any place where the program framing decisions are made. I am considered a nuisance, even though their argument for my exclusion is often couched in the excuse that they don't want to “exploit” my labour. But strangely I have been encouraged to serve on the fundraising and the events planning committees. Because apparently I am inadequate, academic departments are justified in holding me at bay in terms of practice and pay. I am expected to volunteer extra time for students and the university to prove myself. I am supposed to publish even though I teach more than my regular faculty colleagues while just barely eking out economic survival.

I do piecework being paid by course and the number of students. If I want my wages to be at all augmented by special “add ons” for marking I have to increase the output of students passing through the classroom. This means I can't ruin the experience of any student in the class. They must all love me. I am at the bottom of the academic hierarchy. And yet it is my positioning that the institution can capitalize on to make itself profitable. I am the reason tenure faculty can arrange their work lives as they do and still have dental and medical care, sabbaticals, terms to do research, and not worry that if they speak out their department might replace them.

The attack is not necessarily overt or direct. Rather, the attack is embedded in a systemic ideological argument that creates an us/them binary leading us CAF into a state where we feel we must perform an image of gratitude to secure future contracts. I feel pressed to sell my wares as a good thinker and teacher. But as I do this, I individualize a problem that is both systemic and structurally established. And by defending my virtues I am participating in the ideologies that justify a hierarchical highly capitalist system based on the virtues of scientific management.

I no longer expect a permanent position. The statistics are clear. Contract work is done largely by women (Rajagopal 2002; Jacobs 2004; CAUT 2010) and not because they have chosen to have children which is the usual excuse, but because of gender identifiers that subordinate the output of their work, their thinking and their performance. The de-valuation of female contract faculty is done strangely enough by both women and men who claim to hold either a feminist or social justice activist position. There are CAF colleagues who are older than me with larger demands on their monies for personal care. Their worries grow more pressing every year as the social critiques they withstand seem directed at their bodies. They can't compete with regular faculty. They can't get the dental care they need much less the clothes that would allow them to present in another class that would accord them more authority.

My fifteen years as a pieceworker driving the output of students and courses in classes too large to establish a more significant relationship with them, has forced me to live with little hope for a secure

future in retirement. I might be the old, less interesting, less inviting professor beside the new graduates who are the sexier choice as I once was too, but I fear that they unfortunately will also occupy the space I know intimately now.

Natalie's Story

I (Natalie) started teaching on contract at a university about 12 years ago, when I had just finished my comprehensive exams and moved from out west, back to Ontario. Teaching a few courses every semester was great at first. It gave me some income to support myself and it allowed me to connect with people as opposed to feeling locked away in the solitary confinement of dissertation writing. But slowly I began to see what this “part-time” teaching was. It was work that took me away from the valuable time I needed to write my dissertation and gain the legitimacy of being a “real scholar,” and it slowly sucked me into being reliant on it to support my studies.

When I started doing it I thought I would only have to do it for a few years until my thesis was closer to being done, but I am still doing it. I used to think of myself as a “part-timer” since I got paid per course. I even once proudly wore a button with the statement “part timers give full value” during a strike at my university. Sure, I thought at the time, being CAF was being a “part-timer,” what I was getting paid clearly seemed like part-time wages in comparison to my fellow non-CAF colleagues. And I never knew what courses I would be teaching the following year or sometimes even in the next semester. I worried, how would I make ends meet through the summer? It all seemed so “part-time.”

But it was not part-time and I am not a “part-timer,” I am a full-timer. I am a professional university teacher, this is my job, my career and my livelihood. I teach full time, not as CAF, but as a contract worker getting paid per course/piece. I spend my entire week, preparing, marking and teaching three classes every semester; in between marking I slog away at turning my PhD thesis into something publishable so that I can maybe have enough on my CV to land an interview and maybe even that elusive tenure track job, or even just to keep myself relevant and competitive for the contract labour market. This is my full time

profession but I work under part time conditions for part time pay. As a contract worker I get paid only for the courses I teach. I do not have medical, dental or any other benefits. I do not have a pension and when I gave birth to my children, I stayed home without any sort of maternity leave.

When I started doing this 12 years ago, long time sessionals like me were anomalies. I watched as most of the CAF's I knew eventually snagged the coveted tenure track jobs. Well this is no longer the case, now, many of us are permanent contractors, with little chance of getting out. The structures of the system keep us locked in as newly minted PhDs compete with us on the job market with fresh publications and encouraging referees. I, like Helen, am wary of the possibility of a full time job. I also see how it is almost impossible to stay competitive. The job market is so saturated with PhDs and the university relies on our exploitation so heavily that I cannot see a way out.

The Conditions of Academic Piecework

As permanent contractors we float from semester to semester getting paid for each university course. We find out what courses we teach just a month or two before the semester starts. We never know if we will be able to teach these courses the following year. We have to buy our own materials to support our work; we buy our own computers, we pay for our own books and pay our monthly fees for the internet that is critical in being able to do our jobs from our own homes, since we rarely have legitimate office space. We are pieceworkers who perform “just in time” labour. The university has no obligation to ever commit to our courses or to us as employees for more than one semester at a time. Often we only find out what courses are available to be taught once the enrollments are confirmed and once our CAF colleagues decide what they will teach. We get the leftover courses, the ones that our colleagues see no particular value in but at the same time pile huge numbers of students into. We are told by our administrations that students are our academic consumers and we need to service them even though we have no resources to do so either in the class or outside. We are computer-less, office space-less, time-less workers. We allow the university to provide a product

at the lowest cost to service the greatest number of consumers.

We rarely receive extra money for the countless hours of marking even though we are often allocated the biggest classes and the most inexperienced TA's. Nor do we get compensated for extra student demands like letters of reference or plagiarism cases. At Canadian universities CAF earn between \$4000 and \$8000 per course, much less than our RAF colleagues and often with no benefits (CAUT 2013). Yet with this we are expected to exceed work requirements and be grateful for what we have been given. There is no extra salary for the preparation of new courses that we desperately grab to beef up our workload but which eliminate the possibilities of attaining seniority. And, like traditional pieceworkers, we are expected to dedicate spaces in our homes as workspace since we don't have offices. Our dining room tables, our living rooms, our kitchens become offices. We have no role in department decisions and during our working day, we move through the university space with no office or place to establish any legitimacy. Our office hours are held in small, shared rooms, often away from our departments, that we can only access for an hour or two. In this isolation our regular academic colleagues rarely accord us a conversation or a meaningful encounter that initiate an exchange of ideas. Some of us have seniority in a specific course but it is a seniority that is largely meaningless as it just takes one new hire, whether it be tenure track, limited term, the dreaded new teaching only positions, or a decision to restructure the curriculum, to bump us out of the courses in which we have the coveted status of "seniority." Seniority pits us against other contract academics who like us, are also fighting to secure a modicum of economic security in their lives. The point is that in order to survive we gather as many courses at as many universities we can in order to provide ourselves with basic living expenses. We run from one university to the next hoping at one of them someone will accord us value but on the whole just have us selling ourselves to a new market in order to service the aims of a corporate entity that is intent on servicing as many consumers as possible and promising them a stable work future. We are as Indhu Rajagopal says "road scholars."

Piecework as Alienation

Our two stories, while individual, are the result of one powerfully divisive economic system. Our individual experiences even though we are positioned differently merge under the same structural and systemic exploitations of our labour. It is in comparing our experiences that we have come to recognize that the economic and political contexts of our work are the same. Our feelings of isolation, inadequacy and hopelessness, are not the outcomes of personal failings, but are instead the byproducts of a university labour market that is structured upon our exploitation and alienation as workers. Our fears are used by our regular faculty peers but even more by the administrators of this corporate academic structure in such a way that we are compelled to take whatever work we can without complaint.

Alienation, as Marx noted, is built on the dual forces of marginalization and powerlessness in the labour market in which the worker is objectified as an instrument by the means of production (1975). In this case the means of production is not the factory, but the university, which produces intellectual labour. We are objectified, and thus alienated, in many ways within the structures of the university. Alienation from production is not a new phenomenon. It has been core to the operations of capitalism but it has moved in new directions and forms as we see by the ways in which it operates in academia.

Alienation has been sustained by the use of ideological justifications based on gender (and also often on race) that are meshed with supportive arguments about capitalism that function as an effective power tool keeping women slotted into the vulnerable positioning of the pieceworker. Since the 19th century what was wanted was a worker base that could decrease the cost of labour and concurrently maintain the dominance of white men with high profit levels (Benoit 2000). The solution in the garment industry was forcing women to work either from home or in factories where they were paid not by the hour but by the production piece. Women needed to work to feed themselves and their families and therefore they helped to maintain a system based on the competition of a surplus population. Employers in the nineteenth century had no particular reason

to fear an uprising or mass exodus of workers, they knew there was always someone eager to be exploited (Benoit 2000). And while women did organize and protest they knew there was a line up of other women, outside the company doors begging for work. They also knew that if they were identified as problems or should they organize a union, they would be fired and their names would be passed on to other employers who would deny them employment. Economic security was at risk.

Piecework in the 19th century was part of the shadow workings of a power system that hid the illegal and unjust practices of economic engorgement behind an overt ideological argument. The same occurs today. In the academic system there are levels of unspoken practices that allow women in at one level but limit them as they seek entrance into other levels. At the same time universities are profiting from the large female base. More and more women are going to school and graduating with their PhDs causing universities to present themselves as practitioners of equal and just systems. It raises their marketing profile. The hidden message once women are working as academics is that they aren't as smart and aggressive as men. Even the culture among students is one that values white, straight men as the true purveyors of legitimate knowledge. Women as they reach the halls of some privilege, like women who were pieceworkers seek ways to maintain their positioning. They often adopt the shadow justifications of the system in order to secure their own future. The competition is immense. If more women than men dominate as students then what is being produced as universities open more and more graduate programs is a surplus of women vying for positions and trying to maintain any advantage they might be able to accrue. But we remain the workers who reproduce or will reproduce and so not considering us for tenure track or tenure positions is generally attached to the hidden agenda of hiring committees. And because women might have children the assumption also is that their commitment to research is less and their teaching strangely enough less embedded in the real knowledge of the discipline. Give women more teaching because they are "naturally" good in a role that fosters a pseudo identity of "nurturing" but keep

the barriers in place for where real decision-making occurs (Kemp 1994). Because the culture of family has yet to change significantly, women are tied to families, meaning that as they struggle to complete PhDs and find permanent positions while holding down demanding teaching course loads, there is little time for research and publishing.

Once again the university wins. It has a surplus of applicants at a fraction of the cost of tenure faculty and the capacity to close the door on any course or work life of a woman still battling outdated assessments and barriers. She is the alienated pieceworker who can be made to disappear as a new candidate, who will eventually learn quickly how fragile their standing is, takes her place. Women are trying to survive in a work life based on insecurity.

Alienation from being visible

Our work is invisible and based on a lie. The lie that the university tells our students is that what they are "buying" is equal; that the work by all professors is equal. It is of course a misnomer and profoundly dishonest against what is promised to them at graduation – their own dream job. Our students rarely know which one of their professors is a CAF, and which one is an RAF. Some of the more astute students can tell based on offices. As one of my colleagues told me, "they know – if you have bookshelves full of your own books and an office to yourself you are an RAF." But for the most part, the students do not know who is working precariously, and who is not. Nor do they understand the implications of piecework. They don't know that the reason we are not available on the days that we don't teach, is that we are teaching elsewhere and have no access to office space that would even allow us to meet them professionally if we could. Nor do they understand that their future might also hold the same precarious features.

Students don't understand why we cannot tell them what we will be teaching the following year. They have trouble appreciating why, when we are no longer around, we might not want to write them reference letters or that the value of us writing these letters is lesser than if a RAF were to do so. Students are often surprised to find out who is contract labour, or that contract labour means we do the heavy lifting

of teaching, often teaching one third more or even sometimes double the course load of our RAF colleagues. In many universities we teach more than half the student body.

Alienation from making change

Secondly, we are alienated from making change. The constant precarity of the pieceworker means that we are vulnerable to the whims of our departments. We cannot complain; instead we know employment is based on being silent and demonstrating gratitude for the courses we are given. Our silence is strategic. The hope is that if we aren't seen as a problem we'll be given the courses we need to support ourselves and our families, or maybe, just maybe, be seen as the type of contract faculty that can transition to RAF. We know that if we complain, there is a large pool of our peers more than anxious to take on our courses. Our security to meet the demands of living gain increased fragility so our desire to endanger whatever minute privilege we might have gained becomes less possible.

Alienation from our humanity

Thirdly, we are alienated from being people. As pieceworkers we become numbers. We are simply seniority numbers assigned to course numbers. We're tools to achieve institutional goals. When it comes to "part-time" hiring committees, in the complex systems of seniority, our personhood is erased. Decisions are made based on points and credits, which often benefits some CAF over others. Departments fail to include these points and credits in curriculum decisions. Courses are cancelled, moved or even axed, without any consideration of CAF seniority in these decisions. Instead of acknowledging that all department decisions have direct impact on those of us who rely on these courses for our livelihoods, our access to teaching is reduced to course codes and seniority points. This erasure of our personhood is made possible, not because RAF are jerks, but because the alienation of the precariate as individuals is structured right into the university system and many don't see their own complicity in our exploitation. And the offices we use are symbolic of this positioning. Most only indicate that they are CAF offices but have no names on them again erasing both our presence and legitimacy.

Alienation from producing professional capital

Finally, we are alienated from producing the professional capital that we need to be considered "successful" in our careers. We are alienated from the negotiable currency of our work, from the prestige and credibility that comes with research publications. We have no access to funds to pursue our research. We have no access to sabbaticals, or research leaves, or even course stipends. We are often not eligible to apply for internal or external grants, and even if we were eligible without a home institution they are nearly impossible to get. We often have to work in the summer to make ends meet, losing valuable research and writing time. But even more than that for many of us, when we do manage to complete research and publish there is rarely any celebration or formal recognition of our research achievements within our institutions.

Perhaps more critically, what gets denied in all this is the knowledge and expertise our time of service and research have brought. Even if we are doing the most innovative teaching and research our status and longitude bar us from secure inclusion. We are simply cheap labour confirming the power hierarchy. It is a system that uses our labour but accords it little creditability. In not offering any real acknowledgment of our work, which takes place for the most part during unpaid time, the structure of academic piecework functions to lock workers into a system of continued exploitation. Without the professional capital, there is little opportunity to escape the CAF stream and move into RAF. But without this institutional credibility, we are less competitive for other contract teaching positions, making us even more reliant on the precarious whims of our home departments who see us as less enticing than the new candidates emerging.

RAF in the Process of Alienation

Today there is an accepted critique of the corporatization of the university and our RAF colleagues are able to identify many of the ideological and systemic barriers we, as CAF face. Many of them are friends and supportive colleagues. Some of them are our allies and they might even walk with us while we are on strike, but they will not fight for our rights where

it counts on a daily basis in their own departments or on the councils and senates where they sit. There are two basic reasons for their distancing from our fights. Firstly, keeping the conditioned nature of our labour invisible is part of what maintains the power of the corporate education system and so the privileges that come with being RAF are often based on our exploitation. For example, part of the reason that departments can afford to have an RAF on leaves and sabbaticals is that their teaching load can cheaply be replaced by a CAF. The small, seminar classes that our senior colleagues teach are funded by the megaclasses that we teach. Secondly, as Sarah Kendzior rightly points out in her article on this issue, RAF don't consider us their peers (2013). The reasons for this are complex, but one of them is that the more we are alienated from the professional capital of research and publications, the less we are seen as being equal. This alienation from professional capital actually then works to justify our position; we can't get the jobs because we don't have the publication record; of course, our RAF colleagues forget, we can't have the publications because we teach huge course loads in their departments that do not allow us either the time or the financial freedom to do so. Our knowledge and expertise in teaching is disregarded and seen as lesser than research. What RAFs don't realize is that they base their value not on their luck in a commodified system but rather on them being overt in their devaluing of us. Their worth is maintained in this system by having a lesser other. This vicious cycle keeps us locked in as CAF, tied to a cycle of perpetual precarity. And it means that the university is organized on a class based system which functions to maintain layers of power for some workers who are deemed credible scholars while others are positioned in financial and social distress unable to access such credibility.

Recently there has been a shift to address the precariate class and precarity of the current labour market that has grown in the neoliberal society of the 2000s. The university is not just perpetuating the class based inequalities that exist in society, it is creating them and validating these inequalities. Universities need to take a hard look at themselves and recognize their participation in a system that,

like other industries, functions on accruing economic profit through a precariate class. Our RAF colleagues must also recognize that their positioning is based on our subordination so they are complicit in the systems of our exploitation that they benefit from. Changing the system may require them to give up some of their professional privileges and to acknowledge the value of teaching. Many of them have the kind of job security that would in fact allow them to fight with us without endangering themselves. We on the other hand are forced to fight at great risk to our economic and labour future.

Conclusion

Change can only come with getting rid of the claim that piecework is part time work. For a substantial majority of us, it is our full time job. Change can come by slowly trying to drill away at ending the conditions of our alienation. Firstly, students need to become aware of our positions of our labour, and they need to be educated on how this negatively impacts their learning experiences and the value of their university degrees. Secondly we need to get access to making change, we need to be invited into unions, departments and committees as equals to our RAF with concerns that require the same amount of attention that our colleagues receive. We need to get our RAF colleagues to use their power more effectively. They need to value justice ahead of the "sexiest" newest hire that sells them to the administrator as more valuable. Thirdly, we need to be equal partners in department decisions that impact our ability to earn our livings. Fourthly, we must be able to access professional capital through our teaching expertise. And finally we need to get to the governments on who are administrations depend. We must unite across universities so that we have greater influence and power to direct change at a government level and not just "piecemeal" at a local level. We must protect ourselves, but also our colleagues across the country as well as those coming through the system now by being collectively courageous.

Our personal descriptions of performing piecework in the academic marketplace are only two stories out of the tens of thousands of others that now dominate the landscape of academia (invisibly)

across Canada and more globally. Women make up the majority of the precariate connecting our history to women through many generations. It shows all industries have discovered the economic benefits of precarious work and how easy it is in a sexist system to target women. Our stories reveal the economic and political structures of the system that reinforces class and gender divisions. They trace the fabric of a system across age and generation that convincingly justifies its own dominance to the detriment of others who are marked as less. We write our stories fully aware of the risks of doing so. We know we aren't supposed to complain and silence is expected of us. We write this article together knowing the risk of speaking out on these issues and further alienating those who make decisions over our access to our livelihoods. We speak because without untying our tongues we are only contributors to a system that harms too many.

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Artifacts of Collaboration at the National Museum of the American Indian

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ABSTRACT: Contemporary museum anthropology is collaborative anthropology. Illustrated through the case study of the National Museum of the American Indian's process of community curating for its inaugural exhibitions, this account provides a window into the everyday practice of collaborative anthropology in museum practice through ethnographic attention to an exhibition in the making. Artifacts that are not from the collection come to the fore – artifacts of collaboration, like text panels, which signify Native voice. An attention to authorship reveals the process of collaboration between museum curators and Native community members developing the *Our Lives* gallery, including how exhibition contributors imagined their audiences differently and experienced the challenges and rewards of mediating (self)representations of contemporary Native identity for public consumption.

KEYWORDS: Museum Anthropology, Collaboration, National Museum of the American Indian, Kalinago

Contemporary Museum Anthropology

Contemporary museum anthropology is collaborative anthropology.¹ In the current paradigm of museum practice, collaborating with those who are represented in the museum is expected (Thomas 2010). Collaboration has become a major theoretical interest in the field and the main form of ethical

practice when working with indigenous peoples. I focus on the process of “community curating” at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) to illustrate the everyday practice of this kind of collaborative anthropology. I argue here and elsewhere (Shannon 2009, 2014) that training in cultural anthropology theory and methods – such as participant observation, interviewing and qualitative analysis – is essential to contemporary curatorial work and creating exhibitions about indigenous peoples, or any constituent community, in museums. Through a case study of one indigenous group's collaboration with the NMAI, I also caution against viewing indigenous (self-)representations in museums solely through the lens of identity politics or as a form of “tactical museology,” and instead

1 The research for this article was made possible by an individual dissertation research grant from the Wenner-Gren foundation, a Cornell University Sage Fellowship, and a Society for the Humanities research travel grant from Cornell University. The essay was revised at the School for Advanced Research during an Ethel-Jane Westfeldt Bunting Summer Scholar fellowship in 2011. I would like to thank Carla Jones, Elissa Guralnick, Jennifer Leichter, Meryleen Mena, Casey Sloan, Audrey Gayou, and Rhonda Wright for their comments on earlier drafts. This article is a complementary perspective to that provided in a previously published book chapter (Shannon 2009); it is also drawn from a longer museum ethnography titled *Our Lives: Collaboration, Native Voice and the Making of the National Museum of the American Indian* published in 2014 by SAR Press. All photographs and diagrams are by the author.

suggest that the museum has much to gain from Native participation.

Museum anthropology is a diverse field that includes both practice-oriented and critical theoretical scholarship. Critical museology is considered to be an outcome of the “new museology,” a movement rooted in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s that introduced questions of power to the analysis of museums and is derived from cultural studies, critical social theory, and anthropological theory (Kreps 2003; Shelton 2001:146-147; Witcomb 2003:129; see also Vergo 1989). As Christina Kreps (2003:n.p.) explains, “To new museologists the ‘old museology’ was too concerned with museum methods and techniques, and did not pay enough attention to the purposes and interests museums serve in society. Conventional museums were seen as object-centered. The ‘new museum’ was to be people-centered, action-oriented, and devoted to social change and development.” In short, the terms “critical museology” and “new museum theory” (Marstine 2006) point to changing forms of analysis and new expectations for museums in recent decades.

By changing the museum from a temple to a forum, critical museology advocates for the democratization of museums and greater accountability to visitors. This has been interpreted as a shift in emphasis from objects to stories (Macdonald and Silverstone 1992), from collections to audiences. Shelton (1995:6) explains that, as a result of critical museology, “museums have the ability to empower rather than dominate, to forge dialogical rather than monological relations with their publics and to reveal and encourage the transformation of contemporary realities rather than masking them.” The museum has increasingly been envisioned as an educational space and more recently as an institution for civic engagement (American Association of Museums 2002) and social change (Sandell and Nightingale 2012). Rather than a dusty place where knowledge is bestowed upon visitors and research is conducted behind closed doors, the museum is reconceived as a participatory space (Simon 2010).

The democratization of museums also includes greater inclusion and accountability to communities whose items are housed in museums. Accordingly,

anthropology curators argue that they have changed with the times: “the isolated scholar and manager becomes a facilitator and collaborator who shares, rather than represents, authority” (Nicks 2003:24). Christina Kreps (2003:n.p.) explains that there is a “new reality that curators and curating can no longer be defined solely on the basis of their relation to objects. Just as the museum has become more people- and socially-oriented, so too has curating.” Consequently, Kreps suggests that we view “curating as social practice” to “become more aware of how curatorial work is relative to particular cultural contexts.”

The term “decolonization” has become quite common in museum and anthropological practice and discourse, where it points to efforts in Native communities, museums, and social sciences more broadly to acknowledge the past and to engage in ethical research, representation, and writing practices in the present. Decolonizing the museum can be seen as part of a larger movement to decolonize Native communities, Native minds, and non-Native research practices (see, for example, Atalay 2006; Bowe chop and Erikson 2005; Kreps 1988; Phillips 2000; C. Smith 2005; L. T. Smith 1999; Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2012; Wilson and Yellow Bird 2005).

US government assimilation policies, scientific racism (Thomas 2000), and salvage anthropology empowered museums to collect Native ancestors and cultural artifacts, some of which are considered to be breathing, living beings in need of ritual feeding or other kinds of “traditional care” (Cobb 2005; Rosoff 1998).² Consequently, Native communities are spiritually, culturally, and ideologically invested in, committed to, and connected to museum collections. Collaboration with Native communities has become a key aspect of the movement to decolonize

2 Salvage anthropology or salvage ethnography refers to the practice of collecting Native American objects and knowledge (songs, stories, language) as quickly as possible; researchers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries assumed that Native American peoples and/or their cultural knowledge and lifeways were disappearing and needed to be recorded and preserved for posterity – in other words, salvaged like cargo from a sinking ship. However, the posterity imagined here was not the Native peoples themselves but Euro-Americans. The preservation efforts removed objects and knowledge from Native communities and placed them in museums and universities, while cultural preservation within communities was thought to be futile and acculturation inevitable.

the museum; it has also been described as a commitment to “restorative justice” in light of this history (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2007:111). Decolonizing practices in museums like the National Museum of the American Indian, for example, include returning ancestors’ remains and sacred objects, hiring Native staff, incorporating Native voices and perspectives into exhibits, and collaborating with those whose objects are housed in the museum and whose cultural knowledge and images are placed on display.

There are many reasons that museums collaborate with originating communities, whether they are Navajos, Kalinagos, World War II veterans, people of the African diaspora, or Holocaust survivors. Collaboration can enhance participation in the museum, improve community-museum relations, help provide research resources, and ensure content accuracy. But there are other reasons as well. As a matter of politics, when working with Native peoples in particular, those interested in decolonization want to enhance the originating community’s rights and public visibility. Museum professionals also want to maintain a positive public image and avoid political protests, although some have driven positive changes in museum practice over time.³ Ethically, we want to empower Native people to have control over how they are represented to the public, we want to redress past injustices, and include originating communities that have been represented and yet often silenced in the museum. We want the museum to serve the communities whose objects they house. Finally, epistemologically, we value other ways of knowing the world around us and do not want to continue to privilege only Western ways of knowing the world and Western views of Native objects and Native life experiences.⁴

Historically, the non-Native public has considered museums and anthropologists as competing, and

often more-valued, sources of authority or recognized expertise about Native Americans than the Native people themselves. In 2004 the National Museum of the American Indian, dedicated to the living indigenous cultures of the Western hemisphere, opened in Washington, DC. It was significant that this museum referred to Native community members as “experts” on their own experience, cultures, and histories and as “co-curators” of the exhibits. By using these terms, NMAI staff clearly aimed to refigure the authority of Native peoples in museum representation and practice, a key component to decolonizing the museum. This language is at the heart of NMAI museology, which has changed over the years but has maintained the centrality of Native knowledge as authoritative and Native voice as the main vehicle for this knowledge. The foundation of this turn to collaboration, and subsequent emphasis on community curating, is an outcome of both Native activism as well and the critique of representation and power in the field of anthropology.

Artifacts of Collaboration at the National Museum of the American Indian

As founding director Rick West has explained about the NMAI, “to put it in the most basic way, we insist that the *authentic Native voice* and perspective guide all our policies, including, of course, our exhibition philosophy” (West 2000:7, emphasis added). The museum more recently defined Native voice as a “partnership with Native people” that is “based on the belief that indigenous people are best able to teach others *about themselves*. Their understanding of who they are and *how they present themselves* to the world is what the museum calls ‘Native voice.’”⁵ The museum’s original mission statement includes both a commitment to “collaboration” with Native people, and a recognition that the museum has both a con-

3 Protests of the exhibits *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples and Into the Heart of Africa* (discussed in Phillips 2000), the controversy over the *Enola Gay* exhibit (discussed in Dubin 1999), and others show that exhibitions and their subject matter cannot be divorced from the political and social context in which they are made. For an example of “counter-labels,” or interventions in museum displays, see Strong 1997.

4 For an excellent discussion of the epistemological reasons for collaboration with indigenous communities, see Wylie 2008. While she is referring to archaeology, her argument is applicable to knowledge making in general.

5 From NMAI 2006 changing gallery exhibition titled, *Listening to Our Ancestors: The Art of Native Life along the North Pacific Coast* (emphasis added). This explicit definition of Native voice may have been prompted by negative critical reviews of the inaugural exhibitions, reviews that some staff felt were perhaps a result of the audience not understanding or being well prepared for what they saw in the exhibits. Staff speculated that the visitors did not understand the process or the philosophy behind Native voice and its centrality to the making of the inaugural exhibitions.

stituency – “Native communities,” and an audience – the “non-Native public.”⁶

In June 2003, as a contract researcher for the gallery *Our Lives: Contemporary Life and Identities*, one of the three permanent galleries then in development at museum, I conducted a final exhibit script review with a group of Inuit community curators in Igloolik, Nunavut. I asked them, considering that up to 4 million people per year would read their introduction to the exhibit, what did they most want people to know about them? Their resounding response: “We don’t live in Igloos anymore!” We all broke down laughing because it seemed silly to us to have to put it in writing, but they insisted that they knew their audience, and that *that* was what the world needed to know. Apparently, that was the question they would most often get from non-Inuit people. So the conclusion to the introductory panel to their exhibit reads precisely that (fig. 1).

Another example of a text panel in the museum’s inaugural *Our Lives* exhibition is from the urban Indians of Chicago exhibit and is based on what was originally a note in a fieldworker’s notebook from a meeting with Native community curators (fig. 2). And another example demonstrates a common representational strategy at the museum: an individual’s quotation associated with a group-authored statement by the “Kalinago Curators” (fig. 3). These signed

6 NMAI Mission Statement ca. 2002, from personal files: “The National Museum of the American Indian shall recognize and affirm to *Native communities and the non-Native public* the historical and contemporary culture and cultural achievements of the Natives of the Western Hemisphere by advancing – *in consultation and cooperation with Natives* – knowledge and understanding of Native cultures, including art, history and language, and by recognizing the museum’s special responsibility, through innovative public programming, research and collections, to protect, support and enhance the development, maintenance and perpetuation of Native culture and community.” The mission statement was later shortened around 2004 to read: “The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere – past, present, and future – through partnership with Native people and others. The museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values, and transitions in contemporary Native life” (NMAI Community Services 2007).



Figure 1: Introductory panel to the Igloolik exhibit in the *Our Lives* gallery. Reproduced with permission of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution.

text panels are what I call “artifacts of collaboration” between the museum and Native peoples. They are ubiquitous in the museum and index Native participation in the exhibitions.

I ask, then, a very basic question: How were these authored text panels, so ubiquitous through the museum, created? In other words, what does “Native voice” mean *in practice*? And what does authorship mean in this context? I approach these questions ethnographically, and consider the answers to be located at the intersection between museum professionals and Native community members struggling with how to portray Native identities to a greater public. These artifacts are products of collaboration in exhibit making at two levels: in the meetings where Native American community curators discussed the content of the exhibit (which I focus on in this essay), and in the museum institution where museum specialists worked together to transform Native community discussions into exhibit text (which I have focused on elsewhere; see Shannon 2009). Accordingly, there is a wider “circumference of authorship,” to borrow a term from Mario Baggioli (2006), than simply those named on the text panel.

I use Barry Dornfeld’s (1998) concepts of the “social organization of authorship,” the “ideology of

authorship,” and the “imagined audience” to frame my attention to the community curating process at the NMAI. Some additional motivating questions are: What does it mean to be an author in this process? What does the name below an exhibit text signify? Who counts for an author, and what role did he or she have in preparing the text? Ultimately, my intention here is to illustrate how collaborative anthropology works in practice, and what attention to authorship can do to illuminate practices of self-representation and how representations of contemporary Native identity are produced for public consumption.

First I want to situate this particular account in the wider scope of my research about the NMAI, which exemplifies two aspects of museum anthropology: examining the use of anthropological methods in museum practice, through the anthropological study of museums. In my work I highlight that the museum is not only an institution of cultural production but also a bureaucratic place of work and a form through which the representations of Native peoples are mediated. My research focused specifically on the making of the community-curated exhibits in the *Our Lives: Contemporary Life and Identities* gallery curated by Dr. Cynthia Chavez (San Felipe Pueblo/Hopi/Tewa/Navajo).⁷ Taking seriously NMAI references to Native American community members as “co-curators,” I framed my ethnographic research as a multi-sited ethnography of “experts.” I conducted two years of fieldwork from 2004 to 2006, and before that I was a researcher in the NMAI’s curatorial department from 1999 to 2002. Therefore I have a particular kind of “situated knowledge” (Haraway

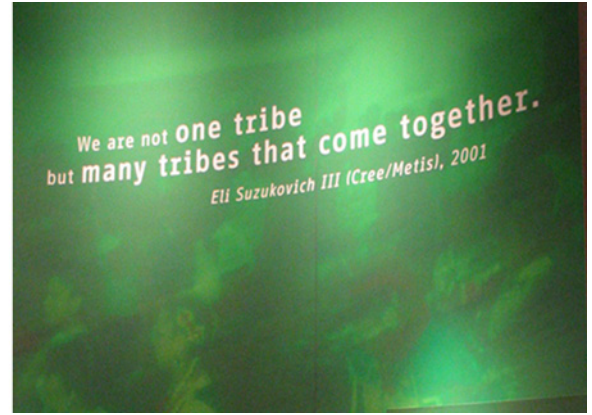


Figure 2: Large photograph and “pull quote” text on the wall of urban Indian community of Chicago exhibit. Reproduced with permission of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution.

