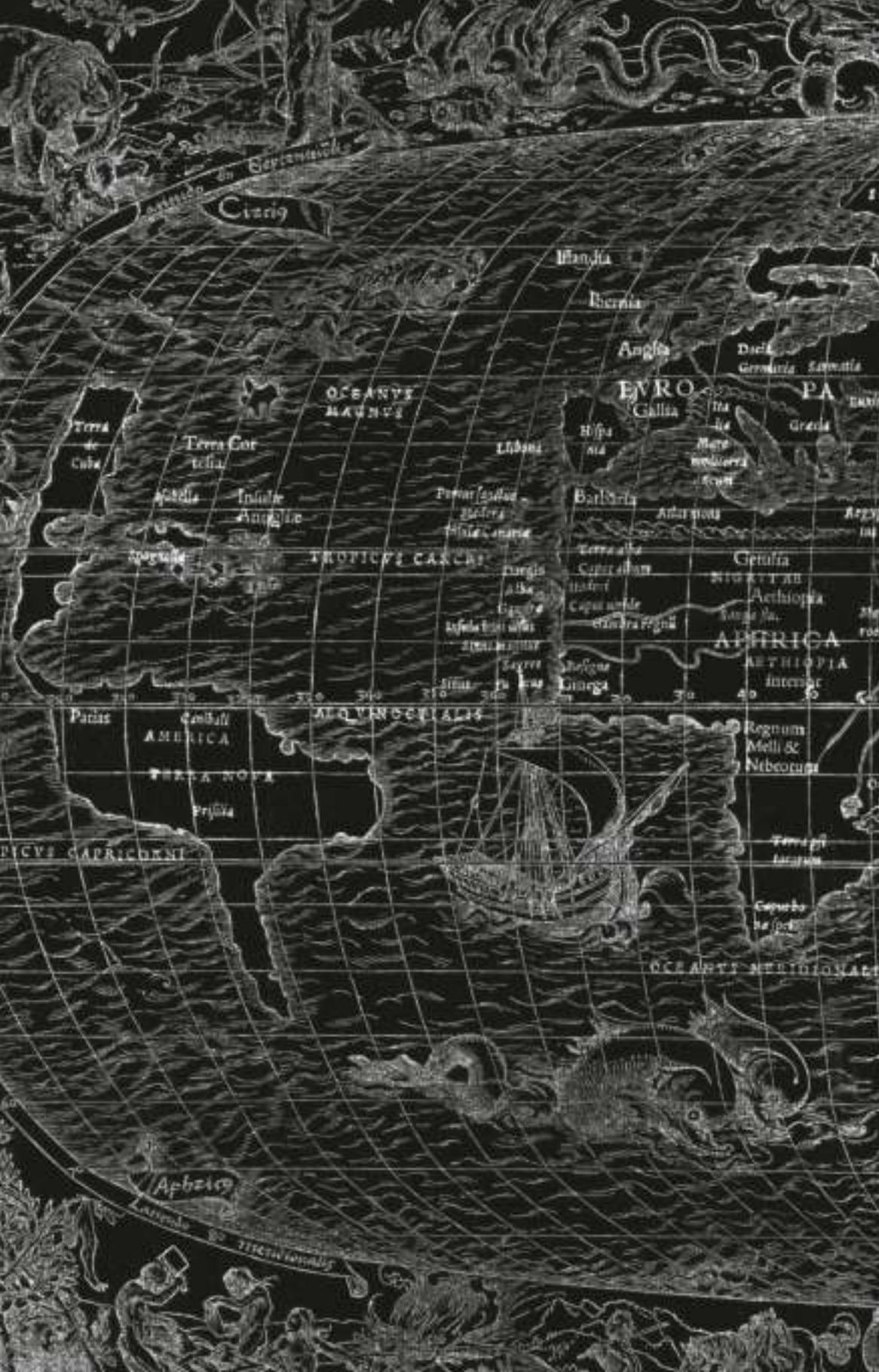


Circular Flow  
On the *Global Economy*  
of *Inequality*

Reader





# Circular Flow *On the Global Economy of Inequality*

## Reader

Realized with the financial support of:

Stiftung für das Kunstmuseum Basel

Fonds für künstlerische Aktivitäten  
im Museum für Gegenwartskunst der  
Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung und der  
Christoph Merian Stiftung

kunstmuseum basel

5-13	67-90	139-157	185-195
On the Global Economy of Inequality	Duty-Free Art <i>Hito Steyerl</i>	Amazon Worker Cage <i>Simon Denny</i>	Europium <i>Lisa Rave</i>
<i>Søren Grammel</i>	93-115		197-211
15-24	Working Proposal: 6 Issues about United Food Company	159-171	The Question of the Economy
Inside Versus Outside	Inconstancy of Memories, Rainy Seasons and Post-Development	The Anarchist Banker <i>Jan Peter Hammer</i>	<i>Felwine Sarr</i>
<i>Stephan Lessenich</i>	121-131	175-183	—
27-59	Petrocosmos <i>Bureau d'Études</i>	Money and Zero: Quantification and Visualization of the Invisible in Early Modern Cultural Techniques <i>Sybille Krämer</i>	60-65, 116-119, 132-137, 172-173 Poems by Alice Creischer
The Economy <i>Colin Crouch</i>			

5-13

On the Global  
Economy of  
Inequality

*Søren Grammel*

“To the extent that transnational capital is no longer centered in a single metropol, as industrial capital in the 1840s was [...], there is no longer ‘a city’ at the center of the system, but rather a fluctuating web of connections between metropolitan regions and exploitable peripheries.”

Allan Sekula  
*Fish Story* (1995)

The ever-widening gulf between rich and poor, the unequal distribution of wealth now affecting even the middle ground of most European societies, precarious work, rising competitive pressure coupled with shrinking incomes and pensions, privatization and economization of formerly public services, the threats of climate change and environmental pollution, growing numbers of regional wars and war-like distributional conflicts around the world, the return of nationalism and religious fanaticism: faced with all these problems, which divide societies and force millions to become migrants, more and more people, even in the mainstream of society, are now asking questions about the social, ecological, and political consequences of the complex process generally referred to as “globalization.”

*Circular Flow* brings together contributions that reflect on economic principles in the light of the fields of conflict listed above. The project calls into question neither the idea nor the reality of an increasingly networked world, arguing instead for a strengthening of those within society who call for a socially just and ecological shaping of the process. Although this discussion centers on critiques of the capitalist system that has turned the world into a commodity, globalization means far more than just international flows of goods and capital, extending to the mobility of people, ideas, and culture.

On the one hand, the project aims to reflect on the current postcolonial era of globalization, doing so in connection with its colonial past and against the backdrop of the imperial dynamic developed by Europe between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. This makes it very clear that globalization is not a new phenomenon. From a European viewpoint, it began in the early sixteenth century with Portugal’s creation of the Estado da Índia and the Spanish-Portuguese race

to the so-called Spice Islands, leading to the first circumnavigation of the globe by Ferdinand Magellan (1519-1522). Antonio Pigafetta's first-hand account, *The First Voyage Around The World*, contains descriptions of many activities that still characterize globalization today: the sale, purchase, and transport of goods around the world; the forging of far-reaching alliances that guarantee their members duty-free trade and an easing of other trade barriers; the founding of trading posts, economic zones, and global communications systems; the exporting of production far from the client's actual location; voluntary and involuntary migration of workers; cultural transfer. Back then, there were already winners and losers, trade wars and "real" wars, oppressed and oppressors. The latter impose their interests on all those who do not want to participate in the system.

On the other hand, the project's main focus is on the present and thus on the incredible acceleration of globalization since the end of the twentieth century. It is just three decades since the socialist system began to crumble in Central and Eastern Europe, after which more than 25 states broke with the only existing alternative to capitalism. The much-cited "end of history" was declared and the rules and relations of the global economy were remade. In the first four years of the 1990s alone, this saw the creation of Mercosur (1991), the revamped European Community (1992), NAFTA (1994), further development of ASEAN, and the founding of the World Trade Organization (1994). The dismantling of trade barriers was advanced worldwide: international competitiveness became a mantra for businesses, states, and whole trading blocs, dictating the conditions of work and production everywhere and for everyone. China stuck with communism—not to empower the people, however, but to control the masses. Like other Far Eastern

countries, China, with its lack of workers rights and environmental regulations, initially developed into a low-wage Mecca, even joining the WTO in 2001. The basic characteristics of the economic architecture of globalization since 1989 are described in this reader by Colin Crouch (p. 27-59). The dismantling of further trade barriers and the ongoing deregulation of the banking sector, which began in the 1980s, created the preconditions for today's overheated global economy.

The yields of accelerated economic growth remain asymmetrically distributed: although decreasing on a global scale, inequality is still growing when broken down by country. Those individuals with the greatest wealth are becoming more evenly spread across the globe, but this has not closed the gap between rich and poor. Studies deliver different results depending on the method applied, but an average value shows that in the early 2010s, 1 percent of the world's population owned roughly 48 percent of global assets. According to the Credit Suisse *Global Wealth Report*, in 2018 the richest 10 percent of the world's adult population owned 85 percent of global assets, while the poorest 64 percent collectively owned just 2 percent. In this context, Stephan Lessenich's essay (p. 15-24) addresses the question of whether inequality is in fact not an unwanted side-effect but the main principle now underpinning the global economy, so that the basis of "our" prosperity is arguably the misery of the "others." Because without abject poverty there would be no 72-hour weeks for forty euros a month in Asia's textile factories, and no unpaid child labor in Africa's mines; people would not be wandering over mountains of trash salvaging electronic waste from the West with their bare hands or selling their own bodies in brothels. On the contrary, if the world was not geared to the economy of inequality

as it is today, then the countries of the Third World would some day be able to use their raw material resources to produce modern products, instead of ceding these raw materials to western companies at cutthroat prices, as analyzed by Felwine Sarr in his essay (p. 197-211). Just imagine. That could mean a stemming of the brain drain from poor countries to industrialized states. It could also stem the counter-flow that floods the markets of Third-World nations with western waste and cheap products that deprive local producers of their livelihoods. And if development aid were to become obsolete, then development aid deals could no longer be tied to trade deals that were previously synchronized with the interests of donor countries and global businesses. Put briefly: other people's poverty is what actually guarantees the functioning of our economy.

Against this backdrop, complex interweavings of business, politics, and transnational organizations like think-tanks, financial companies, regulatory authorities, and intelligence services are an important topic in *Circular Flow*, dealt with in the texts by Bureau d'Études (p. 121-131), Lisa Rave (p. 185-195), and Andreas Siekmann (p. 93-115). Spread through the publication, the poems of Alice Creischer address human rights violations by major corporations that are usually granted little media attention.

In addition, the 1990s saw the creation of countless "synthetic" financial products which, unlike conventional products, were no longer required to have a real basis, allowing them to be entirely disconnected from reality. As a result, between 1993 and 1998 the face value of financial derivatives traded off-exchange globally rose from 84,750,000 billion to 509,970,000 billion USD, a fourfold increase in just five years (source: BIS Annual Report 1998/1999 according to OECD 2000). It is also interesting

that most of the stock market rules and standardized contracts introduced following abuses in the 1850s were removed. The revolution in information technology and the resulting introduction of increasingly cheap and powerful workplace systems (replacing expensive mainframe computers) and the arrival of mathematicians and physicists in global finance made it possible, for the first time, to replace and overrun previous statistical methods based on real experience with complicated and supposedly useful financial formulas (like the Black-Scholes model). Of course, financial markets and their products have been of great interest since the trade in goods began. But such products, like agricultural "futures", fulfilled a meaningful purpose: the farmer sold his harvest in advance for a fixed price to a "speculator," thus ensuring a steady income regardless of weather and crop developments. Insurance policies work in a similar way, by taking on a risk (such as house fires): the house owner pays a premium for this insurance (policy or "derivative" referring to an underlying asset), renewing the policy the following year in spite of a total loss of the premium, even if the house in question (the underlying asset) did not burn down. With suitable mathematical and statistical methods, and by insuring many individuals, the insurer (the "speculator") secures his profit. Financial derivatives function in essentially the same way. One market player (the "farmer") pays a premium (while relinquishing the possibility of a larger profit) and "insures" himself against loss. The other market player ("insurer" or "speculator") makes money by receiving the premium (the possibility of profit) and accepts the risk in return (bad weather, poor harvest, etc.). This works as long as the overall development remains within the bounds of prior expectations. Over centuries, the number and complexity of such instruments remained relatively stable as long as they were

based on real assets (“irrational” speculation purely for profit has of course always existed, as in the Dutch tulip mania of the mid-sixteenth century). Only from the early 1990s, for the above-mentioned reasons, did large numbers of new, increasingly complex financial instruments emerge, which (together with various other relevant developments such as deregulation) then helped to fuel the resulting global financial crisis (from 2007). This forms the backdrop to two contributions in the reader that deal with the profit-oriented mentality of the neoliberal entrepreneur, a disruptive figure that was celebrated in the last third of the twentieth century and that continued to set the tone even after the global financial crisis: Simon Denny (p. 139-157) deals with the specific case of Amazon, while Jan Peter Hammer deconstructs the self-construction of the “anarchist banker” (p. 159-171).

Today, in the context of cultural, economic, and political developments, we look in astonishment at the art world, where the former margins have become new centers while our concept of the center has become a museum piece. Faced with the creation of huge duty-free depots outside the western world, a mushrooming of new biennials, and the construction of some forty spectacular new museums in just the last 25 years, especially in Asia and the Middle East (often in “post-democratic” systems with elevated demand for gentrification, art-washing, and city marketing), we are also bearing witness to the emergence of a new art order. But perhaps the international corporate neo-Rococo has already begun, initiated by the art industry, the superrich, and businesses for whom contemporary art serves as a channel in the same way as tax havens and networks of offshore companies. One can only hope not. Instead of merely interpreting the new global contemporary art as a mirror and lubricant for new power structures, we should recognize its

critical and post-colonial potential and liberate it from the servile function mentioned above, as also suggested by Hito Steyerl’s essay: *duty-free* not in the customs-related sense, but in the sense of having no obligations (p. 67-90).

This reader is part of the exhibition of the same name at Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart. Rather than an exhibition catalogue, it is an anthology of texts in its own right. The book can be read in connection with the exhibition, but also independently of it.

15-24

# Inside Versus Outside

*Stephan Lessenich*

Stephan Lessenich: professor of comparative social and cultural analysis at Jena University (2004-2014). Since 2014: professor of social developments and structures at Munich University. 2013-2017: director of the German Society for Sociology (DGS). Guest professor and lecturer in Antwerp, Fribourg, St. Gallen, and Zurich. Latest publications: *Living Well at Others' Expense. The Hidden Costs of Western Prosperity* (Polity 2019), *Grenzen der Demokratie. Teilhabe als Verteilungsproblem* (Reclam 2019).

“What appears as a structural problem of really existing democracies can be viewed in sociological terms as an expression of the state of modern society as a *world society*: geared toward openness economically, on a political level it is characterized by closure—a difference with far-reaching consequences. Because whereas the movement of and trade in goods, services, and financial products enjoys structural openness, an openness constantly maintained by pressure from the logic of capital, the form of political community is based on closure, a closure constantly reasserted and actualized by the logic of the nation-state.”

“The boat is full.” This is the rallying cry of the privileged that is always heard when fellow citizens struggling for their share get all too loud with their cries for equality. First and foremost, however, it is the collective battle cry heard from all sides that tries to deflect and nip in the bud such demands from individuals or groups who are *not* acknowledged as fellow citizens. When such “perfect strangers”—those who enter the hallowed halls of the state in question from a territorial outside—presume to want to take part in the local democratic community, then the boundaries of that democracy quickly become overwhelmingly clear. It is then that those wanting to take part are made to realize they are not welcome in the house of democracy that is allegedly open “for all.” And this unambiguous message is delivered to the unwelcome guests not just from “above” or “below,” but in surprising social harmony by a national “we” that lacks all humor when it comes to the question of opening the space of entitlement.

In addition to the vertical and horizontal axes of social inequality, a third *transversal* axis comes into play in the modern democratic conflict, one that runs crosswise to class structures *and* to constellations of competition. Deeply divided by multiple struggles along lines of class and status, society is united as a *national society* in fending off third, fourth, or other parties, preventing them from joining in the national class and status struggles so as not to disrupt societal structures that are well-ordered for all their antagonism. This represents an additional line of division and tension that in theory simplifies the democratic border regime, yet in practice leads to further complications. It is a line between citizens and non-citizens, between native and foreign, between the civilized and the pariah, designed to keep

out those who belong to no caste, who do not belong at all, who are to be entirely excluded from social life.

As questionable as the sociological term “exclusion” may be when used to describe phenomena of exclusion within society—the unemployed from the job market, housewives from the pension system, working-class children from tertiary education—it is very much valid and appropriate in this case: the citizens of a democratic state are unified in a *practice of exclusion* of all those who do not belong to that particular state and who therefore should not partake of the sphere of civic rights. For “German” citizens, for example, having grown up with the reality of the political differentiation of global society into nation states, this may seem banal, self-evident, and without alternative: Why and how could it be any different?

And yet, precisely this fact is of fundamental importance for any analysis of modern democracy, its limits, and their possible expansion. For here, talk of the “boundaries” of democracy ceases to be merely metaphoric: instead—in a material, physical sense—it is about defining the boundaries of a national sphere of citizenship rights. It is about drawing borders that protect the inside from the outside, sealing them as tightly as possible, with barriers and police controls, coastguard patrols, and night vision devices (in the current race between western democracies to outdo each other in this regard, Viktor Orbán is probably still the frontrunner after his claim in the summer of 2016 to have created an “airtight seal” along Hungary’s border with Serbia). It is about a “fortified democracy” that puts a stop to any truly *transboundary* claims to share its inner space of democratic rights.<sup>1</sup>

The practice of exclusion by nation states must therefore be seen as a distinctive form of

<sup>1</sup>  
See Joseph H. Carens, “Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders,” in *The Review of Politics* 49:2 (1987), 251-273.

social closure; as an actual *closing off* of the sphere of rights that is especially effective due to being militarily reinforced; as a physical exclusion from any opportunity to participate in competition for property and status within society. Those excluded from citizenship rights not only do not *have* an address on the territory of the state in question—or at best a temporary one, something every German tourist realizes when asked for one on arriving for a few days in, for instance, the USA (most then give the address of their hotel). First and foremost, the non-citizens *are* definitely—and by definition—not an address for the respective democratic state, not an addressee of civic rights: if they can provide no temporary address, no reason to stay, no proof of sufficient cash funds (which should also not be too much), then the coldhearted song they hear at the border (everyone knows the tune) is *return to sender, address unknown*.

When stripped down to the basics, this highlights a simple but momentous fact: citizen status is both an agent of inclusion in spheres of democratic rights and an instrument of exclusion from such spheres. In Thomas Marshall’s classic theory, citizenship is discussed primarily (though not solely) as a category of social inclusion; when looked at analytically, however, it is above all a category of social exclusion—the basic medium for the exclusion of people from the domain of the nation within which societal benefits and functions apply. And not only in logical terms, but also historically, it can be said that the exclusion of all people not recognized as part of national communities of rights was both the *prerequisite* and the *result* of the “unique” history of inclusion in western and subsequently also non-western democracies.

What appears as a structural problem of really existing democracies can be viewed in sociological terms as an expression of the state of

modern society as a *world society*: geared toward openness economically, on a political level it is characterized by closure—a difference with far-reaching consequences. Because whereas the movement of and trade in goods, services, and financial products enjoys structural openness, an openness constantly maintained by pressure from the logic of capital, the form of political community is based on closure, a closure constantly reasserted and actualized by the logic of the nation-state.

This leads to a situation in which the cross-border movement of and “trade in” people is subject to far tighter regulations than that of other production factors: the modern trend towards globalized markets for goods and capital stands in opposition to the (no less modern) seclusion of the nationalized labor market. That is not to say that capital lacks a (globalized) structural interest in what the EU calls the “free movement for workers.” But this economic interest in opening (motivated by accumulation) is counteracted and broken in democratic societies by the political interest in closure (motivated by legitimation): since those dependent on wages are already subject to competitive pressures, democratic political actors deem it more fitting to respond to calls from employers for increased openness with deregulation of the labor market than with more liberal migration policies.

In all democratic capitalist societies, this constellation of inner conflict has resulted in a highly selective immigration regime in which the recruitment of qualified workers is legally possible and socially acceptable, while any other form of labor migration is prevented or declared an exception. This regulatory split, and with it the *double standard* of granting and denying opportunities for access and participation, culminates in the steady growth of options for

members of the global elite to buy citizenship of “attractive” political communities—while at the same time, the radicalness with which asylum seekers and refugees are excluded from even the most basic democratic rights seemingly knows no limits, not even those of political fantasy (Germany’s “Orderly Return Law” of 2019 must be seen not only as a low point in democratic politics, but also as a new pinnacle of Orwellian newspeak).

This further complicates what we have been referring to as the boundaries of democracy. Besides the shaping of modern democracy by conflicts of class and status, it is necessary to consider those conflicts that stem from its constitution as a nation state. Besides class, a category of inequality that has always been part of sociological analyses, and the categories of *gender*, *race*, and *age* that have received increased attention in recent decades, equal importance must therefore be accorded to another dimension of inequality. The category in question is that of *place*, the great unknown of conventional studies of social structure.

In the resulting search for the “*place*” of *democracy*, Raymond Murphy’s contributions on closure are valuable, helping to identify a class division other than that of capital and labor—a social opposition within the wage-dependent class that goes beyond internal rivalries over status and distinction: the class opposition that “separat[es] the working class of advanced capitalist countries from the poor of the Third World.”<sup>2</sup>

Murphy traces this separation back to the exclusive nature of citizenship, which he declares to be the second pillar (besides private property) of the modern, global system of inequality. The dispossessed in the nation states of the global north—the world of the “rich democracies”—are excluded from those posi-

2  
Raymond Murphy, “The Structure of Closure: A Critique and Development of the Theories of Weber, Collins, and Parkin,” in *The British Journal of Sociology* 35 (1984), 547–567, here 559.

tions of power reserved only for those who hold property. However, the dispossessed from the other part of the world—the global south—are excluded *additionally* from the positions of participation that are open to their “class comrades” who happen to belong to the sphere of citizenship rights in their respective home countries. “Citizenship laws operate as collectivist criteria of exclusion differentiating two types of human being according to geographical location of birth, one with rights and the other excluded from such rights.”<sup>3</sup>

From this perspective, talk of life as a “lottery,” with all the ups and downs of fate, takes on an entirely new, existential meaning. Viewed globally, inequality of opportunity is primarily a matter of whether one draws a winning lot in the “birthright lottery”<sup>4</sup> by being born into a rich nation state, or whether one draws a dud by coming into the world in a country that does not offer its citizens much in the way of rights. *Right or wrong—your country*: The lucky ones are born in Germany, or in some other place in Europe, while the unlucky ones are born in Ivory Coast, or Guatemala, or Bangladesh. And for the most part that’s it. The respective plus or minus in terms of life chances has been succinctly put into numbers by American economist Branko Milanović: 80 percent of global inequality (measured in terms of income) can be traced back to inequality of life conditions between societies, with just 20 percent stemming from income inequality within societies: “most of global income differences today depend on location.”<sup>5</sup> This, he argues, is also why European and North American societies have become such fortresses against the pressure of global migration—thereby also somehow becoming bastions of democracy, though admittedly only for their own citizens.

In this light, it seems far from unreasonable to speak of *class relationships in global*

3  
Ibid.

4  
See Ayelet Shachar, *The Birthright Lottery. Citizenship and Global Inequality* (Cambridge 2009).

5  
Branko Milanović, “Global Inequality: From Class to Location, from Proletarians to Migrants,” in *Global Policy* 3 (2012), 125–134, here 128.

society with “those down below” facing “those up above”: the citizens of the poor nations versus those of the rich ones, the entire population of Mozambique, Tanzania, Mali, or Uganda as the “citizenship underclass”<sup>6</sup> versus the whole of Danish society, for instance, all of whose citizens—from the highest to the lowest income—belong to the global upper class.<sup>7</sup>

However, the sociological viability of the concept of exclusion actually might be questioned even here. For it is true that citizens of many of the world’s states are excluded, on account of their citizenship, from possibilities of participation that seem natural to citizens of other nations. And yet, precisely these second- or even third-class citizens, who enjoy fewer rights or even almost no rights at all, are an inseparable part of the global system of citizenship that affords others—the citizens of rich nations—exclusive rights of democratic participation.

Rather than being a typical sociological exercise in hairsplitting, this brings into play the category of the “subaltern” that can help us to gain a clearer picture of the arena of democratic conflict between “inside” and “outside.” In the sense of the word’s Italian origins, the subaltern are subordinate, subservient, subjected. With its connotations of being underneath, the “sub” prefix fits the concept of the “global south,” which is not so much a territorial as a relational locator of those regions of the world that depend on the powerful nations of the industrial capitalist “north.” At the same time, the word “subaltern” has openly negative, pejorative connotations—of being not only subjected but submissive, not only subordinate but servile, of being obedient and obliging people.

The term’s strength lies precisely in this double meaning. For as US-based Indian literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak<sup>8</sup> has impres-

6  
Murphy, “The Structure of Closure,” 559.

7  
See Milanović, “Global Inequality,” 128.

sively shown, the subaltern are not only left behind in a material sense, but are also devalued symbolically: the political and economic domination of the “north” goes hand in hand with a hegemonic discourse about the “south” in which subjugation and degradation merge—and the subaltern remain unheard, misunderstood, voiceless.

On the subject of voicelessness, and without being able to go into detail here, anyone who speaks about the boundaries of democracy cannot remain silent about the global elite’s racist, neo-colonial view of the subaltern. Democracy has always been a matter of exclusion—within western societies themselves, but particularly with regard to those societies below them in the global capitalist pecking order which they ruled over as colonies or brought under their control by other means. “Citizens All? Citizens Some!”<sup>9</sup> This formulation of exclusionary democratic mores has applied—and to a lesser extent still applies—in countries all over the world. In the countries that rule the world, however, it applies in particular “outwardly”—doing so today perhaps more than ever before.

## 8

See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Cary Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 24–28.

## 9

See Immanuel Wallerstein, “Citizens All? Citizens Some! The Making of the Citizen,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45 (2003), 650–679.

27-59

The Economy

*Colin Crouch*

Colin Crouch: professor emeritus of governance and public management at the University of Warwick (UK) and visiting fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne. Has written about problems currently faced by democracy and various aspects of business sociology, always from a comparative European viewpoint. Recent publications (all Polity Press): *The Globalization Backlash* (2019), *Will the Gig Economy Prevail?* (2019), *The Knowledge Corrupters* (2015).

“Had globalization not taken place—had we [...] remained in national fortress economies, with carefully monitored trade and tariff walls, strict limits on foreign travel and even stricter ones on immigration—most of the world would today be considerably poorer [...]. On the other hand, there have been casualties from globalization: some world regions (mainly most of Africa) have been left out, and we have all been presented with general political, cultural, and social challenges, the full extent of which we still have not experienced.”

It is difficult to draw up a balance sheet of gains and losses from globalization. Many variables need to enter the calculations, while different individuals vary in their estimation of the relative importance of, say, having fresh air to breathe and having the money to buy some decent clothes and furniture. Nevertheless, several observers have tried to make some overall assessments, ranging from official international bodies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>1</sup> to individual economists, including François Bourguignon,<sup>2</sup> Branco Milanovic,<sup>3</sup> Dani Rodrik,<sup>4</sup> and Joseph Stiglitz.<sup>5</sup> It is notable that these economists have in the past been senior staff members of the IMF or World Bank. While these organizations have themselves come to see negative aspects of globalization since the financial crisis of 2008, Rodrik and Stiglitz were sounding warnings at an earlier point. Readers wanting a fully detailed account should read their books. Here we can give just an overview, starting with a look at how globalization has developed, going on to assess its gains and losses, and finally considering its implications for economic sovereignty.

The waves of globalization  
We can identify four waves of modern economic globalization.

*The first wave: European imperialism*  
First came the extension of world trade in the late nineteenth century—a globalization episode often forgotten in recent accounts.<sup>6</sup> This was highly controlled by the western European empires—of Great Britain in particular, but also of France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, and others. Being imperial, it was military as well as commercial, and eventually included “the scramble for Africa,” which in turn became one of the causes of the First World War.

<sup>1</sup> IMF, *Globalization: Threat or Opportunity?* (Washington, DC: IMF, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> François Bourguignon, *La mondialisation de l'inégalité* (Paris: Seuil, 2012). Translated into English as *The Globalization of Inequality* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Branco Milanovic, *Global Inequality: a New Approach for the Age of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Dani Rodrik, *Has Globalization Gone Too Far?* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 1997); *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy* (New York: Norton, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Readers wanting to learn more should consult John Frieden, *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Norton, 2007).

However, the growth of industrial production in the period made possible a general increase in trade among many nations, including those, like the USA, not involved in the construction of overseas empires. There is no space here to describe the patterns and forms of governance involved, but the absence of any regulatory regime apart from those imposed by dominant countries was notable. In 1859, Japan was forced to accept trade with the USA under the threat of military invasion if it refused. Twice in the nineteenth century the UK used military action to persuade China to buy opium from British suppliers. Britain also controlled closely which goods it would allow its colonies to produce, to prevent competition with its own industries. Britain's self-proclaimed commitment to "free" trade can be questioned. But international trade, which in past centuries was largely limited to exotic and expensive products, now began to involve those for ordinary working people, improving the lives of many, whether as consumers of cheap imported goods or as the producers of increased quantities of exports.

The years between the two world wars saw a major retreat from international trade, a rise of protectionism, the defeat of attempts through the League of Nations at broad international collaboration, and the rise of militarized, violent nationalism, particularly for Nazi Germany and its Italian and Japanese allies. These finally became major causes of the Second World War.

*The second wave: US-dominated tariff reduction and European integration*

Nationalism and insistence on uncompromising national sovereignty having become associated with Nazism and fascism, after the Second World War politicians of most kinds in the western world moved firmly away from their slogans and passions, and set about constructing an architect-

ture of international institutions. International trade recovered, but was no longer based on the European colonial empires. These were gradually disintegrating, being replaced by the global dominance of the USA. Thus began a second wave of globalization. The initial framework for a new system of rules for international economic relations was established at a key conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944, though the USSR and its allies subsequently departed from the regime. The division of most of the world into the blocs of the Cold War limited the extent of the new system, as that dominated by the Soviet Union, and also that of China, remained outside the international market economy. But in the US-dominated part of the world, trade barriers were gradually relaxed in successive rounds of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). There were no reasons for inhabitants of western countries to see the growth of international governance of trade as a challenge to their national "sovereignty;" their interests dominated the whole process, and their governments' control over movements of capital and labor were left untouched. The exception of capital movements was important, as it enabled governments to avoid threats of capital flight if they constructed strongly redistributive taxation systems or strong demand management policies.

Among the countries that in 1957 formed the European Economic Community (EEC, later the EU), cross-national economic integration went further. Although the architects of European unity seriously envisaged, in the words of the Treaty of Rome, "an ever closer union" among member states, priority was given to trade. Individual countries were left to develop their own welfare states. These were seen as important to regaining legitimacy for governments in countries that had been fascist, or defeated and occupied during the war. On the other hand, social policy aims were never

far from the European project: the EEC's origins lay in the Common Agricultural Policy and the European Coal and Steel Community, both designed to rescue and stabilize industries likely to be sources of social unrest if nothing was done to support them.

Meanwhile, the most fundamental symbol of national sovereignty—the power to wage war autonomously—had in reality been fundamentally compromised by the arrival of nuclear weapons, but this was not experienced as a problem except by a few who held nostalgically to old visions of empire. The European powers gradually abandoned their futile wars to prevent colonial independence, and, albeit beneath the terrifying anxiety of possible nuclear war, many parts of the world, and Europe in particular, became more peaceful than for many years.