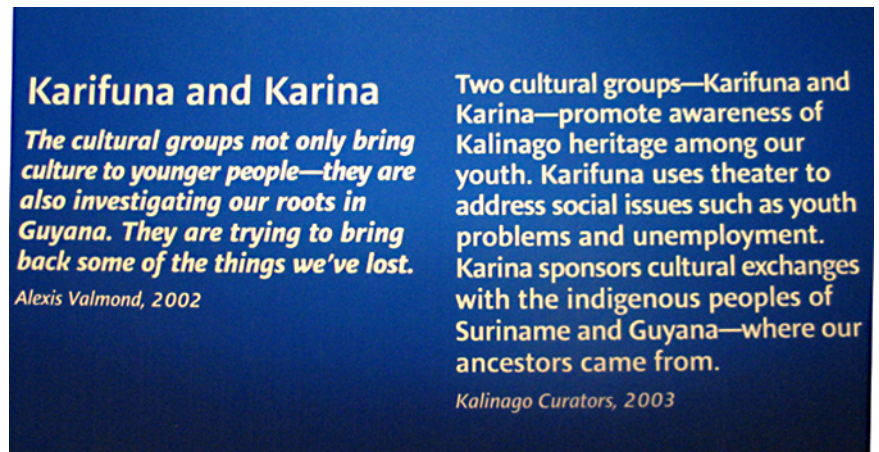


Figure 3: Text label in the Kalinago exhibit. Reproduced with permission of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution.

1991) with respect to exhibit making at the NMAI. For my fieldwork, I spent six or more months living and volunteering in three of nine communities involved in the making of the *Our Lives* exhibition. The many locations of my field site defined by the making of the exhibition included workplaces, professional conferences, indigenous communities, the museum institution, and the gallery space itself. I tracked the exhibition from its inception to its installation to its reception.

The three communities with whom I conducted my research were the museum staff and two of eight Native communities featured in the *Our Lives* gallery. Specifically, I worked with the museum professionals at the NMAI, including Native and non-Native workers at the museum; the American Indian community of Chicago, a multitribal community residing throughout a large city; and the Kalinago community

⁷ Now Dr. Cynthia Chavez Lamar. There are also “NMAI curated” introductory sections to the inaugural exhibits, but I do not attend to them here. I focus on the collaboration between the museum and the communities as represented through the community centered exhibits.

(or Island Caribs) who live on a “reserve” – that they prefer be called the Carib Territory – in which about four thousand people are administered by the Carib Council and chief on the island of Dominica in the Caribbean West Indies. It is beyond the scope of this essay to address equally the Kalinago and Chicago communities’ experiences of community curating; I go into more detail here about the Kalinago case and provide some points of comparison with the Chicago case.

Refiguring fieldwork as an anthropology with experts (a characterization that came *from* the field site rather than being applied *to* it), I basically went into the field and talked to community curators and museum staff about this collaborative process. I also conducted participant observation and life and career histories with my interlocutors because I was interested in learning how these particular individuals came to be selected for this kind of work and what kinds of roles they served in their communities. In choosing the exhibition to organize my field site and focusing on knowledge production, I considered the exhibition to be a “third” figure in the fieldwork relation. In other words, the exhibition process was something that the participants in my research could look at, reflect on, and study *with* me.

In many ways, this (re)orientation to the ethnographic subject, as something the ethnographer and her interlocutors puzzle over together, resonates with the Neo-Boasian approach to anthropology that Matti Bunzl (2004) proposes in his critique of the Malinowskian model for fieldwork. Writing against the notion that anthropological knowledge must be produced through a distance between the ethnographic Self and Native Other (or a studying of the Other), thus reifying and sustaining a hierarchy of difference, Bunzl combines Boasian ethnography with Foucauldian genealogy and proposes that both insiders and outsiders to a culture have a common “epistemic position” with respect to the “ethnographic subject,” which he suggests to be a “history of the present” (Bunzl 2004:438). The Neo-Boasian approach, Bunzl (2004:440) suggests, “would thus follow Boas in turning our attention to” the production of historical differences, and their “ethnographic reproduction”; in short, rather than simply “finding”

cultural differences and boundaries, look to how they were produced (including through anthropological practice). In this case, it is the exhibition (or the history and making of the exhibition) that becomes our shared focal point of analysis.

This shared epistemic position of ethnographer and ethnographic subject can be seen as a form of collaboration.⁸ With this in mind, I want to provide the context for my current attention to authorship as part of a wider commitment to present museum ethnography that is not focused solely on objects or their creation, circulation and valuation. In general, the broader work upon which this account is based can be characterized as an ethnography of collaboration as a particular form of representational practice. Over the last twenty years, collaboration has emerged as a solution to issues of representation in such fields as anthropology, media production, and museum studies when working with indigenous peoples; it has also been posited as “good practice” in business administration, state–citizen relations, and international development projects, among other endeavours. In the museum world, collaboration is considered to be both research method and ethical practice by Native and non-Native people alike.

Taking up collaboration as ethnographic subject means elaborating on the processes of representation – attending to issues of power and position, highlighting moments of decision making and compromise, dialogue and silence. Taking up collaboration as ethnographic subject also means looking to collaboration as an alternative organizing trope of sociality, using it as a lens through which to view social relations, knowledge production, and the representational strategies of culture producers. In other words, collaboration is a form of meaning making, represents a particular kind of belonging, and can present a heuristic concept for moving “beyond the cultural turn” to see how else we might define, represent, and work together with the participants in our research.

8 While I consider the research process a form of collaborative endeavour, this particular account was not written collaboratively. For an example of a collaboratively written account based on this fieldwork experience, see Joseph and Shannon 2009. For a discussion of ethnography in which the written product is done collaboratively, see Lassiter 2005.

Mediating Native Voice

The Kalinago community exhibit in the *Our Lives* gallery displays few recognizable “museum objects” (some are even hidden behind cabinet doors). As a result, NMAI staff nicknamed this gallery “Our Props,” signifying the lack of museum collection objects in the exhibit; for example, there is a glass case filled with brochures. This was opposed to the nicknames “Our Loans” and “Our Objects” for the other two permanent galleries *Our Peoples: Giving Voice to Our Histories* and *Our Universes: Traditional Knowledge Shapes Our World*, respectively. One senior manager referred to the *Our Lives* gallery as “T-shirts and baseball caps” (there is actually a T-shirt folded and displayed in a glass case) – he was skeptical about whether people would appreciate these displays. More prominent are the video monitors, larger than life photographs of people, and text panels – authored text panels – seamlessly integrated into the surfaces of the exhibit. What is really on display here, I have argued, is not (primarily) objects but *reflexive subjects* (Shannon 2009).

By considering the *Our Lives* exhibits as forms of media production, we can highlight the complex interplay of authorship and mediation that occurred between the communities and the museum, and we can provide some insight into the way in which each community chose to interpret what contemporary Native identity means. In Barry Dornfeld’s (1998) ethnography *Producing Public Television, Producing Public Culture*, he analyzes the production of a PBS television series by doing ethnography with, and in the meetings among, the producers of the series. While Mazzarella (2004:350) asserts that the notion of agency is what is taken to extremes in media studies (a *theoretical* false dichotomy of agency rendered as either an over-determined cultural imperialism or an over-active audience), Dornfeld (1998:14) instead problematizes the segregation of scholarly studies of production and reception (revealing, I would argue, that underlying this theoretical false dichotomy is a *methodological* one). Dornfeld insists that, in practice, production and consumption are intertwined. He explains that the anticipation of reception, or the *imagined audience*, is part of the production process. Accordingly, while mediation is most often thought

to occur through objects and persons, one can also consider as part of this process the assumptions about the audience that guide producers’ creative decisions.

Dornfeld’s attention to the imagined audience prompted me to identify the prefigured audience as one of the external forms through which co-curators mediated the representation of themselves in order to develop an exhibit about their own identity.⁹ This analysis revealed that the characterization of the prefigured audience was one of the conceptual fault lines separating the various experts at work on the *Our Lives* exhibition. I address these rifts later; but first, I turn to the kinds of creative decisions that were made in the process, or how authorship was produced through collaboration.

The Social Organization of Authorship: Community Curating by Committee

Cynthia, NMAI lead curator, invited Native communities with whom she worked to develop the *Our Lives* exhibits to structure their own participation in two important ways. First, she left it to each community to determine their own appropriate method of co-curator selection, which provided insight into local practices of self-representation. For example, the American Indian community of Chicago selected co-curators through nomination and election at the American Indian Center, a familiar practice for them that they use to organize annual powwow committees. For the Kalinago in Dominica, the chief of the Carib Territory selected the co-curator committee, making sure there was representation from each hamlet, male and female members, and craft makers, political figures, and cultural group leaders. This is what I call a “representational calculus” that was essential in each community for creating a committee with the authority and legitimacy to work on behalf of the community, according to their own standards. Second, Cynthia gave the community curators basic guidelines of her vision for what an *Our Lives* exhibit “should *not* be”: a history, tourism version, or solely traditional view of the community. She then offered what “every community component *should* be”: honest, complex, and specific.

⁹ For a discussion about the anthropology of mediation that inspired this approach, see Mazzarella 2004.

During the community curating process, NMAI staff encouraged a thematic approach to exhibit making. Therefore, co-curators were largely responsible for producing knowledge about themselves through a thematic structure; they were also tasked with creating a “main message” about contemporary identity for their exhibit. Each community curator committee represented in the *Our Lives* gallery was invited to interpret the term identity in whatever way they chose. Often the co-curators did not include in their exhibits what the NMAI staff had researched and anticipated they would. For example, in the Kahnawake Mohawk exhibit, tribal membership rules or residency requirements, and even the “Oka Crisis,”¹⁰ were not mentioned.

Specific themes emerged in part as a result of the composition of each committee. The majority of the Kalinago co-curators, for example, were part of the first generation of Kalinago who went to secondary education and learned about other indigenous communities worldwide (fig. 4). In 1978 members of the committee founded the Karifuna Cultural Group which continues today to “raise cultural consciousness” about Carib people in and outside the Carib Territory. These individuals were also involved in the short lived Carib Liberation Movement of the late 1970s to raise political consciousness and promote Carib rights.

Prosper Paris, a co-curator and member of these organizations, explained that, at this time in the late 1970s and 1980s, “anyone from archaeologists [to] historians would come to Dominica – they wanted



Figure 4: Kalinago community curators Garnette Joseph, Sylvanie Burton, Irvince Auguiste, Prosper Paris, Cozier Frederick, Jacinta Bruney, Gerard Langlais, and Alexis Valmond.

to write, they wanted to... meet the Carib chief, they wanted to see what is [the] life [of a] Carib” (interview with author, July 20, 2005). This encouragement from people outside the Territory helped Caribs to realize that they had “become assets to the whole of Dominica.” Prosper said of this time period that influenced Kalinago understandings and approaches to cultural identity that “there was a new image that we should rise up as Carib people. ... People who went through education had a lot of problems, being discriminated against as being a Carib or inferior race” (interview with author, July 20, 2005; cf. Turner 1991).

Along similar lines, through a series of meetings over the course of three years (2001-3), these Kalinago committee members created the main message for their exhibit as: “The Kalinago survive despite numerous challenges.” The three main themes for their exhibit became: Cultural Consciousness, Economic Survival, and Challenges. We can see what kind of deliberations occurred to arrive at these themes by looking at a transcript of a Kalinago co-curator meeting during their second visit with the NMAI, which was represented by Susan Secakuku (Hopi) and me, as her assistant.

At this meeting on January 15, 2002, co-curators sat around a table in the Carib Council House, a hex-

¹⁰ The “Oka Crisis” was a conflict in 1990 between the Kahnatesake Mohawk community and the Quebec provincial police over plans to expand a golf course onto a Mohawk sacred site and burial ground. For more information see for example the film *Kabnesatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) directed by Alanis Obomsawin.

agonal structure with a meeting room that had fading yellow paint on the walls and fans turning overhead. The meeting moved forward with a fast rotation of speakers, often finishing one another's sentences, in conversation among themselves as much as in explanation to Susan.

Broadly, the co-curators expressed concerns over the impact of the outside world on youth, economy and education in the Carib Territory through the influence of television, the Dominican government, and the surrounding Afro-Dominican society. As usual, there were a lot of humorous asides in the meeting – something that unfortunately did not translate into the exhibition despite being an important and enjoyable part of working with communities. In any case, the group often returned to what they *would like* to see happen in their community in the future. For example, at one point in the meeting, Susan brings up the issue of “self identity,” saying she heard someone mention it earlier. Sylvanie Burton rephrases this as “Who you are.” Then Susan asks if she heard right from community members – that it's a *conscious* decision to be Carib. To which Sylvanie replies that the co-curators would like to have the exhibit be “not just focusing on the past, but something in the future.”

Later in this meeting Susan again recalls something someone said to help guide the discussion to possible exhibit themes. She says, “You said something a little earlier I want to go back to about: right now, you're an agricultural based people, right?” She asks if that is changing, to which Garnette Joseph says yes and Sylvanie states, “The pressure is on to change.” Garnette reiterates, “Pressure is on.” When Susan asks from whom, Garnette replies, “We see, well, the *global system* is at hand, and we are part of it.” He continues, “But, we've seen changes begin in the tourism industry, for example. For the past five years, we find organized tours coming into the Carib Territory. And around that we've seen changes – the craft marketing, and the *possibility* of strengthening the craft industry. So, I mean, there are very serious constraints here,” he said, then mentioned a lack of marketing and a need for increased exports of crafts. “More can be done,” he says, and Prosper repeats, “More can be done.”

KALINAGO ECONOMY

Our problems and solutions are all tied to the economy. Bananas no longer support us.

Andel Challenger, 2002

Bananas have been the main cash crop for farmers in the Carib Territory for generations. But international competition has become fierce, and banana growing is now an unreliable source of income. Jobs are scarce, and Kalinago are leaving the territory to find work.

We are now trying to develop tourism as a remedy. Already, tour buses bring travelers to the territory to watch cultural groups perform and to buy crafts at roadside stands. A new tourist attraction – which replicates a traditional Kalinago village – is under development.

Kalinago Curators, 2003

Garnette starts again, “More can be done. Our Heritage Village – that is due to open soon, and there are possibilities around that as well.”¹¹ Susan then says, “I'm listening to you and I want to make sure I heard you right. You're moving, you think, to more of a craft-based and tourism –” And the co-curators finish her sentence, agreeing, a “ – tourism based economy” (see “Kalinago Economy” exhibit panel quoted above). The concerns expressed in this co-curator meeting, in interviews, and in subsequent community-wide meetings, would highlight these same themes of hardship, survival, tourism, and future cultural potential.

It was important to the co-curators that the exhibit not be from their perspective alone but from a broader cross section of people from the Carib Territory. Accordingly, they held the first community-wide meeting two days later to which Prosper invited all of the prominent “resource persons” of the Carib Territory, as Kalinago refer to them. This meeting also took place in the Carib Council house, where community members were seated in rows of benches, and NMAI staff – including myself taking notes – sat at a table facing them.

¹¹ By 2006, the heritage center's name had changed to *Kalinago Barana Autê: Carib Village by the Sea*.

After an elder offered a prayer to begin the meeting, Prosper gave a summary of the work conducted so far by the NMAI and the co-curators, saying that “it is a project of the Carib community” and he did not want people complaining that they didn’t know about it. He referred to the gallery as “Our life and time.” Susan then explained the focus of the *Our Lives* gallery to those gathered:

[The focus of] this gallery is the identity of indigenous peoples. Contemporary identities today. I think a lot of non-indigenous peoples believe either we’re no longer around, no longer live here or exist in this world, or that we still wear feathers or, you know, live in tepees. Everybody lives in tepees, they think. And we’ve never lived in tepees [people laugh], and I know that the Kalinago never lived in tepees. Our goal is to try and *demonstrate to the visitor* coming in, saying, we are still here as indigenous peoples, but we live in a particular way, and we have different issues today than we did way back when. But we still have the same thinking and values probably that we did, that have maintained us today. So, what we’re trying to ask from you is – or get some information from you is – pretty much what does it mean to be a Carib? How do you define yourselves as being a Kalinago?... And the other...eight communities we mentioned are going for the same thing... they’re all being asked, what does it mean to be a Yakama? What does it mean to be a Mohawk? ... And all these will be put in the same room, and the visitor will decide, will hear from you directly what does it mean to be a Carib.

Prosper explained that what people said was being tape recorded and then opened up the floor to the community members. One by one, each person stood and made a passionate statement about what it means to be Carib, sometimes being called on specifically by Prosper, who insisted that everyone contribute. At one point a teacher said that this would be an opportunity for tourism: “I think it is a very good medium for Dominica on the whole *to market itself as a tourist destination*... [that] showcases indigenous people.” Later Susan and I would walk away from this meeting impressed by the candor of the community members present. Many talked of

I AM KALINAGO

You make a choice to be Kalinago, because you could either be a Kalinago person or an Afro-Dominican. If you choose to be Kalinago, you find there are a lot of obstacles.

Cozier Frederick, 2002

Many of us choose to be Kalinago. To choose to be Kalinago means to accept responsibility for maintaining and promoting our culture. It requires having a strong character to withstand negative stereotypes about our people. Today, more of us are proclaiming our identity. A stronger cultural awareness is emerging every day.

Kalinago Curators, 2003

discrimination and insisted that they were, and that one must be, proud to be a Carib.

The second community-wide meeting, held almost exactly one year later on March 17, 2003, was basically a vetting session for the specific main message and themes the co-curators had developed in the meantime, which Susan read aloud to those gathered. At this point the main message was: “The Kalinago people make a conscious choice to be Kalinago despite numerous difficulties.” The main themes were Cultural Revitalization, Cultural Tourism, and Difficulties.

Prosper then opened the meeting up for group discussion. Some community members were concerned about the negative tone of the exhibit. Cozier Frederick, a representative for youth on the co-curator committee, suggested that they needed to “strike a balance” in the positives and negatives of the exhibition. Irvince Auguste, a tourism representative, co-curator and former chief, indicated that the museum is like an advertisement and that it is something for which they are not dependent on the Dominica government: “it’s now *our* business to develop and how we can maximize this advertisement.” Prosper indicated that the exhibit should not be too positive, such that it does not reflect reality, because then people will not be inclined to help them. In this meeting, individuals were more talking to

one other, and the discussion ranged from wanting something back from the NMAI to concerns over intermarriage and that their “race will die” in the future.

During the co-curator meeting directly after this community gathering, Prosper, responding to concerns about the negative tone of the exhibition, suggested the term “challenges” instead of “difficulties” for the main message. Susan commented that perhaps “survival” could be a more positive spin, referencing another person’s concerns. The co-curators agreed. The main message was then finalized: “the Kalinago survive despite numerous challenges.” Then the co-curators went down the list of themes, one by one, asking where particular kinds of information should be placed in the exhibit script according to the revised categories (fig. 5). It was basically a classification exercise, as they determined what kinds of community practices would go under which themes. This was not always an obvious task; for instance, Cultural Groups could have been categorized under Economic Survival because Kalinago earn money for performances for tourists, but the co-curators chose to include them under Cultural Consciousness instead.

Back at the museum – once the themes were selected and their sub-themes finalized – NMAI staff worked on the exhibit script structure (also an artifact of collaboration); a record of their collaboration can be seen in the dialogue represented in a document from the Kalinago exhibit’s development (fig. 6). The script was later transformed into a text panel that was produced through the creative work of designers and the material production of fabricators who then placed it on the curvilinear aluminum walls of the *Our Lives* gallery.

The Ideology of Authorship: Reflections on the Exhibit Making Process

During my fieldwork I asked NMAI and community curators to reflect on the community curating process. Prosper Paris, a cultural group leader, compared the thematic approach to writing down a title for a

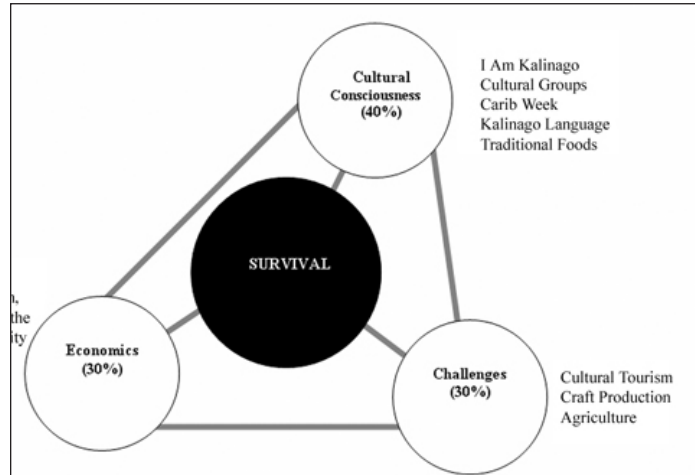


Figure 5: Kalinago “bubble diagram.” A bubble diagram is developed by NMAI curators, based on community curators’ input, to communicate to the designers the relative “weight” each content category should receive in the exhibit design.

Post 11/18 curatorial revisions
 Last edited by MH: 1/21/04
 Reviewed by CC: 2/13/04
 Edited by KM: 2/24/04

	<i>Kalinago Curators, 2003</i> #
GRAPHIC: Map of Carib Territory with Kalinago place names G10.2.5.1 This is courtesy of Lennox Honychurch. This graphic is being recreated from a map he drew.	The Kalinago name for Dominica is Waitukubuli which means “tall is her body.” Map with Kalinago place-names. Courtesy of Lennox Honychurch. Waitukubuli contains several Native place-names, including Bataka and Sineku. Waitukubuli—the Kalinago name for Dominica—means, “tall is her body.” <i>Kalinago Curators, 2003</i> #
Traditional Foods T10.2.6 Should this say “farina”? What is “farine” exactly? Taryn’s note: Farine is flour made from cassava, used in different recipes	Kalinago Cuisine Sometimes when I give my children Kalinago food, they tell me they want store-bought bread. <i>Sylvie Warrington, 2002</i> Our young people are more interested in store-bought foods, so fewer people are making traditional foods these days. But we still consider food an important part of our heritage. Traditional foods such as farine and cassava are often served at special events, celebrations, and tourist attractions. <i>Kalinago Curators, 2003</i> #
PHOTO: Cooking cassava G10.2.6.1	A versatile root, cassava can be made into bread, pudding, and even beer. Here the root has been peeled, shredded, and the water extracted. People then add sugar to the meal and roast it on a hot iron, which produces cassava bread.

Figure 6: Kalinago exhibit “script structure” as a work in progress. At this stage deletions were still present for reference, and the wording appeared in several colors, denoting different NMAI staff members’ contributions.

song and then composing lyrics according to that title; he said it was a familiar process to him. Prosper, like former Chief Garnette Joseph, believed this approach to be successful. Garnette said it worked

because I think listening to people speak, and some of the things that they spend more time [on], I guess, that is only because it is important to them. If people keep on saying the same thing all the time, then that is how we feel most of the time. [Interview with author, April 13, 2005]

In other words, Garnette's comment points to an assumption in a thematic approach that is coupled with collaborative practice – and no doubt also reflects the responsibility of authorship by co-curators *on behalf of* a wider community: that the more people talk about something, the more important it is; that the themes should derive from what community members *talk about the most*. Prosper further noted,

I'm very satisfied that we had a good cross section of people. We had the community workers, we had people involved in tourism, in community work, farmers, boat makers, and youth and all these people... we can safely say that we had the *voice of the Carib People on tape*. [Interview with author, April 24, 2005]

At one point during a tape recorded interview with Sylvanie Burton in 2005, I asked her specifically who wrote the script. She talked about NMAI “pulling” the script out from recordings, and both of us started laughing as she detailed a process that I was engaging in at that moment. She explained that it was the community members who did the script, not the NMAI staff. She said, “Because it's *you* who said everything anyway! It wasn't *they* [the NMAI], [they were] just asking all the questions and throwing out the topics or whatever for us to discuss, and saying what do you think of this?” (interview with author, April 8, 2005). She said the script came from “meetings and discussions,” and added, “Everybody's contribution was recorded [she laughs]. And out of that, certain script was selected and then when [NMAI staff] came down we had a *consensus* on... different things.”

In sum, the selection and visual arrangement of quotations from transcripts and images and photographs were made by the NMAI staff members. Sylvanie said the NMAI “put it together in a way that *we ourselves* were really happy.” A Chicago community curator said the same for their exhibit, noting it was best that the NMAI made those choices, and not themselves, so that other community members would know it was not the co-curators who put themselves all over the walls of the exhibit.

The Kalinago community curators felt strongly that the script reflected their voices. Garnette said their job was basically to make “corrections” to the script, fact-checking names and dates (interview with author, March 17, 2005). He said he didn't change the content of the script because it came from the community and that people were already familiar with it because it was what they themselves had said (interview with author, April 13, 2005). This ideology of authorship suggests credit for the script is related to widespread community contribution, content choice, and oral statements from meetings and interviews (and paraphrases of these) inscribed in the text panels – not necessarily the practice of particular content selection and arrangement or writing the script. The process moved from oral (conversational) to textual (definitive).

I also asked a number of Kalinago people if it was usual for them to talk about their identity, in part as a measure of the impact of the museum's intervention in their community. One committee member said,

It is an everyday topic, every day people talk about Kalinago, the identity, and so on. But sometimes we have that pull between who is a Kalinago and who is a half breed or who is a negro.... So, that was kind of a little bit ticklish. That talk about Kalinago identity, and so on, it's something that everybody's talking about in the Carib Territory. But as I said, some straight hair people and some who have the real features, would look at the [laughs a little, perhaps sheepishly] you know half breed and say well you're a negro, you're not a Carib, you're not a Kalinago man, you know? You something else. That sort of thing, but we get over that and we all work together and so on. [Interview with author, April 13, 2005]

Intermarriage and race in the Carib Territory – like pan-Indianism and organizational infighting in Chicago – were topics that were spoken of in many meetings and interviews among community members, but the community curators chose not to incorporate them into the exhibit. Those topics were more a part of the process, of community members speaking to each other, than the product, or what they felt was appropriate for the public. Exercising this choice, often absent in popular culture representations of Native Americans, was key to the trust-building aspect of this collaborative process.

Collaborative Authorship and the Imagined Audience

Attention to authorship renders the exhibit as a form of mediation that is routed through the imagined audience, the “other” that all of the contributors – the script editor, the NMAI curators, and the Native co-curators – considered as they participated in making the exhibit. Through his ethnography Dornfeld found that the imagined audience for the PBS documentary producers closely matched their own class position, life experiences, and values. In other words, they assumed an audience like themselves. For those involved in community curating for the *Our Lives* gallery, this seemed to follow for the script editor but not necessarily for the co-curators.

The script editor and curatorial staff had very different interpretations of best practice in how to represent communities in the museum. Briefly, the script editor/writer, associated with the Exhibits Department in the museum, presented a visitor-centered perspective and emphasized his expertise of “translation”; the curatorial staff espoused a community-centered perspective and emphasized their intimacy with, and advocacy for, Native communities being represented within the museum (Shannon 2014). One way of understanding these different orientations is to examine the audience that each group working on exhibits imagined and wanted to speak to through their work. It was widely thought among museum staff that the Curatorial Department looked to the “constituency” (or tribes), while the Exhibits Department looked to the general visitors (or non-

Native public): two different audiences mentioned in the original NMAI mission statement.

Cynthia, the *Our Lives* lead curator, expressed great anxiety in the course of making *Our Lives*. She worried over proper representation of the communities as well as what she called the “*huuuuge* and endless sort of subject” that contemporary Native identity is. She said of her beginning weeks on the project, “a lot of the advice I was getting was to sort of create a framework for identity. And I’m thinking, ‘How can you create a framework for identity?!’” (interview with author, July 29, 2004). Her anxiety was also related to her imagined audience, which was the *community curators with whom she worked* – a group of particular persons to whom she felt accountable.

Although I do not elaborate on the script editor’s role here, briefly, his imagined audience was the non-Native visitor. NMAI staff members commented to me that the editor did not know “Indians 101,” but he told me this made him a better translator for the visitor, who was in the same boat. Cynthia and at least one group of co-curators involved in the *Our Lives* exhibition noted that after the script editor’s influence, all the exhibits seemed to have a “happy go lucky” tone about them. More generally, the public-oriented departments imagined their audience as National Air and Space Museum overflow, “streakers” in museum-speak, who they believed did *not* want to read a lot of text (as opposed to “scholars” or “studiers,” as they are called in museum studies, who are the expected audience of, for example, the Holocaust Museum).

While the public-oriented staff insisted that their expertise was essential in translating community-produced knowledge to the museum audience, what they perhaps missed was that the communities had their own audiences in mind as they worked on the exhibits. The Chicago main message was: “Native peoples from different tribes come together in Chicago and maintain a supportive community network.” As Joe Podlasek (Ojibwe/Polish), a co-curator and director of the American Indian Center, told me one day, he wondered how other tribes would respond to their exhibit: “I’d be really interested in getting some feedback from somebody that *hasn’t*

been to Chicago, to our community ... maybe from a rez [or] from another urban Indian community” (meeting with co-curators, October 11, 2005). This imagined audience of *other tribes* is reflected in the more retrospective perspective of their exhibit: the emphasis on the longevity of the Chicago community, the descriptions of institutional support for maintaining Indian identities, and the demonstrated tolerance for different tribal traditions. The Chicago community appreciated being included in the NMAI and the sense of acknowledgment of their identity and presence that comes with this kind of national visibility, perhaps in particular because of the reservation versus city antagonism that can occur about who is a “real Indian.” (Keeping in mind that more than half of all Native Americans in the US live in cities, this was the first time I am aware of when an urban community was treated equally to reservation communities in a museum exhibition).

The Kalinago, on the other hand, imagined their audience to be *potential tourists* as they constructed their exhibit. Prosper said people felt they were “talking to the world” (interview with author, April 24, 2005). Their exhibit maintained a future perspective, hoping that their audience would see the exhibit and visit and participate in their local economy. This perspective was also reflected in their highlighting a “model village” that did not open until 2006, Carib week, and cultural groups (in co-curator meetings they said were lacking in recent years) – but all these things, they felt, had potential for a greater awakening of cultural consciousness in their community.

For the Kalinago, consensus on exhibit content was not so much the challenge as was doing the exhibit “the right way.” Perhaps this was because the Kalinago were practiced at defining themselves to outside audiences as a whole; Garnette, the former chief, once said to me, “I’ve been representing people half my life” (interview with author, April 13, 2005). It seemed the most difficult task in the process for the Kalinago was the local politics of representation: who was on the committee, where the money from the museum went, how co-curators were perceived as benefiting from the process, and staving off jealousies, apathy, or false accusations from others. The most important aspect the Kalinago co-curators stressed was making sure that

a wide swath of the community was represented on the committee, that the wider community was involved in producing exhibit content, and that the community felt *ownership* over the project.

In contrast, for the Chicago community the consensus building around a concept of identity for a multitribal community, or the content of the exhibit, was what was most difficult in the process. Few co-curators were practiced at representing this community as a multi-tribal whole besides Joe, the director of the American Indian Center. In fact, the greatest challenge of the co-curator meetings – beyond getting people to come, as liaison Rita Hodge (Navajo) told me – was respecting one another’s very different tribal traditions in the course of making an exhibit about identity. Rita explained, “Because we were from many different nations, we couldn’t just represent *one* nation over the other. So I think that was probably one of the most challenging things that we had to work with, is to be respectful, to be mindful of the other nations, their traditions, their cultural traditions and so, that was really challenging” (interview with author, November 29, 2005). This struggle and ethical commitment within the Chicago committee, in the end, became the main message about the community itself. And rather than focus on specific tribes, the exhibit presented the main institutions of support for all tribal peoples in the community.

We can see that, through their exhibit, the Kalinagos made a case for economic need and a call for tourist engagement; they promised a renewed cultural product would be waiting for these potential visitors (fig. 7). The Chicago community made a case for longevity and support of tribal identities despite living in a city, and they have mentioned being in the NMAI in grant applications among other things. No doubt in both cases these usually marginalized communities, often written about by academics or considered by surrounding societies as somehow less Native than others (through assimilation due to a devastating history, racial mixing, or being in greater contact with a dominant society) – appreciated the validation and symbolic capital gained through their representation at the NMAI alongside the more familiar forms of Native identity and life.



Figure 7: Kalinago exhibit hall with “craft house” photo collage. Reproduced with permission of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution.