There was one exception to the ease with which this limited globalization was accepted: growing immigration into several western economies brought episodes of violence, and more widespread discrimination and social rejection of immigrants. This happened both in countries where immigrants came mainly from former colonies, as in the UK, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and in those to which they came as *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers), who, it was assumed, would go home after a period of years: Austria, Germany, Switzerland. The USA continued its far longer tradition of accepting immigration from across the world—with a similarly familiar story of accompanying ethnic conflict and discrimination. Political and economic elites often responded to anti-immigrant movements by imposing restrictions on the scale of future immigration, but they resisted temptations to increase their own support by exacerbating tensions. They still remembered what the encouragement of racial antagonism had caused in Germany in the 1930s. Racist and xenophobic organizations and poli-

ticians themselves were marginalized, and governments and civil society gradually developed ways of teaching native populations to accept the new people, whose labor was needed by economies in full expansion. Immigrant cultures, especially in food and music, enriched and were absorbed into host societies. Immigrants and natives began to form friendships and to intermarry.

*The third wave: neoliberal deregulation*

The expansion of world trade and agreements to reduce tariffs and other barriers moved to a new level during the 1980s in what we can see as a third wave of globalization, as it had different roots from the initial post-1945 desire to transcend nationalism. This was the general push for both domestic and international deregulation, as neoliberal economic ideas achieved dominance under the leadership of the USA and the UK. For neoliberals, the most important institution in governing human affairs is the market. There is a role for law in sustaining the property rights and trading obligations necessary for the market to function efficiently, but neoliberals are indifferent, even hostile, to ideas of nation. If markets are to be free and sovereign, there is no place for governments to defend a national economic interest against them; national and even transnational regulatory regimes are seen only as protectionism. The public power should be immune to popular pressures. This condition is found more easily at the international than the national level, as democratic politics is far livelier at the latter.

Under the impact of these two waves of globalization, mass production in steel, shipbuilding, and several metalworking and electronics industries in Europe and North America became uncompetitive in the face of lower-cost competition. There was growing unemployment in many old industrial areas in wealthy countries,

though within the EEC this was alleviated by structural funds to help regeneration. Those parts of the affected sectors that remained moved into specialized, high-value-added products, but employed far fewer people. Employment in services sectors, especially public services, grew at the same time. These, many of which needed to be delivered close to the customer or user, were less vulnerable to international competition. In general, growth of this new employment outweighed the losses of jobs in manufacturing and mining.

A further important element of this period of globalization was the beginning of a deregulation of financial movements. The main negative consequences of this were to follow during the fourth wave, when they were coupled with the relaxation of banking rules, generating the crisis of 2007-2008. The main consequence of the initial deregulation was to remove the safeguards of Bretton Woods over national control of capital movements, making it difficult for governments to pursue policies that conflicted with the interests of major capital holders. While countries remained free to opt out of the new system, to do so would cut off themselves and firms located in their jurisdictions from access to international funds, and encourage capital flight. However, for advanced economies (the issue is not so benign in developing countries), there is evidence that, provided governments manage their deficits effectively and constrain inflation, holders of global capital take little interest in the details of domestic policy; whether or not to have strong welfare states remains the choice of national electorates.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, institutions of cross-national economic governance providing more compliance with free trading norms—in exchange for lower tariffs and mutual acceptance of product standards—than was being achieved through GATT were erected at the level of specific world regions:

7

Layna Mosley, *Global Capital and National Governments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Elmar Rieger, Stephan Leibfried, *Grundlagen der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001).

for example, ASEAN in South-East Asia, Mercosur in South America, NAFTA in North America—but, most fully and successfully, the EEC.

*The fourth wave: the European Single Market, the collapse of communism and the rise of the Far East*

These processes were massively reinforced by various new developments in the 1990s, the combined impact of which has been so great that it amounts to a fourth wave of globalization.

- In 1995, the GATT was replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Countries in membership of the WTO can trade in goods with each other without high tariff walls, provided they abide by certain rules. These mainly concern undertaking not to use protectionism or state subsidies of industries. This has served as a major incentive to governments to limit state intervention in the economy and to shape their trade policies in conformity with WTO rules.
- With particular enthusiasm on the part of the UK, the EU began to construct the European Single Market (ESM), which established common standards for unrestrained trade across a variety of goods, services, and financial flows, and the free movement of labor, with a supranational court, the European Court of Justice (ECJ), to govern its implementation.
- At about the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Empire enabled Russia and the countries of central and eastern Europe to join the market economy, with those in central Europe eventually becoming full members of the EU—again with especially strong support from the UK.
- China, while formally maintaining its position as a state-socialist economy, also entered the market economy, joining the WTO in 2001 (Russia followed in 2012).
- The Multi-Fibre Arrangement, which had been

established in 1974 to protect the world's wealthy economies from cheap clothing and textile imports from developing countries, especially in Asia, expired in 2004. This put heavy pressure on mass-market clothing and textile production, especially in southern Europe.

- The USA and UK had started deregulating the global financial system in the 1980s. This spread to other parts of the world in the 1990s. It funded major expansions of economic activity, but at the same time encouraged the irresponsible financial practices that by 2008 brought much of the world to a massive financial crisis.

Globalization was now in full spate, and in many respects followed the classic expectations of economists that there would be mutual gains from an expansion of free trade. Low-valued-added activities declined in the rich countries, to be replaced by both higher-value-added ones and activities in services that could not easily be replaced by imports, such as health, education, restaurants, and retail trading. Firms in many poor countries, particularly China and the Indian subcontinent, began to dominate traditional manufacturing and mining activities, thereby increasing their national incomes. As a result, these countries developed a large middle class that could afford to buy expensive goods from Europe, Japan, and the USA. The expansion of international trade began to be a positive-sum game. This is often obscured by politicians and business people who talk in terms of a "global race," in which their countries must participate, with a strong sense that there must be winners and losers. They do this in order to encourage workers to accept limited wage rises and cuts in public spending in order to boost "competitiveness." They forget (or conceal) that

competitiveness can mean moving up-market to high-skilled, high-infrastructure activities, and not just keeping prices (and therefore wages and social costs) low. But another consequence was the financial crisis. This eventually contributed heavily to the wave of disillusion with the whole globalization process, and some modicum of realization among policy-makers that the deregulation of finance had gone too far and might threaten the globalization project itself. As Paul Mason, a British left-wing economics commentator, put it, "if we want to save globalization, we have to ditch neoliberalism."<sup>8</sup>

Globalization also brought increased migration, especially as multinational firms recruit their employees across the world. This process becomes cumulative, as certain regions acquire a reputation for a welcoming cosmopolitanism, leading them to attract more immigrants. Cities like London, Paris, New York, and several in California have become highly multilingual and multicultural. Even low-paid jobs in rich countries have been attractive to people living in poor countries. Entry from abroad into the labor market, unlike into those for capital and products, is usually tightly controlled by governments, but the EU long ago established the principle of free movement for citizens of its member states. Free movement became problematic after the admission of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), whose standard of living in the protectionist economies of the state-socialist period had fallen far behind that of the majority of western Europeans. This led to far greater numbers of migrants than had been envisaged when the principle of free movement had been established. Most western member states took measures to delay the extension of the free movement right for several years after countries were admitted to the Union, in the expectation that an improvement would take place in eastern

8

Paul Mason, "The global order is dying. But it's an illusion to think Britain can survive without the EU," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2016: [bit.ly/2VGFt61](http://bit.ly/2VGFt61)

economies, reducing immigration flows. The UK, Ireland, and Sweden did not take advantage of this possibility, and therefore experienced a large initial wave of immigration until the rest of western Europe opened its borders. For nearly all western European countries except the UK, immigration from CEE has ceased to be controversial, but considerable conflict has been aroused by a quite different phenomenon: waves of refugees and asylum seekers escaping from wars and other disasters in the Middle East and North Africa. Although not a direct consequence of the reduction of barriers to trade, this phenomenon has several links to globalization in general, and is certainly responsible for some of the opposition to it.

9  
bit.ly/2q5IUaC

#### *Gains and losses from globalization*

We must now put some flesh on these generalizations with some key examples, focusing mainly on the world's most populous country, China, on which much western anxiety over globalization has concentrated. (Unless otherwise stated, the following data are taken from the World Bank's most recent *World Development Indicators*.<sup>9</sup>) The overall wealth of the Chinese people has certainly increased. In 1990, gross national income per capita in purchasing power parities stood at \$US990 (in the USA, it was \$23,730). By 2016, it had become \$15,500 (the US equivalent was then \$58,030). In 1990, exports represented 14% of China's gross domestic product (GDP); by 2016, this had risen to 20% of the far larger economy (the comparable figures for the USA are 9% and 13%). But China also increased its imports from the rest of the world, from 11% to 17% of GDP (the USA's figure increased from the same 1990 level as China's to only 15%). China's advance has therefore involved not only exports, but also imports from the rest of the world. China's growing wealth has, however, been

increasingly unequally divided. The World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University (UNU-WIDER) has calculated Gini coefficient measures of inequality for most countries.<sup>10</sup> The China of the Communist Cultural Revolution was very poor and the regime brutal, but relatively egalitarian, with a Gini coefficient of around 0.30 (broadly similar to the Nordic and certain central European countries). With China's entry into the global economy, inequality rose steeply: by 2015, the Gini coefficient had increased to 0.55—more unequal than the USA at 0.42. However, poverty has also declined in China. Taking the World Bank's definition of extreme poverty as meaning workers earning less than \$US1.90 a day at 2013 values, in 1990, 60% of the Chinese population were living in poverty-stricken households; by 2016, that level had dropped to 1.9%. Chinese life expectancy at age 0 was 69 years in 1990; in 2016, it stood at 76—one year higher than US life expectancy had been in 1990. In 1990, 5.4% of Chinese children died before they had reached the age of 5 years; in 2016, it was 1.1% (the same as the USA in 1990). In 1990, only 37% of those of secondary school age were enrolled at school; by 2016, that figure had reached 94% (slightly higher than the USA in 1990, which had been 91%). These achievements came at a price, mainly in air pollution. In 1990, Chinese industrial, transport, heating and other activities generated 2.17 metric tons of carbon dioxide per inhabitant. By 2016, this had risen to 7.55 (the equivalent figures for the USA were 19.32 and 16.4).

The studies by Bourguignon and Milanovic cited above tackle what the latter terms the paradox of inequality: inequality has declined across the world as a whole, but increased within most countries. Although global real per-capita income increased between 1988 and 2012, the world's

10  
bit.ly/32ikb0w  
The Gini coefficient calculates the level of inequality of incomes in a country, where 1.00 represents a society in which all income is concentrated in the hands of one person, and 0.00 one with perfect income equality.

very poorest saw no improvement. The global middle (i.e., the 45th to 65th percentiles of the world's income distribution, mainly found in China and other industrializing countries) saw a major improvement in their living standards, but the 80th to 95th percentiles (broadly, the western middle class) experienced some decline. The richest 1% in the world, on the other hand, saw a massive improvement in their standards, and now account for 29% of all income and 46% of all wealth.

One of the main industries in which China and some other developing countries have had a particular impact on world trade is that of crude steel (others include low-value-added clothing and textiles, and light consumer goods). Steel has been particularly problematic following the recent slowdown in China's economic expansion. It is estimated that the country will need to shed over a million jobs in steelmaking over the next few years. Meanwhile, it has been accused by the EU, the USA and others of dumping steel at heavily subsidized prices. That kind of action is prohibited by the World Trade Organization, and cases are pending, but charges are not easy to prove, and the processes take time. In the meantime, there is panic about the effect of the alleged dumping on production in the advanced economies. Setting those issues temporarily aside, it is clear that China and India have had a major impact on global steel production in recent decades. [...]

#### *Employment and migration*

Looking beyond steel to the whole economy, there has been some decline in overall employment rates since the early 1990s, but these are not confined to the advanced countries and are very small. Data from the International Labor Organization (ILO) show the employment rate for the population aged 15 to 64 declining margin-

ally across high-income countries from 56.5% in 1991 to 56.2% in 2016.<sup>11</sup> The decline was concentrated on men (from 68.4% to 64.0%), the rate for women *growing* from 45.3% to 48.5%. Across the world as a whole, employment declined from 62.4% to 59.2%, and affected both genders. The decline in China was in fact considerably greater, from 75.4% to 67.3%, and again affected both men and women. Unfortunately, global data are available only for this 15-64 age range, which is becoming of decreasing use when so many people over 15 are in education. World Bank data show that, across the world, the proportion of children of secondary school age who were enrolled in school rose from 52.53% in 1991 to 76.42% in 2015. The figure for China rose from 39.63% to 94.29%; for India, from 37.29% to 73.97%. Wealthier countries were already close to 100% in 1991, but the numbers have continued to rise. Global enrolment in tertiary education has risen from 13.84% in 1991 to 35.69% in 2015; in China, from 2.93% to 43.39%; in India, from 6.09% to 26.88%. There has also been considerable expansion of higher education in the wealthy countries.

Since 2001, the EU has standardized an employment count for the age range 20-64 for its member states, which is a more realistic estimate of the size of the potential labor force.<sup>12</sup> Experience varies among countries, but, overall, employment in the EU rose from 66.9% in 2001 to 71.1% in 2016, despite the 2008 financial crisis and 2010 Euro crisis happening between the two dates cited. Although employment in most developed countries has thrived, this has often been at the cost of increasingly precarious employment conditions, as Guy Standing has described.<sup>13</sup> Young people are often able to find only temporary jobs, or have contracts that pay them only when an employer calls them into work (what in the UK are called "zero-hours contracts"), or which treat them

<sup>11</sup>  
bit.ly/2MfZbm2

<sup>12</sup>  
bit.ly/2pDEI7h

<sup>13</sup>  
Guy Standing, *Work after Globalization: Building Occupational Citizenship* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2009); *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

as self-employed. In a study of the US labor market, Arne Kalleberg<sup>14</sup> showed that, between the 1970s and the early years of the present century, there had been a major increase in temporary, self-employed, and low-paid jobs in the USA. He listed a number of factors behind this development. Globalization and immigration were included, but others were improvements in technology that had created a labor surplus, and deliberate political choice by successive US governments to deregulate labor standards and to fail to increase minimum wages. Crouch<sup>15</sup> calculated that, in 2012, in EU member states plus Norway, anything from 33% (Norway) to 71% (Greece) of workers were either without work, temporarily employed, or self-employed. While some self-employed workers are content to be such, including some very well-rewarded professional practitioners, a high number of self-employed usually indicates people either unable to find standard employment or being described as self-employed by those for whom they work in order to avoid various employer obligations. There is considerable debate over whether part-time workers should automatically be included among those in precarious or otherwise undesirable labor-market conditions, as many people work part-time by choice. There is even complaint that, in some countries, there are inadequate opportunities for part-time work, reducing women's labor-market participation in particular. Calculations have been made, for OECD member states, of the number of part-timers saying that they are working part-time only because they cannot find full-time employment.<sup>16</sup> If we add these to the existing statistics, we find that in 2012 the proportion of the population aged between 20 and 64 who were not in standard employment was above 70% in Greece, Italy, and Spain; above 60% in Ireland, Poland, and Portugal; above

14

Arne L. Kalleberg, *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs* (New York: Russell Sage, 2011).

15

Colin Crouch, *Governing Social Risks in Post-Crisis Europe* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2015).

16

OECD, 2018

50% in Belgium, Finland, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania, and Slovenia. Nowhere was it below 37%.

Another widely used measure of unsatisfactory labor market conditions, despite reasonably strong overall employment levels in most countries, is the number of young people not in education, employment, or training (known as NEETs). Of course, many young people are in employment, but in temporary or otherwise precarious and unsatisfactory positions; but the NEET statistic tells us about something even more desperate: young people simply lost to a future place in the economy. According to OECD statistics,<sup>17</sup> in 2016 the number of NEETs reached over 20% of young people aged between 15 and 29 in most of southern Europe (Greece, Italy, and Spain) and also in Mexico and Turkey; over 15% in France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, and Slovakia; and over 10% in Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Russia, Slovenia, the UK, and the USA.

Further signs of the burdens being placed on workers in the contemporary economy appear in the concerns being raised about work stress, as found in research by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EuroFound).<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to appraise whether there have been actual changes or just increased consciousness—though the fact that EuroFound identified more evidence of stress in poorer EU member countries than in wealthier ones with strong welfare states suggests that this is not a case of a “rich country problem.” People in many different kinds of work are reporting various combinations of physical and mental stress in their jobs, including difficulties in managing a balance between work and the rest of life.

All these developments reflect a change in the relationship between supply of and demand

17

OECD, 2017, [bit.ly/33utctUT](http://bit.ly/33utctUT)

18

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, undated, *Work-Related Stress*, [bit.ly/32f3Ni3](http://bit.ly/32f3Ni3)

for labor, though by no means all result from globalization. There would have been pressure to substitute machines for human workers as a result of technological opportunities. Nevertheless, globalization has certainly played a part in producing a worldwide labor surplus, which logically must find at least short- and medium-term expression in reduced work incomes and worse working conditions in already-industrialized countries. Globalization's role here takes two forms: changes in the occupational structure, and immigration.

First, the shift of much productive industry to newly industrializing countries means that in wealthy countries work has to be found mainly in services. For many people this means skilled work in more congenial conditions than in manufacturing. There has been a general improvement in education standards in wealthy countries, enabling many younger people to move into these more rewarding, up-market jobs. However, for low-skilled workers, the situation is different. As the German political scientist Fritz Scharpf demonstrated back in 1991, production industries improved the productivity of such workers by putting technology at their disposal and enabling them to enjoy good wages and job security.<sup>19</sup> While there is technological support for workers in some services sectors, and this has increased considerably with information technology, it is less significant than in manufacturing. For some other low-skilled workers, there used to be employment in public services—jobs that did not pay much but which offered considerable security. That has declined as conditions in public employment have become tougher as a result of reductions in government spending. This has been a consequence partly of neoliberal ideology, partly of declining tax revenues consequent on reductions in taxes on corporations and the global rich. These reductions are in turn partly

19

Fritz Scharpf, *Crisis and Choice in European Social Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

a consequence of competition among governments to attract transnational corporations and wealthy individuals by offering them low taxes. This is an aspect of globalization. Albeit indirectly, therefore, globalization is partly responsible for the decline in good jobs. For a time at the end of the last century, it seemed that these changes would result in mass unemployment. Eventually, however, there occurred a growth in services jobs for low-skilled and moderately skilled people, who have had to compensate for their poor skills by accepting precariousness and insecurity.

Second, globalization is responsible for much of the migration that has taken place in recent years, whether this happens through freedom-of-movement provisions such as those in the EU, corporate recruitment plans, governments encouraging immigration to resolve labor shortages and improve a country's demographic profile, or the illegal immigration that inevitably takes place when there are large disparities between income levels in different countries and mass transport is reasonably available. It is often argued that immigrants reduce wages, since it seems clear from elementary economic theory that an increase in the supply of labor without a concomitant increase in its demand will lead to a reduction in its price. Immigration is here just one of a number of potential sudden increases in labor supply. Others include the major increase in female employment that has taken place, and internal migration from depressed to flourishing cities and regions. In all such cases, it might seem rational to seek to boost wages by restricting access to the labor market (as was often done by early trade union movements). But the evidence is against these expectations. In the 1980s and 1990s, and especially after unification, Germany tried to restrict labor supply by not reducing barriers to women's entry into

the labor force. In contrast, the Scandinavian countries and the UK took steps to make it easier for mothers to work. The German labor market stagnated, but these of Denmark, Sweden, and the UK flourished. Eventually, Germany changed its approach.

The reason for the paradoxical result is that the simple model of an increase in labor supply tells only part of the story. An increase in the supply of working people means an increase in the number of consumers, and therefore an increase in demand. The impact of this varies considerably across sectors. Where there is already a strong supply of local labor and rather inelastic demand, the short-term impact of immigration is likely to lead to a reduction in wages, but there are other scenarios. For example, in seasonal agriculture (a major sector for immigrant labor), there are often shortages of local workers, if only because it is difficult for people living within a wealthy society to get by on seasonal wages. It is easier for an immigrant from a poor country, who can go home during the off-seasons, living in a cheaper economy on savings from the income received. These workers have no negative impact on local wages in the country to which they come, but their spending in the local economy may boost the wages of others there; they also contribute tax payments to the national economy. The fact that they are willing to work in a seasonal pattern and for wages unacceptable to people in that economy keeps the prices of fruit and vegetables low, raising the value of the wages of others. Were the immigrants to be prevented from coming, the sector would probably move to another country, the first country losing the consumer spending and tax payments of the immigrants it has rejected.

In other sectors, immigrants perform highly or moderately skilled tasks where there are shortages of local labor, either because there

has been inadequate training or because the work is unattractive. This is the case with many activities in the hospitality, health, and care sectors. If immigrants were not available, employers might have to raise wages in order to recruit local staff. However, consumer demand (or, in the case of public services, government willingness to fund) may be inadequate to raise wages. In that case, the result of a labor shortage is simply a reduction in supply of the service concerned. Many restaurants and care centers would close if immigrants were not available to work in them. Further, although, if the supply of suitable local labor is insufficient and cannot easily be increased, the result of employers outbidding each other to recruit from a small pool will certainly increase wages in the sector concerned, there will be an increase in prices for everyone else. Under conditions of tight labor supply, one person's wage increase is another's price increase. The pursuit of generally higher incomes through the enforcement of labor scarcity is a self-defeating project.

It is true that, in some cases, labor supply could be increased by improving training, and that the availability of already-skilled immigrants might enable employers to avoid investing in training. This will be effective mainly in medium-skilled sectors, where skills can be imparted quickly enough to address current shortages. For more highly skilled activities, where training lasting several years is needed, the incentives do not work. A current crisis in recruiting hospital nurses cannot be met by launching a new training program. Incentives to provide training for such occupations has to come from outside current market pressures, which is why so much training of this kind is either provided by public policy or becomes an unresolved problem leading to permanently reduced activity in the sectors concerned. Immigrants

can rarely be “blamed” for employers’ and governments’ failure to train.

If it were really the case that reducing the supply of labor was a positive move, then we should find that towns and regions experiencing sudden population loss should have the most vibrant local economies. In reality, we find the opposite. Declining labor means declining consumption, therefore a decline in demand, therefore lower wages, therefore more population loss as people emigrate, in a continuing spiral. Immigration is just part of the general issue of free trade in free markets: free economic activity is a positive-sum game, but it does throw up problems, difficult moments when the speed and size of change create insecurity in people’s lives. These problems must be addressed by specific policies, not by overall rejection of the free trade model. In the case of immigration, threats to wage levels (if they exist) can be met through minimum wage policies. Inadequacies in training can be met through public training policies. The free-movement rules of the EU are a good example of this approach: there is free movement, but it is subject to certain conditions that member states can apply if their labor market stability is threatened by immigration.

But opposition to immigrants is rarely just part of the general issue of free trade in free markets. Immigrants come from ways of life different in various ways from the local one. It is incontestable that some people feel uncomfortable in the company of people from other cultures. Therefore, against the advantages of immigrant workers has to be set the turmoil caused if political movements succeed in stirring up hostility towards them. Experience in many countries suggests that hostility subsides when immigrant families have been settled for two or more generations and, paradoxically, where their numbers are highest. Friendship and family bonds

form across the ethnic and cultural divides, people of different appearance become taken-for-granted sights in the high street and at sporting and other events. Immigrants are most likely to be the victims of xenophobic campaigns when there is a sudden increase in their numbers; when they come as seasonal workers who return home at the end of seasons and never settle; or in areas where they are not found at all, but xenophobic movements are able to spread rumors about these strange creatures whom no one has actually seen. In the US presidential elections of 2016, support for the anti-immigrant candidate Donald Trump was highest in areas with the lowest levels of immigration. In the UK referendum on EU membership of the same year, where hostility to immigrants was central to the anti-EU campaign, the vote to leave was highest in areas where there were very few immigrants, where they were mainly employed in seasonal agriculture, or where their numbers had suddenly increased. Votes for the anti-immigrant party Alternative für Deutschland in the 2017 German parliamentary elections were highest in eastern, formerly state-socialist regions where very few immigrants live.

It is important to consider at what point hostility to immigrants and the settled ethnic minorities who are inevitably included in the attacks on the newcomers does damage to the fabric of a society that outweighs the economic, cultural, and demographic benefits they bring. In some countries, that hostility has already changed the political context, from time to time bringing extreme nationalist and anti-globalization parties to government office in Austria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and Poland, and to play a major role in France, Sweden, and elsewhere. The USA has a president closely associated with anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic organizations; and the UK embarked on a process of ending its over

forty years' membership of the EU, without at the time having a clear alternative in mind, largely because of hostility to EU freedom-of-movement policies. Globalization is a major cause of migration; hostility to immigrants is currently threatening the viability of globalization. This is the vicious circle currently confronting the protagonists of globalization.

Indirectly relevant to the issue of immigration are some negative consequences attributed to globalization experienced primarily by older men, former employees of the traditional industries rendered uncompetitive by the rise of the new economies. They have seen the activities in which they took pride decline, and their traditional communities collapse. Even if new jobs have come to their areas, they have often been in non-prestigious services activities, and more often for their daughters than for their sons. The heavily male base of employment in manufacturing and mining is not reproduced in the majority of services sectors. This more gender-balanced workforce is welcomed by many people, but for those—especially, but not only, men—brought up in communities based on those sectors and the patriarchal gender relations associated with them, the experience can be disorienting. Further, with the exception of the public-service professions (e.g., health, education), which tend to be distributed evenly across populations, those services activities that provide highly skilled, highly rewarded jobs tend to be concentrated in capitals and a small number of other dynamic cities. Unlike agriculture and much manufacturing, many services activities (especially those based on information technology) have no geographical constraints to their location. Originally, geographers had thought that this would lead these sectors to be evenly distributed across population centers, but the evidence suggests that the opposite happens:

because they can choose where to locate, firms tend to cluster in generally attractive places. Because their space needs are typically low, the effects of this clustering on land prices are relatively slow to develop. Only rarely do old industrial cities become the focuses of these new activities. One consequence of this is that the best-educated and most highly skilled young people move away from declining industrial areas to the new centers of employment, leaving behind an increasingly despairing population.<sup>20</sup>

It is here, in these specific industries, cities, and regions, and in the ugly social environment confronting many immigrants and members of ethnic minorities, that we find the negative impacts of globalization in the existing advanced economies. Viewing the issue in this way reveals the damage that globalization has produced, but also the positive impact of innovation, growing wealth, and cultural diversity in other locations and sectors. These are usually cosmopolitan places that have attracted immigrants from around the world, making their contribution to innovation and diversity. To seek to turn back the clock on globalization is to seek to put an end to this dynamism. But the “forgotten” cities and regions remain a major challenge.

There is a similar problematic imbalance in the newly industrializing countries. Longevity, health and education have improved for millions of people in China and other parts of Asia, but workers in the rapidly developing manufacturing cities are suffering from harsh labor regimes and heavily polluted atmospheres. They have been uprooted from farming areas where they were poor and lived highly restricted lives, but where they often had settled communities. In their mobility to new, growing industrial areas, they have shared the dislocation and disorientation of people left behind in the old industrial areas of the western world.

20

Enrico Moretti, *The New Geography of Jobs* (Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016); OECD, *Competitive Cities in the Global Economy*, OECD Territorial Reviews (Paris: OECD, 2006).

A race to the bottom?

Central to criticisms of globalization for many on the left has been the complaint that it enables multinational corporations to play countries off against each other in the so-called "race to the bottom," threatening to cease production in those with strong labor laws or high corporate taxes. If the logic of the race to the bottom fully prevailed, there would no longer be any private-sector employment in the strong welfare states of northwest Europe; everything would have fled to the low-wage dictatorships of the Far East or to countries with the poorest labor standards. But corporations often want the good-quality human and physical infrastructure that only relatively high-tax regimes and high-quality labor can provide. Such countries continue to be very successful in attracting foreign direct investment. Against this, it is also the case that across most advanced economies the burden of taxation has shifted from capital to relatively low-paid labor over the past three decades—evidence that important aspects of a race to the bottom have been in place, increasing inequality and reducing the money available for public services and infrastructure projects.

On the other hand, globalization is far from owing all its existing achievements to neoliberalism. A World Bank study in 2001<sup>21</sup> found that major factors favoring the increased participation of developing countries in world trade were reductions in transport costs and improved communications through information technology. These are technological rather than political changes—though reduced transport costs have led to more goods being carried farther around the world with no regard for atmospheric and marine pollution costs. The Bank also tried to analyze why some parts of the world had managed to benefit from world trade, while others (especially Africa) had not done so. Successful

21

World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries 2001* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2001).

countries had spent public money on infra-structural developments, including such human infrastructure as expanded education and improved health—social democratic rather than neoliberal priorities. They had also improved the reliability of the rule of law. Meanwhile, countries that had not done these things were vulnerable to negative developments that made their position worse. The two main ones can be laid at least partly at neoliberalism's door. First was a vicious spiral: if countries were doing badly, they suffered from financial flight, which made their predicament worse. The freedom of capital movements that is a fundamental feature of neoliberal "reforms" makes this kind of destabilizing change more likely to occur. Second, failing to enter the world manufacturing economy, but often rich in the mineral resources on which that economy depends, these mainly African countries became increasingly dependent on earnings from mineral exploitation. Wealth is gained from mineral exploitation by controlling the land in which the minerals are found. For countries with low levels of law enforcement and poorly defined borders, this has led to a major increase in civil wars for control of mineral deposits, further weakening national economies. This might have happened under any economic regime, but the dominance of neoliberal policies made it difficult for governments in poor countries to protect their economies from fitting in with whatever fate participation in global markets assigned to them. Forests and other natural environments have been destroyed, ecological balance disturbed, and diseases spread across the world, as governments have searched to engage their countries in the global economy, and as elites have sought to share in the rich pickings that such engagement brings. Global neoliberal hegemony allowed them to do this without taking social and environmental costs into consideration.

However, western opponents of globalization, particularly those who profess humanitarian concerns, need to ask through what means other than globalization it would ever be possible for billions of people outside the advanced economies to emerge from poverty. While their countries faced forbidding tariffs and controls over markets, excluding them from western economies, they could develop only through endogenous growth, which in turn required their own protectionism to prevent their infant industries from being swamped by goods from the advanced economies. Their achievements were, with very few exceptions, meagre: cut off from innovations taking place elsewhere in the world, their leading firms relaxed behind tariff walls and political favors. Had such a world continued without the series of reforms starting from the GATT and culminating in the WTO, poor countries would have remained excluded from prosperity.

Increased trade has also brought strengthening relations of all kinds across much of the world; this is the other side of the coin of cultural challenge represented by immigration. People have learned more about other countries, travelled to them, adopted some of their customs, eating habits, social attitudes, and cultures. These flows have been multi-directional, but in particular people in poorer countries have been encouraged to want to know more about richer ones, and some have migrated to them. Within the EU single market, this has been particularly easy, leading to major flows from central to western European countries; but it happened to the USA too.

#### *The illusion of economic sovereignty*

Globalization has reached a point where it is not even possible to distinguish clearly between an export and an import, despite the Quixotic attempts of international and national statis-

tical bodies to do so. Within global supply chains, a finished complex product, like a motor vehicle, accumulates components from a number of countries, often being exported and re-imported several times during the process. A joint research effort of the OECD and the Council of Nordic Ministers, published by Statistics Denmark,<sup>22</sup> demonstrated the impossibility of separating individual national economic efforts from “the rest of the world.” The Nordic economies are, of course, small, but the OECD has calculated the import content of exports for a wide range of countries, showing that even for large economies this can be high—for example: China 29.4%, Germany 25.4%, UK 21.9%, Japan 18.2%, USA 15.3%, and Russia 13.7% (2014 statistics).<sup>23</sup> Desmond Cohen has argued that, when these data are put alongside the widespread sub-contracting of public-service delivery to international firms that has occurred in several countries, as well as the compromises that have to be accepted in international trade deals, the idea of economic sovereignty in the modern economy is no longer viable.<sup>24</sup>

An instructive illustration of this point concerns the different attitudes of British supporters of leaving the EU in favor of seeking a special trading relationship with the USA over the questions of chlorine-washed chicken and the regulation of banana quality labelling.<sup>25</sup> Chlorine-washing of chicken is among a number of chemical processes used in US agriculture that are banned under EU regulations, but which at least some members of the British government are willing to accept as part of a trade deal with the USA. For present purposes, substantive issues of US abattoir hygiene standards are not important. The question is whether changing one’s food standards, not because one wants to do so, but in order to secure a trade deal with a far more powerful country, is a compromise of sovereignty.