The Kalinago approach to exhibit making and their particular imagined audience as tourists may appear to reflect what Ivan Karp and Gustavo Buntinx refer to as “tactical museology” in the latest edited collection by Karp and others titled *Museum Frictions* (2006). Among other things, this volume considers the museum in the globalized world and economy. They write in the introduction about the tensions in contemporary museums, which are striving to be simultaneously “community-based, national, regional and *global*” (Karp et al. 2006:8). They explain that communities have “sought the legitimacy conferred by museums for themselves, not necessarily to display themselves for others” (Karp et al. 2006:11). And they introduce the concept of “tactical museology” (Buntinx and Karp 2006:207) in which groups take advantage of the symbolic

capital of the museum or employ it for legitimizing a group identity, particularly in community museums. Keeping in mind that NMAI director Rick West has described the NMAI as more like a community museum than a national one, it would seem that this idea of tactical museology may apply to what I have presented here. But I would caution against coming to that conclusion.

I want to emphasize that it is the NMAI that gains symbolic capital from these artifacts of collaboration. It is a two way street. Recall director Rick West’s promise of authenticity through Native voice; it is these artifacts, these indexes of community participation – the faces, the signed text panels – these are the evidence of collaboration and are what give the *museum* legitimacy in the eyes of both its audience *and* its constituency.

Collaborative Anthropology in the Museum

Native communities' participation in museum practice is a way for them to access a wider public sphere in which a struggle over what it means to be Native has all too often been controlled and defined by people outside of their experience. Patricia Erikson describes "autoethnography" as Native communities' "representations of themselves that engage with dominant cultural systems yet still have a degree of local control" (Erikson et al. 2002:66). The *Our Lives* gallery, then, is in many ways eight autoethnographies assembled by museum and community experts. Therefore collaborative anthropology is not only a form of exhibition making, but it is also on display in the museum. However, far from creating a multivocal exhibit as NMAI staff had predicted in 2000 during an early vetting session about the gallery premise, through the process of community curating, collaborative authorship, and the *committee form* that relied on a consensus approach to knowledge production, what resulted instead were artifacts that presented a group authoritative voice, and uniform thematic content for each community.

In addition, the artifacts of collaboration elided a number of producers involved in their making. Ironically, while the exhibits are about the Kalinagos or American Indians of Chicago, their everyday life and identity seemed far less defined by the museum than were the lives of those who worked at the NMAI. While the communities might experience exhibit making sporadically for a number of days every few months or so when NMAI staff visited with them, exhibit making was an ongoing and frenetic experience at the museum. It was more the case that the researchers' and curators' lives and sense of identity revolved around working on this exhibit. In other words, the exhibition was not just about the lives of the co-curators but also about the lives of the NMAI staff: their competence, ingenuity, and the future of their careers.

Authorship, as Mario Baggioli (2006) explains in his analysis of bylines in scientific papers, is about credit and responsibility; we can see that the credit and responsibility for the content of the exhibits did indeed reside in the co-curators: they developed

the themes, and their names were on the panels. However, in contemporary museum practice with Native communities, I would add that authorship – particularly collaborative authorship developed through these (para)ethnographic methods – is especially about ethical practice and a commitment to more accurate representations. Like the NMAI itself, the co-curators had both a constituency (their neighbors, family, and friends) and an audience (other tribes or potential tourists). And just as the museum felt collaboration with Native peoples was the best practice for making exhibits about them, so too did the co-curators emphasize collaboration within their own communities to arrive at an appropriate exhibit about themselves.

Like the *Childhood* documentary in Dornfeld's (1998:5) ethnography, the museum exhibit was also filled with "media texts" that "viewers grapple with and reproduce understandings of cultural identity and cultural difference." It seems that a dominant metaphor today is culture as "resource." Terry Turner (1999:6) explains that "culturalism" is on the rise, and the more sophisticated approaches to culture in anthropology are often reduced to "identity" beyond the walls of academe. Turner writes that culture has "tended to replace nationalism as a political resource in struggles for states and empowerment within a nation-state," and cultural identities become an avenue through which to assert social power and to struggle for collective social production. "This is a struggle for social production in the broadest sense," he writes, "not merely 'cultural' politics at the level of 'discourse' or 'imagination.'" Perhaps this is a way to view the Kalinago exhibit: that they represented their own identity through their economic need, and they recognized that their survival was tied to an economic future that depends on the production of cultural difference. Their hopes for tourism and concerns over intermarriage are indeed about the social (re)production of their own community.

Through attention to the everyday practices of collaboration, we can see how these representations about Native identity are debated, produced, and interpreted and become additional representations through which local life is expressed and understood. The turn to collaboration in museum anthropology,

CAUGHT IN THE WAVE OF TOURISM

We hope to develop our own type of tourism. We don't want to preserve our culture just so people can come and see us. It must be for our own identity.

Garnette Joseph, 2001

We need to organize tourism in Carib Territory so we benefit more directly from it. The Carib Model Village will help us do so. Tourists will learn about Kalinago crafts, food, dance, and music at a site based on our traditional architecture.

Kalinago Curators, 2003

illustrated in detail through this case study and its analysis, depends on the methods and theoretical perspectives in collaborative anthropology – they are essential and foundational to the movement toward reflexive and accountable relationships between museums and indigenous communities. In short, the museum is now a major site – and one of the most publicly visible venues – to highlight the practice and display of collaborative anthropology. However, issues of representation and power imbalances remain, and the anthropological perspective will always be associated with a colonial past. Although collaboration is often an attempt at redressing these issues, there is always a negotiation among research and museological goals; commitments to the scholarly community; Native community desires and responsibilities to community members; and the social and institutional constraints under which we work together. Collaborative anthropology remains our best approach, under the current paradigm, to acknowledging past injustices, working together, and providing more accurate representations of indigenous peoples in museums and consequently more accurate representations of anthropologists in Native communities.

As a final note, when I returned to Dominica in 2005 to begin my fieldwork, during the second week I was there I was at a cultural performance by

the Karifuna cultural group. Two busloads of white-haired older tourists from the United States arrived from a cruise ship. They came as part of a “Carib Indian Tour” (as opposed to the “Rainforest Tour”). As they wound their way upstairs into the resource center where the performance would take place, I noticed a woman wearing a Pamunkey Indian Tribe T-shirt. It turned out that not only was she Pamunkey but she was also carrying around in a ziplock bag two photos of the *Our Lives* Pamunkey exhibit: one of her two grandchildren's photos in the display, and the other of the text panel with the name of the tribe and its introduction. She had seen the Kalinago exhibit while at the NMAI and had told her friends from California they too should take this tour to see the Carib people. After the performance, I introduced her to Sylvanie and she showed Sylvanie the photos. Sylvanie later told me she felt encouraged that the exhibit really was having an impact, that people were seeing it and coming to visit.

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Piece-Rates as Inherently Exploitative: Adult/Asian Cam Models as Illustrative

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ABSTRACT: This paper argues that, regardless of contingent conditions, piece-rates are *inherently* exploitative. It theorizes piece-rates as a labour-remuneration system that is contrary to the interests of labour, exemplified by the new industry of Adult/Asian Cam Models (ACMs). Very little of any literature addresses the question of why a piece-rate system is deleterious for the worker. What the literature *does* extensively dwell upon is the *kinds* of piece-rate systems and their *situational* risks, effects, advantages and disadvantages, rather than the underlying principle of piece-rates as an *inherently* exploitative system. Thus the paper critiques a sample of contemporary economic/labour literature that focuses on the various models of piece-rate payments to best optimise worker productivity and gains *for capital*. Given the significant increase in piece-rate work throughout the world in the last few decades, the paper highlights how capital has shifted the risk of production to the worker.

KEYWORDS: Adult/Asian Cam Models; cyber sex; labour relations; piece-rates; work conditions

Introduction: Piece-rates and Sex-work

A piece-rate system of payment consists, in its simplest form, of remuneration to workers on the basis of *the number of “products”* they produce in a given period of time vis-à-vis a wage that is dependent on the *time* at the work place. In its more complex forms, quotas may be imposed by the capitalist, penalties applied for failing to meet quotas, rates and quotas varied arbitrarily, and poor quality products rejected and thus not included in a quota. In some cases the supply of materials and tools – and their use – is subject to capitalist control or have to be paid for by the worker. “Work at home” schemes, such as marketeers for Amazon, are modern examples that are subject to many of these conditions, such as supplying one’s own capital (a computer, internet connection fees, electricity) or meeting quotas, and

will be illustrated with case studies of ACMs.¹

One of the major changes in western economies over the past few decades has been the increased use of various forms of performance-based pay vis-à-vis wages or salaries (Chang et al. 2013). According to Lemieux, Macleod and Parent (2009), the proportion of jobs that use performance-based pay in the USA rose from 30 percent in 1976 to 45 percent in 1998.

Despite the increase in performance-based payment among many occupations, and a plethora of material (Lazear 1986:406) examining the best practice for this form of remuneration, there is a dearth of material on the exploitative nature of piece-rates, about which even Marxist theory has little to say.

¹ ACMs are girls who present themselves live via internet camera to solicit customers to view the girls engaging in virtual sexual activities in a private show

Rather, contemporary material focuses on the various models of piece-rate schemes to best optimise worker productivity and gains *for capital*. Both Stiglitz (1975) and Petersen (1992), for example, address the comparative advantages for both the worker and the capitalist (firm) of piece-rates compared to wage-based remuneration, but within a framework of screening and management theories; their focus is on which system of payment is best *for the firm*. Most of the literature extensively focuses on the *types* of performance-based systems and their *situational* risks, their effects, and advantages *for capital*, rather than the underlying principle of piece-rates as an inherently exploitative system (cf. Chang et al. 2013). Thus very little literature addresses the question of why a piece-rate system as a *system* of payment is deleterious for the worker (cf. Lazear 1986).

In this regard there are two questions: (1) Are piece-rates exploitative of the worker only in given situations? or, (2) Are piece rates *inherently* exploitative? Is there something *intrinsic* about a system of piece-rates that is exploitative for the worker?

If the latter, then the first question is *ipso facto* answered in the negative. If there is nothing intrinsically exploitative about such a system, then we need to look at the particular conditions under which piece-rate workers labour to determine the features of exploitation.

However, the thesis of this paper is that there is indeed an intrinsic principle of exploitation in any system of piece-rates. Regardless of the situational conditions, it is the piece-worker who, within the existing normative framework of capitalism, bears the burden and risk of production. This arises because the management of labour always poses a problem for capital; to minimise that problem capital shifts the risk of production, at the point of production, to labour. This is illustrated by one form of sex work, ACM-ing, that wholly uses piece-rates.

Economists have paid relatively sparse attention to the sex industry, despite its size and financial importance. Where there has been some interest, it has tended to follow traditional discourses and focus on which economic techniques could be applied to explain sex-work or for policy development; the former has often focused on financial necessity of sex

workers, while the latter has focused on economic incentives or strategies to limit or eradicate sex-work.

Generally, economists, among other researchers, have focused on several main areas:

- “Explanations” of sex-work as a market, and links between sex-work, poverty, and inequality, and thus entry into sex work;
- Contributions of the sex industry to development;
- Economics within the sex industry;
- Economic empowerment or income generation for sex workers.

Sex-work has principally been of interest to researchers usually in the context of public health, sexual exploitation, trafficking, or eradication policies. A great volume of research on sex-work has focused on socio-economic and sexual inequality or psychological factors (cf. Weldon 2006, O’Neil 1997) as root causes of sex-work, or with sex trafficking. These dominant discourses emphasise poverty and exploitation as the main features of sex-work. Economics of course does play a role in sex workers’ entry to the industry and their continuation of sex-work (Benoit and Millar 2001, McKeganey 2006, O’Neill and Campbell 2006, Willman-Navarro, 2006).

In the late 20th century there emerged a counter discourse of agency (cf. Agustin, 2005). While this discourse acknowledges economic factors in sex-work, studies here still tend to draw on anecdotal, microcosm case studies to illustrate or justify sex-work, and continue to argue within the “sex-as-work” and “abolitionist/moralist” dichotomy. Such an agency-economic bent presupposes that sex workers are not only rational beings, but also economic ones, and, importantly, that they have a great deal of control over economic structures within which they must work; in this way sex-work resembles other forms of market-based work. Several autobiographies by sex workers also tend to follow the same socio-economic discourses and thus lend credence to such views.

Clearly, sex-work is an income-generating activity. As such, economic incentives do play a role in attracting people to sex-work. Therefore, economic analysis should provide a useful tool for examining sex-work and the various types of economic incentives that may be determinants. However, prejudices are common in such studies on sex-work, with a bias

towards supply-based analyses that tend to focus on how economic conditions push people into sex-work.

Overall, there is an abundance of studies about sex-work, much of it within the dichotomy of coercion/necessity/morality vs agency, with some studies exposing what occurs *within* the industry in terms of sexual exploitation and coercive work and financial conditions. But none of these link the micro-economics, the conditions of sex-work, with economic structures and principles. Despite the morality, poverty/inequality and agency discourses, there are more grand economic structures that impinge upon, restrain and determine the features of sex-work and its remuneration system. In other words, whatever the reason people become sex workers they are deemed morally exploited. But there has been little understanding of the economic principles of payment, even in the best situations. ACMs provide a good illustration of this connection between sex-work² at a practical level and economic principles of remuneration. ACMs provide an opportunity to consider why girls enter into sex-work and their situational working conditions, and also the wider economic principles that govern their work and remuneration.

While some studies of street and brothel sex-workers have briefly enumerated payment arrangements, none acknowledge the underlying economic principle of piece-work on which this remuneration is based, and the implications of that. Thus, while these forms of sex-work could equally provide an illustration of the payment system under which they toil, the literature is poor on reliable and comprehensive data, which empirically is very difficult to obtain. But more importantly, it fails to examine why a system of piece-rates prevails, or why this may be *ipso facto* exploitative.

Sex-workers undertake their activity for some kind of remuneration, regardless of how important that may be for taking up the activity; that much we know. But what we are often left with is anecdotal evidence of how much sex-workers earn. But none of the literature addresses the principles of economics

that govern how that remuneration is paid. In short, such studies document the obvious and appeal to the popular and to the morality-laden situational exploitation that supposedly occurs. The ACM industry affords opportunity to explore these issues; to not only quantify remuneration, but also to understand the economic principles of piece-work that underpin that remuneration.

However, in contrast to the plethora of scholarship on prostitution, there is no academic literature on ACMs, other than my own (cf. Senft 2008, who has barely two pages of snippets in her book that deal specifically with paid sites like *AsianPlaymates*).

The paper begins by reviewing how much of the literature has focused on the circumstantial implementation of piece-rates and situational exploitation of workers, generally. In the following section I argue that, regardless of the situational conditions, it is the piece-worker who bears the burden and risk of production because of an underlying intrinsic principle on which piece-rates as a system is based. This is further developed by focusing on why the management of labour poses a problem for capital, and how that risk is shifted to labour under a piece-rate system. Following on, a brief contextual introduction to ACMs is provided, and the paper describes how the ACM industry works and the system of piece-rate payments. The final section uses ACM-ing to illustrate the intrinsic risk to labour in adopting piece-rates as a payment system.

The Contingencies of Piece-Rates

Stiglitz (1975) once bemoaned the lack of interest among economists concerning what goes on inside the firm (Fernie and Metcalfe 1998). Since then, the “new” economics of personnel (NEP) framework of the 1990s attracted growing interest, with a substantial text book (Lazear 1998) and a *Journal of Economic Literature* survey on compensation systems (Prendergast 1998) being produced. While there was no shortage of theories within this NEP framework, less empirical attention continued to be paid to an important and obvious distinction in methods of compensation, namely, a fixed wage for some period of time, (i.e. paying on the basis of input), and paying a piece compensation that is specifically geared

² While ACMs have much in common with non-virtual sex-workers, they also differ, and thus problematize what sex-work – specifically, “prostitution” – is. ACMs may not necessarily identify their work as sex-work or prostitution. (See Mathews 2010).

to output (Ferne and Metcalfe 1998; cf. Lazear 1986:405–406).

Sociologists, on the other hand, have long examined the operation of piece-rate payment systems as direct incentive structures. The foci of these investigations have been how direct incentive structures induce workers to expend more effort by allocating uncertainties, at the point of production, to the workers, as well as how such structures give rise to social rewards and informal relationships that regulate the behaviour and interaction of workers (Petersen 1992:68), often without the need for direct supervision by management. Essentially, much of the literature documents how piece-rates can be intelligently implemented and highly effective in motivating employees, thereby leading to a rise in standards of service by providing incentive and opportunity.

However, several problems have been identified by researchers. If such schemes are implemented “carelessly,” expected standards and quotas can be a source of significant stress, low morale and other problems. Other problems identified include poor quality of output, the neglect of work tasks for which workers are not paid, and the manipulation of performance targets in order to maximize or stabilize earnings, along with several other issues.³

One of the key problematic issues identified in much of the literature is that of quality of output under piece-rate systems. Lazear (1991:105) notes that, “a piece rate that is tied to quantity and ignores quality will induce the worker to produce lower quality items.” Likewise, Shaw and Pirie (1975) confirm that *time* rates are appropriate when it is important to maintain standards of quality. Ferne and Metcalf (1998:36) argue that the quality of product is one of the most likely victims of piece-rates; therefore, when it is difficult to verify and measure the “quality” of service the firm would be more likely to use time-rates. Where a piece-rates system is used, the NEP framework predicts that it would be group-based or profit-sharing, rather than individual payment by results (Ferne and Metcalf 1998:7).

More generally, these views about problematic quality influencing which remuneration system should be utilized overlooks the motivation of workers themselves to ensure quality, for the fact is that poor quality work can be returned to the worker for amendment and the additional work not paid for. Hence, while quantity is significant, the quantity is only acceptable if the quality is also. This will become self-evident in the case of ACMs.

Other issues that piecework may also need to confront include industrial relations problems, as workers and management dispute what are reasonable and attainable piece rates. In addition, unlike wage work, for piece-rate workers there may be no regularity of work and income, something that the worker is least able to weather vis-à-vis the capitalist; rather, it is the piece-rate worker who bears the risk.

Also in piece-work there may be contraventions of workplace safety standards, health and hygiene; and piece-rates usually do not allow for breaks, holidays, leave, or for much control over work conditions (cf. Chapkis 1997:138).

Crystal (1991) and Kohn (1993) contend that performance-related pay contracts are often ineffective and may have deleterious effects; the riskiness of performance-based pay causes employees to assume a risk-averse posture, lowering their propensity to be innovative; these issues adversely affect both workers and the firm.

Further, the performance of a complex job as a whole is reduced to a simple, often single measure of performance. For instance, a telephone call-centre may judge the quality of an employee based upon the average length of a call with a customer. As a simple measure, this gives no regard to the quality of help given.

What is striking in this literature is how piece-rates are seen as a strategy by capital for the enhancement of capital’s profit. Thus, what I am concerned with, contrary to much of the literature and at a more fundamental level, is what economic principle underpins piece-rates as a system of remuneration. Ultimately it puts the burden of proof of the worker’s ability onto the worker, and the need for him/her to control his/her *own* input and hence output, and in

³ Many of these situational problems or adverse effects are commonly listed in the literature; see Heywood and Wei (2006:525–526) for a partial summary.

so doing places the risk of performance (productivity) on to the worker vis-à-vis capital.

While capitalism is an economic system it has, since its inception, gathered a normative and thus moral dimension. As an economic system it is constituted by capitalists who bring together (in one place) land, labour and capital for the production of goods and services, and because of this organizing principle and the financial advantage the capitalist holds in terms of ownership of land and capital, takes control of the means of production (MOP). In return for taking a risk that such control will deliver a return above costs, the capitalist receives a dividend, or surplus value, i.e. an income over and beyond the cost of labour power and producing a product. In order to do so, capital must also control the supply and use of and the demands by labour; just as the capitalist must keep costs of land and capital to a minimum, so too must he or she keep labour costs to a minimum. Thus, as an economic system, there is an inherent risk of not controlling (the cost of) the MOP, particularly labour power.

A key and indeed the largest ongoing cost is that of labour, which, unlike machinery, is able to influence its own cost. While in principle capitalism is a system that should/could treat all components with relative value, accordingly, in its historical development, it has had to deal with the human element that, unlike other elements, is not inert, and thus there also evolved a moral and normative dimension. If capital was to extract a surplus value simply from the supply and control of the MOP, from taking a risk that it could take, then, unlike labour, it should do so. Thus it became the normative order that capital, not labour, should take a risk that production would yield a value over and beyond costs, a surplus value.

Whatever other dimensions of exploitation that this may entail, here I am concerned only with how that principle of risk-taking is violated. Given that capital is now perceived as not only an economic system but also carries with it a normative dimension, an expectation underpinned by moral constraints and prescriptions, what piece-rates as a system of remuneration to labour does is shift that risk to labour. Capital not only violates this normative order, or established principle of

capitalism, but does so by false pretences – by presenting piece-rates work as opportunity, when in fact other facets of capitalism such as control of the production process and other capital still provides the capitalist with an advantage, that he or she is able to utilize situationally. In other words, under a normative order in which capitalism has come to accrue surplus value through and because it takes a risk with its organization and control of capital, it has shifted some of that risk, i.e. the control of labour and the extraction of surplus value, to labour.

It may be argued that this normative order is one that is constructed, historically. This is true. But equally true is that it is the system with which we must deal, and in so dealing with it take account of how risk, that should be the domain of capital, is shifted to the worker.

Marx argues that time and piece rates are equally exploitative, in that they both extract surplus value, and indeed this is true. But what piece-rates do is breach the established economic and normative principle of capital taking a risk, for which it reaps a return, and shifts that risk to labour whose sole role is to provide labour power. While there is very much a normative dimension to all this, it does not escape notice that as an economic principle capital is rewarded for taking a risk with the organization (and control) of the MOP, from which capital derives a return. In principle, then, labour taking a risk vis-à-vis a wage purely for its labour power, and situationally without control of other capital, blurs, at best, the roles of labour and capital, and, morally, under false pretences.

Thus, in the following section I am not concerned with how capital *situationally* uses piece-rates and capitalists' situational strategic manipulations within such a system. Such an approach would largely abide with what Stiglitz, Petersen, Lazear and other scholars present in the literature. Rather, the following section argues that, regardless of the situational condition of the piece-worker, it is the piece-worker who bears the burden and risk of production because of an underlying intrinsic principle on which piece-rates as a system of remuneration is based.

Shifting the Intrinsic Risk

Piece-rates “represent the conversion of time wages into a form which attempts ... to enlist the worker as a willing accomplice in his own exploitation” (Braverman 1974:62-63). It is a form of capitalism in which the capitalist does not assume the essential function of management, i.e. direct control over the labour process (Braverman 1974:63). Unfortunately, Braverman says little more on these issues, and nothing about how or why piece-rates may be intrinsically exploitative for the worker. Similarly, Marx (1990) has little to say, other than that piece-rates call upon and exploit the personal interests of the worker to strain his or her labour, and as intensely as possible; such personal interest enables the capitalist to set, or raise, more easily the normal degree of intensity of labour.

While the worker in a piece-rate system may believe that he or she has a share in the surplus value of their own labour power (as capital), the fact is that both social and economic inequalities place greater risk on the piece-rate worker than the counterpart capitalist who supplies only the machinery, land and other disposable capital, at minimal risk. This capital can be sold or used for another purpose; but labour can only be sold and used as labour power.

Capital makes a profit because it organizes the MOP and takes the risk that the surplus value will be greater than the input. The capitalist’s power is derived in part from the ownership or control of the common instruments of production, against which the worker has only his or her labour power. By monopolising the MOP, and therefore the workers’ means of subsistence, the capitalist compels the worker to submit to the conditions of remunerated labour. Operationally, these conditions consist of not only the monopolisation of production and thereby control over even the ability to work, but also the form of remuneration.

These conditions also involve various strategies, some of which we shall witness amongst ACMs. For example, truck and barter or “tommy shops,” setting rates and quotas, usury, ensuring that materials used in production are bought from the employer rather than elsewhere, or charging for ancillary services

needed for production (Steinberg 2010:179, 192).⁴ But these are situational strategies, made possible because of the piece-rates remuneration system.

Such conditions or situational strategies notwithstanding, that piece-rate work is intrinsically exploitative is *implicitly* recognized in some of the literature (see Lazear 1986:422, for example), although only directly substantiated by snippets of reference in the economic literature, which rarely deals with the risk to the worker or with risk transfer (cf. Toms 2010). Much of the literature also acknowledges the issue of risk aversion by workers, taking this for granted, but few question what this risk *is* that may be averted, other than possible low income, or why this risk factor is a major issue. Indeed, so little attention is paid to this issue of risk for the worker that it appears in only a footnote of Stiglitz’s (1975:558) seminal work: “Reducing the risk faced by the worker increases the risk faced by the firm,” which would clearly imply the converse.

These snippets of workers’ risk appear in such comments as the following few examples, and imply, but rarely analyze, the risk piece-rate workers take on:

- Prendergast (1998) suggests that advances in the field of remuneration systems can be obtained by collecting more data on contracts, but one wonders for what purpose? Apart from using such information to test theories – which invariably contribute to improving efficiency, productivity and control in firms, for capital, and which imply some kind of risk – none of these purposes, theories and studies comment on or are designed for the betterment of workers or the mitigation of *their* risk.
- Fernie and Metcalf (1998:35-36), writing within the NEP framework, note under the heading of “Risk Aversion” that, where the firm is risk-averse the employer will tend to prefer piece-rates because its “wage bill varies automatically as demand and output fluctuate...incentive

⁴ See Steinberg (2010) for details of strategies, and which ACMing illustrates. For example, some ACMs must contribute to the electricity used in their work; others are required to be boarders at their workplace; girls may be expected to purchase goods from another business run by their boss; and usury is common. Platteau and Nugent (1992:391-397) provide further examples in marine fishing of how the capitalist shifts some of his/her risk to labour and is able to set terms.

schemes give management a desirable flexibility in costs.” In other words, there is a risk for capital in terms of labour costs that is transferred to labour; even using the title of “risk aversion” implies this. They go on to say that widespread dissatisfaction among workers occurs with the uncertainties that arise from piece-rate systems, and that such systems provide more security of employment in industries where demand fluctuates, implying that workers risk and bear the brunt of economic downturns.

- Heywood and Wei (1997:241), citing McKersie et al. (1964), similarly note that the capitalist’s assurance for high productivity and the need to lower costs, which are risks for capital, are particularly important during intense competition, which gives more incentive to introduce incentive pay schemes. Thus, when competition increases capital’s risk, the risk is shifted to labour.
- Bloom and Milkovich (1995) also investigate the effects of risk on the formation and outcomes of performance-based pay contracts. They point out that classical agency theory argues that the choice of an optimal compensation system is contingent on both the need to direct employee behaviours and the need to mitigate the effects of risk *to the firm*. The premise is that the use of incentives to align workers’ behaviour and reduce capital’s risk also increases the formers’ risk, and this balance of incentive against risk-sharing is the fulcrum of agency theory. As organizations face greater risk, they are more likely to use variable pay to control costs and ensure that employees’ behaviours are aligned with organizational goals. In effect, the organization creates an employment contract that shares some of the risk with employees through a variable pay scheme tied to organization performance. Here, these authors, amongst most others, are concerned with capital’s risk in terms of income streams, strategic, financial and stock return risk, and competition.

But few studies develop the most fundamental principle of risk *for the worker*, that Marx’s seminal work noted; rather, the focus of contemporary literature is on that which constitutes the greatest and most costly component for capital and hence

risk, that of labour – its cost, control, quality and productivity.

Thus as Haywood and Wei (1997:247) state, firms “that adopt piece rates do so to elicit effort in a manner that conserves managerial resources. Once in place, the piece rate acts as a ‘self-monitoring’ scheme that reduces ... the need for other managerial oversight,” thus echoing Marx’s (1954) axiom that under piece-rates the “superintendence of labour becomes to a great part superfluous” – and it can only be superfluous if labour is its own “manager.”

But rather than analyze this shift of risk to and for workers, the literature addresses risk *for* capital, and hence the plethora of literature and models that discuss the means of limiting that risk for capital. One means is by shifting the risk for capital to the worker; where this is even partly successful, it implies that the risk that capital should shoulder falls to the worker who, unlike the capitalist, has no fall-back position. Indeed, as noted previously, much of the literature discusses models of employment which best benefit capital, i.e. reduce *its* risk, and one key model, with numerous variations, is piece rates.

Logic would tell us, then, that in capital shifting its risk to the worker, there is created for the worker an intrinsic risk that was once intrinsic for capital because of the nature of capitalism as it currently exists. In other words, it is not merely the risk to capital that is transferred, but the intrinsicity of that risk also, which capital has always had to face. However, whereas capital benefits from taking a risk, labour cannot, because labour has no control over the risk and cannot produce a surplus value for itself.

But risk for capital is not only about economic downturns, it is also about ensuring control over labour to ensure surplus value, and this is always a problem, as Burawoy (1979) notes: rather than taking for granted management’s ability to control labour, as the human relations school had done, we can invert this approach, viewing managerial control as a problematic phenomenon that itself needs to be explained (cited in Vallas 2001:5).

Capital's Problem, Labour's Risk

The intrinsic problem for capital is that it *must* employ labour, which is the largest cost for capital and often presents difficulties in controlling and ensuring that it produces surplus value. Thus, the employment of labour renders the accumulation of capital *inherently* risky; therefore, in seeking the maximum rate of profit, the capitalist's incentive is to incorporate risk minimisation. The transfer of risk from capital to labour in this sense is rational (Toms 2010:97). However, if one transfers the risk, one also transfers the intrinsicity of that risk. Indeed, Lazear (1986:422) says as much: "salaries are more likely to be paid when workers have a high degree of risk aversion relative to owners." This clearly implies that non-wage work *does* carry risk for the worker.

But what exactly is this risk for capital, that becomes the risk for the piece-rate worker? In capitalism,

through a market relationship potential labour power is commodified and made a form of property. ... This creates possible problems for the capitalist who legally owns this potential labour power as a use-value to be expended, but does not actually have full propriety control over it. For the capitalist this creates the imperative of exerting control in the labor process to realize the full value of the commodity. [Steinberg 2010:180]

The capitalist gets around this problem of control, and extracting surplus value from labour, by largely *not* having to deal with it. The capitalist gives up his or her legal ownership of labour power as a commodity for the advantage of shifting the realization of the full value of labour power to the worker. Thus it is left to the piece-rate worker to realize the full value of the commodity (labour). That is, if the capitalist cannot have full incorporation of labour into the production process by means of the social relations of production (i.e. real subsumption), then the capitalist needs another way to realize full value of the commodity, or in the least, to minimize the capitalist's risk of controlling labour to capital's best advantage.

Put more simply, the problem for capital is that it must not only employ labour, at a cost *ipso facto* (whether the labour does anything or not), but also

ensure that labour creates surplus value (in terms of both quantity and/or quality) with minimum costs to capital; to ensure this, labour needs to be monitored, which involves an additional cost. If the cost of monitoring output is high for the capitalist, then it would be rational to shift that cost to the worker (cf. Lazear 1986). Petersen (1992), who draws on Stiglitz (1975) and Lazear (1986), sums up this intrinsic exploitative nature of piece-rates. Both Petersen (1992) and Stiglitz (1975) note that piece rates "*allocate to the workers some of the risks at the point of production*" (Petersen 1992:68, my emphasis).

While workers may not have physical capital, in the situation of piece-work their labour power is treated as capital vis-à-vis labour power tied to a wage, and therefore they are not drawn into the capitalist relations of production as a wage worker; and in taking this risk with their labour-as-capital they are taking on a combined role. It is a role that involves risk, which should be the domain only of capital.

Thus piece-rate workers are neither wage-workers nor capitalists; their labour has not been transformed into a saleable item to a capitalist who then resells its surplus value, but rather, through their own labour-as-capital the piece-rate worker risks their income. That is, their labour is a form of capital and not a commodity, yet they produce a surplus value for capital rather than for themselves.

Marxist-based theory would argue that piece-rate workers risk their income on the basis that the value of their input will be less than or equivalent to the production value of their output, and that by various means over which they supposedly have some control, they can increase their output and hence their income. For classical Marxist theory, this situation is a blurring of the capitalist and worker roles, which Marx was at pains to distinguish. The problem with piece-rates, for Marx, was that the system made the worker neither labour power nor capital, and in that ambiguous role the worker became a willing accomplice in his or her own exploitation, and in a situation controlled by the capitalist. For Marx this was both ideologically and economically wrong, although for the piece-worker, in practical terms, it seemed to make sense and *appear* to provide opportunity. It is

this “sense” to which piece-rates appeal – which is well illustrated in the case of ACMs. But it is simply an economic façade for exploitation. The piece-work system of payment introduces the *semblance* that the worker obtains a specified share of the product.

Many of the foregoing situational features, and the intrinsic exploitative nature of piece-rates, are evident in the ACM industry of the Philippines, to which we now turn.

ACMs

Ann, a Filipina ACM, was poor by most standards: lack of money; no saleable assets; no “capital” other than her sexuality and youth; limited social capital and education; unsure of where she would sleep at night. While she did have a “job,” she was unsure if that would last and even if she would be paid at all. She complained about having to socially forage for food each day. Her father and grandmother were sick, and soon her grandmother died, putting a burden onto Ann to travel home for the funeral and help pay for it. She asked to borrow money from me to meet this commitment, commenting that she didn’t like to ask, but had no one else. I sent her the money, not for the reasons she had espoused, but rather for the chilling comment she made: “*I hate being like this... I hate being poor.*” (Mathews 2010: iii).

While Ann’s story is but one microcosm of the labour relations, vulnerability and exploitation evident in the ACM industry of the Philippines, it is too readily interpreted through the myriad lenses of feminism and gender/sexuality, medical discourses, third-world exploitation and underdevelopment, or contingent labour relations, that generally fit within four major ideological stances evident in the sex-work literature: (1) moralistic viewpoints that regard sex-workers, predominantly women, as immoral and the antipathy of womanhood; (2) medical-centred viewpoints that treat the women as either sexually promiscuous or as health research subjects in need of education; (3) first-wave feminist and sociological viewpoints that consider them victims of patriarchal culture and gender inequality, and sex-work as a form of oppression; and (4) the liberal feminist standpoint that argues sex-work is work and advocates

decriminalization of prostitution and legal rights for sex workers, which has recently branched out to explore notions of agency (e.g., Agustin 2005; Ding and Ho 2013:44). But such interpretations obscure the fundamental economic principle of piece-rates as a remuneration system in which contingent labour relations are made possible and under which most sex-workers toil.

No doubt sex and economics are closely tied in terms of the commodification of labour and (women’s) bodies. ACMs, like “other” sex-workers, employ practices to develop different “currencies” – bodily beauty, sexual values, knowledge, practices and skills, gender performance, and sexual and emotional sophistication – in exchange for primarily economic capital (Ding & Ho, 2013: 43). Be that as it may, this section focuses on the economic vis-à-vis the sexual and gender perspectives. Here I document and theorize the piece-rate system under which ACMs work; it is a labour-remuneration system that manifests as almost Dickensian.

Thousands of girls, subject to the influence of digital technology and cultural globalization, work as ACMs in the Philippines. While it is clear that specific internet sites benefit, as do some of the ACMs’ bosses, it remains problematic if and how ACMs themselves could benefit from the piece-rate system under which they labour. I will begin by briefly outlining the ACM industry and payment system, and how this and local relations of production can be abused, before presenting how ACMs well illustrate the intrinsic risk and exploitation of piece rates.

ACMing

ACMs are girls who present themselves live via internet cam to solicit customers to view the girls naked or engaging in sexual activities in a private show, usually at \$1 per minute, of which the girl gets only 25 cents. Their presentation is facilitated by one of several sites. *AsianPlaymates* is one such site.

This site provides a technological base to register ACMs, clients and guests, allow them to communicate directly, and collect and disburse payments through web-based credit card facilities. Clients access *AsianPlaymates* by logging on with

a Screen-name. This provides access to 400+ photos of Filipinas, in different poses, each with their own screen name, such as *SweetChelsea*, *Angelface*, *WickedAngel*, *SinBabe*, *Digital Miss*, *HotnJuicy*, *Sexilicious69*. These girls are available free of charge to “chat” with and, ultimately, to take into a private, one-to-one show with a paying client at \$1 per minute.

The site promotes itself as a benign employer to potential models in very much an appealing and monetary way (Figure 1).

It is in fact at this very starting point that persuasion, inducement and economic exploitation commences, seductively offering young, attractive, but largely impoverished and uneducated girls an “opportunity of a lifetime” – as the site’s web-promotion exemplifies: flexible working hours, being one’s own boss, work from home, monthly cash prizes, and, the ultimate, *50 percent* of all income. Too good to be true? All you need is a PC, cam, modem, internet connection, electricity and a safe place, and the dollars will simply roll in. It is all presented as the perfect solution for lifting the abject poor of the Third World into prosperity via “self employment” and to counter Ann’s lament of “I hate being poor.” The opportunity presents itself in such easy steps and terms, and highlights in 24-point font the “50%” that the girls will earn, and goes on to say, “work at your own pace in air-conditioned comfort, with no boss. Make money from home, and be your own boss!”

But situate yourself as a young, uneducated, attractive, Filipina, with no job, no prospects, with a family to support, and certainly no capital; someone who “hates being poor.” Where will you get a PC, modem and cam, and how will you pay the deposit on a studio and internet and electricity connections? How could you be self employed? The obvious and easy solution is to find someone who *does* have the social and financial capital, a “boss,” who supplies the computer, webcam and the studio, and pays for the

The image shows a promotional webpage for 'Chathostess'. At the top, there's a banner with five models (three women and two men) and the text: 'Become a CHATHOSTESS PERFORMER! Be listed on one of THE LARGEST NETWORK OF CAM SITES AROUND.' Below this are bullet points: 'Earn thousands of dollars from home!', 'More than a million registered Members!', 'Nothing to download to get started!', and 'And much more...'. A 'Click Here to Register!' button is also present. The main content area is titled 'Join Chathostess' and includes a list of reasons to choose the site, such as 'Earn money from home', 'Your privacy is very important to us', and '50% of everything you earn in private chat'. It also lists 'STEPS TO BECOMING A PERFORMER' and 'WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED'.

Become a CHATHOSTESS PERFORMER!
Be listed on one of **THE LARGEST NETWORK OF CAM SITES AROUND.**

- Earn thousands of dollars from home!
- More than a million registered Members!
- Nothing to download to get started!
- And much more....

[Click Here to Register!](#)

Join Chathostess
and in a few minutes you can be online and making money.

REASONS TO CHOOSE CHATHOSTESS.

- 1.) Earn money from home.
- 2.) Your privacy is very important to us.
- 3.) TV-like video quality which will boost your sales.
- 4.) Cash prizes given out monthly.
- 5.) You set your own schedule. No one tells you when to work.
- 6.) Payouts made twice a month. We offer several payout methods that are free.
- 7.) Choose free chat or members only chat.
- 8.) Earn money while you are not online by making your old private video session available for rental.
- 9.) Live Support that is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. We never close we are open every day of the year.
- 10.) Here is the biggest one we payout

50%
of everything you earn in private chat.

STEPS TO BECOMING A PERFORMER.

- 1.) Create a Master Account. Complete all the online forms.
- 2.) Validate you email.
- 3.) Create a model account for yourself and also your friends.
- 4.) Once our 24 hour staff approves your account you can log on and start earning.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED!

- 1.) Computer
- 2.) Web Camera
- 3.) Color Scans of your Government Issued Photo ID
- 4.) DSL or Cable Modem connection.

Figure 1. Webpage promoting employment opportunities for ACMs.

electricity and internet connections.

Having a boss not only *immediately* cuts into the proffered 50 percent of profits offered by the site, but also gives a great deal of power to the boss, the supplier of capital. This is capital that can be easily withdrawn, used for other purposes or sold, and a power that can be wielded in setting terms and conditions. All that the ACM has is her physical and emotional labour, her erotic capital, on which she depends for producing “products.” The more she produces the more she can earn – for the boss, the site and *possibly* for herself.

Thus, for the ACM piece-worker, becoming an ACM seems to make sense and *appears* to provide opportunity. But as we shall see, the piece-work system of payment introduces only a *semblance* of equality and opportunity, a façade, not simply because of the power imbalance between the ACM and boss, but because the remuneration system itself posits full responsibility onto the worker to produce. The girls’ income is derived from private shows. The

girl of course aims to get as many or long private shows as possible, for she is paid by the minute in each private show – that is, a piece rate.

The System of Piece-rate Payments

There are serious implications that arise from this situation and the payment system under which these girls labour. The terms by which ACMs sign up to the site are that the site takes 50 percent of all income derived from private shows. The boss and the ACM each take 25 percent of the remaining income – provided the ACM meets her quota, which can be as minimal as 100 minutes per month. If she fails to reach her quota, then she *may* forfeit *all* of her income. That is, she is not paid a proportional amount of the quota: it is all or nothing. Thus, each girl gets on average a thousand pesos (\$25) a month (Mathews 2010).

In effect, in one month an ACM may spend 192 hours (11,520 minutes) at work and have, for example, only 80 minutes of paid private shows (0.7 percent of her total time); consequently, she may get *no* payment at all. Even if she were to meet her quota of 100 minutes per month (0.9 percent of her time) she brings in a *gross* amount of \$100); 50 percent of this goes to the site, 25 percent to the boss (paid by the site directly into the boss' bank account and thus giving complete control of income to the boss); the ACM receives 25 percent, *not* the 50 percent that the promotions promise. This equals a net amount of \$25 a month, (\$1 = P40). On an individual-show basis, she would receive on average a net three to four dollars.

But there are limitations to labour. An ACM exposes her body across the globe and performs as sexually appropriate, yet she is required to put in 11,520 minutes just to be paid for 100 minutes of actual work. Even if she were to triple her number of private shows and thus income, she would still need to work 192 hours for 5 hours of pay.

Chelsea is a case in point: She indicated that she may get 30–40 minutes per day in private shows; this would give her P300–400 for the day; multiplied by 5 days, she would get P1,500–2,000 per week. This of course depends on her getting those minutes each day. But, on one occasion, she had worked for 22

days in one month, had had 140 minutes of private shows, for which she received P1,400 – in 3 weeks, *not* per week. She further illustrated the situation by saying that on the previous night she had worked for 240 minutes, of which only 23 minutes were private shows; this equals P230. *If* this were an average, then in 5 days she would get P1,150 per week, or about P4,600 per month; but indications are that 23 minutes every 4 hours is not an average for some girls.⁵ Regardless of the income, however, the critical feature is that *Chelsea* worked for 4 hours but was paid for only 23 minutes of her time, that is, about 10 percent of her actual time and labour at the work site. Similarly, *xxSpiceyxx* also earned P10 a minute for private shows. She had 40 minutes of shows in 15 days, for which she received P400. In effect she worked 7,200 minutes for 40 minutes of pay (0.5 percent of her time and labour).

While work conditions and rates vary from one ACM to another, the fact is that the ACM does not get paid *for the hours* “worked”; that is, she is not paid for the time she is at the work site, but only for the “pieces” of work she actually “produces.”

While these rates of “productivity” may appear to be no different from that of a saleswoman on a wage, there are in fact significant differences, the most important being that a shop assistant gets paid for the hours she is actually in the shop, regardless of whether or not she actually does any work. Besides, a shop assistant can be otherwise productive such as by sweeping the floor, arranging goods, doing administrative tasks, etc. An ACM is neither paid for the total number of hours she sits in front of a computer, nor able to do other productive tasks. As labour, she is wasting much of her labour power, about which she can do little. Thus she is taking a risk that she can utilize her labour power to full capacity.

This system of piece-rates for labour can be quite tyrannical, because there is often necessary negotiation between unequal partners and, commonly, debt. Essentially, a worker is required to meet a quota, and there may be provisions should the quota not be met such that a lesser amount, or even nothing, would be

⁵ *Chelsea* would seem to be earning only one fifth of average family income. (2000 Family Income and Expenditures Survey: www.census.gov.ph).

paid. As a result, the worker may have to borrow from her boss against future labour, and negotiation would then ensue about future quotas, interest on “loans” and about piece *rates*. This puts pressure on the girl to go beyond a standard quota to enable repayment of her debt; she can often end up in a spiralling cycle of debt and obligation, which may only be repaid in “kind.” On the one hand, all this is possible because there is often no written contract setting out terms and conditions, nor is collective action against adverse situations always possible. On the other hand, and at a more fundamental level, there cannot be a contract because the piece-rate worker operates under a standing economic principle of being responsible, come what may, for the production of the goods or services. In other words, the *responsibility* for production has shifted from the capitalist to the pseudo-capitalist, the piece worker.

Piece-rates, as a remuneration system, is perhaps more tyrannical when one considers that those who work in a piece-rate system often have few or no other options for the deployment of their labour; therefore an employer can demand not only the remuneration system, but can also demand contingent additional “services,” merely to retain the worker. This in fact became evident with two ACMs: *Avril* said that her boss’ husband would not be so mean to her if she provided him sexual favours; *AsianTribal69* said that her male boss had demanded sexual favours from her, simply to retain her employment.⁶

The often conjunct to such sexual exploitation is economic exploitation in various forms. One girl reported she had not been paid for 3 months. She thus had to stay with her boss to ensure she might eventually get paid, and also had to borrow money from her boss. These circumstances more closely tied her financially to her boss.

Another form of exploitation is the boss’ demand for the girl to intensify labour output, which can be a major source of conflict between workers and “management” (Hutchison 1992:482-483). This arises from a tension between resistance to the intensification of work and the means to increase output, and

concerns over employment.

The intensification of labour involves “increased expenditure of labour in a given time” (Marx 1990:660). However, for ACMs it is difficult to increase productivity through the intensification of labour. While an ACM may take fewer breaks within her given work time, longer hours cannot constitute higher productivity, because the “given” time is also extended. Essentially, the only way an ACM can increase her productivity is through improving her quality by such means as appearing more alluring, developing her emotional labour, or providing promotional “free samples.” Unlike workers in garment manufacturing or craft-work, who may increase their speed, streamline production or use their unpaid children to assist in order to increase productivity, ACMs have little scope other than simply being more alluring physically and/or in terms of performance. These strategies themselves, however, may be limited because the girls have neither the skills nor the resources to develop their presentations, as well as there being practical limitations on how alluring any girl can be, and how many times they can engage in virtual sexual activities.

Piece-rate arrangements have traditionally placed a premium on speed for the completion of products. In the case of ACMs, however, keeping a client in private as long as possible constitutes productivity; this implicitly favours young, attractive, sexy, overt, “promiscuous” workers, and hence productivity can be directly linked to sexuality. Because ACMing is a service rather than a vendible product, the route to quantity is more direct: quantity in fact depends entirely on quality, in many respects – appearance, friendliness, performance, emotional labour, communication and connection, or what Hakim (2011) calls erotic capital. This requires “grooming” clients before, during and after any private show, and this takes a great deal of effort and time, culminating, hopefully, in a private show, which may last only a few minutes. Thus ACMs are required to focus on quantity *directly through quality*. In short, if the quality is not salient then the quantity will directly suffer. While theories of productivity commonly focus on the quantity of output, that quantity for ACMs indeed depends on quality. By shifting responsibility for quality and

⁶ Another form of incentive, or punishment, was revealed by *SeductiveAnn*: if she did not get any private shows each night then her boss would not provide her with food.

hence quantity to the worker, quantity and hence surplus value for the boss is almost guaranteed.

However, for both quantity and quality there are practical limitations: an ACM can have only a limited number of performances per hour, and over which she largely has no control; and there are limitations on quality. Even though ACMs may develop their erotic capital and modify their choreography, they are in a precarious if not unique “product” position: each girl *is* the product, the *same* vagina, the *same* breasts, the *same* face, essentially the *same* performance, on each occasion. Thus while the “quality” of an ACM initially may be high, it can also quickly wane, for, ultimately, the whole industry relies on diversity and novelty. Thus there is the problem of limited repeat-customers. The implications are that ACMs must either continually reinvent themselves and their performances, or largely rely on an endless supply of new customers.⁷

Since an ACM’s performance is measured solely by the number and length of private shows, there is no consideration by the boss about the quality of her public chat that may induce a potential client to visit that girl. Indeed, some bosses, with little understanding of management practices or erotic capital, openly discourage girls from extensive public free chat, reprimanding girls to the effect that if a client does not quickly take the ACM private then she should not pay much attention to him. Many of the girls, particularly the inexperienced ones, also expect a visitor to take them private very quickly, and pay little heed to visitors who simply want to chat. There is an assumption that, simply because an ACM is a girl, attractive, young, and willing to provide vicarious sexuality, then clients would *want* to take her private. But some clients want more than an attractive face and sexy body (cf. Caldwell 2011).

Chelsea, for example, clearly cultivated the kind of friendly relations that potentially *could* lead to something which would improve her life chances, and she had a repertoire of choreographic presentations to keep patrons interested. She would spend hours chatting with potential clients, and even engage those who logged in as a guest. Nevertheless,

Chelsea’s efforts went largely unappreciated or unrewarded, other than perhaps they *may* have led to more private customers. The problem, of course, from an accounting perspective, is that it is difficult to measure the contribution of unpaid choreography on output, which can only be measured by the quantity of private shows.

While there is in fact opportunity to increase productivity through the cultivation of one’s appearance and choreography, few girls have the resources, experience, knowledge, skills or personality and perseverance to do so. Even if they were to cultivate these skills, it would require a continual reinvention of one self and the input of significant emotional labour – qualities and skills that continue to be measured in purely mathematical terms of how many private shows an ACM performs. More importantly, the requirement for quality shifts the responsibility from the boss to the worker; and given that quality is so integral to quantity in ACMing, it therefore shifts the risk of production to the worker. That risk can be exacerbated in times of low custom, where multiple workers compete for the attention of fewer customers. But unlike a wage worker who gets paid regardless of custom, the ACM has no control over this.

Thus, there are conditions under which a piece-rate worker may be disadvantaged or exploited, in a practical sense, and of which ACMs exemplify as a particularly unscrupulous case. Be that as it may, it can be argued that, *regardless* of the work conditions and situations, piece-rates per se are *intrinsically* exploitative, even in the best situations.

Intrinsic Exploitation: the Risk for Labour

While the previous section provided a brief empirical illustration of what goes on inside the firm (Stiglitz 1975), it also presents a unique case that challenges economic and labour theories, and illustrates how a fundamental labour-capital relationship simply has been taken for granted.

Situational conditions and exploitation are largely possible because it is the ACM who is taking the risk in production. Thus while the site and the boss have almost nothing to lose, because they can employ other labour or use the capital for other

⁷ For a similar scenario, about taxi-dancers set in the 1930s, see Cressy, 1932; Mathews 2010: 51.

purposes, the ACM now has to bear the risk of production to meet her own needs (i.e. returns to labour), as well as, incidentally but by no means insignificant, situational obligations.

ACMing illustrates how the capitalist shifts the risk of production to the worker, at the point of production. In cases where it is not feasible or cost-effective to monitor input, particularly high-cost labour, piece-rates can make sense to the capitalist and are made to appear sensible if not outright attractive to labour. This may be particularly so in the case of service industries, such as ACM work. It would be far too costly time-wise and monetarily to directly supervise any number of ACMs and ensure they are responding quickly and appropriately to potential customers, or to constantly appraise their private show performances. Particularly in the Philippines where it is common to have multiple sources of income (“sidelines”), it would make no sense for a boss to tie up her or his time with direct supervision; the very nature and advantage of ACMing, which allows outputs to be computerized and hence directly measured against inputs (i.e. labour) without constant supervision, is in fact what may attract bosses to the business, providing them with another source of income whilst they pursue others.

As ACMing illustrates, by using piece-rates, the worker becomes his or her own monitor, and therefore for capital the cost of measuring the input to output ratio becomes low, as the boss has only to do this periodically, with minimal effort, or not at all, for output by piece can be simply and easily calculated via the site. Similarly for quality: a periodic or random check suffices to monitor quality. But even this is not necessary in ACMing since poor quality performance will be reflected in the low quantity of output, which the worker bears.

Although piece-rates were originally used in industries that provided vendible products, they can of course be used in services industries, which ACMing illustrates. Like vendible products, service can be assessed. In the case of ACMs, short performances or a lack of customers that reflect either customers’ rejection of the service or a lack of performance, would reflect on a girl’s ability to solicit

(i.e. the quality of the “product”). Such assessments would appear in the monthly tally, and hence particular strategies, as we have previously noted, could be used to penalise the ACM.

The most significant risk that a capitalist must face, and one that he or she passes on to labour, is the control of labour; this means ensuring labour is motivated sufficiently to meet production requirements in terms of quality and quantity, and in such number and cost effective manner that a surplus value can be had.⁸

In brief, then, piece-rates is all about controlling labour and minimizing for capital the risk that labour will not create a surplus value. By placing monitoring in the hands of labour itself, as self-policing, and setting conditions on rates, outputs and quality in return for remuneration, the capitalist places the burden and cost on the worker, thereby shifting the risk of low productivity to the piece-rate worker.

For the piece-rate worker, I have already mentioned several risks, and they are the same risks that capital faces. The first is that, for a piece-rate worker to be remunerated sufficiently for necessary labour, output value must exceed inputs, for she receives only 25 percent of output value, and must receive sufficient income in order to reproduce labour. If for any reason – such as absence, sickness, injury, lack of ability, broken machinery or lack of raw materials – he or she cannot meet that output, it is the worker who must bear the brunt of low production and hence low income. While there are strategies in the social relations of production that may mitigate the worst effects of these situations (see, for example, Platteau and Nugent 1992), these serve not to eliminate risk, but rather, highlight the fact that there *is* inherent risk in a piece-rate system. Indeed, why else would one have strategies of mitigation in the social relations of production if there were no risk in the relations of production?

Second, piece-rate workers are adversely affected by lack of custom. While this is also true of capital,

⁸ It is frequently noted in the literature on piece-rates that self-discipline is a problem, along with ensuring other members of one’s family or work-mates commit to their share of the work. This is common in the literature on various Philippine industries, particularly agriculture and craftwork. See Maquiso (1985), for example, who makes this issue quite clear.

the capitalist has various means and strategies to address this. The capitalist can more readily weather downturns, especially if he or she has reserve capital or other means of sustenance; he or she can diversify, cut prices or use other strategies to promote products and attract customers, or cut costs, especially labour costs; and ultimately, in becoming bankrupt, the capitalist can fall back to a position of being a worker him or herself. For the piece-worker, almost none of these are available; he or she has little or no capacity to promote purchases by customers; cutting costs essentially means cutting livelihood; and few piece-workers have sufficient reserves to see them through any significant period of economic downturn. The only real option is for the piece-worker to move to other employment, to diversify, assuming he or she has the skills to do so and other employment is available. All of these apply to ACMs.

Given the foregoing conditions, possibilities and limitations for labour, it is difficult for labour to move from one employer to another, and, more significantly, almost impossible to get out of labouring itself. In the case of ACMs, moving to another boss may provide slightly better social relations of production, but it does not escape the intrinsic risk that the piece-rate worker confronts. My data on ACMs document numerous cases of ACMs leaving the industry, possibly seeking other employment forms, or simply becoming unemployed, only to return to ACMing a few weeks later. Thus, whatever their situational circumstances, the fact that they are burdened in whatever situation or social relations they find themselves, with having to bear the risk of income, highlights the underlying capital-labour relations of piece-rates as a system, and a system of intrinsic exploitation.

Yet, economic models attempt to posit inadequacies of piece-rates on the social relations of production, the situational conditions of capital-labour relations, rather than the underlying principle of how piece-rates shift the burden of risk *ipso facto* to labour. That is, focusing on the social relations of production is to *presuppose* the intrinsicity of exploitation and to focus on schemes that are implemented “carelessly,” or on strategies of how situational conditions may be mitigated; they shift the exploitation of piece-rates

from a principle of capitalism to the situational, to the social, and this appears to make intrinsic exploitation simply situational – and more bearable if not changeable.

Indeed, much of the literature addresses these issues, if only to shift analysis and responsibility from an economic system per se to the situational relations. That is, much of the literature points out the importance of the social relations of production by drawing on case studies, and in so doing examines how piece-rates operate in practice, and subsequently draw economic models from these studies. But those empirical studies obscure the underlying principle (and exploitation) of piece-rates as a system of remuneration.

Generally, the literature argues that economic relations do not exist in a social and cultural vacuum, but rather, income “inequalities under various payment schemes need not primarily reflect different risk-sharing arrangements, but may rather reflect differences in the division of surplus from the relationship between workers and managers” (Petersen 1992:68-69). In other words, the emphasis is not on the economic relations of production but the social relations of production, in which capitalists have the power to negotiate rates, quotas and conditions that best advantage them, and who are able to invoke socio-cultural sanctions, morals and obligations. While one is readily tempted to suggest that the social relations of production is a further risk for labour, it is a situational risk, and is thus a red herring.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that, regardless of the situational condition of the piece-worker, she or he bears the burden and risk of production by having to monitor her or his own labour-as-capital. Given the need for capitalism to employ labour and the inherent risk therein to control labour and ensure its productivity, any attempt to shift that inherent risk is also an attempt to shift the intrinsic nature of that risk, thus relieving capital of this risky burden. In simple terms, piece-workers take it upon themselves to ensure their own survival, and in so doing risk failure at the very point of production, at the coal-face of the labour-capital process. Failure

to appropriately monitor their own work capacity and work ethic, and to ensure output greater than their labour input, brings forth the risk of under-employment or unemployment.

While variations in piece-work schemes, combined with social relations of production, may mitigate or exacerbate the situational conditions under which piece-workers labour, these at best can only buffer immediate setbacks in productivity and hence worker income. Thus much of the literature has considered what variation is best for capital, to minimize *its* risk, while little literature has developed an analysis of the principle of exploitation in shifting the risk to the worker. Largely ignoring this principle, although acknowledging it in passing, many authors have at best dealt with how variations in piece-rate plans may mitigate the worst effects of this production risk, primarily for capital, and only occasionally for the worker.

This paper also has briefly documented the situational exploitation of ACMs working under a piece-rate system. ACMing is a new industry of service provision but one which, like few other piece-work services, presents the useful effects of labour embodied in the person herself as the commodity, and in the manufacture of which production and consumption are simultaneous.

ACMs illustrate both the potential (and real) situational exploitation and the principle of intrinsic exploitation in piece-work, and also highlight how

quantity (piece) and quality are linked. Unlike many other forms of piece-work, ACMs have very limited opportunity to increase their productivity, particularly since so much of their productivity depends on the inherent or nurtured quality of the commodity herself. Thus they are particularly subject to the burden of risk.

While it is important to explore this new industry for several reasons pertaining to possible sexual/gender exploitation, or in terms of agency, trafficking, health or globalization, ACMing also is important for illustrating empirically how exploitation within socio-cultural contexts may occur. It is also significant because it clearly illustrates gaps in our empirical and theoretical knowledge, and challenges existing understandings and treatment of piece-rates as a *system* of remuneration.

This paper has thus identified a theoretical gap in much of the literature. Rather than consider how firms reduce risk and costs, or examine the various strategies firms use to motivate labour, this paper has argued that much of the literature has taken for granted and glossed over how piece-rates burden labour with capital's own costs of supervision and productivity and the intrinsic risk associated with labour's failure to meet productive requirements.

While I have not explored all economic and accounting literature within the limited space of this paper, it is hoped that the focus I have provided on some central writings will open up sociological and economic issues in need of further study.

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Internet, Capitalism, and Peripheral Development in the Waldviertel

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ABSTRACT: The Waldviertel (“Forest Quarter”) is a region in northern Austria that is structurally weak. It represents an inner periphery and inner colony of Austrian and European capitalism. This article analyses the political economy of the Internet in the Waldviertel. The Waldviertel is confronted with high rates of exploitation within the context of an imperialist division of labour, with transfer of value, unequal exchange, low wages, the exodus of the textile industry, high unemployment, depopulation of the countryside, a dismantling of public infrastructure, and a declining population. This analysis makes clear that the reality of the Waldviertel as inner periphery of the capitalist centres shapes communication in the region. Access to computers, the Internet and broadband is worse in the Waldviertel than in other regions. Internet and mobile speeds tend to be slower, making the region less attractive to information workers. There are also signs of an alternative economy in the Waldviertel that call imperialism into question. In the area of the information economy there is potential for founding socialist co-operatives for hardware, software, and social media that call the capitalist information society into question and struggle for alternatives.

KEYWORDS: regional development; capitalism; political economy of the Internet; Austria; Waldviertel; inner colonies; periphery; inner periphery; imperialism

Introduction

I grew up in the small Austrian city of Waidhofen an der Thaya, and went to school there. Waidhofen an der Thaya is a county town in the federal state of Lower Austria with a population of about 5,600. The county of Waidhofen an der Thaya, which in 2013 had a population of 26,597, is one of the counties of the Waldviertel, along with Gmünd, Horn, Krems, and Zwettl. The Waldviertel is a region in Lower Austria that abuts the Czech border. In 2013, the Waldviertel had a population of 200,676.¹

When I was 17, following my completion of secondary school, I moved to Vienna to study like all my schoolmates did. My career took me first to Salzburg, then to Uppsala in Sweden, and finally, to London in Great Britain, where I am now Professor for Media and Communication Studies. Only a few

of my schoolmates have returned to Waidhofen or the surrounding area to work. Most of them have jobs outside the region.

This has very little to do with feeling unconnected to our place of origin, and much more to do with the fact that the Waldviertel is among the most structurally weak regions of Austria, with high unemployment, a low rate of natural increase, an ageing population, and a deficient and shrinking public infrastructure. One study estimates that by 2050, in the Waldviertel county of Zwettl, there will be 30 percent fewer children under the age of 14 than in 2009; in Waidhofen an der Thaya it would be a decline of 23 percent.² Between 1869 and 2011, the total population of Austria increased from 4,497,800

1 Data from Zahlen & Fakten in Niederösterreich, <http://www.noe.gv.at/Land-Zukunft/Zahlen-Fakten.html>

2 Dem Viertel gehen die Jugendlichen aus. *Bezirks Blätter Waidhofen an der Thaya*. <http://www.meinbezirk.at/waidhofen-an-der-thaya/chronik/dem-viertel-gehen-die-jungen-aus-d593395.html>

to 8,401,940, but in the Waldviertel, over the same period it declined: in 1869 there were still 258,768 people living in this region of Austria. In 1910 the population reached a peak of 279,024. Since then, the number of people declined steadily, and in 2011 reached 219,541, the lowest number since statistical records began in 1869. The population projection for 2031 is 211,556.³

Right behind my grandmother's house the Thaya Valley Railway ran from Waidhofen an der Thaya to the villages Dobersberg, Waldkirchen and Gilgenberg. As a child I was afraid of the train when it ran by, and I used to cover my ears when it blew its loud whistle. In 1986 the whistle went silent – this section of the Thaya Valley Railway was decommissioned due to unprofitability. This development was a harbinger of the shrivelling up of the infrastructure of the Waldviertel. At the end of 2010, the Thaya Valley Railway and the Zwettl Railway of the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) were shut down. These rail lines had served the counties of Waidhofen and Zwettl between Waidhofen, Schwarzenau, and Zwettl since 1891 (Waidhofen ⇔ Schwarzenau) and 1896 (Schwarzenau ⇔ Zwettl). The number of post offices in Lower Austria was reduced from 613 in the year 2000 to 99 in 2014 (Springer and Simoner 2014). In 2011, in the federal state of Lower Austria, 14.7 percent of the population were aged 0-14, and 18.75 percent were 65 and older. In the Waldviertel counties of Waidhofen/Thaya, Gmünd, Zwettl, Horn, Krems (Stadt), and Krems (Land) the percentage of those aged 0-14 was only 13.0 percent, 12.7 percent, 14.3 percent, 13.4 percent, 12.4 percent, and 14.5 percent respectively. By contrast, those over 65 accounted for 21.8 percent (Waidhofen an der Thaya), 22.9 percent (Gmünd), 10.7 percent (Zwettl), 21.3 percent (Horn), 20.6 percent (Krems Stadt), and 19.0 percent (Krems Land) (Statistik Austria 2011). The Waldviertel, then, is a region with a high proportion of elderly residents, and a low proportion of younger residents.

For young people who have completed their university studies, there is very little work to be found in the Waldviertel, much as is the case for many other young people from other structurally weak

regions. This is the main reason that people of my generation and the following generations leave this part of Austria. The exodus of young people from the Waldviertel has been a stable trend since the last third of the 19th century, caused by peripheralisation, structural deficits, and the low wage structure of the region (Komlosy 1988:107-111).

This article deals with aspects of Internet access in the Waldviertel, and looks at this topic in the context of capitalist developments, regional structures, and regional politics. The next section engages with theoretical foundations. Section 3 presents data about the development of the Waldviertel. Section 4 discusses Internet and mobile access in the Waldviertel, and contextualizes the data given with the help of the theoretical foundations. Section 5 deals with questions about alternatives that can strengthen non-capitalist economic and social development, and improve the communication situation in the Waldviertel.