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Denmark, *Nordic Countries in Global Value Chains* (Copenhagen: Statistics Denmark, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> OECD, 2017. “Import Content of Exports,” [bit.ly/2MdefAM](http://bit.ly/2MdefAM)

<sup>24</sup> Desmond Cohen, “Economic Sovereignty: a Delusion,” in *Social Europe*, September 20, 2017: [bit.ly/2BmUWix](http://bit.ly/2BmUWix)

<sup>25</sup> An extended version of this example can be found in Colin Crouch, “Riddle: When Is a Chlorinated Chicken Better than a Regulated Banana?” in *Social Europe*, August 7, 2017: [bit.ly/2VG6nuR](http://bit.ly/2VG6nuR)

Not so, in the view of British advocates of a trade deal with the USA. The very same advocates do, however, see agreements reached among EU member states—including the UK itself—on trading standards as affronts to sovereignty. The main example that they have used to symbolize this is EU regulations designed to ensure that there is a common standard across the EU in defining a Grade I or Grade II banana. This is seen as an affront to sovereignty, because it prevented the UK from having its own banana classification. But the rule was not “imposed” on the UK; its representatives were among those involved in making it. Why is there a difference in attitude in the UK to the two forms of acceptance of a food-quality rule, one via a trade agreement, the other by means of a jointly agreed rule? This is not a case of a preference among British nationalists for dealing with countries in what they have started to call the “Anglosphere;” the UK is clearly willing to make post-Brexit trade agreements with the EU, and if such a deal were to involve continuing to use EU banana nomenclature, there would be no objection. The difference in the chicken and banana cases is the procedure through which the agreements are reached, and that is what takes us to the heart of British—and probably other—misguided understandings of sovereignty.

In a trade deal between countries, both sides want something from the other and are willing to compromise to get it, sometimes having to offer something about which they are not too happy; the overall deal makes that worthwhile. But they remain separate countries, they sit on opposite sides of the table, and do not share much common information. When an organization like the EU makes a regulation, there will also be different interests among countries and compromises that are not always happy, but what is being reached is not a deal between separate parties, but a

jointly produced and agreed regulation, on the basis of shared technical and economic data, with everyone concerned having rights to oppose and object, but in the end accepting a group decision. It is that quality of sharing and joint production that seems to offend the idea of economic sovereignty.

Economic treaties of all kinds involve compromises of independent decision-making, and participation in the modern world economy requires large numbers of these. Moves to shared decision-making rather than just across-the-table deals are among the main means available for bridging the gap between political debates and decisions, which remain obstinately national, and economic rule-making, which is fundamentally transnational. To see these means as uniquely compromising is to refuse to use a valuable political instrument, preferring an idea of sovereignty derived from military concepts of earlier centuries. In an increasingly integrated world, countries gain from pooling their sovereignty in order to secure transnational regulation of economic forces.

*Conclusion: the balance sheet  
of globalization*

Had globalization not taken place—had we, that is to say, remained in national fortress economies, with carefully monitored trade and tariff walls, strict limits on foreign travel and even stricter ones on immigration—most of the world would today be considerably poorer; the amount of *illegal* immigration, with all its consequences of increased criminality, would have been greater; relations among states would have been more hostile. On the other hand, there have been casualties from globalization: some world regions (mainly most of Africa) have been left out, and we have all been presented with general political, cultural, and social challenges, the

full extent of which we still have not experienced. Even in the rich countries, there have been losers—cities and regions that have not shared in the overall gains, and many workers who have experienced declining standards of security. The main winners have been the planet's richest people, with an overall increase in inequality, especially between the very rich and everyone else, partly through changes in taxation as countries have competed to attract footloose firms and individuals, though partly through changes only indirectly linked to globalization. There have been further major negative side-effects, including environmental damage.

Nevertheless, were globalization now to go into reverse, the world would become poorer, which would bring its own conflicts within countries, and intensify tension among them as governments and businesses would see the erection of trade barriers by others as hostile acts. It is not possible to withdraw from an open trading relationship without the action being perceived as unfriendly by those from whom a country is separating itself, leading to a further deterioration in relations. The UK government discovered this as it tried haplessly to argue to the EU that its decision to leave it was not an unfriendly act. For rich countries to surround themselves with new protectionist walls would not only hurt producers in the developing world, but also lead to major increases in prices and restrictions of choice for domestic consumers. Severe restrictions would have to be placed on the movement of goods, persons, and capital to prevent citizens and businesses from circumventing such restrictions. Would it be possible to do this, especially for publics who have become accustomed to economic freedom, without imposing controls on people's lives of the kind found in eastern Europe until 1990?

There can be no simple "return" to a pre-

globalized world of autonomous national economies; even if it were clear to which decades that "return" might refer, the world has been so changed by globalization that there can be no simple idea of "return." It is far more constructive to work out how in some policy fields the idea of national economic sovereignty needs to give way to one of pooled sovereignty in pursuit of a better transnational regulation of the globalized economy. For many opponents of globalization, the issue is not primarily economic, but something about their deeper sense of who they are as social persons, and the relationship of that identity to those of others with whom they are forced to come into reluctant contact. It is to these issues raised that we must now turn.

Alice Creischer: born 1960 in Gerolstein (D); studied philosophy, German studies, and art in Düsseldorf; lives and works in Berlin. Together with Andreas Siekmann she curated the projects "Ex Argentina" at Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz (2011), Palais de Glace, Buenos Aires (2006) and Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2004); and "Principio Potosí" at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2010). She took part at documenta 12 (2007).

Alice Creischer

Establishment of Matters  
of Fact / 2  
Every Day A – SANOFI-AVENTIS

Source: [e-drug] Poor compensation to MNCs clinical trials victims, From: "Chandra Gulhati" <seeemgee@ythoo.co.uk>  
Translated by David Riff, 2012 /  
Edited by Matthew Hyland, 2015

## Every Day A SANOFI-AVENTIS

The drug industry says  
that  
due to the availability of a great many  
people  
who never take drugs,  
it has its testing done in places  
where no drugs are taken.

It allows  
a great many contracts  
to be signed by thumb.

The signatories' death rate  
rises in proportion  
to the number of tests.  
The number of tests  
in places where no medicine is taken  
has grown since 1990  
by 2000 percent.

In the year 2010  
668 people  
died in India  
during these tests.

Until 2009  
the families of the dead received  
no compensation.

In 2010  
the Bayer Corporation paid  
off 5 of 138,  
Sanofi Aventis corporation  
paid 3 of 152 families  
50,000 rupees,  
which is 3,125 dollars  
and which is what a taxi driver there  
earns in a year.

Meanwhile in Germany  
in 2008  
60,000 euros  
were paid per corpse.

Which is something that shouldn't enter the equation,  
since everyone is equal in death,  
though it does, involuntarily,  
as the drug industry proceeds to calculate,  
and this calculation is tied  
to the impossibility of transplanting the rule of law,  
which seems nailed to places  
where drugs are taken.

# Every Day B

## TOTAL

In 1992, Total agreed with the government of Myanmar  
to convey natural gas from the ocean to Thailand.  
It now produces a volume  
of 758 million cubic meters  
every day.

Total has companions  
that are called Unilocal, PTT, and Chevron  
and that seek to devour each other  
every day.  
They split the profits with the government.

The government sees to it  
that the bunkers for the battalions  
are already provided,  
that the embankments on which the pipes are welded  
are tramped down,  
and that the landing field is tarred  
when the engineers alight from their machines.

The bunkers, the embankments, the pipes  
pretend to create themselves on their own,  
they are lying.

When we are caught sleeping  
by the patrol,  
they will beat us  
until  
we pick up our baggage again.  
And when we arrive,  
they will order us  
to immediately  
pick up the shovels and axes,  
to cut a swath  
and operate the roots out of the ground  
which is already hard from previous treads.

The engineers leaving their machines  
see what we are doing.  
The engineers passing by the embankment in their jeeps  
don't stop.  
They don't ask us questions.  
And even if someone would ask,  
we would wither away with fear  
of the one who saw that questions were asked  
like moths  
and under the suspicion  
of having told the truth.

Alice Creischer

Establishment of Matters  
of Fact / 2  
Every Day B – TOTAL

Source: <http://www.earthrights.org/sites/default/files/publications/Human-Cost-of-Energy.pdf>  
Translated by Karl Hofmann /  
Edited by Matthew Hyland, 2015

# Every Day C

SYNGENTA

Every day,  
when the saplings are still small,  
we spray the fields.  
We don't wear coats  
or boots or masks,  
because the company doesn't want to pay for them,  
although we asked them to do so several times.  
They say it's too hot.

Our skin burns  
where the container sits on backs.  
When we come from the fields  
our eyes burn.  
It is said that you go blind from the poison  
that you spray on the fields,  
and that the nails on your fingers and toes come out.

And is that not just?  
And mustn't the death of the birds be paid back?  
And who gets the bill if not they  
who are here  
and tread this soil  
every day  
with their feet  
along the furrows, along and along.

Alice Creischer

Establishment of Matters  
of Fact / 2  
Every Day C – SYNGENTA

Source: [www.paraquat.ch](http://www.paraquat.ch);  
Pilot study (English), Burkina  
Faso, Monsieur Mangin  
Translated by Karl Hofmann /  
Edited by Matthew Hyland, 2015

67-90

Duty-Free Art

*Hito Steyerl*

Hito Steyerl: professor of experimental film and video and co-founder of the Research Center for Proxy Politics at Berlin's University of the Arts. Studied cinematography and documentary film in Tokyo and Munich and wrote her doctoral thesis at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Her research focuses on media, technology, and the distribution of images. Her texts, performances, and essayist documentary films deal with postcolonial criticism and feminist criticism of representational logic. She works at the intersections of visual art and film as well as theory and practice. She exhibited her work at institutions worldwide, including Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2016); Venice Biennale (2015), and Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014).

“Huge art storage spaces are being created worldwide in what could essentially be called a luxury no man’s land, tax havens where artworks are shuffled around from one storage room to another once they get traded. This is also one of the prime spaces for contemporary art: an offshore or extraterritorial museum.”

#### Chapter 1 — The National Museum

This is a file published in 2012 by WikiLeaks. It forms part of WikiLeaks’s Syria files database.<sup>1</sup> The file is called “316787\_Vision Presentation–Oct 30 2010 Eng.pptx,” in PowerPoint format, dated October 2010.<sup>2</sup> It details Syrian First Lady Asma al-Assad’s plans for the future of Syria’s museums. Her foundation aims to establish a network of museums to promote Syria’s economic and social development and strengthen national identity and cultural pride.<sup>3</sup> The French Louvre is listed as a partner in developing this plan.<sup>4</sup> Both the Louvre and the Guggenheim Bilbao are named as role models for a redesigned National Museum in Damascus.

A conference was planned to unveil the winner of an international competition for the design of this National Museum in April 2011.

However, three weeks prior to this date, twenty protesters were “reportedly killed as 100,000 people marched in the city of Daraa.”<sup>5</sup> By then, invitations for the conference had already been issued to a host of prominent speakers, including the directors of the Louvre and the British Museum. On April 28, 2011, *Art Newspaper* reported that the conference had been cancelled due to street protests.<sup>6</sup> The winner of the architectural competition for the National Museum has never been announced.

#### Chapter 2 — Never Again

To build a nation, Benedict Anderson has suggested that there should be print capitalism<sup>7</sup> and a museum to narrate a nation’s history and design its identity.<sup>8</sup> Today—instead of print—there is data capitalism and a lot of museums. To build a museum, a nation is not necessary. But if nations are a way to organize time and space, so is the museum. And as times and spaces change, so do museum spaces.

The image above shows the municipal art

1

See [bit.ly/2oaf0Bx](http://bit.ly/2oaf0Bx)

2

The PowerPoint file is attached to an email sent to the Ministry of Presidential Affairs with the subject line “Presentation on the New Vision for the Syrian Museums and Heritage Sites,” Oct. 30, 2010, Email-ID 2089122. [bit.ly/2new20Z](http://bit.ly/2new20Z)

3

In the foundation’s own words: “Under the patronage of The First Lady, Asma Al-Assad, the Syrian Government is launching a cultural initiative of exceptional ambition—the transformation of its museums and the conservation of its heritage sites. To celebrate and inform this initiative, Cultural Landscapes 2011, a new annual forum, will bring together an international assembly of thought leaders and experts from the worlds of heritage, contemporary culture, academia and business. This inaugural edition will take the Syrian experience as a starting point for a discussion global in reach and conclusion,” Feb. 7, 2011, Email-ID 765252 (see attachment entitled “About Cultural Landscapes”). [bit.ly/2oea92j](http://bit.ly/2oea92j)



— A view from the outside of the Sumer Park Kültür Merkezi, Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photo: Hito Steyerl.

4

However, on June 26, 2011, partner museums call for a dismantling of the initiative’s institutional framework, the Syria Heritage Foundation. Earlier that month, the *Financial Times* reported that the

gallery of Diyarbakir in Turkey. From June to September 2014, it hosted a show on genocide and its consequences, called “Never Again! Apology and Coming to Terms with the Past.” Its poster shows former chancellor of West Germany Willy Brandt on his knees in front of the Warsaw ghetto memorial.

In September 2014, this museum became a refugee camp. It did not represent a nation, but instead sheltered people fleeing from national disintegrations.

After the Islamic State (IS) militia crossed and effectively abolished parts of the border between Syria and Iraq in August 2014,<sup>9</sup> between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand Yezidi refugees escaped the region of Shengal in northern Iraq. Most of them had trekked on foot across Mt. Shengal, assisted by Kurdish rebel groups, who had opened a safe corridor. While the majority stayed in refugee camps in Rojava, northern Syria, and several camps in northern Iraq, many refugees crossed into Turkey’s Kurdish regions, where they were welcomed with amazing hospitality. The city of Diyarbakir opened its municipal gallery as an emergency shelter.

Once settled on mats within the gallery space, many refugees started asking for SIM cards to try to reach missing family members by cell phone.

This is the desk of the curator, left empty.<sup>10</sup>

Chapter 3 – Conditions of Possibility  
According to the Google N-gram viewer,<sup>11</sup> the usage of the word “impossible” has steeply dropped since around the mid-twentieth century. But what does this tell us? Does it mean that fewer and fewer things are impossible? Does this mean that impossibility “as such” is in historical decline? Perhaps it just means that the conditions for possibilities as such are subject to change over time? Are both the possible and the impossible defined by historical and external conditions?

organization had suspended operations. See Lina Saigol, “First lady struggles to live up to promises,” *Financial Times*, June 9, 2011. [on.ft.com/2o98BXa](http://on.ft.com/2o98BXa)

5

Peter Aspden, “The walls of ignorance,” *Financial Times*, June 9, 2012. [on.ft.com/2oTwm5x](http://on.ft.com/2oTwm5x)

6

Anna Somers Cocks, “Syria turmoil kills Mrs Al-Assad’s forum,” *The Art Newspaper*, Apr. 28, 2011. [bit.ly/2o0UCmw](http://bit.ly/2o0UCmw)

7

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised and extended ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 224.

8

Anderson, “Census, Map, Museum,” excerpt from *Imagined Communities*, available at [bit.ly/2pHFYkt](http://bit.ly/2pHFYkt)

9

The exodus of Yazidis from Shengal is described in Liz Sly, “Exodus from the mountain: Yazidis flood into Iraq following U.S. airstrikes,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 10, 2014. [wapo.st/339CGVH](http://wapo.st/339CGVH)

10

His name is Baris Seyitvan.



— Sumer Park Kültür Merkezi, Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photo: Hito Steyerl

According to Immanuel Kant, time and space are necessary conditions to perceive or understand anything. Without time and space, knowledge, experience, and vision cannot unfold. Kant calls this perspective “criticism.” With this in mind, what kind of time and space is necessary for contemporary art to become manifest? Or rather: What does criticism about contemporary art say about time and space today?

To brutally summarize a lot of scholarly texts: contemporary art is made possible by neoliberal capital plus the internet, bien-nials, art fairs, parallel pop-up histories, growing income inequality. Let’s add asymmetric warfare—as one of the reasons for the vast redistribution of wealth—real estate speculation, tax evasion, money laundering, and deregulated financial markets to this list.

To paraphrase philosopher Peter Osborne’s illuminating insights on this topic: contemporary art shows us the lack of a (global) time and space. Moreover, it projects a fictional unity onto a variety of different ideas of time and space, thus providing a common surface where there is none.<sup>12</sup>

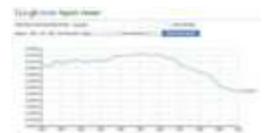
Contemporary art thus becomes a proxy for the global commons, for the lack of any common ground, temporality, or space. It is defined by a proliferation of locations, and a lack of accountability. It works by way of major real estate operations transforming cities worldwide as they reorganize urban space. It is even a space of civil wars that trigger art market booms a decade or so later through the redistribution of wealth by warfare. It takes place on servers and by means of fiber-optic infrastructure, and whenever public debt miraculously transforms into private wealth. Contemporary art happens when taxpayers are deluded into believing they are bailing out other sovereign states when in fact they are subsidizing international banks that

11

Wikipedia: “The Google ‘Ngram’ Viewer is an online viewer, initially based on Google Books, that charts frequencies of any word or short sentence using yearly count of n-grams found in the sources printed since 1800 up to 2012 in any of the following eight languages: American English, British English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Hebrew, and Chinese.” [bit.ly/2ndnXc0](http://bit.ly/2ndnXc0)

12

Osborne argues that contemporary art expresses the “disjunctive unity of present times ... As a historical concept, the contemporary thus involves a projection of unity onto the differential totality of the times of human lives ...” Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013), 22.



— Google books’ N-gram viewer tracks the word “impossible” in all the books on its database printed in between the years 1800-2000.

13

As in the case of the relation between Germany (or EU-taxpayers) and Greece. Eighty-nine percent of the so-called bailout funds have gone to international banks. Only the remaining 11 percent has reached the Greek national budget. Even if only a fraction of this money ends up at auction, how would auctions nowadays fare without the constant subsidies from public funds that mysteriously end up as private assets?

thus get compensated for pushing high-risk debt onto vulnerable nations.<sup>13</sup> Or when this or that regime decides it needs the PR equivalent of a nip and tuck procedure.

But contemporary art also creates new physical spaces that bypass national sovereignty. Let me give you a contemporary example: freeport art storage. This is the mother of all freeport art storage spaces: Geneva freeport, a tax-free zone in Geneva that includes parts of an old freight station and an industrial storage building. The free-trade zone takes up the backyard and the fourth floor of the old storage building, so that different jurisdictions run through one and the same building, as the other floors are set outside the freeport zone. A new art storage space was opened last year. Up until only a few years ago, the freeport wasn't even officially considered part of Switzerland.

This building is rumored to house thousands of Picassos, but no one knows an exact number since documentation is rather opaque. There is little doubt, though, that its contents could compete with any very large museum.<sup>14</sup>

Let's assume that this is one of the most important art spaces in the world right now. It is not only not public, but it is also sitting inside a very interesting geography.

From a legal standpoint, freeport art storage spaces are somewhat extraterritorial. Some are located in the transit zones of airports or in tax-free zones. Keller Easterling describes the free zone as a "fenced enclave for warehousing."<sup>15</sup> It has now become a primary organ of global urbanism copied and pasted to locations worldwide. It is an example of "extrastatecraft," as Easterling terms it, within a "mongrel form of exception" beyond the laws of the nation-state. In this deregulatory state of exemption, corporations are privileged at the expense of common citizens, "investors" replace



— Geneva Freeport signage alerts visitors to its guard dogs. Photo: Hito Steyerl.

14  
"Suffice it to say, there is wide belief among art dealers, advisers and insurers that there is enough art tucked away here to create one of the world's great museums." David Segal, "Swiss Freeports Are Home for a Growing Treasury of Art," *New York Times*, July 21, 2011. [nyti.ms/2AEtVXp](http://nyti.ms/2AEtVXp)

15  
Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso, 2014).

taxpayers, and modules supplant buildings:

[Freeports'] attractions are similar to those offered by offshore financial centres: security and confidentiality, not much scrutiny ... and an array of tax advantages ... Goods in freeports are technically in transit, even if in reality the ports are used more and more as permanent homes for accumulated wealth.<sup>16</sup>

The freeport is thus a zone for permanent transit. Although it is fixed, does the freeport also define perpetual ephemerality? Is it simply an extraterritorial zone, or is it also a rogue sector carefully settled for financial profitability<sup>17</sup>?

The freeport contains multiple contradictions: it is a zone of terminal impermanence; it is also a zone of legalized extralegality maintained by nation-states trying to emulate failed states as closely as possible by selectively losing control. Thomas Elsaesser once used the term "constructive instability" to describe the aerodynamic properties of fighter jets that gain decisive advantages by navigating at the brink of system failure, arguing that they more or less "fall" or "fail" in the desired direction.<sup>18</sup> This constructive instability is implemented within nation-states by incorporating zones where they "fail" on purpose. Switzerland, for example, contains "245 open customs warehouses,"<sup>19</sup> enclosing zones of legal and administrative exception. Are this state and others a container for different types of jurisdictions that get applied, or rather do not get applied, in relation to the wealth of corporations or individuals? Does this kind of state become a package for opportunistic statelessness? As Elsaesser points out, his whole idea of "constructive instability" originated with a discussion of Swiss artists Fischli and Weiss's work *The Way Things Go* (1987). Here all sorts of things are knocked off balance in celebratory

16  
"Freeports: Über-warehouses for the ultra-rich," *The Economist*, Nov. 23, 2013. [econ.st/2pJjcsB](http://econ.st/2pJjcsB)

17  
Marie Maurisse, "La «caverne d'Ali Baba» de Genève, plus grand port franc du monde, ignore la crise," *Le Figaro*, Sept. 20, 2014: "Selon un document confidentiel, le port franc de Genève dans son ensemble générerait chaque année pas moins de 300 millions de francs de retombées économiques sur le canton" (According to a confidential document, Geneva freeport in total would generate no less than 300 million Swiss francs of revenue for the canton).

18  
Thomas Elsaesser, "Constructive instability, or: The life of things as the cinema's afterlife?" 2008, 19f. The text's manifold implications for contemporary political thought and its relation to managed collapse cannot be underestimated, in relation to its discussion of technology but also political usage: "Its engineering provenance has been overlaid by a neo-con political usage, for instance, by Condoleezza Rice when she called the deaths among the civilian population and the resulting chaos during the Lebanon-Israel war in the summer of 2006 the consequence of 'constructive instability.'" [bit.ly/31SWBbe](http://bit.ly/31SWBbe)

19  
Cynthia O'Murchu, "Swiss businessman arrested in art market probe," *Financial Times*, Feb. 26, 2015. [ft.com/2oeavWH](http://ft.com/2oeavWH)

collapse. The film's glorious motto is: "Balance is most beautiful just at the point when it is about to collapse".

Among many other things, freeports also become a zone for duty-free art, a zone where control and failure are calibrated according to "constructive instability" so that things cheerfully hang in a permanently frozen failing balance.

#### Chapter 4 — Duty-Free Art

Huge art storage spaces are being created worldwide in what could essentially be called a luxury no man's land, tax havens where artworks are shuffled around from one storage room to another once they get traded. This is also one of the prime spaces for contemporary art: an offshore or extraterritorial museum. In September 2014, Luxembourg opened its own freeport. The country is not alone in trying to replicate the success of the Geneva freeport: "A freeport that opened at Changi Airport in Singapore in 2010 is already close to full. Monaco has one, too. A planned 'freeport of culture' in Beijing would be the world's largest art-storage facility."<sup>20</sup> A major player in setting up many of these facilities is the art handling company Natural Le Coultre, run by Swiss national Yves Bouvier.

Freeport art storage facilities are secret museums. Their spatial conditions are reflected in their designs. In contrast to the rather perfunctory Swiss facility, designers stepped up their game at the freeport art storage facility in Singapore:

Designed by Swiss architects, Swiss engineers and Swiss security experts, the 270,000-square-foot facility is part bunker, part gallery. Unlike the free-port facilities in Switzerland, which are staid yet secure warehouses, the Singapore FreePort sought to combine security and style. The

20  
"Freeports," *The Economist*.



— Trezor is a digital wallet for bitcoin transactions. Image: CC by-SA 3.0

lobby, showrooms and furniture were designed by contemporary designers Ron Arad and Johanna Grawunder. A gigantic arcing sculpture by Mr. Arad, titled *Cage sans Frontières*, (Cage Without Borders) spans the entire lobby. Paintings that line the exposed concrete walls lend the facility the air of a gallery. Private rooms and vaults, barricaded by seven-ton doors, line the corridors. Near the lobby, private galleries give collectors a chance to view or show potential buyers their art under museum-quality spotlights. A planned second phase will double the size of the facility to 538,000 square feet. Collectors are picked up by FreePort staff at their plane and whisked by limousine, any time of day or night, to the facility. If the client is packing valuables, an armed escort will be provided.<sup>21</sup>

The title *Cage Without Borders* has a double meaning. It not only means that the cage has no limits, but also that the prison is now everywhere, in an extrastatecraft art withdrawal facility that seeps through the cracks of national sovereignty and establishes its own logistic network. In this ubiquitous prison, rules still apply, though it might be difficult to specify exactly which ones, to whom or what they apply, and how they are implemented. Whatever they are, their grip seems to considerably loosen in inverse proportion to the value of the assets in question. But this construction is not only a device realized in one particular location in 3-D space. It is also basically a stack of juridical, logistical, economic, and data-based operations, a pile of platforms mediating between clouds and users via state laws, communication protocols, corporate standards, etc., that interconnect not only via fiber-optic connections but aviation routes as well.<sup>22</sup>

Freeport art storage is to this "stack" as the national museum traditionally was to the

21  
Cris Prystay, "Singapore Bling," *Wall Street Journal*, May 21, 2010. [on.wsj.com/2newdcF](http://on.wsj.com/2newdcF)

nation. It sits in between countries in pockets of superimposing sovereignties where national jurisdiction has either voluntarily retreated or been demolished. If biennials, art fairs, 3-D renderings of gentrified real estate, starchitect museums decorating various regimes, etc., are the corporate surfaces of these areas, the secret museums are their dark web, their Silk Road into which things disappear, as into an abyss of withdrawal.<sup>23</sup>

Think of the artworks and their movement. They travel inside a network of tax-free zones and also inside the storage spaces themselves. They may not even get uncrated. They move from one storage room to the next without being seen. They stay inside boxes and travel outside national territories with a minimum of tracking or registration, like insurgents, drugs, derivative financial products, and other so-called investment vehicles. For all we know, the crates could even be empty. It is a museum of the internet era, but a museum of the dark net, where movement is obscured and data-space is clouded.

Movements of a very different kind are detailed in WikiLeaks's Syria files.



— Containers in the yard of Natural Le Coultre, Ports Fracs, Geneve. Photo: Hito Steyerl.

22

Benjamin Bratton, "On the Nomos of the Cloud: The Stack, Deep Address, Integral Geography," Nov. 2011: "The Stack, the megastructure, can be understood as a confluence of interoperable standards-based complex material-information system of systems, organized according to a vertical section, topographic model of layers and protocols. The Stack is a standardized universal section. The Stack, as we encounter it and as I prototype it, is composed equally of social, human and 'analog' layers (chthonic energy sources, gestures, affects, user-actants, interfaces, cities and streets, rooms and buildings, organic and inorganic envelopes) and informational, non-human computational and 'digital' layers (multiplexed fiber optic cables, datacenters, databases, data standards and protocols, urban-scale networks, embedded systems, universal addressing tables). Its hard and soft systems intermingle and swap phase states, some becoming 'harder' or 'softer' according to occult conditions. (Serres, hard soft). As a social cybernetics, The Stack that we know and design composes both equilibrium and emergence, one oscillating into the other in indecipherable and unaccountable rhythm, territorializing and de-territorializing the same component for diagonal purposes." Bratton.info

----- Original Message -----

**From:** xy@sinan-archiculture.com  
**To:** xy@mopa.gov.sy  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 07, 2010 4:06 PM  
**Subject:** Fw: Flight itenary OMA staff  
 \*\*\*AMENDMENT\*\*\*

Dear Mr. Azzam,

This is to confirm the arrival of Mr. Rem Koolhaas and his personal assistant Mr. Stephan Petermann on this coming Monday July 12th. We need visa for them as we spoke before (both are Dutch). Their passport photos are attached. They are arriving separately and at different times. Mr. Koolhaas coming from China through Dubai on Emirates airlines (arriving in

Damascus at 4:25 PM), while Mr. Stephan Petermann is coming from Vienna on Austrian airlines (arriving in Damascus before Mr. Koolhaas at 3:00 PM).

They are staying at the Art House or at the Four Seasons hotel until their departure on Thursday (at 4:00 pm).<sup>24</sup>

WikiLeaks's Syria database comprises around 2.5 million emails from 680 domains, yet the authenticity of these documents was not verified by WikiLeaks. It can be verified, however, that the PR company Brown Lloyd James was involved in trying to enhance the image of the Assad family.<sup>25</sup> In early 2011, shortly before the start of the Syrian civil war, a *Vogue* story, presciently photographed by war photographer James Nachtwey, portrays Asma al-Assad as the "Rose of the Desert," a modernizer and patron of culture.<sup>26</sup>

In February 2012, one year into the war, Anonymous and affiliated organizations hacked into the email server of the Syrian Ministry of Presidential Affairs, in solidarity with Syrian bloggers, protesters, and activists.<sup>27</sup> The inboxes of seventy-eight of Assad's aides and advisers were accessed. Apparently, some used the same password: "12345."<sup>28</sup> The leaked emails included correspondence—mostly through intermediaries—between Mansour Azzam, the Minister of Presidential Affairs, and the studios of Rem Koolhaas (OMA), Richard Rogers, and Herzog and de Meuron regarding various issues.<sup>29</sup> To paraphrase the content of some emails: Rogers and Koolhaas were being invited to speak in Damascus and, with Koolhaas, these visits extended to project discussions including the National Parliament.<sup>30</sup> Herzog de Meuron offered a complimentary concept design proposal for the Al-Assad House for Culture in Aleppo, and expressed interest in the selection process for the parliament project.<sup>31</sup> A lot of this correspondence is really just gossip about the studios by way of intermediaries. There is also lots of spam. No communication with any

23

An extremely intelligent remark from an audience member in Moscow added that this was to be seen as a huge benefit, as a lot of shoddy "market art" would get safely quarantined without anyone having to see it. I sympathize very much with her point of view.

24

See bit.ly/2pCVIoI

25

Bill Carter and Amy Choizick, "Syria's Assads Turned to West for Glossy P.R.," *New York Times*, June 10, 2012. nyti.ms/2pHug9w

26

The story has since been withdrawn. More background can be found here: Max Fisher, "The Only Remaining Online Copy of *Vogue's* Asma al-Assad Profile," *The Atlantic*, Jan. 3, 2012. bit.ly/31R0LQE

of the studios is documented after the end of November 2010. With protests starting in January 2011, a full-blown uprising began in Syria by the end of March of that year. All conversations and negotiations between officials and architects seem to have stopped as scrutiny of the Assad regime increased in the buildup to actual hostilities. It has not yet been possible to independently confirm the authenticity of these documents,<sup>32</sup> so for the time being, their status is that of unmoored sets of data, which may or may not have anything to do with their presumed authors and receivers.<sup>33</sup> But they most definitely are sets of data, hosted by WikiLeaks servers that can be described in terms of their circulation regardless of presumed provenance and authorship.<sup>34</sup>

Above is Saif al-Islam Gaddafi's painting, *War* (2001). Saif is the son of the late head of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi and was a political figure in Libya prior to his father's deposition by rebel forces backed by NATO airstrikes in 2011. This painting was exhibited as part of a show called "The Desert is not Silent" in London in 2002.