Theoretical Foundations

Immanuel Wallerstein (2000; 2004), one of the main proponents of world systems theory, conceptualizes the capitalist world system as a relationship between centre, semi-periphery, and periphery. The centres are economically stronger than the periphery, which leads to the flow of value from the periphery to the centres. This arises through uneven trade and/or the exploitation of the work force in the periphery. "A capitalist world-economy was said to be marked by an axial division of labour between core-like production processes and peripheral production processes, which resulted in an unequal exchange favouring those involved in core-like production processes" (Wallerstein 2004:17). The centres of the capitalist world economy would especially use monopoly power, patents, state subsidies, trade policies, and tax advantages to protect their power advantage. The most profitable industries are typically controlled and organized from capitalist centres, and typically have higher levels of productivity, wages, and levels of training than the periphery or semi-periphery. The capitalist world economy sells core-like products to the periphery, and peripheral products to the centres (Wallerstein 2004:97).

³ Population figures from Statistik Austria Online.

On the basis of world systems theory, Samir Amin has identified possible characteristics of peripheral regions and countries:

- **Global Class Structure:** For Amin, the class structure of the capitalist world system consists of: a) the imperialist bourgeoisie; b) the bourgeoisie of the periphery, which is dependent on the c) imperialist bourgeoisie; d) the proletariat of the centres which tends to have higher wages than e) the overexploited proletariat of the periphery; the f) peasantry of the periphery, exploited in the context of capitalist and pre-capitalist class systems; g) and the classes in non-capitalist forms of organization which are exploited by the capitalist world system (Amin 2010:92ff). “The principal contradiction ... is the one that counterposes the peoples of the periphery (the proletariat and the exploited peasantry) to imperialist capital and not, of course, the periphery as a whole to the center as a whole” (Amin 2010:93).
- **Low Wages:** The wages in the periphery tend to be lower than those in the centres (Amin 1976:200). The workforce often has a lower level of training (Komlosy 2011:83). Exploitation is uneven in that the workforces of the periphery are more strongly exploited (Amin 2010:88).
- **Dependent Production:** Production in the peripheral regions is often limited to supplying specific commodities, products and services that are processed or used in the centres and primarily satisfy their needs (Amin 1976:200, 202).
- **International Division of Labour** (Amin 1976:211-213): In the old international division of labour, the peripheries delivered raw materials to the centres that were then processed there. In the new international division of labour, the periphery often provides the raw materials and manufacturing steps, while the knowledge, research and technological innovations are situated in the centres. Complex technologies are expensive and hard to produce. This creates a technological dependence of the periphery on the centres (Amin 1974:15). This dependence of the periphery on the centres is organized by transnational corporations (Amin 1974:15) that can make capital-intensive investments.
- **Unequal Trade:** in reaction to their status in the capitalist world system, peripheral countries and regions often have strongly export-oriented industries (Amin 1976:203, 206; Amin 1974). The trade of the periphery takes place primarily with the centres, while the centres trade largely internally and with each other (Amin 1976:247). The products exported from the periphery contain more hours of labour than the products of the centres, which are produced with higher productivity and therefore with less labour. However, the products are paid for at global prices which are set in the higher productivity environments of the centres, creating a transfer of value from the periphery to the centres in the form of unequal trade (Amin 1974:13). An example: Let us assume that the average production of a car is 20 hours, the average time at Ford in Europe 16 hours, and at JMC in China 100 hours. If Ford pays an average wage of 15€ per hour, then the average wage costs per car are $16 * 15€ = 240€$. If JMC has the same wage level, then its wage costs per car are $100 * 15 = 1500€$. In the chosen example, JMC’s productivity is lower. In order to compete with Ford on the world market, JMC has to reduce the total wage costs per car to 240€ or less. The average hourly wage is thereby reduced to a maximum of $240 / 100 = 2.4€$. This means that in the example labour power is sold to a much lower value in China than in the West. Global capitalist structures impose a low wage structure on peripheral regions.
- **Unequal Economic Structure:** The economies of the peripheral regions often have a high proportion of agriculture and the service sector in their value and employment structures, while the newest economic developments take place in the centres (Amin 1976:239-246). The industries in peripheral regions often have difficulty competing with companies in the centres. The services resulting from this often have low productivity. There has been more industrialisation in the periphery since 1945, but it is nevertheless an unequal industrialisation relative to the centres (Amin 1997:2).

- Differences in Productivity: There are often big differences in productivity, and therefore, in wages, in the various economic sectors of peripheral regions (Amin 1976:215-218). There are quite often great disparities in wages between urban and rural, as well as better and lesser trained labour forces (Amin 1976:221). There are also differences in productivity between the centres and the periphery to the disadvantage of the periphery.
- Global Monopolistic Structures: The law of worldwide value (Amin 2010) by which value is transferred from the periphery to the centres is enabled by five monopolies: the monopoly on technology, of the financial markets, on access to natural resources, of media and communication, and on weapons of mass destruction (Amin 1997:4ff). The average global value of goods and labour are key, because through this arise the disadvantaging of the periphery and the advantaging of the centres (Amin 2010:83-86). The goods from the periphery contain more hours of labour than those of the centres, but are often sold at below the global average value, which is set in the centres that take advantage of their higher productivity.

To summarize, Samir Amin describes the capitalist world system as a relationship between the centres and the periphery that is shaped by elements like a global class structure, low wages and dependent production in the periphery, an international division of labour, unequal trade, unequal economic structures, differences in productivity, and global monopolistic structures.

For Amin, the autonomous and self-reliant development of the peripheral regions is the alternative to the development of underdevelopment, to the international division of labour, and to unequal trade (Amin 1974:16-20). Releasing the periphery from the capitalist world system is the first step to creating world socialism as an alternative form of globalisation (Amin 2011:58).

Economic independence is not necessarily politically progressive. For example, there are the right wing populist parties such as the Conservative Party and the UK Independence Party in Great Britain, the

True Finns, the Front National in France, Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary, the Five Star Movement in Italy, the Sweden Democrats, the Alternative for Germany, or the Freedom Party of Austria. These are either euro-sceptical or anti-European and combine this attitude with resentment toward immigrants, and often with racist propaganda. Geography, natural, historical, and social factors make it difficult to produce all the goods necessary for the survival of a society in one country or region. It becomes difficult to have socialism in one country and to delink from the capitalist world market and its unequal global trading system. For this reason, a socialist economic order must be multi-polar and international from the start. As long as the capitalist world system exists, competition within the world market may be unavoidable for socialist enterprises, cities, and regions. Nevertheless, regionalisation should be attempted as much as is possible. If unique goods can be produced in co-operatives and self-managed companies, and these can be sold on the world market with a monopoly status at producer prices that make high wages possible, then economic advantages can be achieved for socialist regions. The major left parties in Europe, such as The Left in Germany and Syriza in Greece, are not calling for a departure from the EU, but rather for a restructuring that creates a peaceful, social, ecologically sustainable, socialist, and democratic Europe.

The Social Development of the Waldviertel

The economic historian Andrea Komlosy (1988; 2011) has demonstrated that peripheralisation does not only happen at the level of the capitalist world system, but also at the regional level between peripheral and central regions. On the basis of a term introduced by Hans-Heinrich Nolte, “dependent regions within a state [are] ... denoted as ‘inner peripheries’” (Komlosy 2011:199, translated from German). The unequal relationships between the centres and the periphery tend to reproduce themselves within the centres and the periphery through the creation of inner colonies (Luxemburg 1913; Mies 1998). Komlosy applies this approach to the analysis of the economy of the Waldviertel, which she understands as a periphery of the semi-periphery

country Austria, “robbed of its own ability to develop, dependently integrated into the capitalist world system” (Komlosy 1988:296, translated from German).

The Waldviertel was tied into the capitalist world system in the 17th century. From the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire imported cotton, which was processed by spinners and weavers in the counties of Gmünd, Waidhofen, and Zwettl. Flax and wool, the traditional raw materials of peasant textile production in the Waldviertel, carried on as a supplementary source of income (Komlosy 1988:13), and were also used. The Schwechater Baumwollmanufaktur, headquartered near Vienna, controlled the profits. This was a monopolistic-capitalist enterprise founded in 1724. It extracted and transferred value from the Waldviertel and the Ottoman Empire. “The unequal division of labour between the Lower Austrian centre and the Waldviertel inserted itself into the international unequal division of labour between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire” (Komlosy 2011:236, translated from German).

The structural weakness of the agricultural sector arising from the poor soil quality and rough climate meant that the peasants carried out textile production as a sideline industry well into the 20th century (Komlosy 1988, chapters I.1, I.2). In the 18th and 19th centuries, textile mills, spinning mills, band factories, specialty weaving plants, knitting mills, and textile print facilities were established, whose activities were combined with labour intensive work at home. The owners of these factories lived mostly in the federal capital of Vienna and in the capitals of Austria’s federal states. For example, the carpet and upholstery factory Backhausen had its headquarters and sales office in Vienna, but produced in facilities in Hoheneich (Gmünd County), Groß Siegharts (Waidhofen an der Thaya County), and Schwarzenau (Waidhofen an der Thaya County) (Komlosy 1988:79, 81). The Waldviertel was an “extended workbench” in the capitalist textile industry (Komlosy 2011:237). In the 19th century, wages of textile workers in the Waldviertel were approximately a third of the average wages paid to workers and servants in Vienna (calculation based on numbers from Komlosy 1988:79). Construction of the Franz Joseph rail line in 1869–70

made transportation of textiles cheaper, and therefore made access to cheap labour easier for the bourgeoisie, increasing the transfer of value out of the Waldviertel (Komlosy 1988:94).

Ideologically and politically, the peripheral situation of the Waldviertel in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century was not reflected in socialist movements. The class structure of the Waldviertel consisted primarily of small peasant farmers, the petty bourgeoisie of the small and medium-sized traders, and the industrial bourgeoisie. There was a strong presence of German-national ideology. The German National Party of Georg Heinrich Ritter von Schönerer, with its anti-Semitic, anti-Czech, and racist ideology that influenced Hitler’s view of the world, was elected into the State Parliament of Lower Austria multiple times (Komlosy 1988, chapter I.6). The Socialist Party appealed primarily to the industrial workers of the Waldviertel, who, nevertheless, would in part also vote for German-nationalist parties. Through the work carried on in the home, the industrial work force was deeply anchored in the peasantry. Hitler’s grandmother, Maria Anna Schicklgruber (1796–1847), and his father, Alois Schicklgruber/Hitler (1837–1903), were from the village Döllersheim (Gmünd County) in the Waldviertel, and his mother, Klara Hitler (née Pözl, 1860–1907), was from Spital bei Weitra (Gmünd County) (Müllner 1997). The family belonged to the class of peasant smallholders in the Waldviertel. Ernst Bloch (1985) characterises the basis for National Socialism as anachronistic layers that react ideologically to capitalist modernisation and industrialisation with irrationalism – “economic-ideological residual beings from earlier times”⁴ (Bloch 1985:16, translation from German) – taking the form of Führer ideology, anti-Semitism, anti-Communism, and racism.

The farmers and the petty bourgeoisie were not only distracted to Jews, and the competition of the centre was not only palliated by obvious anti-Semitism: there was also space for the not so obvious in the deception: the national community, the ‘national soul,’ the ‘Führer,’ the ‘destiny.’ Thus came the fas-

4 „wirtschaftlich-ideologischen Restseins aus früheren Zeiten“

cist state, the wolf-state that intervenes ‘mediating’ between wolves and sheep, capitalists and their victims. Thus, Social Democracy was replaced by a new sham, social autocracy.⁵ [Bloch 1985:203, translation from German]

It is therefore important, “to mobilise the antagonisms of non-simultaneous social strata under socialist guidance against capitalism”⁶ (Bloch 1985:16, translation from German). However, in Austria, this mobilisation never succeeded, neither during nor after National Socialism. In the Waldviertel, the German Nationalists, in contrast to the Conservatives, called for the modernisation of municipal infrastructure (Komlosy 1988, chapter I.6,) while their social and political ideas were Fascist.

In the 1920s and early 1930s strikes in the glass, wood, stone, and clock industry of the Waldviertel followed in the wake of mechanisation, factory closures, wage decreases, and the global economic crisis, and as a consequence there were workers’ demonstrations (Komlosy 1988, chapter III.2). The social democratic movement became an important factor, especially in the county of Gmünd, supported among others by the workers of the railroad workers and rail maintenance shops. It engaged in bitter fights with the national socialists (Komlosy 1988, chapter III.4). After World War II, the dominance of the conservative Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP) was unchallenged.

Between the wars and after the Second World War, the Waldviertel was above all exploited by foreign capital as a “cheap labour market with an educated work force potential” (Komlosy 2011:238, translation from German). Gmünd County was shaped by the textile, stone, glass, and lumber industries; Waidhofen County by the textile, metal fabrication, electronics, and food industries; Zwettl County was organized primarily along agricultural lines (Komlosy 1988:222, 226). Since the mid-

1970’s, the rise of the new international division of labour has led to rural depopulation and the relocation of the textile, garment, lumber, metal, and electronics industries to eastern Europe and into developing countries which have become the new cheap labour markets. In this way the Waldviertel became an excluded and exploited inner periphery of European capitalism (Komlosy 2011:246; Komlosy 1988:217ff, 232-237). The result has been increased depopulation, unemployment, and more deaths and births (Komlosy 1988, chapters IV.1, IV.2, IV.5). The unemployment rate in the counties of the Waldviertel tends to be rather high. For example, in Gmünd County the average unemployment rate in 2012 was 9.3 percent when the Austrian average was 7.0 percent. In 2013, the average rate was 10.3% in Gmünd County and the Austrian average 7.6%. In 2008, the average unemployment in Waidhofen an der Thaya County was 8.4 percent, and 8.5 percent in Gmünd County, when the average for Austria was 5.9 percent. In 2010, 9.2 percent of the workforce in Gmünd County were unemployed, 7.6 percent in Waidhofen County, while Austria wide it was 6.9 percent (AMS Arbeitsmarktdaten).

The critical theorist Franz Schandl, who was born and grew up in Heidenreichstein (Gmünd county), a small town in the Waldviertel, describes the situation in the following words:

Today there is a yawning emptiness, except during the summer. When walking across the main square in the evening of an autumn day, the small town (that currently has 4,500 inhabitants) feels completely extinct, even the pubs have often been closed because there are no guests. Nothing is left of the factories, where my parents have worked in the seventies. Industrial cities such as Heidenreich suffered badly under the onset of the recession. Thousands of jobs dissolved within a decade into nothingness. ... Heidenreichstein lost more than a fifth of the population from 1971 until 2001. [Schandl 2004, translation from German]

Today, the Waldviertel has developed into an excluded and exploited periphery that tries to compensate for the loss of the textile industry with new low wage sectors in agriculture and adventure tour-

5 „Die Bauern und Kleinbürger wurden nicht nur auf Juden abgelenkt, der Konkurrenzkampf der Mitte nicht nur durch durchsichtigsten Antisemitismus gemildert: es hatte auch Undurchsichtigeres im Betrug Platz, die Gemeinschaft, die Seele, der ‚Führer‘, das ‚Schicksal‘. So geriet der fascistische Staat, der Wolfs-Staat (der zwischen Wölfen und Schafen, Kapitalisten und ihren Opfern ‚vermittelnd‘ eingreift); so wurde Sozial-Demokratie ausgewechselt mit einer neuen Attrappe, der Sozial-Autokratie“.

6 „Widersprüche ungleichzeitiger Schichten gegen den Kapitalismus unter sozialistischer Führung zu mobilisieren“

	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Waldviertel</i>
Population	8 451 860	218 676 (2.6%)
Percentage of those 0-19 years of age	20.1%	19.2%
Percentage of those 20-64 years of age	61.8%	59.8%
Percentage of those > 64 years of age	18.0%	21.0%

Table 1: Demographic statistics of the Waldviertel in comparison to all of Austria, 2013 (Source: Statistik Austria)

	<i>1991</i>	<i>2001</i>
0-15, Waidhofen County	17.8%	16.8%
>60, Waidhofen County	24.0%	25.9%
0-15, Gmünd County	16.8%	15.9%
>60, Gmünd County	24.0%	26.4%
0-15, Zwettl County	20.2%	18.4%
>60, Zwettl County	21.1%	23.7%
0-15, Horn County	17.4%	18.4%
>60, Horn County	21.0%	21.6%
0-15, Krems (Stadt) County	14.9%	14.2%
>60, Krems (Stadt) County	23.2%	23.5%
0-15, Krems (Land) County	17.8%	17.0%
>60, Krems (Land) County	20.8%	22.4%

Table 2: The younger and older generations in the Waldviertel, Source: Volkszählungen 1991 und 2001 (Statistik Austria)

ism. The structural weakness and peripheral social situation can be demonstrated with current data.

Tables 1 and 2 show that the relative proportion of elderly people is higher in the Waldviertel than the Austrian average. By contrast, the proportion of young people is considerably lower. The consequences of the peripheral and excluded character of the Waldviertel within Austrian and European capitalism, as well as the shortage of jobs, the low wage environment, the hollowed out public infrastructure, and the rural economic structure that cannot satisfy the need for higher education and jobs requiring higher qualifications make the Waldviertel unattractive for young people.

The population of the Waldviertel declined from 224,387 in 2001, to 219,541 in 2011 (Source: Statistik

Natural Increase 2012	-704
Natural Increase 2011	-602
Natural Increase 2010	-713
Balance of Migration 2012	7
Balance of Migration 2011	482
Balance of Migration 2010	120
Population Growth 2012	-697
Population Growth 2011	-120
Population Growth 2010	-593
Percentage of those employed in the primary sector 2011	11.8%
Percentage of those employed in the primary sector 2001	12.7%
Percentage of those employed in the secondary sector 2011	28.3%
Percentage of those employed in the secondary sector 2001	29.3%
Percentage of those employed in the tertiary sector 2011	59.9%
Percentage of those employed in the tertiary sector 2001	58.0%
Those commuting in 2011	13080
Those commuting out 2011	29698
Balance of commuters 2011	-13618
Those commuting out as a percentage of the resident population	12.2%

Table 3: Statistical information on the Waldviertel (Source: Zahlen & Fakten in Niederösterreich, <http://www.noel.gv.at/Land-Zukunft/Zahlen-Fakten.html>)

Austria, Volkszählung 2001 and Registerzählung 2011). The population of Austria increased from 4,497,880 in 1869, to 8,401,940 in 2011 (Source: Statistik Austria, Volkszählungen 1869-2011 und Registerzählung 2011). The population of the Waldviertel, by contrast, declined from 244,708 to less than 220,00 over the same period (Source: Statistik Austria, Volkszählungen 1869-2011 und Registerzählung 2011). The population projection for 2031 foresees a further decline to 211,556 (Source: Statistik Austria). The population decline can be explained by the combination of more deaths than

births and stagnant or low in-migration (Table 3). The aging of the population and the negative natural increase of the Waldviertel are inherently connected to each other and have to do with the region's peripheral social and economic situation.

Looking at the numbers of those who commute out of or into the Waldviertel, it is clear that there are substantially more people travelling outward for work and for this reason the balance of commuters came to -13,618. The lack of jobs and positions requiring higher qualifications means that many residents of the Waldviertel commute to Vienna or other parts of Austria. The structure of commuting in the Waldviertel shows clearly the economic gap between Vienna and its vicinity as an economic centre on the one hand, and the Waldviertel as economic periphery on the other.

In Austria as a whole, in the year 2011, 5.7 percent of the employed worked in agriculture or forestry (OECD STAN), while in the Waldviertel it was 11.8 percent (Table 3), underscoring the rural nature of the region. This also demonstrates that technologically advanced, innovative, and high productivity industries usually move to the centres of capitalism, while labour intensive, low wage industries with lower productivity are often found in peripheral regions like the Waldviertel.

According to one study, the average income in Austria was 34,031 Euros in the year 2011.⁷ Table 4 shows the five municipalities with the highest figures. Table 5 shows the statistics for the Waldviertel.

The average income in the Waldviertel of €33,037 was less than half that of the Inner City of Vienna, and almost half that of the Mödling County municipalities of Gießhübl and Hinterbrühl. While the average income in the wealthiest county in Austria, Inner City Vienna, was €68,400 in 2011, and in the wealthiest county of Lower Austria, Mödling, was €49,450, in the Waldviertel it was only €33,037. Mödling County has an advantaged position, due to its proximity to Vienna. Many companies have established a presence in Mödling's Industriezentrum Süd (Industrial Park South), which has made the county one of the economically strongest in Austria. This has also led to the county's relatively high tax

Municipality	Average Income
Inner City, Vienna 1 (Vienna)	68399.01
Gießhübl, Mödling (Lower Austria)	64850.89
Hinterbrühl, Mödling (Lower Austria)	61743.2
Gaaden, Mödling (Lower Austria)	57187.52
Bisamberg, Korneuburg (Lower Austria)	55442.13
Inner City, Vienna 1 (Vienna)	68399.01
Mödling County	49448.61

Table 4: Average income in the wealthiest municipalities in the year 2011, in €, Source: WU Studie zur Einkommensungleichheit in Österreich, <http://taxsim.wu.ac.at/atineq/>

County	Average Income
Waidhofen an der Thaya County	30903.61
Gmünd County	31494.53
Horn County	32497.74
Zwettl County	30193.09
Krems (Land)	35565.30
Krems (Stadt)	37570.35
Durchschnittseinkommen im Waldviertel	33037.44

Table 5: Average income in the Waldviertel in the year 2011, in €, Source: WU Studie zur Einkommensungleichheit in Österreich, <http://taxsim.wu.ac.at/atineq/>

revenue and a high gross regional product (Table 6). In comparison to Vienna, the area around Vienna, and the federal state capitals like Sankt Pölten, Linz, Graz, Salzburg, Innsbruck, and Klagenfurt, the per capita gross regional product of the Waldviertel is very meagre (Table 6). This gap is an expression of the centre-periphery structure of Austrian capitalism, in which peripheral regions like the Waldviertel have both low wages and low capital assets. The Waldviertel's gross regional product per capita has in the years 2000 to 2011 increased at a rate of 51.15 percent, which is relatively high in comparison to the Austrian average of 37.31 percent. Nonetheless the Waldviertel's gross regional product per capita was in 2011 30.5 percent lower than the Austrian average and 45.6 percent lower than in Vienna. The Waldviertel's peripheral socio-economic situation has in the first decade of the 21st century hardly changed.

⁷ See <http://taxsim.wu.ac.at/atineq/>; Der Standard (2014).

Region	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2011
All of Austria	26,000	27,300	28,700	31,300	34,000	35,700
Sankt Pölten	26,000	27,000	28,300	31,300	34,400	36,900
Waldviertel	16,300	18,200	19,700	20,500	22,900	24,800
Vienna surroundings, southern part	33,200	33,000	35,600	37,900	40,600	41,000
Vienna	35,900	37,900	38,100	41,400	44,000	45,600
Klagenfurt-Villach	26,500	27,100	28,800	31,000	33,600	35,600
Graz	31,900	32,200	35,100	37,300	39,400	40,000
Linz-Wels	33,700	35,600	37,400	40,800	45,000	46,400
Salzburg	32,200	33,600	36,400	39,600	42,900	45,400
Innsbruck	29,200	31,300	32,300	35,300	37,300	38,400

Table 6: Gross regional product per capita 2000-2011, in €, Source: Statistik Austria

Today, the Waldviertel is a peripheral region of Austrian and European capitalism, characterized by capital flight and the economic exclusion that results from this. Other characteristics are: unemployment, high rates of exploitation of low wage earners, unequal competition and the related value transfer through the unequal exchange based on the preponderance of labour intensive, low productivity industries. There is also the dismantling of public infrastructure and the loss of value, knowledge, tax base, and workforce through outward commuting. And, finally, there is the flight from the country, and an ageing and declining population. The Waldviertel is a dying region that is slowly being bled to death and killed by its peripheral geography and situation in capitalism. The pastoral assistant and company counsellor Karl A. Immervoll sums up the situation in the following way: “The Waldviertel is being systematically robbed. ... First the money is gone; second the jobs; third the people” (Müller 2009, translated from German).⁸

Internet and Communication in the Context of the Peripheralisation of the Waldviertel

In 2009 in Lower Austria, there were 11,603 companies in the so-called creative economy, which creates products with high information content (Amt der NÖ Landesregierung 2010). This industry accounts

for 24.0 percent of all companies in Lower Austria, and 12.2 percent of all employment. Table 7 shows that the software industry, measured by the number of employed workers, is the largest sector of the creative economy in Lower Austria, followed by consulting and advertising.

Table 8 shows the results of a poll in which residents of Lower Austria were asked which cities they consider creative centres. Krems, in the southern part of the Waldviertel, is mentioned alongside Sankt Pölten, as an important creative centre. By contrast, the cities in the upper Waldviertel, in the counties of Gmünd, Waidhofen an der Thaya, and Zwettl, play almost no role.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of the workforce active in the creative economy in the municipalities of Lower Austria. “The creative economy plays an important role above all in the municipalities surrounding Vienna, and along the south and west axis” (Amt der NÖ Landesregierung 2010:16, translation from German).⁹ While in the Waldviertel the percentage is between five percent and 15 percent, in the northern, western, and eastern “Speckgürtel” (lit. “fat belt”) around Vienna, in the Lower Austrian counties of Mödling, Wien-Umgebung, and Klosterneuburg, the percentage is usually 20-30 percent. The information economy is distributed extremely unevenly geographically, to the disadvantage of peripheral regions like the Waldviertel.

⁸ „Das Waldviertel wird systematisch beraubt. [...] Als erstes geht das Geld weg, als zweites die Arbeitsplätze und als drittes die Leute“.

⁹ „Vor allem in den Gemeinden im Wiener Umland und entlang der Süd- und Westachse spielt die Kreativwirtschaft eine verhältnismäßig große Rolle“.

Type of Work	2001	2002	2005	2009
Film Production	177	173	214	266
Film and Video Production (Film Rental)	35	37	48	83
Film Studios + Sound Studios	101	11	16	16
Sound Studios	123	120	126	151
Organisation and Facilitation of Public Events	275	364	564	735
Advertising Agencies	535	644	907	1,310
Public Relations Consultancies	287	297	300	309
Market and Opinion Research	62	67	107	105
Ad Writers	16	13	16	21
Corporate Consultants	0	785	1,323	1,909
IT Services	3,221	3,429	3,959	4,313
Interior Design	48	67	79	83
Publishing and Media	919	878	862	1,104
Carpenters	1,081	1,047	1,045	1,221
Dress Makers	182	173	150	197
Photographers	153	157	172	196
Press Photographers	121	117	151	228
Organisation and Implementation of Training and Seminars	201	220	390	657

Table 7: Development of employment numbers in the creative economy of Lower Austria, Source: Amt der NÖ Landesregierung (2010).

Table 9 shows that Lower Austria is the federal state in Austria that has the lowest household access to computers, the Internet, and broadband. As the Waldviertel is a peripheral region within Lower Austria which has a considerably weaker infrastructure than wealthier Lower Austrian counties such as Sankt Pölten or Mödling and Korneuburg in the area around Vienna, we can extrapolate that it is one of the regions of Austria in which households

Creative Centres in Lower Austria	Responses
Sankt Pölten	94
Krems	89
Wiener Neustadt	27
Baden	25
Mödling	22
Amstetten	12
Tulln	10
Mistelbach	8
Melk, Geras, Grafenegg	5
Waidhofen/Ybbs, Horn	4
Kottingbrunn, Perchtoldsdorf, Vienna region, Wiener Neudorf	3
Bruck/Leitha, Korneuburg, Raabs/Thaya, Schiltern, Sankt Valentin	2

Table 8: Results of an opinion poll regarding perceived creative centres in Lower Austria, Source: Amt der NÖ Landesregierung 2010:16.

Federal State	Computer Ownership	Internet Access	Broadband Access
Lower Austria	77%	76%	74%
Vienna	83%	84%	83%
Vorarlberg	85%	84%	83%
Tyrol	84%	84%	83%
Upper Austria	82%	83%	81%
Steiermark	81%	82%	81%
Salzburg	78%	79%	78%
Burgenland	81%	79%	78%
Kärnten	77%	77%	75%

Table 9: Computer, Internet, and broadband access in the federal states of Austria, Source: Statistik Austria, Europäische Erhebung über den IKT-Einsatz in Haushalten 2013.

have the least access to computers, the Internet, and broadband.

The Austrian Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications (RTR) conducted a network test¹⁰ on the strength of mobile signals in Austria. In these measurements, an 80 percent quantile means that 80 percent of measurements taken are below the stated strength. Figure 2

¹⁰ <https://www.netztest.at/de/Karte>

shows the location of the Waldviertel in the northeast of Austria, in order to help interpret the visual data presented in the following pictures. Figure 3 shows the colour scale to represent the regional connection speeds. Dark green means a very fast connection, dark red means a very slow connection.

Figures 4, 5, and 6 show the results of the RTR network tests for Internet access speeds on mobile telephone networks in Austria. The graphics show the results for all network operators. The figures display the speeds for downloading and uploading data, as well as the so-called ping test by which the connection time to Internet servers is measured. The large, coloured area on the right side of the three images is Vienna. The Waldviertel is all the way in the north, at the upper right end of the images. Dark green or green areas, which signify fast Internet connections over mobile telephone networks, are found especially in the federal capital Vienna, and the federal state capitals like Graz, Linz, Sankt Pölten, Salzburg, Innsbruck and Klagenfurt. The Waldviertel is thinly populated and heavily forested, which explains the many white areas without service. The areas of settlement are largely light green, yellow, and sometimes red, which signifies a significantly slower connection speed than in the Austrian centres.

Figures 7, 8, and 9 show tests for data uploading and downloading and ping connections using web browsers on a regular Internet connection. The images display the area of Lower Austria and Upper Austria. These are combined tests of all accessible Internet providers.

The figures show that the Internet speeds in central urban areas like Vienna, Linz, and Sankt Pölten are relatively fast (dark green areas), while in the Waldviertel there are several areas with slower connection speeds: Drosendorf, Gars am Kamp, Groß Gerungs, Geras, Karlstein, and Rastendorf for downloading; Drosendorf, Eggenburg, Gars am Kamp, Geras, Gföhl, Groß Gerungs, Horn, Langelois, and Litschau for uploading; Gars am Kamp, Gföhl, Groß

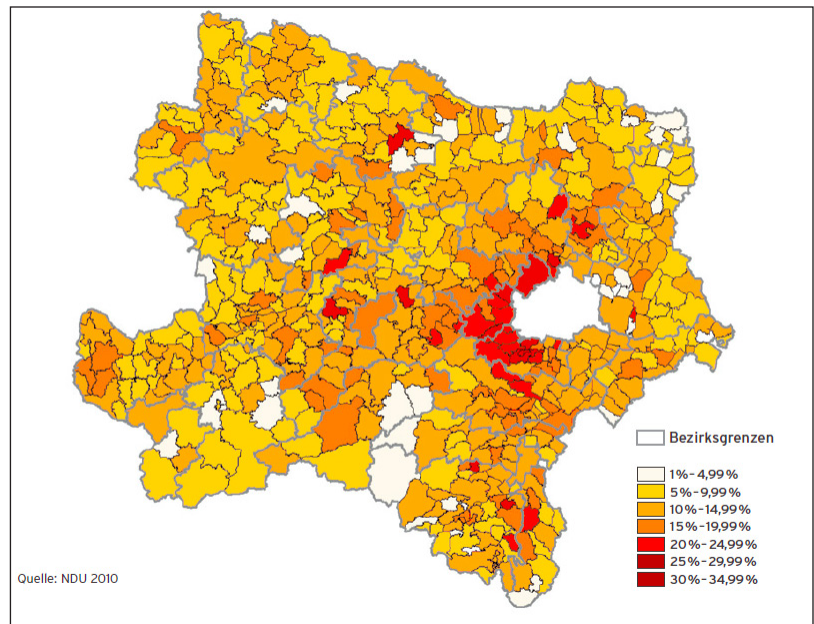


Figure 1: Proportion of the creative economy in percentages of all employment categories in Lower Austria, Source: Amt der NÖ Landesregierung (2010, 17)

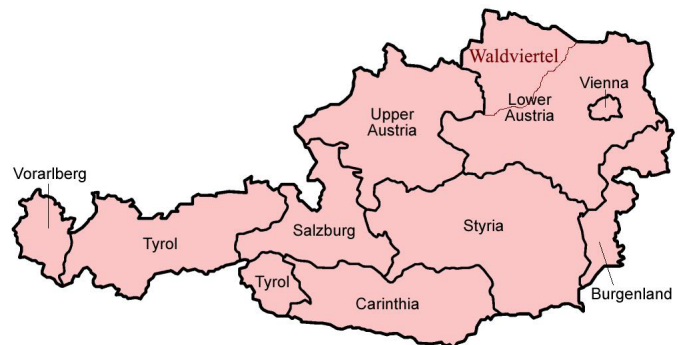


Figure 2: The location of the Waldviertel in Austria, Source: Wikimedia Commons, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Austriastatesenglish.png#file>

Gerungs, Heidenreichstein, Raabs an der Thaya, Rastendorf, and Waidhofen an der Thaya for the ping connection test.

Figures 10 and 11 show the test results for the signal strength of mobile telephone networks in Austria. The test combines all available networks in specific regions.

These images make clear that the signals of the mobile telephone networks are especially strong in the federal capital of Vienna and in the federal state capitals, while they are weaker in many areas of the Waldviertel.

This analysis highlights the tendency for the mobile signal strength and the Internet connection

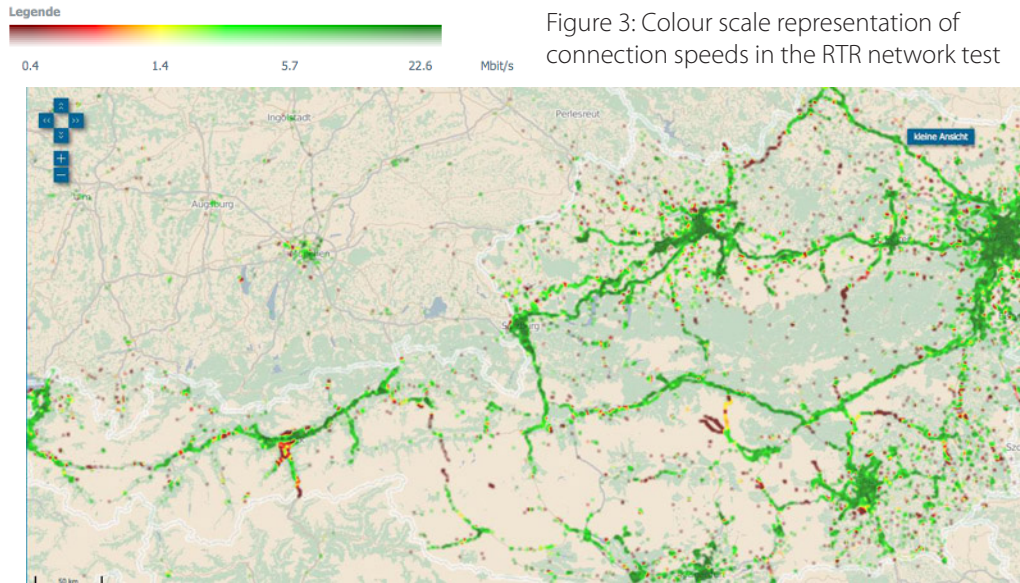


Figure 4: Internet download speeds on mobile telephone networks in Austria, RTR Netztest 2013

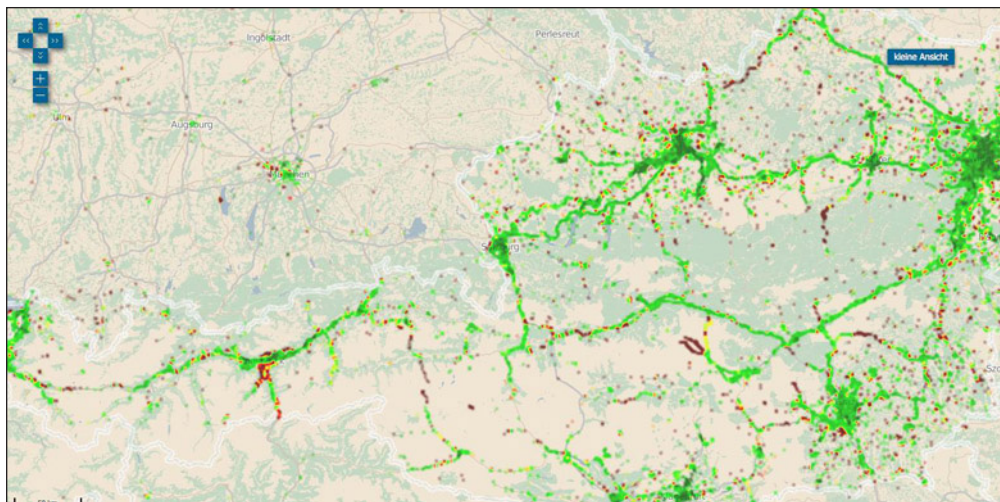


Figure 5: Internet upload speeds on mobile telephone networks in Austria, RTR Netztest 2013

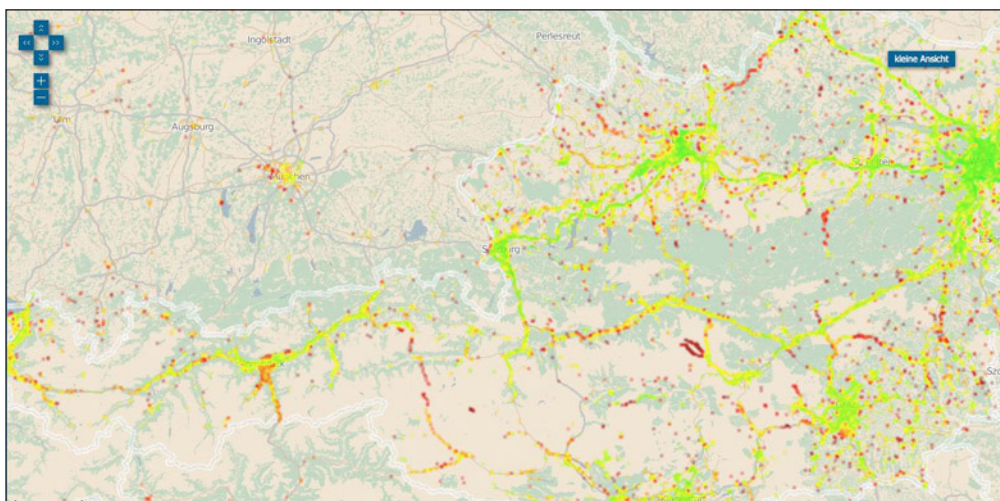


Figure 6: Internet ping connection speed tests on mobile telephone networks in Österreich, RTR Netztest 2013

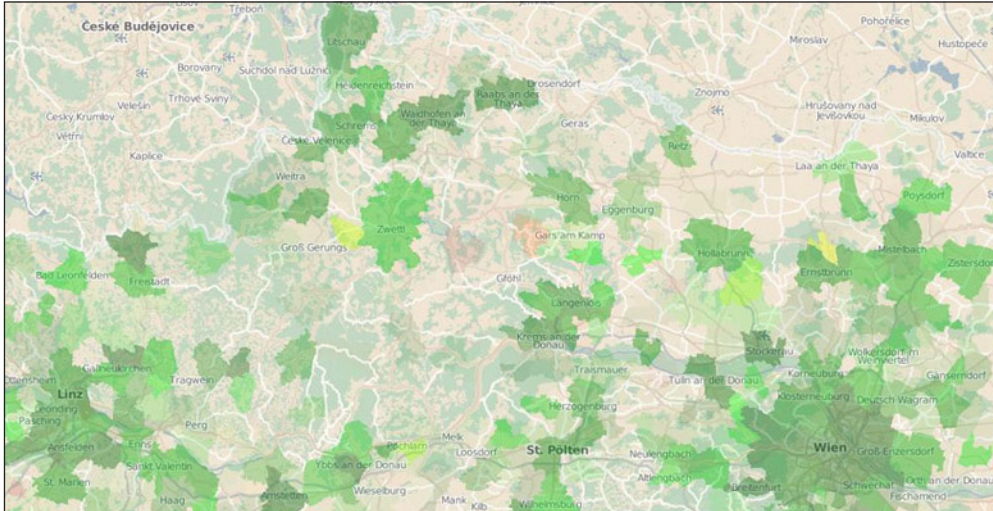


Figure 7: Data download speeds using a web browser on a regular Internet connection, RTR Netztest 2013

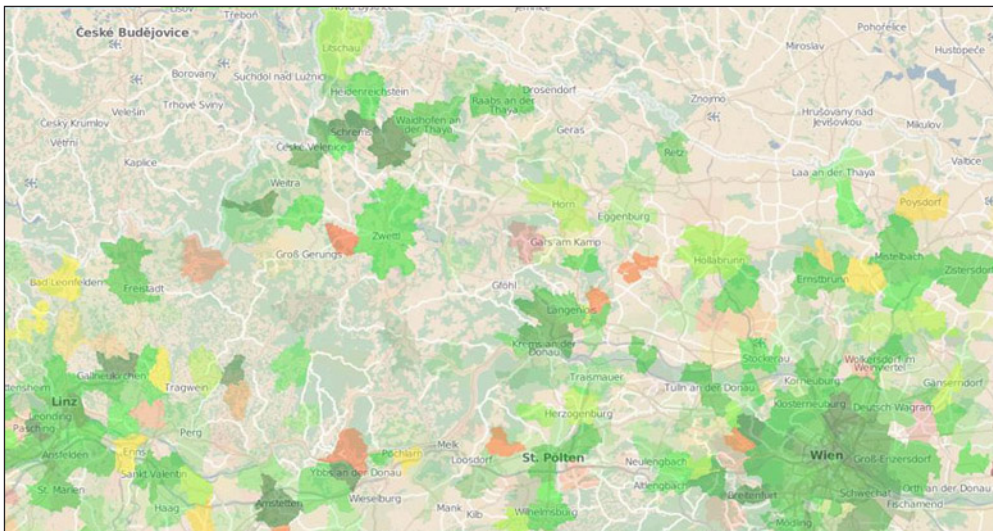


Figure 8: Data upload speeds using a web browser on a regular Internet connection, RTR Netztest 2013

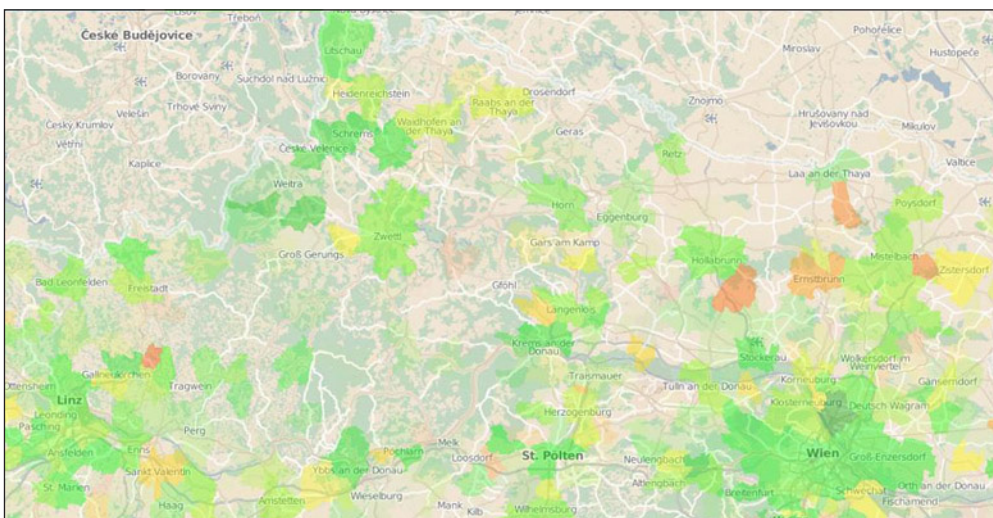


Figure 9: Ping connection speed test using a web browser on a regular Internet connection, RTR Netztest 2013

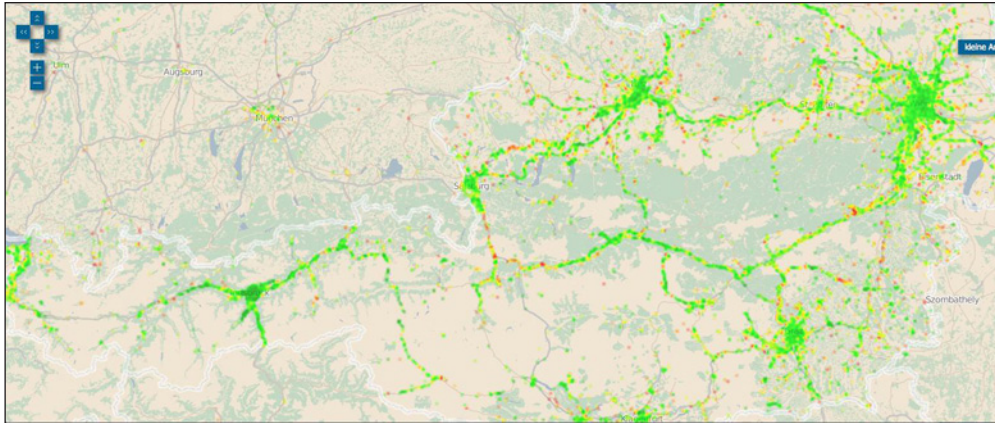


Figure 10: Signal strength of mobile phone networks, RTR Netztest 2013

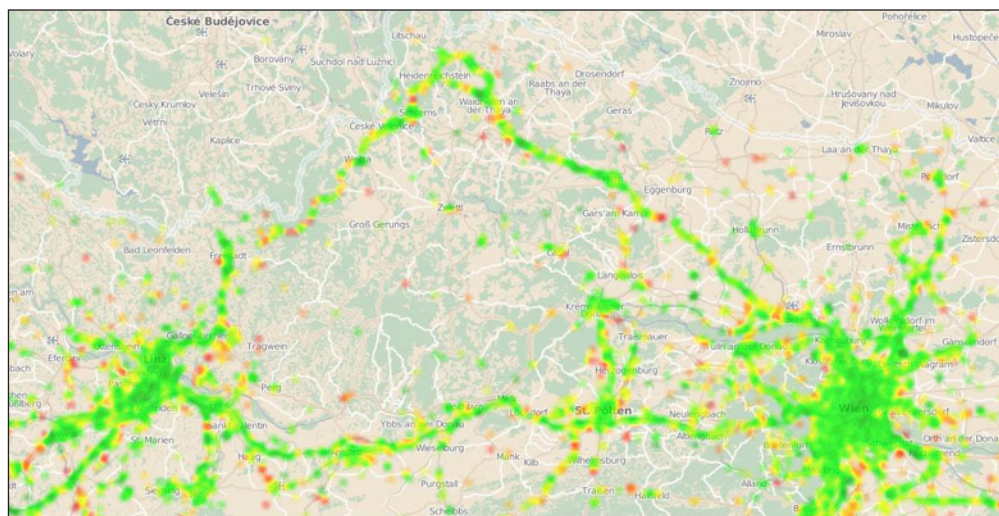


Figure 11: Signal strength of mobile phone networks, RTR Netztest 2013

speeds and mobile Internet speeds to be notably higher in the centres of Austrian capitalism – the federal capital of Vienna and the federal state capitals – than in the Waldviertel. The access to computers, the Internet, and broadband is also less developed in the households of the Waldviertel than in the Austrian centres. The peripheral status of the Waldviertel is reproduced in the access and signal quality of the communications networks. Not only are the centres of Austrian capitalism – like Vienna, Graz, and Linz – characterised by an abundance of capital, profits, residents, jobs, tax revenues, public infrastructure, educational and cultural institutions, but they also have a high speed, well developed communication infrastructure. By contrast, the Waldviertel is not only poor in private and public resources, but is character-

ized by poorer signal strength of communications networks. It is much more likely that you have no mobile phone or Internet signals in parts of the Waldviertel or that such signals are unstable or disconnect than in Vienna or the regional capital cities.

When asked the question, “Why is it that the people in the northern Waldviertel often have poor mobile connections?” Hermann Gabriel, the spokesperson for A1 Telekom Austria AG answered, “One has to say that it is difficult to provide service for the Waldviertel because of, on the one hand, the topographical situation, and, on the other, the low population density” (Zellinger 2013, translation from German).¹¹ What is probably meant by “difficult to

11 „Man muss sagen, dass das Waldviertel einerseits aufgrund der topografischen Situation und der dichten Bewaldung, andererseits durch die dünne Besiedelung sehr schwierig zu versorgen ist“.

provide service for” is that the peripheral circumstances of the Waldviertel promise only low profits on extensive high speed communications networks, and for this reason the service providers restrict themselves to a limited service of poorer quality.

Karl Marx pointed out that means of transport and communication are part of the fixed constant capital: means of production that help to organise the transport of commodities. However, computers and computer networks are not only organisers of the circulation of commodities, but also the means of production for information products and the platforms for internal and external communication for companies. While trains, buses, automobiles, ships, lorries, and airplanes transport people and physical goods, computer networks transport information, information products, and flows of communication. Physical and informational means of transport are similar in that they present a common infrastructure: “Regarded as a means of production, it distinguishes itself from machinery, etc., here in that it is used up by various capitals at the same time, as a common condition for their production and circulation” (Marx 1993:725).

In capitalism, means of transport and communication play an important role in the organisation of the exchange of physical and informational commodities and in the communicative organisation and production and circulation: “The more production comes to rest on exchange value, hence on exchange, the more important do the physical conditions of exchange – the means of communication and transport – become for the costs of circulation” (Marx 1993:524). The means of communication and transport determine “the sphere of those who are in exchange, in contact, but also the speed with which the raw material reaches the producer and the product the consumer” (Marx 1993:187). In capitalism, means of communication and transport have thus the primary role of accelerating exchange and production so that commodities can be produced and sold more quickly, which allows the production of more goods in the same or less time than before. Communication and transport technologies are means of acceleration: “Capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier. Thus the creation of the

physical conditions of exchange – of the means of communication and transport – the annihilation of space by time – becomes an extraordinary necessity for it” (Marx 1993:524).

The impoverishment of public transportation-connections in the Waldviertel makes it difficult for people and goods to be transported into and out of the Waldviertel. Thus, goods produced in the Waldviertel tend to have a higher circulation time, which means that more circulation labour is put into the goods, and their value is higher than in regions with well-developed infrastructures. It is similar with poor, slow, and underdeveloped communication networks in the Waldviertel: the transport of information and communication within, into and out of the Waldviertel is more expensive for producers, more time consuming, slower, and tends to be more prone to failure than in the communication centres of capitalism which have access to well-developed and extremely fast communications networks. Poorer Internet access and poorer transportation connections make the transport of goods, people, and information into and out of the Waldviertel more costly, by which geographical disadvantages arise that raise the constant capital costs. Goods produced in the Waldviertel tend to be more expensive than comparable goods produced in the centres of Austrian and international capitalism. The infrastructural disadvantages of the Waldviertel strengthen the unequal exchange of commodities that the region faces.

Poor transportation and communication infrastructures also tend to strengthen outmigration and are barriers to capital investment and companies moving into the region. Well-developed and fast communications networks are essential for knowledge workers. Again, the Waldviertel is structurally disadvantaged for the establishment of an information economy. It is more likely for knowledge workers to settle in Vienna than in the Waldviertel. The communication peripheralisation of the Waldviertel can also lead many actual or potential knowledge workers to move away from the Waldviertel. It is no surprise that the Waldviertel not only has a weak communication infrastructure, but also has a relatively low percentage of knowledge workers (see Figure 1).

A study conducted in 33 countries showed that doubling the Internet speed can result in the growth of the gross domestic product by 0.3 percent.¹² Conversely, this means that it is likely that there is a causal connection between that slow communication infrastructures contribute to reduced regional economic performance and low regional wages. The analysis of the Waldviertel conducted in this article confirms these presumptions.

I want to show with these examples that the Waldviertel has a disadvantaged economic structure. The solution to this problem cannot and should not be that one tries to compete with capitalist centres in order to overtake and outstrip them and to become even more capitalist than them. The uneven development of the Waldviertel within capitalism cannot be overcome by capitalist development. It is not meaningful to make capitalism in the Waldviertel faster, better, more efficient and more effective. Capitalism is the root evil of uneven development. More of it cannot solve the problems of the Waldviertel and other peripheral regions. Even if one succeeded in making some of the Waldviertel's economic sectors dominant in the capitalist world system, this development would be coupled with unemployment in and structural weakening of other regions in the world. And this economic world leadership could be unstable, prone to crisis and temporally limited. The example of the Waldviertel shows that it is important that we think about a qualitatively different economy, about alternatives to capitalism.

Global capitalism's economic structure has changed because of the development of the productive forces. There is less work in agriculture and classical industry because both realms have been more and more automated. In addition industry has been changed within the international division of labour in such a way that capitalist production is globally flexible. Andrea Komlosy (1988) has shown the de-industrialisation of the Waldviertel that has resulted from this development. A re-industrialisation that results in the comeback of the textile, clothing and metal industries would create unemployment and precarity in other regions of the world. It would

predominantly create strenuous and low-paid work. The manufacturing of mobile phones and clothes in piece-work is meaningless, monotonous and often hazardous labour that nobody should perform and that should rather be automated. But the problem of automation in capitalism is that it is contradictory. As a tendency, it does not result in a re-distribution of the remaining work and thereby to a better life for all, but rather in the development that some work more, whereas others become unemployed or precarious workers, whereby capital hopes to create more profits, but at the same time the crisis-proneness of capitalism increases. Classical labour in agriculture and the manufacturing industry is often not only strenuous toil, but has also become more and more unnecessary because of the technological development. The Waldviertel can and should not primarily be a region of agriculture and classical manufacturing industry. Alternatives to capitalism face the question what role the information economy can and should have.

The British socialist and artist William Morris (1884) opposed the idea that all work is useful and that labour is an important moral value in-itself. He distinguishes between *unnecessary, useless labour* that is a waste of human energy; *harmful labour* that harms nature, the human mind and body and society, and useful labour that advances self-fulfilment and a good society. Piecework on the assembly line is unnecessary and meaningless. It also tends to harm human health. The industrial accidents in Chernobyl and Fukushima have shown that nuclear power plants and the labour performed in them pose huge destructive potentials for humans and nature. Nuclear power should therefore be seen as a harmful industry.

What about information work? It is partly unnecessary, meaningless, and harmful. Labour in advertising, financial services, real estate, public relations, marketing, consultancy, and market research has the only role to construct brand images and commodities' use-value promises, to sell ever more commodities in a more efficient and effective way and to convince people that they need these goods. These industries and the labour performed in them only have a dimension of capitalist valorisation, increase consumption of throw-away commodities that are produced in

¹² <http://www.portal-21.de/ambient-assisted-living/artikel/53517-ericsson-studie-einfluss-von-breitband-datenraten-auf-wirtschaftswachstum-092742033/>, accessed on July 10, 2014.

an ecologically unsustainable manner, and are in an alternative economic order unnecessary. Information work always makes use of the body and the mind at the same time in order to create information. It is however not a moral good in-itself. The technification and scientification of the economy has however made information ever more important. We can no longer think of modern society without information work in the realms of education, media and culture such as the one of university teachers, researchers, software engineers, artists, authors, web designers, translators, film and video producers, photographers, sound engineers, organisers of public events (concerts, exhibitions, discussions etc), journalists, television and radio presenters, DJs, librarian, archivists, operators of galleries, performers, musicians, cabaret artists, satirists, network administrators, administrators of online communities, etc. Such work is also meaningful in a post-capitalist society and can only fully unfold itself in such a society, where it will play a qualitatively different role than today. The work of journalists then is no longer Yellow Journalism that disinforms, but rather presents the complexity of society and stimulates critical reflection. Such journalism already exists today, but not to a sufficient degree and constantly limited by the media's market imperatives. The work of journalists will remain an important part of modern society. An economist in an alternative society is not concerned with how companies can sell more commodities in a better way and how they can increase the exploitation of employees. They can rather focus on the question how the economy can benefit all humans and preserve nature.

Young people, who have higher education, find many of the above-mentioned works attractive. Information work faces a capitalist paradox: Many information workers love their activities and consider it is a possibility for self-fulfilment. At the same time their work experience in actual existing capitalism is often shaped by small income, anxieties not to be able to survive economically, individualised risks, isolation, precarity, times of high workload followed by times without work (see: Fuchs 2014a, Gill 2002, Gill 2006, Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Many knowledge workers are highly qualified, identify themselves with the content of their work, and experience precarious

conditions. An alternative economic order should not be a return to hard physical toil because freedom also means freedom from toil and necessity. Such an order requires an information economy, in which the antagonism between creativity and precarity is sublated, as integral part. A progressive development of the Waldviertel does not mean country romance with toil, but an alternative economic order that features alternative forms and contents of work, alternative products, and alternative relations of production. The Waldviertel requires for example a university. But not institution such as the Danube University Krems that is focused on science and education that serves capitalist interests and charges high tuition fees, but a critical university that is a public space for learning and research, that enables critical engagements with and production of knowledge about the region and the world, and whose goal is not the growth of profits, but the good life of all humans.

For Herbert Marcuse, freedom is threefold – economic, political, and cultural.

1. Freedom from the necessity to make one's life a means to the struggle for existence, i.e. freedom from the necessity of labour, in which the individual cannot unfold its human capacities [negation of economic unfreedom];
2. Freedom from the necessity to merely be an object of politics that are made by career politicians as realm of the societal division of labour [negation of political unfreedom];
3. Freedom from the necessity to be exposed to a public that as an external power also determines the inner sphere of private existence [negation of cultural unfreedom]. [Marcuse 2002:133]

Freedom as society's autonomy therefore means

that the individual does not practice and confirm its freedom in the struggle of economic competition, that it is no longer dependent on uncontrolled market mechanisms, that the individual functions no longer as a voter in, for or against given parties or other self-contained apparatuses and also no longer is a reproducer or consumer of dominant modes of thoughts and feelings. [Marcuse 2002:133-134]

Liberation is a process of sublation that negates the negation of freedom (= freedom from), i.e. unfreedom, and results in a positive determination (= the

freedom to). Freedom in a positive sense means the creation of a co-operative, self-determined, well-rounded activity without toil, the realisation of a maximum of free time (economic freedom), participatory, grass roots structures, in which all affected by certain aspects of life take collective decisions based on communicative deliberation (political freedom), and a sphere of wisdom, reason and critical reflection, in which the humans engage mentally and culturally in an all-embracing manner (cultural freedom).

People in the Waldviertel and other peripheral regions pay the same price for access to the Internet and mobile phones as in other regions. It is however much more likely that they do not receive a signal at all or that they are confronted with connection failures. Most communications networks and Internet platforms are owned by large corporations such as Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Telekom Austria, T-Mobile (Deutsche Telekom), Drei (Hutchinson Whampoa), UPC (Liberty Global), or Tele 2. Mediatized communication takes on various commodity forms and results in a transfer of value to communication corporations. The alternative should not be a global communication corporation that has its headquarters in the Waldviertel, but rather to free communication from the commodity form.

It is neither desirable nor realistic for the Waldviertel that one tries to win the competition with other regions or capitalist cores, to try to attract or create capitalist companies. The Waldviertel's social and economic peripheralisation shows that the logic of ever more profit in ever less time, the commodity form, global competition and the exploitation of labour harm humans, society and nature. We need a qualitative different logic of life and the economy. We need alternatives to capitalism: alternative companies, alternative products, an alternative mode of the economy. Are alternatives possible?

What to Do? Alternatives to Peripheralisation and Information Imperialism

We can summarize the main findings of this article as follows, which will facilitate reflection on alternatives to the current social situation of the Waldviertel.

An analysis of the political economy of the

Waldviertel demonstrates that, in the global capitalist system, there is not only an imperialist relationship between the centres and the periphery, but also that there are inner peripheries within the centres that are impacted negatively by imperialism. Historically, the Waldviertel was a peripheral inner colony of Austrian and European capitalism. In the context of a superregional and international division of labour, the Waldviertel's textile industry (above all), as well as their stone, glass, forestry, metal, electronic, and food industries produced for capital located in Vienna, Germany, and other countries. This production took place for low wages and, therefore, under high rates of exploitation. Low productivity and the emphasis on a few, labour intensive low wage sectors led to unequal exchange with the centres.

Since the middle of the 1970's, the Waldviertel, with its textile industry and other sectors, has been impacted by capital flight, company closures, and the relocation of industries to Eastern Europe and developing countries because of the new international division of labour. In this way, the Waldviertel has become a partially highly exploited, and partially excluded periphery of global capitalism. The consequences have been, among others, high unemployment, outmigration to Vienna, an aging and declining population, the dismantling of public infrastructure; the loss of value, knowledge, tax revenues, and workforce due to outward-commuting; flight from the countryside and an aging and declining population.

The termination of public transportation infrastructure, especially the rail lines of the Thaya Valley Railway and the Zwettl Railway, as well as post offices, and the slow, underdeveloped, and rather poorly accessible Internet and mobile networks make the goods produced in the Waldviertel more expensive. This strengthens the unequal exchange and the outflow of value, tends to increase outmigration and create barriers to capital investment and the movement of companies into the region. This also makes the Waldviertel unattractive to knowledge workers. The peripheral situation of the region as exploited and excluded periphery is reproduced in the information economy and in access to communication networks.

The Waldviertel is not the only structurally weak region in Austria. So for example the Mühlviertel in Upper Austria, Southern Burgenland and the Weinviertel in Lower Austria have a comparable peripheral socio-economic situation. It does therefore not come as a surprise that a glance at the RTR network test shows that they are just like in the Waldviertel zones in these regions that have particular low Internet and mobile phone speeds. A detailed analysis would go beyond the scope of this article, but it could however be an interesting task for further studies conducted by Internet researchers who are critical of imperialism and capitalism. The phenomenon of peripheral Internet access is of course not limited to Austria. An international comparison could possibly show similar trends in other structurally weak regions in Europe. Examples for such regions are all parts of Bulgaria, Romania, or Slovenia; Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen, Sachsen and Northeast-Brandenburg in Eastern Germany; Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha and Andalusia in Spain; Peloponnese, Epirus and Thessaly in Greece; Campania, Calabria, Puglia, Sicily in Italy; North, Centre and Alentejo in Portugal; Wales and Cornwall in the UK, etc.¹³ The peripheral access to communication infrastructures is also not limited to Europe, but a global phenomenon. According to statistics, Africa is, with an Internet penetration rate of 15.6 percent, the continent with the lowest access rates.¹⁴ Data show that in 2013 the Chinese metropolises Beijing and Shanghai had Internet access rates of 75.2 percent and 70.7 percent, whereas in the poor rural provinces Guizhou, Yunnan and Jiangxi the penetration rate was just 32.9 percent, 32.8 percent and 32.6 percent (China Internet Network Information Center 2014). Socio-economic and communicative peripheralisation are dialectically coupled. As long as there is a capitalist world society, there will be information inequality.

The state government of Lower Austria, dominated by the conservative ÖVP, formulated its perspective on the Waldviertel in the

Landesentwicklungskonzept 2004 (“Development Concept for the State 2004”), saying that the Waldviertel should establish itself as a region for second homes, short vacation stays, golf as leisure activity, and health and fitness tourism. It said that it should also foster an image of being a region of nature, forests, lakes and mysticism (Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung 2004:109). The Regionalmanagement Niederösterreich – Waldviertel (2010) [Regional Management Lower Austria – Waldviertel] has developed the strategy, “Strategie Waldviertel 2015+.” It suggests that the Waldviertel should specialize in renewable energy, health products, spa-, health-, eco-, and youth-tourism, offering opportunities in health, sports, and fitness, as well as organic products from agriculture. “The production of fairy tales has high season. ... The Waldviertel has become a fantasy hell of esoteric speculation. There is no story that one cannot ascribe to it. What once was the business of the church, has now become the business of the tourism industry” (Schandl 2004, translation from German).

Both concepts envision the Waldviertel as a tourism and agriculture region. In 2011, the median gross income in Austria was €24,843. The lowest gross income was achieved in the hotel and gastronomy sector at €9,464. The annual median income of an agricultural operation was €17,871, far below the median gross income (Rechnungshof 2012). The idea of positioning the Waldviertel primarily as a tourism and agriculture region must, therefore, be interpreted as an attempt to cement its status as a low wage region with high rates of exploitation and imperialistic dependence on the centres. The information and communication sector, which includes publishing, software development, media, telecommunications, data processing, webhosting, the production, rental, and sale of film and music, as well as information services, was one of the sectors with the highest annual median incomes: €39,029 (Rechnungshof 2012). The expansion of the information and communication sector is not taken into consideration in either of the regional concepts discussed above. Communication is allegedly seen as a strategy to include the population in the development of the region (Regionalmanagement Niederösterreich –

¹³ These are examples of regions that the EU classified as so-called convergence regions in the years 2007-2013 because their gross regional product was below 75% of the EU average.

¹⁴ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>, accessed on July 10, 2014.

Waldviertel 2010:11), but not as an economic sector for regional development.

The European Union, the Austrian national government, and the federal state government of Lower Austria support the strategy called “Standort Aktiv” in which capitalists are offered industrial real estate at no cost (see <http://www.standort-aktiv.at>). This initiative promotes itself in the following manner: “We offer you free commercial space in a good location with ideal conditions for relocating your business or starting a new business, free commercial real estate, production halls, as well as office and business space” (translated from German).¹⁵ This means that companies from outside the region are offered free land in the Waldviertel, which fuels the transfer of value out of the Waldviertel and the exploitation of low wage sectors within the international capitalist division of labour.