*War* depicts NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. The artist writes: "A civil war broke out in Kosovo, which shattered the picture and its theme. The sea unleashed itself, anger fell from the sky, which came up against a stream of blood."<sup>35</sup> Saif al-Islam said in a statement at the time: "Not only do we buy weapons and sell gas and oil, but we have culture, art and history."<sup>36</sup>

In September 2010, OMA expressed the desire to work in Syria.<sup>37</sup> A subsequent email from Sinan Ali Hassan—a local architect who acts as an intermediary—to Mansour Azzam flaunts the advantages of such a collaboration: "Rem was the previous supervisor and boss of Zaha Hadid in addition to the fact that he is considered to be more

27

Michael Stone, "Anonymous supplies WikiLeaks with 'Syria files,'" *The Examiner*, July 9, 2012. This article quotes Anonymous' initial declaration: "While the United Nations sat back and theorized on the situation in Syria, Anonymous took action. Assisting bloggers, protesters and activists in avoiding surveillance, disseminating media, interfering with regime communications and networks, monitoring the Syrian internet for disruptions or attempts at surveillance—and waging a relentless information and psychological campaign against Assad and his murderous and genocidal government." [wikileaks.org](http://wikileaks.org)

28

Barak Ravid, "Bashar Assad emails leaked, tips for ABC interview revealed," *Haaretz*, Feb. 7, 2012. [bit.ly/2oRT1iA](http://bit.ly/2oRT1iA)

29

The emails can be accessed here [wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/](http://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/)

30

See the email here [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

31

See the email here [bit.ly/2o1kA9s32](http://bit.ly/2o1kA9s32)

32

See [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)



— Artist Saif al-Islam Gaddafi stands beside his painting *War* (2001), which depicts NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

important (if not much more important) than Lord Richard Rogers, in terms of celebrity and professional status."<sup>38</sup>

From the conversation between OMA and Sinan Ali Hassan, it becomes clear that OMA's proposal might be based on a project realized in Libya previously: "This would be a similar scope to the Libyan Sahara vision we showed you, and the one that Rem discussed with the President."<sup>39</sup>

In an interview in June 2010, Koolhaas stated that people close to Saif al-Islam Gaddafi approached him.<sup>40</sup> At the time, he was widely seen as a reformer. OMA's project in Libya revolved around preservation and was exhibited at the Venice Biennale.<sup>41</sup> The project was later mentioned as a possible precedent for a project proposal for the desert region around Palmyra, Syria. Since the uprising in early 2011, this area has been deeply affected by the ensuing civil war.

At present, the International Criminal court has requested Saif Gaddafi's extradition from Libya, where he remains imprisoned.<sup>42</sup>

#### Chapter 5 – A Dream

WARNING: THIS IS THE ONLY FICTIONAL CHAPTER IN THIS TALK

To come back to the original question: What happened to time and space? Why are they broken and disjointed? Why is space shattered into container-like franchising modules, dark webs, civil wars, and tax havens replicating all over the world?

With these thoughts in mind, I fell asleep and started dreaming ... and my dream was pretty strange. I dreamt about some diagrams in one of Peter Osborne's recent texts.

They describe a genealogy of contemporary art; I wasn't focusing on their content, but instead on their form. The first thing I noticed was that the succession of concentric circles seemed to indicate a dent, or a dimple, in any case, a

33

Studio Herzog de Meuron has been contacted for comment but has not replied as of the time of publication. For the answer from Rem Koolhaas's studio, OMA, see below.

34

See [bit.ly/2pCVL3S](http://bit.ly/2pCVL3S)

35

Martin Bailey, "Gaddafi's son reveals true colours," *The Art Newspaper*, March 2, 2011.

36

"Rem Koolhaas is very keen to visit Damascus with strong interest to participate in public sector and urban gentrification and regeneration of the city, and trying to keep away from commercial developments and suburban master plans, yet we wanted to sense and feel the current conditions of architectural and urbanization in the city before establishing any commitment. I also wanted to engage Rem in Damascus architectural school and establish internship program with OMA and the university." See the full email here [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

37

"Rem Koolhaas is very keen to visit Damascus with strong interest to participate in public sector and urban gentrification and regeneration of the city, and trying to keep away from commercial developments and suburban master plans, yet we wanted to sense and feel the current conditions of architectural and urbanization in the city before establishing any commitment. I also wanted to engage Rem in Damascus architectural school and establish internship program with OMA and the university." See the full email here [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

3-D cavity. But why would time and space start sagging, so to speak? Could there be an issue with gravity? Maybe a micro-black hole could cause these circles to curve? But then again, it is much more likely that something else caused this dimple.

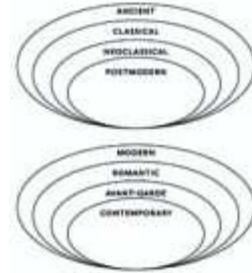
Suddenly, I found the answer to the question. I started losing gravity and flying up towards space. Peter Osborne was floating around there too, and with an unlikely Texas accent, he pointed down and showed me this sight.

Seen from above, Peter's diagram transformed into a sight. If you look at it from above, the slight cavity vanishes. It becomes a flat screen. From here on, people just ended up seeing the genealogy of contemporary art in Peter's diagrams instead of a depression indicating that the target had been hit already and that a gaping crater had opened at the site of impact. Seen from above, the genealogy of contemporary art was acting as a proxy or a screen: a sight to cover the site of impact. Behind his astronaut's visor, Peter croaked.

This is the role of contemporary art. It is a proxy, a stand-in. It is projected onto a site of impact, after time and space have been shattered into a disjunctive unity—and proceed to collapse into rainbow-colored stacks designed by starchitects.

Contemporary art is a kind of layer or proxy which pretends that everything is still ok, while people are reeling from the effects of shock policies, shock and awe campaigns, reality TV, power cuts, any other form of cuts, cat GIFs, tear gas—all of which are all completely dismantling and rewiring the sensory apparatus and potentially also human faculties of reasoning and understanding by causing a state of shock and confusion, of permanent hyperactive depression.

You don't know what's going on behind the doors of the freeport storage rooms either, do



— Here, a genealogy of contemporary art is represented diagrammatically by



— Crosshairs aiming at target



41  
OMA's exhibition at the 2010 Venice Biennale, entitled CRONOCAOS, included a section on the Libyan desert. The exhibition was based around "critical preservation stories." [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

42  
A warrant for Saif Gaddafi's arrest was issued by the ICC on June 27, 2011. [bit.ly/30NdHqp](http://bit.ly/30NdHqp)

38  
Ibid.

39  
Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. See the full email here [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

40  
Suzie Rushton, "The shape of things to come: Rem Koolhaas's striking designs," *The Independent*, June 21,

you? Let me tell you what's happening in there: time and space are smashed and rearranged into little pieces like in a freak particle accelerator, and the result is the cage without borders called contemporary art today.

AND THIS IS WHERE THE FICTIONAL PART ABRUPTLY ENDS

I woke in shock and found myself reading this pdf document aloud.

2010. "An unlikely new client is Libya, specifically 'a subtle group of people around the [Gaddafi] son there who want to pull the country toward Europe.'" [bit.ly/324Xofi](http://bit.ly/324Xofi)

## OMA

Dr. Bashar al-Assad  
President of the Syrian Republic

Rotterdam, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Dear Mr. President,

Following our meeting in July and the subsequent request that we prepare an outline OMA/AMO approach for the strategic development of Al Badia, I am pleased to present you with the Al Badia Vision proposal for your review.

Our approach to this study begins with the conception of Al Badia as a unified entity within Syria. We envisage the region to act as a powerful resource for the benefit of the entire country while preserving its unique heritage. The Al Badia Vision creates a plan of action and of preservation for a set of subjects that are crucial to the region.

I am looking forward to meeting with you again to discuss the study as outlined in the attached proposal, which we trust demonstrates both our sincere interest in Syria and our capabilities to consider various challenges to the development of the region.

I will be visiting Syria during the fourth week of November for the purpose of giving a Public lecture in Damascus as well as to expand my knowledge and experience of your country. It would be a great pleasure to elaborate further with you on our prospective engagement with Al Badia and other projects such as the National Parliament and other national and cultural projects during my stay.

Yours sincerely,

Rem Koolhaas

## Chapter 6 — And Now to Justin Bieber

This is the Twitter feed of E! Online on May 4, 2013, which has someone posing as Bieber triumphantly blurting out: “I’m a gay.” As you can see, the Syrian Electronic Army (SEA) has hacked the Twitter account. Who is the SEA? It is a group of pro-Assad regime hackers. They also hacked *Le Monde* in France a few weeks ago. Previously, the SEA had commandeered: the websites of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the recruitment division of the US Marine Corps. The group also hacked the Twitter feed of the Associated Press and sent out a false report about a bombing at the White House.<sup>43</sup>

The above diagram shows the consequences of this tweet on Wall Street. In three minutes, the “fake tweet erased \$136 billion in equity market value.”<sup>44</sup> Anonymous Syria and its multiple allies had hacked the Syrian Electronic Army and dumped coordinates of alleged members onto the dark web.<sup>45</sup> The data-space of Syria is embattled, hacked, fragmented. Moreover, it extends from the AP to Wall Street to Russian and Australian servers, as well as to the Twitter accounts of a celebrity magazine. It extends to WikiLeaks’s servers, where the Syria files are hosted, and which had to move around quite a lot previously, being ousted from Amazon in 2010. It was once rumored that WikiLeaks tried to move its servers to an offshore location, an extraterritorial former oil platform called Sealand.<sup>46</sup> This would in fact have replicated the freeport scenario from a different angle.

But to ask a more general question: How does the internet, or more precisely networked operations between different databases, affect the physical construction of museums—or the impossibility thereof?

## Chapter 7 — An Email Sent From Switzerland and its Reply

**From:** Hito Steyerl mailto:xy [at] protonmail.ch  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 17, 2015 8:05 PM  
**To:** Office Reception  
**Subject:** Request for confirmation of authenticity

Dear Sirs,

I would like to kindly ask you to confirm the authenticity of various email communications between OMA/AMO and Syrian government officials and intermediaries published by WikiLeaks as part of their “Syria files” in 2012.

I am a Berlin-based filmmaker and writer working on a lecture about the transformations of national museums under conditions of civil war, both in data- and 3D physical space.

There is no intent to scandalize the communication between OMA and the Syrian Ministry of Presidential Affairs. The intent is to ask how both internet communication and the (near-) collapse of some nations-states affect the planning of contemporary museum spaces.

In this context it would be interesting to know more about the circumstances that led to the end of project discussions in Syria. I am sure that your office had its reasons for this and it would be great to be able to include these in the discussion.

Pls find below a list of links I plan on quoting.

Best regards,

Hito Steyerl

[https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2089311\\_urgent.html](https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2089311_urgent.html)  
[https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2092135\\_very-important.html](https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2092135_very-important.html)  
[https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2091860\\_fwd-.html](https://wikileaks.org/syria-files/docs/2091860_fwd-.html)  
<http://bit.ly/18jZeWr>

Sent from ProtonMail, encrypted email based in Switzerland.

## 43

Shane Harris, “How Did Syria’s Hacker Army Suddenly Get So Good?,” *Foreign Policy*, Sept. 4, 2013. [bit.ly/2NNAiHb](http://bit.ly/2NNAiHb). For more details, see this interesting report: John Scott-Railton and Morgan Marquis-Boire, “A Call to Harm: New Malware Attacks Target the Syrian Opposition,” *CitizenLab.org*, June 21, 2013. [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

## 44

Max Fisher, “Syrian hackers claim AP hack that tipped stock market by \$136 billion. Is it terrorism?,” *Washington Post*, April 23, 2013. [2013. bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

## 45

Hunter Stuart, “Syrian Electronic Army Denies Being Attacked By Anonymous,” [bit.ly/35guULe](http://bit.ly/35guULe)

## 46

Joshua Keating, “WikiLeaks to move to Sealand?,” *Foreign Policy*, Feb. 1, 2012. [bit.ly/2o0I12J](http://bit.ly/2o0I12J)

**RE:** Request for confirmation of authenticity  
**From:** Jeremy Higginbotham  
**To:** Hito Steyerl xy@protonmail.ch  
**CC:** Legal xy@oma.com, xy xy@oma.com  
**At:** 26/02/2015 7:13 am

Dear Hito Steyerl,

Thank you for your email. We are not able to confirm the authenticity of the documents linked below.

However, we wish you good luck with your work.

Best regards,

Jeremy Higginbotham  
 Head of Public Affairs  
 OMA

(contact address redacted)

After the Edward Snowden leaks, I started using ProtonMail, an initiative by Cern researchers, who are graciously providing a free encrypted email platform. This is how they describe their project, using the map of Switzerland:

All information on the ProtonMail servers is stored under the jurisdiction of the Cantonal Court of Geneva, taking advantage of the privacy laws of Switzerland and the Canton.

But OMA/AMO's friendly response is not stored in a freeport, it is just stored under "regular" Swiss jurisdiction in a former military command center deep inside the Swiss alps.<sup>47</sup> This is the jurisdiction and encryption I use to try to make any potential government interference with some of my data just a tiny bit more cumbersome. I am in fact taking advantage of legal protections that have enabled tax evasion and money laundering through Swiss banks and other facilities on an astounding scale.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, the mere usage of privacy-related web tools

<sup>47</sup>  
 Information under the heading "Swiss Security" on the the ProtonMail website. [bit.ly/2o1kG0m](http://bit.ly/2o1kG0m)

<sup>48</sup>  
 One recent example: [bit.ly/2oNPimi](http://bit.ly/2oNPimi)

flags users for NSA scrutiny, thus effectively reversing its desired effect.<sup>49</sup> The screen of anonymity turns out to be a paradoxical device.

The ambiguous effect of policies destined to increase anonymity also figures into a different level of freeport activity.

On February 25, 2015, Monaco prosecutors arrested Yves Bouvier—the owner of Natural Le Coultre, the company involved with the Luxemburg, Geneva, and Singapore freeports—for suspected art fraud: "The investigation is believed to centre on inflating prices in very big art transactions in which Bouvier was an intermediary."<sup>50</sup> Bouvier allegedly took advantage of the fact that most artworks held in freeports are owned by what are called "sociétés écran" (literally "screen companies"). Since transactions were made through these anonymous proxies, buyer and seller were not able to communicate and control the amount of commission fees charged. The screen that was supposed to provide anonymity for owners may also have worked against them. Invisibility is a screen that sometimes works both ways—through not always. It works in favor of whoever is controlling the screen.

#### Chapter 8 — Shooting at Clocks—

##### The Public Museum

To build a nation, Benedict Anderson suggested there should be print capitalism and a museum. Nowadays, it is not impossible to build a museum without a nation. We can even look at it more generally and see both nations and museums as just another way to organize time and space, in this case, by smashing them to pieces. But aren't time and space smashed whenever a new paradigm for a museum is created? This indeed happened in France's July Revolution of 1830, of which Walter Benjamin tells a story.<sup>51</sup> Revolutionaries were shooting at clocks. They had previously

<sup>49</sup>  
 This ambiguity characterizes popular web tools that are supposed to safeguard anonymity, such as Tor. The Edward Snowden leaks revealed that the mere usage of Tor, or even searching the web for privacy-enhancing tools, actually flags people for NSA scrutiny (see [bit.ly/2AMH94t](http://bit.ly/2AMH94t)). A software designed to screen out surveillance actually ends up attracting it.