The existing regional development concepts for the Waldviertel are imperialistic and seek to cement the region’s imperialistic exploitation and marginalisation. The alternative is a socialist regional development strategy that strives for the independent and non-capitalist development of the Waldviertel, connecting this to a socialist information and communication strategy. Peripheral regions have the potential to think about and experiment with alternatives, as they usually have little to lose, and have already been pushed to the margins. The beginnings for an alternative economic development already exist in the Waldviertel.

In 1984, at the direction of the Ministry of Social Affairs under the leftist social democratic minister Alfred Dallinger, the Waldvierteler Schuhfabrik (Waldviertel Shoe Factory) was established as a self-managed company in Schrems (Gmünd County). The Shoe Factory evolved into the alternative company GEA, where 160 employees produce high quality shoes, furniture and mattresses. The goal is to work against outmigration, unemployment, the peripheral status of the Waldviertel, and the low wage situation. GEA founder Heini Staudinger says: “The cheaper destroys the cheap, after the cheap has

already destroyed the good. From the shoe industry to agriculture, from the air to the ground... – everywhere we find the same destructive game. To save one’s own dignity, it is imperative not to participate in this undignified game” (translated from German).¹⁶ The goal of GEA is for people to do well and for nature not to be destroyed.¹⁷

Another alternative economic project is the regional currency of the Waldviertel (<http://www.waldviertler-alternativen.at/>, <http://www.waldviertler-regional.at>). Euros can be exchanged at certain banks at a rate of 1:1. Three percent of the value go to social projects in the Waldviertel like the Tagesstätte Zuversicht, the Heidenreichsteiner Arche, and the Betriebsseelsorge Oberes Waldviertel. These offer, among other things, work projects for unemployed people of the region. The “Waldviertler” (as the currency is called) loses 3 percent of its value every year in order to encourage consumption. The currency can be used for purchases in certain, usually smaller, businesses in the Waldviertel. The goal is for the money to stay in the region and thereby not flow out through unequal exchange, thus encouraging production of goods in the Waldviertel. The project describes the social effects as follows:

As a consumer, you have a lot of power, perhaps more than you think possible. When you shop at a Waldviertel business, you give the people of the business work and income. When you buy using the W, you also give more people work and income because the W can only be used in the Waldviertel. This makes you the employer. You have a voice in deciding if people in the Waldviertel have work and income. When you pay with the Waldviertler, your purchasing power stays in the Waldviertel. [translated from German]¹⁸

16 „Das immer noch Billigere zerstört das Billige, nachdem das Billige schon das Gute zerstört hat. Von der Schuhindustrie bis zur Landwirtschaft, von der Luft bis zu den Böden ... – überall finden wir dasselbe destruktive Spiel. Zur Rettung der eigenen Würde ist es eine Notwendigkeit, in diesem unwürdigen Spiel wenigstens selber nicht mitzumachen“. <http://www.w4tler.at/geaneu/gea-home>, looked up on 13. May 2014.

17 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3m8nbJjra2c>, looked up on 13. May 2014.

18 „Als Konsument und Konsumentin haben Sie viel Macht, mehr als Sie vielleicht für möglich halten. Wenn Sie bei einem Waldviertler Unternehmen einkaufen, dann geben Sie den Menschen in diesem Betrieb Arbeit und Einkommen. Wenn Sie mit einem Weinkaufen,

15 „Wir bieten Ihnen: Freie Gewerbeflächen in guter Lage mit optimalen Voraussetzungen für Betriebsansiedelung oder Neugründung, freie Gewerbeimmobilien, Produktionshallen sowie Büro und Geschäftsflächen“.

A regional currency like the Waldviertler is not enough to create a socialist alternative to capitalism because it does not operate in the area of production but in the circulation of commodities and the realisation of value in the form of money. However, in imperialistically dominated regions, a regional currency can help to weaken and push back exploitation and exclusion by the capitalist centres. At the same time, a regional currency offers no guarantee that the people working in the participating businesses will be paid a higher wage. For this, there would need to be a changed production environment and an end to private ownership of the means of production at the enterprise level. A socialist approach that would be interesting for the Waldviertel would be self-managed companies, or so-called co-operatives.

“Worker co-operatives are trading enterprises, owned and run by the people who work in them, who have an equal say in what the business does, and an equitable share in the wealth created from the product and services they provide” (Co-operatives UK 2010). A co-operative is characterized by the following qualities (Co-operatives UK 2012):

- 1) Open Membership: Work in a co-operative is voluntary.
- 2) Economic Democracy: All decisions are made by an assembly of all those working in the co-operative, or are delegated by this assembly.
- 3) Collective Property: The company and its finances belong to the workers together.
- 4) Autonomy and Independence: Co-operatives try to avoid dependence on banks and other external financiers.
- 5) Continuing Education and Information Politics: Co-operatives consider it important for workers to get further education; co-operatives inform the public about the advantages of self-managed companies.
- 6) Cooperation Among Co-operatives: Co-operatives try, as far as it is possible, to work

together to achieve mutual advantages.

- 7) Community Orientation: Co-operatives are interested in the common good of the local communities in which they are embedded. In Argentina, self-managed companies account for approximately 10 percent of GDP (Co-operatives UK 2010). The Mondragon Co-operative is the seventh largest company in Spain (Co-operatives UK 2010), with more than 74,000 workers in 2013 (Mondragon Corporation 2013).

Self-managed co-operatives are a response to the fact that in practice, democracy often confines itself to politics, and in reality, capitalist economies are corporate dictatorships. Co-operatives would not only bring economic democracy to all sectors of the economy in the Waldviertel, but could also strengthen economic independence from the imperialist centres. In regards to the information economy, self-managed software and hardware co-operatives could be established.

The Waldviertel is confronted with relatively poor and slow Internet services. It is not a true alternative if the Waldviertel tries to attract a global communication corporation or to become one itself. It is rather an alternative to build one's own networks that are not owned and operated by capitalist companies. An idea is to establish local and regional free networks offered by non-commercial, self-managed companies or local communities that are oriented on the common good. These technologies are open, free WiFi networks that are connected to so-called mesh-networks by mesh-technology. The idea is not to make a profit from Internet access, but rather to provide free access to as many people as possible in order to bridge the digital gap, promote communication among people and community life through information services. Examples of free wireless networks are Funkfeuer in various parts of Austria, Freifunk in Germany, and Free2Air in East London. In order to expand the coverage areas, the operators of the free networks use so-called WiFi antennas that strengthen the signal. There are, for example, home made WokFi antennas (Wok + Fi, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WokFi>) where a wok or other kitchen utensil is repurposed into an antenna. These

dann erreichen Sie aber auch, dass der W weiteren Personen Arbeit und Einkommen gibt, denn er kann wieder nur im Waldviertel ausgegeben werden. Sie sind also Arbeitgeber und Arbeitgeberin, Sie bestimmen mit, ob Menschen im Waldviertel Arbeit und Einkommen haben. Wenn Sie mit dem Waldviertler bezahlen, dann bleibt Ihre Kaufkraft im Waldviertel“. <http://www.waldviertler-regional.at/index.php?cont=2#2>, looked up on 13. May 2014.

WokFi antennas typically can cover an area of three to five kilometres, sometimes up to ten. The construction and distribution of efficient WiFi antennas is a gap that the Waldviertel could fill. Innovative co-operatives could also be formed that manufacture kitchen utensils and WiFi antennas at the same time. For this there would need to be cooperation between the information, communication, and technology sector and the iron and steel industry, especially for making use of recycled iron and steel. Free networks are based on primary connections to the Internet. This is why local Internet providers in the Waldviertel, such as W4NET (<http://www.wvnet.at>), should be converted into non-commercial, worker controlled, socialist non-profit co-operatives.

The creation of an alternative transport and communication infrastructure should not be guided by the aim of making profits, but by dissociating transport and communication from the logic of commodities and profit so that they become common and public goods. Many young people have the desire for self-determination in the knowledge economy and alternative forms of life. The Waldviertel could be an attractive region for many of them. An information economy beyond the commodity, profit, markets and competition in global villages and global regions is a desirable perspective. Global villages that are part of alternative economic structures integrate common goods, alternative forms of energy, renewable resources, common activities, co-working, local co-operation, computer technologies, computer networks, self-determination, creativity, new forms of how technologies, software and hardware are created, sustainable life, collective learning and research, critical and commons-oriented education, and an engaging and engaged culture (Nahrada 2011). Global villages and regions have potentials for a life beyond capitalism and the commodity form. A communalised or self-managed communication infrastructure can be part of commons-based local structures in global villages so that it is attractive for young people, to live and work in regions such as the Waldviertel. Socialist global villages do not necessarily leave the Waldviertel as “one of the last reservations of boredom in Central Europe” (Schandl 2004, translation from German), but rather combine

the need for calmness with the needs for community, activity, creativity, co-operation, communication, culture, education, social encounters and movement. Global villages and regions are neither pure acceleration nor pure deceleration, neither pure shortwhile nor pure longwhile, but rather the possibility for and a field of experimenting with how humans can self-determine their time and overcome capitalism’s temporal, life and economic structures.

Software companies typically focus on creating software for other companies and private users. They sell software in order to make a profit. By contrast, a software co-operative does not pursue the idea of creating software to accumulate capital, but to produce software that promotes the common good. Typically, software cooperatives produce free software (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_software) whose programming code is open and can be re-used and further developed by others. Software companies like Microsoft, Oracle SAP, or Adobe have patents on software and encrypt the source code so that they can secure a monopoly on the programme and can sell it. Software co-operatives are a socialist development opportunity for Waldviertel. The region could produce and make available software for specific local purposes.

Two examples of software co-operatives are Co-operative Web (<http://www.web.coop>) and Software Coop (<http://www.web.coop>). Co-operative Web is a software co-operative in Birmingham: “We are a special type of co-operative called a ‘worker co-operative,’ which means that all the people that work for us own the business, make the decisions and generally run the company. This means you won’t find a more committed bunch of people to help you with your computer problems” (Co-operative Web 2014). Software Coop is a worker controlled software co-operative in Great Britain with four members who create and host websites, and program free software.¹⁹ “In essence, we are doing this to improve the world and the world-wide web by delivering better software while earning a fair living” (Software Co-op 2014).

Free software should also be free in the sense that it supports the well-being of all humans.

¹⁹ See <http://workerco-operatives.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/case-study-softwarecoop-llp.html> and <http://www.software.coop/info/>.

Software for fighter planes is therefore also not free if its source code is freely available. Based on William Morris (1884) we can say that software can only be free if it does not support destruction and meaningless labour, but only if it supports the common good, the well-being of all, creativity, self-fulfilment and peace.

The Internet has given rise to a new gratis culture. Gratis access does not mean to automatically transcend the commodity form, as capitalist “social” media such as Facebook that turn personal data into a commodity. Does one have to give away free software and culture as a gift? The problem is that humans need income in order to survive as long as money has not been abolished. The dependence on this general commodity can surely be reduced step-by-step, but not tomorrow. In the case of the production of free software, open hardware, open culture and media, information can form examples for local and non-profit organisations and purposes can be offered without payment, whereas one can charge an access fee for other forms of use. The resulting revenues can be collectively owned and used without individual profits. Further ideas that can be considered are donation models, financial support by taxes, foundations, or a percentage share of all money that is exchanged into the local currency.

It is an important goal to operate without money and exchange. This goal may however only be attainable step-by-step. Already Marx stressed that self-managed companies are nuclei of an alternative, post-capitalist economic order, but cannot get immediately rid of necessities posed by capitalism:

The cooperative factories run by workers themselves are, within the old form, the first examples of the emergence of a new form, even though they naturally reproduce in all cases, in their present organization, all the defects of the existing system, and must reproduce them. But the opposition between capital and labour is abolished here, even if at first only in the form that the workers in association become their own capitalist, i.e. they use the means of production to valorize their own labour. These factories show how, at a certain stage of development of the material forces of production, and of the social forms of production corresponding

to them, a new mode of production develops and is formed naturally out of the old. [Marx 1991:456]

Since 2005 the term “social media” has been used a great deal to refer to the use of blogs (for example, Blogspot, Wordpress, Tumblr), wikis (such as Wikipedia), social networks (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, VK), microblogs (for example, Twitter, Weibo) and platforms for the sharing of user generated content (such as YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Pinterest) (Fuchs 2014b, 2015). The problem with social media is that they are primarily run by California-based companies that turn the personal information of the users into a commodity, which they use to facilitate targeted advertising on the profiles of the users (Fuchs 2014a, 2015). Social media, such as Facebook and Google, are not social communications companies, but rather are the biggest advertising companies of the world. They are oriented toward making monetary profits by exploiting the users’ digital labour (Fuchs 2014a, 2015). Most of these California based companies use tax loopholes and a complex structure of subsidiaries spread across the globe in order to pay little or no tax in Europe and other parts of the world. Thus, there is a strong outflow of value from the countries and regions where social media are being used. The revelations of Edward Snowden make clear that there is a security-industrial-complex in which state security services work together with private security firms such as Booz Allen Hamilton, and communications companies like AOL, Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Paltalk, and Yahoo! to monitor the contents and destinations of citizens’ communications.

The question arises, which role the state can play for advancing socialist alternatives to the capitalist Internet. I have suggested in another paper a system, in which the license fee is transformed into a media fee that is a kind of progressive tax paid not just by citizens, but first and foremost by companies. It could be combined with participatory budgeting (Fuchs 2014c, see also the video of my inaugural lecture at the University of Westminster: <http://vimeo.com/97173645>). Such measures could fund a citizen cheque that provides all citizens with an annual amount of money (e.g. £100) that they have

to donate to non-commercial media project. The media fee could provide a finance basis for alternative projects in the realms of hardware, software, Internet platforms, social media, journalism, and Internet infrastructure. Another possibility could be that public institutions such as the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF offers public Internet services. But today on the one hand the ORF Law and EU laws pose limits because one sees public Internet services as competition for capitalist IT companies (Fuchs 2014c). On the other hand such projects should be realised under left-wing governments. Right-wing administrations tend to privatise and commodify public infrastructures. If they introduce gratis media services then it is likely that they come along with new forms of commodification. Edward Snowden's revelations have shown that right-wing governments tend to monitor communication services because they hold the false consciousness that surveillance can prevent terrorism. It is therefore a danger to civil rights if right-wing governments provide Internet services that process personal data. In countries that have left-wing governments that want to protect civil rights, public Internet services could work. The danger of state surveillance is smaller for Internet services that hardly process personal data. It would make sense that the ORF develops and provides a non-commercial YouTube and that civil society organises a non-commercial Facebook and non-commercial Wi-Fi networks and get state support in the form of the participatory media fee.

But Austria is a post-National Socialist society, in which the political left is extremely weak and far-right parties such as the Freedom Party (FPÖ) regularly achieve voting shares above 20 percent at nationwide elections. Austria's Communist Party KPÖ has since 1959 not been represented in Austria's parliament. It has thus far not changed its name that has dissuasive effects on regular citizens and does at nationwide elections since a long time not achieve more than 1 percent of the voting share. Austria is not a good country for left-wingers, but rather a country of Nazis and Catholics. The writer Thomas Bernhard, who lived in Austria, characterised Austrian society and its people in a satirical manner the following way:

The Austrian head thinks always only Nazi-Catholic. ... On Vienna's streets, we in the end only see Nazis and Catholics, who present themselves at one time more as Nazis, and at other times more as Catholics, mostly however as both. ... In Austrian newspapers we read something that is either Catholic or National Socialist. All of this is, we must say, *the typically Austrian*. [Bernhard 1988:292]²⁰

A public left-wing Internet strategy, in which the state plays a progressive role, is not likely to be possible at the moment in Austria and should therefore be an important part of the left's renewal and struggles.

So, there are many reasons why we urgently need alternatives to capitalist Internet platforms. Currently, there are few initiatives. Wikipedia is the only widely used non-commercial civil society-operated Internet platform. The Waldviertel could become a region in which self-managed social media are created and made available. These kinds of media should not aim to make profits, but to really promote communication and community among people. On social media platforms, users create their own social use-values. Thus, they are the workers of social media. Today this work is largely heteronymous and is exploited by capitalist corporations such as Google and Facebook. Self-management of social media by the workers means self-management of platforms by the users. Alternative social networks are privacy-friendly, advert free, and do not turn personal information into a product. They can contribute to community building on the local, regional, and global level. It is conceivable, for example, that a social network can be created through which workers, employees, and independent contractors in the Waldviertel can communicate about their work experiences, and through which contacts, communication, and partnerships can be established with workers in other peripheral regions of global capitalism. In this way people in

20 Author's translation from German: „Der österreichische Kopf denkt immer nur nationalsozialistisch-katholisch. [...] Gehen wir in Wien auf die Straße, sehen wir letzten Endes nur Nationalsozialisten und Katholiken, die sicher einmal mehr als Nationalsozialisten geben, einmal mehr als Katholiken, meisten aber als beides zugleich [...] Lesen wir etwas in den österreichischen Zeitungen, so ist es entweder katholisch oder nationalsozialistisch, das ist dann, müssen wir sagen, *das Österreichische*“.

peripheral regions could help each other by communicating about the possibilities and challenges of creating autonomy from the imperialist centres, and about the similarities and differences of the social situations of the various regions of the capitalist world system.

The goal of socialist co-operatives is a co-operative society with mutual aid, without capital, money, exploitation, or imperialism. The gift, free agreement, and voluntarism replace exchange, coercion, and wage-labour. The problem is that in the current reality, self-managed companies are entangled into the global and trans-regional economy of exchange because it is difficult to produce all necessary products in one region. Thus, for the time being, socialist co-operatives are tied into the economy of exchange and money even though their goal is to overcome these. How can software and hardware co-operatives offer their workers a living if they are not oriented toward profits and so not sell anything, but rather, make software and Internet access available for free? Regional networks that offer free Internet access can be created whose operations are combined with the production and sale of WiFi-antennas and kitchen utensils, sold at a trans-regional level. It is important that these co-operatives do not make an individual profit, but that earnings are socialized in the neighbourhood, the municipality, and the region. For both software and hardware production, one can experiment with new forms of financing: donation models, crowd funding, membership models, financing through a percentage charge which, when converting money into the regional currency, is automatically used as a donation for software and hardware co-operatives, etc. The important difference is that co-operatives do not become profit oriented, but rather, pay fair wages and either have no capital surpluses, or, if they do, make these available to the community.

The communications infrastructure of the Waldviertel is based largely on transnational capitalist businesses like Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Telekom Austria, T-Mobile (Deutsche Telekom), Drei (Hutchinson Whampoa), UPC (Liberty Global), or Tele 2. These corporations accumulate capital by treating personal information, communications networks, and software as commodities. By

using these capitalist communications services, there is a transfer of value out of the Waldviertel and other peripheral regions of global capitalism. Local and regional capitalist communications companies are not a true alternative, as they are also based on the exploitation of the workforce.

A step in the right direction of reducing and alleviating the peripheral status of regions like the Waldviertel, and creating a socialist world system that disables the mechanisms of capitalist and imperialist exploitation through unequal exchange and the outflow of value, is to create socialist co-operatives in all areas of the economy. In this way, regional economic structures are created that are connected to each other globally, are controlled by the workers, and foster the common good. Free wireless networks, software co-operatives, and alternative social media can be the seeds of a socialist information society that challenges and struggles against capitalist control of communications. Excluded and imperialistically exploited regions like the Waldviertel are especially well suited for the attempt to start alternatives that struggle against the capitalist communication society and the capitalist Internet, and replace them with a socialist world information order and a socialist Internet.

The idea to organise communication infrastructures, software and hardware in a non-capitalist manner is not limited to single regions such as the Waldviertel, but can be applied in all cities and regions as a communist strategy of transformation. A well-known European example is Tallinn (Estonia), where the municipality provides gratis Wi-Fi since 2005 with the help of 30 hotspots.²¹ Such a communalisation and de-commodification of public infrastructures was further extended in 2013 when Tallinn became the first European city that offers gratis public transport.²²

Info-communist projects are however likely to face the resistance of the local capitalist class. A good example is New Orleans. After hurricane Katrina

21 <http://www.visitestonia.com/en/things-to-know-about-estonia/facts-about-estonia/wifi-in-estonia>, accessed on July 10, 2014.

22 <http://www.tallinn.ee/eng/tasutauhistransport/Tallinn-Free-Public-Transport>, http://www.tallinn.ee/eng/tasutauhistransport/Tallinn-Free-Public-Transport-Expanded-to-Trains?&filter_otsing_uudis_rubriik_id=160, accessed on July 10, 2014.

the city's population decreased from 437 186 in July 2005 to 158 353 in 2006 (Los Angeles Times 2006). In order to make settlement in New Orleans more popular, the Democratic mayor Ray Nagin suggested at the end of 2005 among other things an info-communist strategy: a communal local Wi-Fi that can be used without payment²³. His idea faced huge resistance by local telecommunications corporations such as Bell South that attempted to boycott the plan. The example shows that info-communist projects must be prepared to face capitalist resistance and to wage class warfare against capitalist companies.

Alternatives to capitalism are possible. In the 21st century, such alternatives have to take into account the potentials for regional development, ecological and social sustainability, new forms of co-operation and community, the information economy, and desires for alternative forms of life.

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²³ <http://www.corp-research.org/e-letter/broadband-socialism>, <http://www.macworld.com/article/1051053/neworleans.html>, accessed on 10. Juli 2014.

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The Function of Time in Marcuse's One-Dimensional World, and its Relevance in the Networked Society

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ABSTRACT: In the 1960s and 1970s Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* exerted a profound influence on revolutionary politics and on theories on the effects of capitalism as a system of "total administration." Its analytic power began to fade, however, as capitalism itself began to radically transform in the 1980s. Apart from its historical significance, the work is largely overlooked today. This essay, however, seeks to recover the considerable diagnostic power and political relevance that the book still has. Centrally, it is argued that through a *theory of temporality*, it is possible to see that Marcuse over-determined the power of clock-time under 1960s Fordism, and therefore over-determined the power of "total administration." However, by developing and applying the theory of *network time* for our post-Fordist age, the new "temporalized" perspective gives Marcuse's core argument new significance and gives a more positive and potential-filled dimension to his ultimately negative political and philosophical vision from the 1960s.

KEYWORDS: Marcuse; time; network society; political theory; capitalism; one-dimensionality

Introduction

It is not so easy, from our 21st century viewpoint, to appreciate fully the impact and influence of Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (hereafter *ODM*). The book first emerged in 1964 at the height of the post-war industrial boom, a time of "high Fordism" when that particular mode of production was at its economic and cultural zenith. It influenced a generation of radicals in the USA and beyond, through advancing its grim thesis on the anesthetizing and shallowing effects of capitalist consumer society and its outrider, technological "progress." Marcuse argued that the planned predictability of the Fordist way, with its logic of mass production for a mass society, was creating "new forms of social control" through a totalizing instrumental-rational productive mode that was expressed through the one-dimensionalizing of our ontology, of our society,

and of our very modes of thought that were being increasingly shorn of their critical capacity (Marcuse 1991:1-19). The book's influence began to wane as the decade turned, however. The last edition appeared in 1991 and Marcuse's sphere of influence has since retreated to the remoter corners of the social/political theory departments of the university – departments that are themselves a dwindling presence in our post-Fordist and neoliberal/networked age. Through the perspective of a social theory of time, this essay looks at the reasons for the decline of Marcuse's ideas and develops an argument which posits that his ideas on one-dimensionality are in fact more relevant than ever in these early decades of the networked age. More, it argues that they *can and need* to be revived and imbued with the agency of a new praxis with which to bring what he himself termed "the chance

of the alternative” to a point of (at least) plausibility (ODM:203-259).

It is ironic that Marcuse’s relative obscurity today is a direct and proportional effect of the accuracy and profundity of his own one-dimensional thesis. Today the deepest logic of the capitalist industrial processes of social domination, of instrumental rationality and of the commodification of anything that may be sold, has entrenched itself far beyond the industrial-age Fordism that Marcuse analyzed, and far beyond the liberal-democratic West that was the orbit of his thought-world. What Marcuse termed the “closing of the universe of discourse” has become universal through neoliberal globalization; and network information technologies have allowed the cash-nexus to colonize, almost to completeness, the inner spaces of culture and society (ODM:19-56). Though not fully “total,” a one-dimensional culture is certainly global in that the market logics of individuality, of consumerism and the presence of the Anglo-American derived cash-nexus in almost every sphere, is now preponderant (Sandel 2010:1-15).

A Digital Context for One-Dimensionality

As a product of critical theory, any proper appreciation of Marcuse’s one-dimensional thesis must come through the application of critical thought. As I will argue in some detail below, in the 1960s there was still space and time for the growth of the intellectual habit of critical thought, and therefore a more effervescent critical culture enabled his ideas to have wider purchase. This was possible, in part, because across the West, a critically oriented New Left had been supplanting 1930s Stalinist dogma; and socialism (or its social democratic variants) appeared as vibrant and seemed to characterize the political and economic shape of the future. Liberal economist Milton Friedman famously summed up the ideological difficulty faced by conservatives in the West at the time when he said that “We’re all Keynesians now.” However, in our post-Fordism, the relationship with space and time as the context for reflexive thought is now characterized and shaped by their digitalization (Lash 2002:13-26). Today, information (and information technologies) are the foundation upon which capitalism is now largely constructed,

and information as the basis of knowledge and critical thought is becoming both instrumentally oriented towards the needs of capital, and information re-produces itself in ever-growing volumes and at ever-quickenning speeds. Again, as I will show, in this networked society, through what I term ‘network time’ a form of temporal experience is created that seeps into every nook and cranny of life, leaving less space and time for the critical reflection necessary for the development and implementation of critical ideas. Nevertheless, as I will also show, a critical understanding of the space-time of the network can enable people to exploit the potential of network time for more social and collectivist ends. Indeed, as I will conclude, a critical temporal analysis of time and politics in our neoliberal and networked age is perhaps our best chance for the kind of “alternative” that Marcuse has such slim hopes for.

This unfolding of a *digital one-dimensionality* – of a society of “one-dimensional thought” as Marcuse termed it – is wholly in accordance with the logic he revealed in *ODM*. Moreover, through the specific logic and ubiquity of computing, technologies that are designed and deployed to produce a specific orientation towards information and knowledge has an effect that “unfolds” as a kind of generalized socio-political dementia: the *more* the relationship with information and knowledge in networked time and space makes us less able to think critically on a broad social level, then the *less* we are aware that our capacities for critical theory and critical action are being diminished (Hassan 2012:155). At its most serious level we witness this in the realm of Left politics. It was Perry Anderson – intellectual embodiment of the 1960s New Left that Marcuse’s ideas helped launch – who recognized that neoliberalism is now so dominant that “there are no longer any significant oppositions – that is, systematic rival outlooks – within the thought-world of the West” (Anderson 2000:17).

Generalised economic crises in the 1970s triggered the technological transformation of the Fordist mode of production. It created what Dan Schiller (1999) calls a “digital capitalism” – a resurgent and radical liberalism that over the 1980s and 1990s not only transformed the productive base of capitalism,

but also inflicted a historic (and arguably terminal) defeat upon the traditional Left across the world. The eclipse of Marcuse's influence was thus accompanied by the downward trajectory of a century of progressive political ideas that spanned from classical Marx to the New Left – and reaching to the reformist strands of social democracy that had made positive changes in the lives of millions in the West (Judt 2005). At the same time, of course, the arc of the ideas of Friedman, Hayek and their neoliberal political adherents, was to rise to heights of domination – the grip of which we feel today – that neither Marcuse nor anyone else could have predicted.

Much has been said and written about the rise of the neoliberal age and the technological and political transformations that came with it. However, in the large literature that has concerned itself with the network society, and with the society of speed and of instrumental capitalism, relatively little has been said about its connections with Marcuse, notwithstanding the fact that much of what he gave insight into has proven accurate. To explore and evaluate the processes of the last thirty years, in a way that would bring Marcuse's ideas once again to some salience, it is necessary to “temporalize” the analysis. That is to say, to insert a theory of time at the centre of our thinking on Marcuse's one-dimensional thesis and on the structural reasons for its demise as an explanatory framework for the logic of capitalism. Such an analysis will not only give fresh power to the continuing relevance of his work, it will also provide a key to a new understanding of his thought that will give perspective into how it may be revived as a political analysis that can have real-world applicability. Firstly, though, it is necessary to step back and to contextualize Marcuse's ideas in their original time and space.

Marcuse's One-Dimensionality and Marcuse's Capitalism

The economic context of Marcuse's thought-world is of course very different from our own. The productive forces of society in the 1960s were dominated by Fordism; a modality (and logic) that had reached a very high degree of sophistication, and in the West had achieved a very deep level of penetration into culture and society. As David Harvey noted, Fordism

as a “regime of accumulation” had become a “total way of life” that went beyond the routines of production in the factory and office, to create a “whole new aesthetic” based upon standardized rhythms of production and consumption, to produce a deeply rooted “commodification of culture” (Harvey 1989:135). This process had roots that are traceable back to the machine culture of the Victorian age – and were augmented to a much higher degree through the Taylorism that was grafted onto it in the early part of the 20th century. Not so well recognized is that this Fordist lineage, as Harvey observes, can also be linked to that early and influential computer theorist of the Victorian age, Charles Babbage (1989:135-6). This particular ancestry, as we will see, only takes on its fullest significance in our own time.

The political context was also very different. The capitalism of Marcuse's age, based directly as it was in the first industrial revolution, produced essentially the same class cleavages as its Victorian antecedent. And so even in the advanced capitalism of the 1960s, politics was still discernibly organized around fairly traditional class polarities. Marcuse saw vibrant workers struggles, but he saw in these only the circumscribing logic of rational administration, where workers *irrationally* fought mainly for a stake in the system that oppressed them. The fetish for consumerism and the collective alienation that Fordism and Taylorism had brought meant for Marcuse that workers were now unable to recognize or realize their own collective interests, so powerful had advanced technological society become. With the source of human liberation so deeply locked into the logic of capitalism, Marcuse saw only a ‘closing of the political universe’ through the mass assimilationist mechanisms of advanced industrial society (ODM:19-55).

The rationally administered society that Marcuse theorized had its origins in Max Weber, whose shadow fills the pages of *ODM*. Marcuse extends Weber's ‘iron cage’ thesis of rationality to incorporate the analysis of Fordism as he saw it at the peak of its productive powers; taking it also into the cultural and political context of the USA, where standardized mass production and mass consumption seemed equally at their zenith. It is my argument, however,

that the machine-based Fordism that served as the locus of the technological order that would exert such exquisite technological control over men and women in the advanced industrial age, was for Marcuse the logic of something approaching perfection: an internally coherent system of mathematical precision where technological rationality had produced both the material ideology in the guise of its pacifying commodities, as well as the illusion of human progress unfolding over time.

The notion of time – or more precisely the function of temporality – is key here, but Marcuse gives it only marginal significance in his critical theory. Time is treated in his work in a wholly conventional way, with the clock functioning as mere backdrop to the active social and economic world. It enters his narrative only as a point of reference in terms of its expropriation and commodification through the standard Marxist critique (ODM:37-8). However this unreflected-upon and taken-for-granted time permeates *ODM* and gives to its logic a power and inevitability that is ultimately unwarranted. It is true that the time of the clock had shaped capitalism to a degree that is only beginning to be appreciated. For example in the 1930s technology theorist Lewis Mumford observed that it was the “clock, not the steam engine, [that was] central to the Industrial Revolution” (Mumford 1967:14). And in the 1960s E.P. Thompson described the effect of clock time on society as an indispensable disciplining force over capitalism and over those who worked within it (Thompson 1991). These influential theorists viewed time as both technologically and socially produced, and as such time was thus contingent upon technological and social (political and economic) conditions. However to view clock time as a *specific rhythm of modernity* – which is only a short step of interpretation from the insights of Mumford, Thompson and others – is one that Marcuse didn’t take. Accordingly, by implying that the clock of advanced industrial societies was somehow “timeless” he argues that its unerring rhythm would *always* be the time of capitalism. Marcuse’s one-dimensional society therefore seemed to possess a totalizing potential, with the ineffable power of clock time as scheduler of machines and lives functioning as the mainstay of the

operation of capitalist society. It was this imputation of the unchanging rhythm of capitalism, a rhythm made even more powerful and unstinting through the growing pervasion of technological automation that gave Marcuse’s one-dimensional thesis a kind of implacable force. He saw that workers were “being incorporated into the technological community of the administered population” where ‘the machine seems to instill some drugging rhythm’ into them – into their thought-patterns, into their political outlook, and into the administered society more broadly (ODM:26). For Marcuse, then, the unchanging clock acted as an unstoppable force that gave to capitalism a power so natural that alternatives to its rhythms (other, possible, temporal relationships) are not even contemplated.

The temporal assumptions that underlie *ODM* are a major flaw in the work. They cede too much power to the clock-rhythmed logic of total administration and therefore make his thesis ultimately too deterministic and pessimistic. Nevertheless the passage of historical time and with it the technological revolution in computers and the new relationship with time that this has brought, allow us to consider what is still relevant in the work. And there is a great deal. Marcuse saw accurately enough what technological society had become, and his thesis on one-dimensional society and the pervasion of one-dimensional thought seem to be borne out in a global condition based today upon consumption and a growing monoculture of capitalism. But for Marcuse, time, politics and economy seemed to be set upon a specific course of rationality, where the course to domination was calibrated by the unchanging temporal logic that was based upon an essentially 19th century machine-culture model of capitalism. From the perspective of any hope for what Marcuse termed the “authentic self-determination” of freedom it has to be said that politics have changed, and have done so for the worse (ODM: 251). And in terms of basic fairness and social justice, the economy has changed too, and also for the worse. However, if we continue with the frame of temporal analysis, it is possible to see that our post-Fordism has an *inherent unpredictability* that its predecessor did not, and within this unpredictability there exists possibilities

for political change, and for forms of change that are more attainable than Marcuse imagined.

The Eclipse of Clock Time and Fordism

Even as he wrote *ODM*, Marcuse's Fordist world was coming to an end. The "transition to flexible accumulation," as David Harvey termed it, was a slow-burning process that had reached crisis point by the early 1970s. The continuing profitability of a machine-based and inflexible system was increasingly problematic as capitalism became more complex and competitive across the global scale. As Harvey wrote (and Marcuse was acutely aware of this of course) Fordism had continually "been pushed to new extremes of rationalization" (Harvey 1989:32). These "extremes" were the expression of technological innovation driven by ever more ferocious competition. However, the Victorian age machine mode was reaching a point of maturity beyond which the competitive edge of innovation was more difficult to find. A perceived "solution" to this contradiction at the heart of Fordism provided an historic opportunity for the computer to come into its own.

As noted previously, Fordism has its rationalizing and efficiency-seeking roots in the influential work of Charles Babbage. Babbage was one of the first to be convinced of the efficiency-oriented connections between mathematics, the functioning of the mind, and the processes of production. A computing "engine" was for him the technology that would link and enhance all three, with the objective to "ground and organize the operations of intelligence into an efficient atemporal system of production" (Ashworth 1996:635). The ancient algebraic logic that stated that the mind is analogous to a computer, and mirrors the practical efficiency of a computer, is the basis of what Babbage held to be the central linkages in his search for the ultimate in *human efficiency*, which was to be nothing less than the "automation of reason" (Bullock 2008:19-39). Indeed, the human mind as representing an organic form of computer was a concept that was to find even more influence in the early theoretical and practical computer innovations in the mid-20th century through thinkers such as Alan Turing, J.C.R. Licklider and Norbert Weiner,

whose ideas would eventually produce the Internet and network society.

Much of this is familiar, though not in the context of Marcuse or in the context of temporality. If the clock was the fundamental technology underlying the development of industrial age capitalism of the kind Marcuse analyzed when it was at its apogee, then today it is the computer. In 1984, J. David Bolter, writing in his *Turing's Man: Western Culture in the Computer Age*, was prescient about the importance of what was then happening. The computer, he maintained, was shaping up to be the "defining technology" and the key to understanding the stupendous changes taking place in our age. This was because computers were special in terms of their effects. He writes:

With the appearance of a truly subtle machine like the computer, the old power machines ... lose something of their prestige. Power machines are no longer agents on their own. ... now they must submit to the hegemony of the computer that coordinates their effects. [1984:8]

Computerization transformed capitalism. It made possible the transcending of the Fordist mode and placed economy, culture and society on a new organizational level. By linking Bolter back through to Babbage and his contemporaries and to the underlying logic of efficiency, we can see that by way of the information technology revolution economy, culture and society begins to transcend the clock in a way – and to an extent – that Marcuse, nor any of his own contemporaries could have imagined. And so to Bolter's list of "old power machines" we must now add the clock. Marx showed in some detail in *Capital* that speed of operation in production processes makes commodities cheaper and more competitive. Marx, however, like Marcuse, did not see a world beyond clock time, a world where the clock would someday be too slow for a maturing mode of hypercompetitive production. But Babbage and his associate John Herschel did. They could see the limitations as well as the possibilities of the temporal when applied to industrial processes, and they could see what "calculating engines and the factory system" could, in conjunction, achieve. Indeed, time, in the conception of the mathematician Herschel was, in

an odd metaphor, “dirt – except insofar as it is converted and worked up into opportunity by industry” (cited in Ashworth 1996:638). The working up of time toward “opportunity” could only be realized through its acceleration, or what Herschel termed “promptness”; and the acceleration of time was the desired effect of “power acting rapidly” (1996:638). What men such as Babbage and Herschel saw in the potential of linking time with industrialization, “putting time to work” (Bolter 1984:109) as Bolter terms it, was something that was largely forgotten as clock time industry and the machine-based rigidities of Fordism rose to dominance and its logic became the ‘total way of life’ that so influenced Marcuse’s analysis of one-dimensionality.

Network Time

Computing and time working together, as Babbage and Herschel foresaw, could turbo-charge industry. The neoliberal mantra of “efficiency” in all realms of production and beyond was pursued through this nexus. Again Bolter is perceptive about what computers were seen to be best at. He writes: “The computer programmer is concerned with time because he wants to get a job done. ... All the elaborate mathematization of time comes down to the desire to put time to work.” (Bolter 1984:109). Through its new application and networking up to new levels of efficiency and speed, the programmer in effect creates the basis for a new form of time; a network time. This form displaces or destabilizes the clock time context that has regularized polity, economy and society since the industrial revolution. Network time may be experienced as a temporal fragmentation of time(s) into numberless network contexts; into the time(s) that we create and spend online and in the increasingly networked forms of work and education and leisure that fill our waking hours. In the network, the zoned hour of the clock becomes increasingly irrelevant, as the whole planet is the theoretical context of our networked connections and for the experience of time. In Web 2.0 interaction, for example, it may be midnight where you are, mid-afternoon for one of your interlocutors, breakfast time for another. However, the conversation, or collaboration or communication, takes place in network time. This may be fast if the

network is running smoothly, faster if you have a top-of-the-line computer and broadband fiber-optic access – or slow and filled with drop-outs or latencies or delays, if network conditions are busy and you are using a copper-wire telephone connection and (quickly) antiquated modem connections. These fragmented and contextual times vie with “industrial time” for predominance for the duration of our stay in the virtual sphere, in our browsing of the Internet, in our conversations on a mobile phone, or through our rapidly expanding social media. The key point is that although the times of the network are infinitely fragmented, as fragmented as there are possible combinations of connections, and the speed of these interactions vary greatly also, they all are governed by a network logic (a techno-logic driven by commercial competition) that orients almost all network users to an *accelerated existence* within network time (Hassan 2009 and 2012 for a fuller development of this idea).

The overall effect is that within the growing domain of network time, Fordist stability and the machine-based logic that drove Marcuse’s total administration have become much less tenable. A Fordized centre of modernity that would hold (more or less) as a fulcrum around which one-dimensionality could radiate, begins to loosen; a society (and state) that sees planning and regulation and the projection of a political future for its citizens as a guiding *raison d’être*, begins to turn toward market forces for meaning and for inspiration; and the market, powered by networked technologies that produce a new form of time has as its meter an acceleration expressed in its inherent instability, with rates of acceleration that have no predictable patterns or discernible limits – apart for those imposed by the technology itself, and these are being extended every day. It is here we encounter something of a contradiction. Neoliberal post-Fordism and the network time it creates, enhances the logic of one-dimensionality. The sedative of consumerism is more powerful than ever; and the burgeoning of information of every kind through networked communication generates even more powerfully what Marcuse saw as “negative thinking,” a process of “*functional* communication” where people are “trained to forget – to translate the negative into the positive so that [they] can continue to function”

(ODM:104, 123). Today, it is through this system-generated “negative thinking” that we cope with information overload, and try in our individualized way to stay afloat in the rising water levels of information that envelop us in the network. The “functional” communicative context of the network and Internet, where everything is informational, trains us also “to forget” and through the resultant “negative thinking” to see the world of digital information as evidence of choice and possibility and diversity in both the epistemological and political senses. The flip side of this contradiction, though, is that the instability of the process – from the economy, to the politics, to the thought-world of the individual. Instability is the antithesis of total administration, and digital capitalism’s inherent chaos offers the times and spaces from where “the chance of the alternative” politics may seed and take root. Raymond Williams has already shown us how to think about ideas or theses that offer a one-dimensional future. In his *Politics and Letters*, he speaks about the “indissoluble unity of individual and social experience” and then goes on to write in a wonderfully suggestive way about how we can approach Marcuse’s controlled society (and my concept of network time) in a more optimistic way:

However dominant a social system may be, the very meaning of its domination involves a limitation of selection of the activities it covers, so that by definition it cannot exhaust all social experience, which therefore always potentially contains space for alternative acts and alternative intentions which are not yet articulated as a social institution or even project. [1979:252]

Strategies for the Post-Modern Struggle Against One-Dimensionality

Marcuse saw only dying embers of hope in a cold mechanical world, and he expressed these at the end of *ODM*. The totally administered world had exacted a tremendous toll upon freedom. But, for Marcuse – though much less confident than Williams – in their totality the technologies of administration were not wholly and fully comprehensive; there always existed alternatives. The central prerequisite, though, was a transformation of the instrumentalization of reason. He writes

that “as a historical totality” instrumental reason:

has developed forces and capabilities which themselves become projects beyond the established totality. They are possibilities of the advancing technological rationality and, as such, they involve the whole of society. The technological transformation is at the same time political transformation, but the political change would turn into qualitative social change only to the degree to which it would alter the direction of technological progress – that is, develop a new technology. [ODM:227]

We see in these few sentences the key to unlocking the latent power of Marcuse’s analysis. So let us look at them in a little more detail. First it has to be noted that very little has been made of these words in the literature on Marcuse – possibly because their full import has been obscured by the more forthright and more aphoristic phraseology at the beginning of the book where he observes that:

essentially the power of the machine is only the stored-up and projected power of man. To the extent to which the work world is conceived of as a machine and mechanized accordingly, it becomes the *potential* basis of a new freedom for man. [ODM:3 Emphasis in the original]

And perhaps also his key lines are overlooked because he only barely perceives the “forces and capabilities” he speaks of as actual or potential processes. A few pages later, right at the end of the book, Marcuse seems to give up the quest altogether. He notes that across the whole of society the prospects for positive transformation exist, but they are “like fragments which do not connect” (ODM:253).

To conclude this essay I want to separate out and then consider what I take to be the central elements needed for a new appreciation of Marcuse’s one-dimensional thesis: these are *time*, *technology*, *Reason* and *class*. What follows is simply an exploratory undertaking, but it is hoped that it will provide the theoretical basis to make possible a more promising position to promote his ideas to the forefront of the political debates that need to be had if we are to identify – and to have any hope of reversing – the logic of one-dimensionality.

Time

As stated previously, Marcuse neglected to critically interrogate the concept of time, considering it, as in the Newtonian tradition, almost a force of nature. But time within capitalism had become more than a source of commodification and exploitation. Clock-time is, we still too easily forget, a technology. Moreover, it is the technology that so powerfully drove Marcuse's overdetermining Fordist context and gave a mathematical inexorability to his trajectory of total administration. However, in the technological transformation that is the computer revolution, we see a new technology and a new experience of time – what I have called network time. This time is fluid and indeterminate; it is contextual and subjective and its technological affordances under neoliberalism have transformed how we relate to time. The most important feature of this time is that it is oriented toward instrumental acceleration, away from the predictive control that humans could wield over clock time, and into the flux and flow of “disorientation” (Virilio 1995:np). Its transformative power potential comes from the fact that time is networked – time connected through computers and with an accelerative logic that seeps into every register of economy, culture and society. The challenge for critical theory is to understand that it is from within ostensibly unpromising context that we can identify Marcuse's “potential basis for a new freedom for man.”

To begin the analysis we need again to review the key line relating to his emancipatory vision: alternatives exist but they are “like fragments which do not connect.” In the 1960s, McLuhan's “global village” notwithstanding, the connecting of fragmentary political alternatives was difficult: first, the “political” was heavily institutionalized around parties and settled ideologies, and as Marcuse showed, this politics almost always saw its interests in the status quo; and second, capitalist rationality was relatively global, but local and global “fragments” of resistance and alternatives could not easily connect at a time when the nation state and the national economy and the national imaginary were relatively autonomous. However, in the network society these fragmentary spheres and times and temporal contexts – what Barbara Adam terms “timescapes” – *can be*

connected through the networked computer and the socio-technical dimensions of networked time. But the process needs to go beyond mere connections (Adam 1998:123–227). The network society and its networked time is a technological change, but as Marcuse observed, technological change is simultaneously *political change* (ODM:227). What this means is that the numberless fragmentary timescapes of human interaction that make up the network society must be politicized and their forms of time be democratized to reflect that change. Otherwise we face increasing temporal repression through increasing social acceleration. However, the political alternatives, in the contexts I will describe here, go beyond the forms of institutional, party-political and revolutionary change that Marcuse theorized in the 1960s. It also goes beyond the “network politics” advocated by theorists like Clay Shirky who argues that being simply able to network will bring positive political outcomes (2011). We have the connections, but are presently unable to connect politically, through shared issues and goals in ways that can make a difference at the local and global levels.

My argument is that in the network society a *politics of time* can be the connective issue. Its motive force is the growing *lack of time* (Southerton 2003), the growing *acceleration of time* (Rosa 2013) and the growing “dispossession of time” (Crary 2014:58). These are issues that affect us all and are the political issues that can unite us all. There is a growing literature on the instrumental acceleration of time and its broadly deleterious consequences in the service of neoliberal “efficiency.” A few examples must suffice here. There is the worsening “time-squeeze” that is felt as an effect of time-space compression – a scarcity of time due to the unceasing imperatives of the networked economy that is cross-class, cross-cultural and suffuses almost the totality of life. There is the accelerating and volatile speed of the global economy that was a key underlying factor in the still-unresolved global financial crisis that brought capitalism, along with its votaries, as well as the vast majority who are simply tied to it (the “99%”) to the threshold of catastrophe in 2008 (Hope 2011). And not least there are the widespread negative effects on the environment that have been exacerbated by

the negative short-termist timescapes of our post-modernity, the neoliberal “habits of the mind” that shape our attitudes to industry, to risk, to the future, and which continues to have their corrosive effect today (Adam 1998:21).

As things stand, the logic of economic, social and technological acceleration continues to push the Enlightenment-derived and Reason-based projects of humankind beyond the control of nations, of institutions and of individuals (Scheurman 2004). It is logic expressed as a form of “fast capitalism” (Agger 1989) that Marcuse might not easily have anticipated because neoliberal globalization, in these time contexts at least, places *almost everyone* at the precipice. This means that almost everyone thus has a subjective interest in a positive time-focused transformation of a system that is no longer rationally administered for the benefit of even a few, but is irrational and disorganized to the extent that there is no stability for anyone or anything.

Technology

As a starting point in the politicization process, the weakening of the influence of clock time and the emergence of network time has to be seen as a positive transformation in our relationship with time. This means, fundamentally, that the logic of Babbage’s dream of disciplining the human mind (and society) to correspond to an industrial age machine concept has been broken with the end of Fordism as the dominant mode. The salience of a new relationship with time, though currently broadly oppressive and in the service of neoliberal capitalism nonetheless creates opportunities for alternative ways of thinking and acting. If we take Marcuse’s imprecation: “political change would turn into qualitative social change only to the degree to which it would alter the direction of technological progress – that is develop a new technology” (ODM:227) and reverse it, we can see his negative turn to a potential positive. Network time *is* the “new technology” that comes from the logic of hyper-rational one-dimensionality, but its fluxual and unpredictable logic in the context of the neoliberal marketplace means it contains the time-spaces for “political change” that could “alter the direction of technological progress.” However, the

politicization of time would firstly require the identification of the temporal sphere as a social sphere that carries with it the rights and obligations and even the forms of *sovereignty* such as inhere to our conceptions of space (Hassan 2013). Such a politicization of the technologies of time, and of time itself, carries with it the potential to alter the direction of broader technological processes because the computer technology that makes network time possible has so much latent social power “stored-up” within it.

As environmental philosopher Arran Gare observed, a Platonist “metaphor of the machine” has since the time of Classical Greece, driven the trajectory of the broader technological processes and has been “the dominant thematic motif of Western culture” since that time (Gare 1996:155). Marcuse himself acknowledged that the “quantification of nature” or “mathematized nature” through “Pythagorean-Platonic metaphysics” is at the root of contemporary one-dimensionality (ODM:150-1). The merging of computing technology with a politicization and democratization of networked time would thus constitute an historical break with the metaphor of the machine and the rationalized world it has constructed.

If we consider further the nature of computers and how they have transformed our relationship with time, we are able to make out the dim outlines of “*potential* basis of a new freedom for man” that was the more optimistic tone with which Marcuse opens his book. The computer, as theorists from Babbage to Turing have observed, is much more than a classical machine. It is an enabler, transformer and sometimes destroyer of almost every other machine and process. As Bolter argues: “Computers perform no work in themselves: they direct work” (1984:8). The computer is, then, a machine like no other; it is a machine (and a logic) that has had world-historical effects. The fact that it is more than a machine means it contains more in terms of its potentialities than those largely instrumental ends to which it has been applied, and which have reinforced the *ostensible* power of Marcuse’s one-dimensional world. But as I have tried to show, whilst the computer and its revolutionizing effects have transformed the technological, economic and cultural rigidities of a “mathematized” Fordism,

the concurrent transformation from rigidity to flexibility, together with the inherent volatility of the neoliberal age, has opened up at least the promise for transformation of the kind Marcuse thought only an elusive dream.

Reason

“The totalitarian universe of technological rationality,” Marcuse observed, “is the latest transmutation of the idea of Reason” (ODM:123). He went on to note that this idea was “pre-designed” for such an outcome due to the influence of the “quantification of nature” that dominated Classical Greek concepts of Reason (ODM:124). However, Marcuse wrote of “the catastrophe [for] the established direction” [of Reason] if it were possible to “transition to a higher stage of civilization” through technologies that were “designed and utilized for the pacification of the struggle for existence” (ODM:227-8). The basis for a positive “catastrophe” would be a new idea of Reason, he reckoned. His cues in this come from Alfred North Whitehead who envisioned a new form of Reason emerging from a new form of science. In his book, *The Function of Reason*, Whitehead argued that “science has always suffered from the vice of overstatement” (1929:27). This is the effect of its mathematized authority on the insistence on “ultimate categories of explanation” where “conclusions true within strict limitations have been generalized dogmatically into a fallacious universality” (1929:22). Drawing on this Marcuse surmises that, “Reason is still to be discovered, recognized and realized” (ODM:228). The discovery or recognition of a new form of Reason, one not dominated or “pre-designed” by rationalized science, or by what Whitehead (1929:40) termed the “dogmatic creed” of mathematics, one that is able to question the basis of Classical Platonism and its real-world machine culture is, to put it no stronger, a difficult task. But the elements for the transformation that Marcuse sought are in place if we look for them and seek to politically exploit them. I have argued that networked computers and the pragmatism they allow for in communication, in production and in understanding our biology and environment, constitutes the creation of a new machine, one unlike

any previous human-made contrivance. Moreover, this machine is only in its infancy, and still coded with the logic of Leibnizian binaries. The incessant quest for speed means that in the near horizon, completely new forms of computing will replace the silicon chip and binary code. Quantum computing, for example, has been shown experimentally to transcend the very basis of classical computing and its computational functions between states of on-off or ones and zeros. Quantum computing functions *simultaneously* between both states, a state called the “superposition” – and expresses a logic that overturns the many assumptions that flowed from “Laws” of Newtonian physics and upon which so much of the modern machine world is based.

The universal flux and volatility that the technologies of time and computing are unleashing do not lead in any “pre-designed” ways to deeper and more widespread logics of total administration. This particular unfolding of the Classical Greek conceptions of Reason reached their zenith, with the advent of high Fordism, the phase that shaped much of Marcuse’s *ODM*. In our postmodernity, the acceleration of time through the acceleration of computing has not led to increasing levels of efficiency and productivity, but to their opposites – to persistent turbulence, to material and environmental waste, to massive devaluations of economic capital, and to the immense human toll in terms of stunted lives and narrowed opportunities. Alongside what might be seen as rather predictable effects of what Anthony Giddens (1991) once termed a “runaway world” these same dynamics of a radical networked driven time-space compression has taken the contradictions of capitalism to new and unexpected configurations (see Harvey 2010). This new phase of capitalism and its new configurations are characterised above all by their volatility through acceleration, thereby undermining the “rational” within the overall irrationality of the system – that dwindling part of capitalism that to some extent may still be planned and predicted and projected as expected outcomes. All now seems to be permanent flux. Irrationality confronts irrationality in the dialectical rubbing of negative against negative, to the point where each “defeats its own purpose” (ODM:46).

Class

Marcuse discards this central element of traditional Marxism in *ODM*. As he wrote elsewhere, in 1965, a class-based striving toward social revolution “is something quite different from a vital need for better working conditions, a better income, more liberty and so on” (Marcuse 1965:150-1). Marcuse’s prescience here is all the more remarkable when we consider that from the perspective of today, 1960s capitalism was still a predominantly industrial mode, and its class formations strongly reflected this. It was a question of consciousness then and it continues to be so today; however “class consciousness” is an antique term that young people especially, never much reflect upon. In his classic *History and Class Consciousness*, Georg Lukács, quoting Marx, argued “in the study of economic categories ... it must be borne in mind that categories are but forms of being, conditions of existence” (1990:4). Our “conditions of existence” in our post-modern, post-capitalism are such that the categories of class and the conditions of class are deeply sublimated by consumption, by the availability of cheap food, cheap clothes, cheap transport, cheap communication, cheap consumer goods and cheap electronics. Moreover, our post-modern “form of being” is buttressed by the ideological pressure of individualism to the extent that many of us today think of ourselves “naturally” as individuals as opposed to members of a group or class. This process has a temporal dimension, too. Narrative theory tells us that the stories we tell ourselves and the experiences we accumulate help construct our identity and sense of self. However, our consciousness and self-consciousness are derived today to an increasing extent from an existence that (as I will discuss below) is lived in a temporal *present*, in the accelerated context of the here and the now, and through the individualist ideologies that shape this timescape. As Luciano Floridi argues, living in a constant present creates a hyper-identity that is centred on the self (2014:65). And so in a world dominated by consumption, consciousness moves from the category of class to that of status, and simultaneously from the category of class to that of solitary individual.

Perry Anderson’s observation I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, that there are no longer any

plausible alternatives to the neoliberal worldview, has many deeply problematic effects today, for forms of consciousness and for political action. For capitalism to be overthrown, consciousness needs to be oriented once more toward class. But *first* consciousness needs to be primed and oriented toward the political, to become weaned from the tranquilizers of commodities and able to adopt “forms of being” that reflect new objective “conditions of existence” that would be the basis upon which class could be understood as relevant once more. And political consciousness, for it to be catalyzed must strike home first at the individual *as an individual*, but also one whose particular interests correspond with almost everyone else in society. In other words, to raise politicization in a general sense in the context of a dominant neoliberal individualism, we need to move beyond the material, and (in the first instance of political consciousness) beyond even capitalism. We need to develop a political consciousness that seeks change – an individual fear or anger or hope or aspiration – that is at the same time something we all feel and recognize and share; something fundamental and universal, something that can connect Marcuse’s “fragments.” Again, such elements are in place, as I will now try to show. Moreover we also have a global network of communication that can act as vector for concrete political ideas that have universally relevance and universal application.

The Universal Struggle

The global and convergent flux of time, of technology of Reason and of (sublimated) class presents a political opportunity. And in the reversal of Marcuse’s logic cited above – in his “neglected” passage – it is possible to exploit the transformation of a technology – the computer network and its temporality – to create the basis for “qualitative social change.” A prescriptive politics is always dangerous. But any kind of politics is impossible without the first principle of an idea, and as Douglas Kellner notes in his Introduction to the 1991 edition of *ODM*, “all values, aspirations and ideas which cannot be defined in terms of the operations and attitudes validated by the prevailing forms of rationality” are systemically repressed in Marcuse’s “advanced industrial society” (*ODM*:xii).

For ideas to escape the remnants of modernist political categories of Right and Left, which Marcuse had already written off as the basis for progressive social transformation, they must be able to resonate among all of us. The politicization and democratization of the idea and the experience of time is one way forward towards positive social change. This is based on the premise that an acute human interest in the individual and collective ownership of time is an issue that transcends class or sectional or cultural or geographic divides. Globalization and time-space compression are creating what Paul Virilio has termed a universal “dictatorship” of acceleration (1995:np); oppression through an abstract logic made possible and made comprehensive through the enabling powers of computing. This “dictatorship,” or what I have called network time, is not totalitarian in the Marcusian sense. It is shot-through with holes and inconsistencies – and therefore possibilities. To politicize and democratize this time through a shared understanding of its nature (subjective) and its deployment (as an individual and collective resource) would be to create a human capacity for agency. The term “capacity” is important, because it connotes the idea of space and time in the body as latent potentialities that could transcend the narrow strictures of one-dimensional thought. The consideration is that such a new perspective on time could constitute the basis for a new form of Reason. Time and its Platonic mathematization laid stress on temporal efficiency, which give rise to machine culture thinking which in turn provided the fertile ground upon which capitalism could thrive. To undermine this logic would be to begin to undermine the trajectory of Reason that took it toward domination through instrumental rationality.

Struggle is by definition something political. But the transcending of our modernity has created a postmodern context for political struggle that leaves political struggle largely bereft of the “fundamentals” that would constitute the basis for political organization. This context is expressed through new and always-shifting postmodern “constellations.” Fredric Jameson describes these in a way that strongly echoes Marcuse, and his lament for the “fragments which do not connect.” Postmodernity for Jameson constitutes

“a constellation [where] there can be no ‘fundamental’ features, no centres, no ‘ultimately determining instances’ or bottom lines, *except for the relationship of all these contents to each other*” (1990:224). Network time, as I tried to show in the context of Marcuse’s “fragments,” may act as the connector for political action. And so too with Jameson’s “relationship” between what he terms the “fundamental features.” Jameson wishes to promote the basis for new (or the revivification of old) narratives that might act as reconnectable fragments that become fundamental once more – or for the first time. Nevertheless, even the “meta-narratives” that Jean François Lyotard railed against in his *The Postmodern Condition* as “totalitarian,” such as religion, or science, or History – or even a too narrow and prescriptive narrative of democracy – would not begin to encompass all of us, or even most of us, and so still less would they (or their ascendancy as legitimizing meta-narratives) be the positive basis of a political struggle.

And so we need to look elsewhere, somewhere where *universal* means what it says; somewhere wherein everyone has been, is, and will be implicated. And this takes us back to the human relationship with technology – especially technology as it relates to temporality. Hans Jonas and his *Imperative of Responsibility* provide a framework to think about the basis for political struggle in our postmodernity. The subtitle of his book is: *In Search of Ethics for a Technological Age*. Jonas puts his case simply:

Technological power has turned what used to be and ought to be tentative, perhaps enlightening plays of speculative reason [to promote] extremes of remote effects. The one thing we can really know of them is their extremism as such – and that they concern the total condition of nature on our globe and the very kinds of creatures that shall, or shall not, populate it. [1984:21]

One may disagree with the notion of “tentative ... enlightening plays of speculative reason” as having much to do with the largely instrumental trajectory of broad-scale technological development since at least the 18th century. But the more substantive point of the evolution of “extremes of remote effects” resonates strongly, as does his claim that these “effects” concern

us all. These “remote effects” are also temporal effects, in that technologies can project their effects into our futures. Moreover, these “cumulative dynamics of technological development” simply accelerate as capitalist competition pushes them to further extremes of complexity and effect, where they gain “an automotive momentum, by which [effects] become not only irreversible [but also] overtake the plans and wishes of the initiators” (Jonas 1984:32). Jonas sees specific effects in the environment, in the ecological system, in climate change, population growth, fossil fuel use and pollution, where “the happy-go-lucky feast of a few industrial centuries could be paid for with millennia of altered terrestrial nature” (1984:190). His thesis of remote technological effects has echoes in Marcuse’s “one-dimensional thinking.” The speed of technological change creates a knowledge gap; wherein we lose control of the dynamic of technological transformation that then produces unknown effects, and our “predictive knowledge falls behind the technical knowledge that nourishes our power to act” (1984:8). It is the centerpiece of Jonas’ thesis that this gap between predictive and technical knowledge assumes a fundamental ethical importance.

Wisdom is necessary to bridge this gap, Jonas insists. But it is a new form of wisdom, one based upon a new form of ethics, an “ethics of responsibility” toward our technological and temporal worlds. Jonas makes the important point that since Antiquity ethical conduct has been centered on the individual in the here and now – a present-focused behaviour where “proper conduct had its immediate criteria and almost immediate consummation” (1984:8). In a context where the “total condition” of nature and humanity are implicated, then a new ethics is necessary. Responsibility is the central element of the ethics of wisdom. Traditionally, Jonas argues, responsibility had been characterised as parental – a largely nonreciprocal obligation “to the children one has brought forth” (1984:39). He argues that the sphere of this nonreciprocal obligation must now be enlarged to become a collective political responsibility, an obligation toward our children and generations of children yet to be born because we are creating the conditions in which they will have to live.

Jonas argues, as I have tried to, that for our politics to be up to the task of change and of adopting an ethic of responsibility, it has to be temporalized. He makes the revealing point that “Greek political theory is on the whole silent about the time aspect” (1984:14). The problem has been that the Greeks saw the best and most viable and enduring political system as one created in a stable present. The creation of the best possible state was thought to be also the one that would be best for the future. As Jonas characterizes it: “The foresight of the statesman ... consists in the wisdom and moderation he devotes to the *present*” (1984:15). The best form of politics, in other words, is the one that will be best for now and for always, “for a future still like itself” (1984:15). This reads like a conservatism, to say the least. However, and maybe ironically, a temporalized politics, one geared for managing unavoidable social transformation, would in many ways be a conservative politics. But it would be a politics of responsibility only if it were able to control and shape change and not merely to try to adapt to it or hopelessly resist it. The great conservative philosopher Edmund Burke is of help here. If read closely, his work, especially his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, may be seen as deeply temporal in that it consistently urges “prudence” over “effervescence” and the need to “suspend judgment” over a too hasty “agitation.” In other words, he urges reflection over reaction and slow over fast. And concerning the nature of political change in the conservative mind, he was clear: “A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation” (1986:90).

My advocating of elements of Burke alongside the Marxist Marcuse, and extended through the scholar of Gnosticism and existentialism, Hans Jonas, indicates that we need necessarily to think beyond old political categories. A temporalized politics would be a new form of politics, and to practice this would be to place our relationship with time and with technology at the forefront of our most pressing issues, such as our degrading environment. And so moving beyond stale political groupings to a politics grounded in universal concerns and shaped by a future-oriented ethics would mean that many current and seemingly intractable problems might

appear differently. For example, capitalism – the universal source of our postmodern troubles – along with its febrile technological dynamic, need no longer be viewed through the ideological lens: good or bad, Right or Left, socialism or barbarism, but as social claims upon the ethical frame of universal responsibility; responsibility towards ourselves, towards each other and towards our children and to future generations where “regard to them is not specified but global” (Jonas 1984:94). Seen through the prism of its remote effects upon those who have no choice, capitalism could appear in a new way, as a very often culpable and always answerable process that is the reflection of all our collective actions in the past, the present and into the future. We collectively might equip ourselves with the means of change that is simultaneously the means for conservation of those elements we still need.

Marcuse’s work remains immensely valuable for insights into the kind of world that reached its high point in the 1960s. He feared that that his world was permanent and totalizing. It wasn’t. Fordism and modernity and clock time have been eclipsed in terms of their importance by post-Fordism, post-modernity and network time. Domination by the system has deepened, though, and as individuals existing in our fragmented constellations of irrationality we tend to struggle not for justice or fairness or for a new society. We instead increasingly concern ourselves with the accommodation of the return of a “trampling, crushing, elbowing and treading on each others heels” that J.S. Mill saw as so destructive of economic and social life (2004:690). Such universal regression is itself a form of domination, though not of the kind Marcuse envisaged. The important lesson is that as the outward expressions of Marcuse’s one-dimensionality change, this tells us that the core logic of the system is itself become decentred. It has therefore “moved beyond the established totality” that Marcuse saw as a precondition for positive change and is therefore ripe, potentially, for transformation.

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