<sup>50</sup>  
 Angelique Chrisafis, "Leading Swiss art broker arrested over alleged price-fixing scam," *Guardian*, Feb. 26, 2015. [bit.ly/2oLqdse](http://bit.ly/2oLqdse). Bouvier has rejected these allegations, putting the blame on the allegedly defrauded Russian oligarch Dmitry Rybolovlev.

also overturned the calendar, renaming months and changing their duration.

And this is the period when the Louvre was stormed yet again—as during every major Paris uprising in the nineteenth century. The prototype for a public museum was created when time and space were smashed and welded anew. The Louvre was created by being stormed. It was stormed in 1792 during the French Revolution and turned from a feudal collection of spoils—a period version of freeport art storage spaces—into a public art museum, presumably the first in the world, introducing a model of national culture. Afterwards, it turned into the cultural flagship of a colonial empire that tried to authoritatively seed that culture elsewhere, before more recently going into the business of trying to create franchises in feudal states, dictatorships, and combinations thereof.

But the current National Museum of Syria is of a different order. Contrary to plans inspired by the “Bilbao effect,” the museum is hosted online, on countless servers in multiple locations.

As Jon Rich and Ali Shamseddine have noted, it is a collection of online videos—of documents and records of innumerable killings, atrocities, and attacks that remain widely unseen.<sup>52</sup> This is the de facto National Museum of Syria, not a Louvre franchise acquired by an Assad foundation. This accidental archive of videos and other documents is made in different genres and styles, showing people digging through rubble, or Twitter-accelerated decapitations in HD. It shows aerial attacks from below, not above. The documents and records produced on the ground end up on a variety of servers worldwide. They are available—in theory—on any screen, except in the locations where they were made, where the act of uploading something to YouTube can get people killed. This spatiotemporal inversion is almost like a reversal of the freeport aggregate art collections.

51

Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” thesis XV, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 261–62.

52

Ali Shamseddine and John Rich, “An Introduction to the New Syrian National Archive,” *e-flux journal* 60 (Dec. 2014). [bit.ly/2oQ40ZW](http://bit.ly/2oQ40ZW)



— An ad promotes Duty Free Shopping in Hong Kong.

But the entirety of this archive is not adapted to human perception, or at least not to individual perception. Like all large-scale databases—including WikiLeaks’s Syria files—it takes the form of a trove of information without (or with very little) narrative, substantiation, or interpretation. It may be partly visible to the public, but not necessarily entirely intelligible. It remains partly inaccessible, not by means of exclusion, but because it overwhelms the perceptual capacity and attention span of any single individual.<sup>53</sup>

#### Chapter 9 — Autonomy

Let’s go back to the examples at the beginning: freeport art storage spaces and the municipal gallery of Diyarbakır, that became a refugee camp. One space withdraws artworks from the world by hoarding them, while the other basically sheltered the escapees of collapsing states. How and where can art be shown publicly, in physical 3-D space, without endangering its authors, while taking into account the breathtaking spatial and temporal changes expressed by these two examples? What form could a new model of the public museum take, and how would the notion of the “public” itself change radically in the process of thinking through this?

Let’s think back to the freeport art storage spaces and their stock of duty-free art. My suggestion is not to shun or belittle this proposition, but to push it even further.

The idea of duty-free art has one major advantage over the nation-state cultural model: duty-free art ought to *have no duty*—no duty to perform, to represent, to teach, to embody value. It should not be indebted to anyone, nor serve a cause or a master, nor be a means to anything. Duty-free art should not be a means to represent a culture, a nation, money, or anything else. Even the duty-free art in the freeport storage

53

Note the different strategies for publicizing massive leaks employed by, on the one hand, WikiLeaks, and on the other, Edward Snowden, Laura Poitras, Glenn Greenwald, and their numerous collaborators.

spaces is not duty free. It is only tax-free. It has the duty of being an asset.

Seen like this, duty-free art is essentially what traditional autonomous art might have been, had it not been elitist and oblivious to its own conditions of production.<sup>54</sup>

But duty-free art is more than a reissue of the old idea of autonomous art. It also transforms the meaning of the battered term “artistic autonomy.” Autonomous art under current temporal and spatial circumstances needs to take these very spatial and temporal conditions into consideration. Art’s conditions of possibility are no longer just the elitist “ivory tower,” but also the dictator’s contemporary art foundation, the oligarch’s or weapons manufacturer’s tax-evasion scheme, the hedge fund’s trophy,<sup>55</sup> the art student’s debt bondage, leaked troves of data, aggregate spam, and the product of huge amounts of unpaid “voluntary” labor—all of which results in art’s accumulation in freeport storage spaces and its physical destruction in zones of war or accelerated privatization. Autonomous art within this context could try to understand political autonomy as an experiment in building alternatives to a nation-state model that continues to proclaim national culture while simultaneously practicing “constructive instability” by including gated communities for high-net-worth individuals, much like microversions of failed states. To come back to the example of Switzerland: this country is so pervaded by extraterritorial enclaves with downsized regulations that it could be more precisely defined as a x-percent rogue entity within a solid watch industry. But extrastatecraft can also be defined as political autonomy under completely different circumstances and with very different results, as recent experiments in autonomy from Hong Kong to Rojava have demonstrated.

But autonomous art could even be art set free

54

Most pronouncedly expressed by Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974). English translation: *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984): 90.

55

Which might fulfill the traditional role of a “financial tombstone”—a gadget that commemorates concluded transaction. [bit.ly/2pHoNzw](http://bit.ly/2pHoNzw)

both from its authors and owners. Remember the disclaimer by OMA? Now imagine every art work in freeports to be certified by this text: “I am not able to confirm the authenticity of this artwork.”

This is the Cultural Center in Suruç, Turkey. It is across the border from the city of Kobanê, the administrative center of the autonomous canton of the same name, which itself is located in the Rojava region of northern Syria. It is not a coincidence that the autonomous entities in Rojava are called cantons: they have been modeled after Swiss cantons, to emphasize the role that basic democracy played in initially establishing them.<sup>56</sup>

After the attack on the Kobanê canton by fighters from the so-called IS in September 2014, the Cultural Center was temporarily turned into another refugee camp, hosting several hundred people who fled from the besieged region around Kobanê. One of the refugees watched circling bombers through binoculars as the cultural workers and I discussed the role of culture and art.

But why am I showing you this? Remember the top-down view of contemporary art? In my dream—and perhaps also in reality—contemporary art was a layer that served to screen out the smashing of time and space on the ground. It served to project a disjunctive unity onto a geography marked by systems constructively “failing” to increase profitability, nation-states engulfed in civil war, fragmented time, and vast and major inequality. But a screen has two sides and potentially very different functions. It can decrease but also enhance visibility, protect and reveal, project and record, expose and conceal.

And now please edit this image: it shows the same situation from below, from under the screen.

It points very literally at a bottom-up

56

However limited basic democracy may have been in Switzerland, given that general female suffrage was not established until 1971, and in Appenzell Innerrhoden not until 1990.



— The Cultural Center in Suruç, Turkey, here represented, is across the border from the city of Kobanê, the administrative center of the autonomous canton of the same name, which itself is located in the Rojava region of northern Syria. Photo: Hito Steyerl



model from a ground zero where time and space, and in some cases borders and nation-states, are smashed, as during the time when the first public museum was founded, creating not only junk space—a term coined by Rem Koolhaas that deeply influenced my work—but also junk time.<sup>57</sup>

When we look at this screen from above, we see a model of contemporary art, which has created the secret museum as one of its most important spaces, a model of terminal impermanence, of privacy and concealment, of constructive instability.

If we only knew what the guy with the binoculars sees from below, we might see its future public counterpart.

57

A term invented by Sven Lütticken.

93-115

Working Proposal:  
6 Issues about UFC\*

Inconstancy of  
Memories, Rainy  
Seasons and  
Post-Development

*Andreas Siekmann*

Andreas Siekmann: born 1961 in Hamm (D), studied art in Düsseldorf, lives and works in Berlin. Exhibitions at Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (2010), and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2010). Together with Alice Creischer he curated the projects "Ex Argentina" at Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz (2011), Palais de Glace, Buenos Aires (2006) and Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2004); and "Principio Potosí" at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2010). He took part at Skulptur Projekte Münster (2007), and documenta 11 (2002) and documenta 12 (2007).

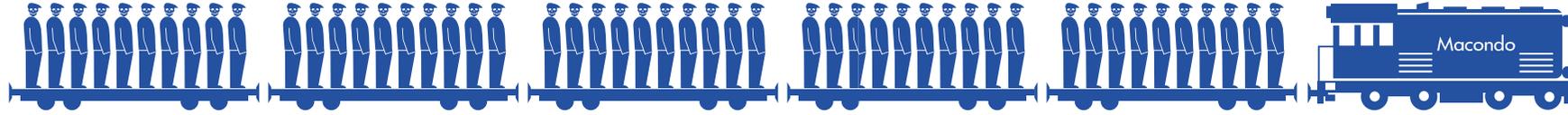
# Working Proposal: 6 Issues about the UFC

## Inconstancy of Memories, Rainy Seasons and Post-Development

1

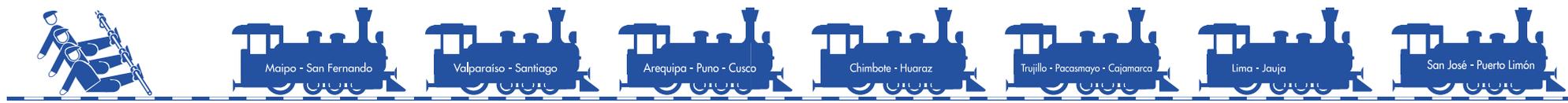


2



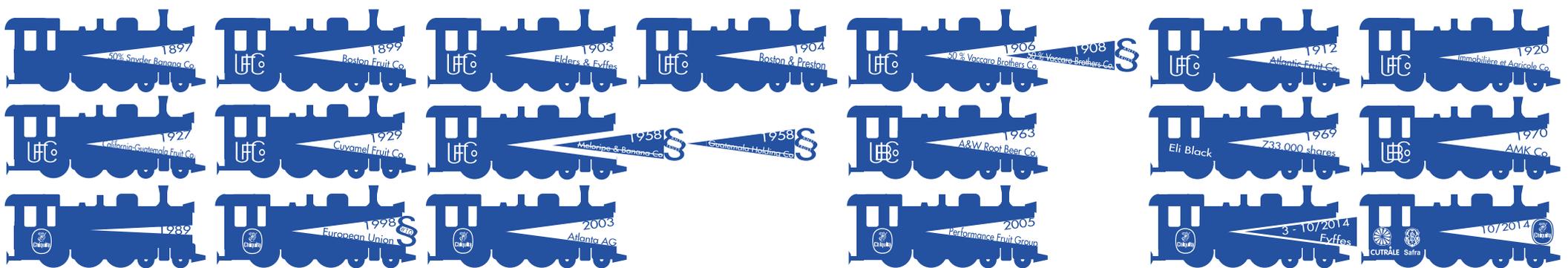
Each figure 40 persons

3



Punishment received by laborers drunk in the tasks of the engineer Henry Meiggs

4 a)



b)



Macondo

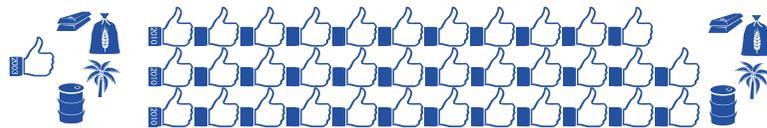
c)



Each figure 65 tons (GDR)

New Laender

d)



Each hand 13 Billion \$ over-the-counter market (OTC)

5



February 3, 1975

6



Each figure 1000 workers, since August 1997...

Rainforest Alliance 1993

May 11, 1998

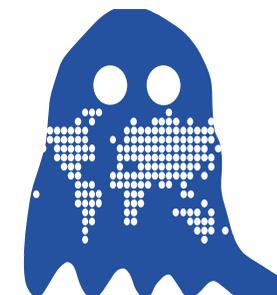
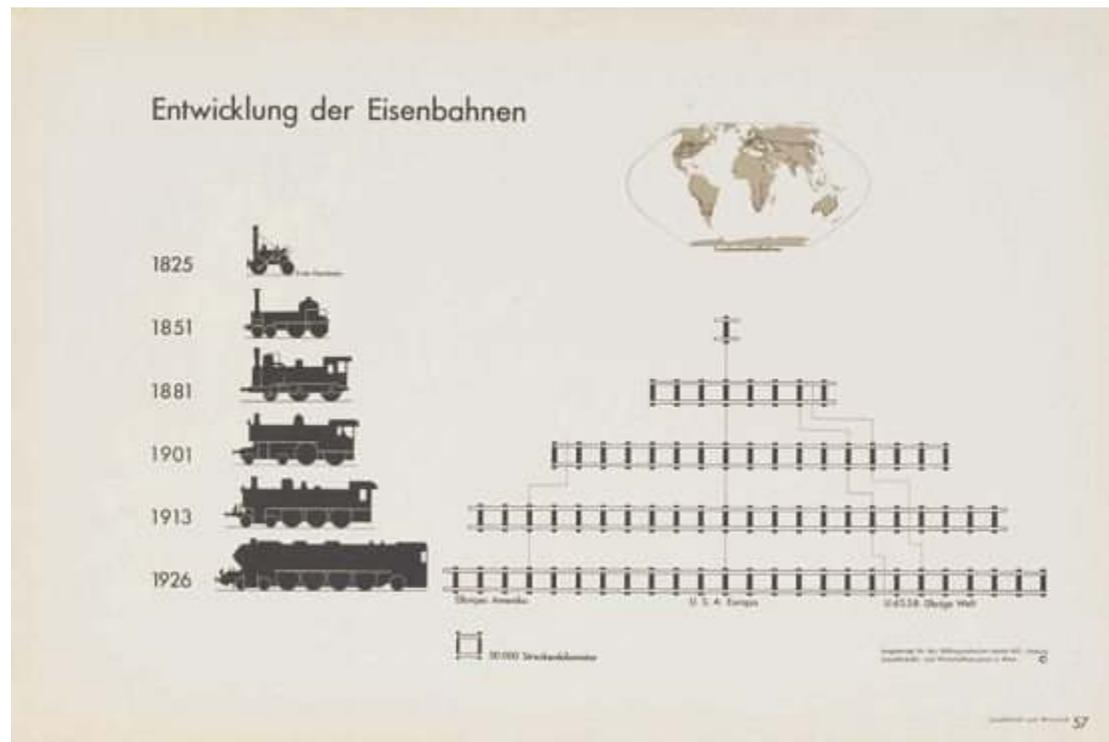
Foro Social de las Américas, Asunción, Paraguay, August 2010

<sup>1</sup>  
MECW Volume 12, 125;  
[bit.ly/2NNNFHW](http://bit.ly/2NNNFHW)

### 1. Nectar from the skulls of the slain

In the summer of 1853, Karl Marx wrote three articles for the *New York Daily Tribune*: June 10: "British Rule in India," June 24: "The East India Company, its History and the Results of its Activities," July 22: "The Future Results of British Rule in India."

On June 10, he reported on the famine in Poona (known today as Pune), the collapse of the spinning mills, and the ruin of the Indian cotton industry. He describes the trade flows of the East India Company and the international connections of exploitation. He cites a report of the British House of Commons on Indian issues: "... and though the villages themselves have been sometimes injured, and even desolated by war, famine or disease, the same name, the same limits, the same interests, and even the same families have continued for ages. The inhabitants gave themselves no trouble about the breaking up and divisions of kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred, or to what sovereign it devolves; its internal economy remains unchanged."<sup>1</sup> But he despises this indifference towards the forms of government, which for us could be an enchantment. He is in love with the telegraph poles, the power of steam, and the railway tracks. He writes: "There have been in Asia,



2  
Ibid.

3  
Ibid.

generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of Government—that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of War, or the plunder of the exterior; and, finally, the department of Public Works”<sup>2</sup> which is, for example, responsible for the irrigation of the soil and the creation of grain inventories. He thinks of the famines and the destruction of infrastructure as a historical strait through which one must pass in order to be connected to what Hegel called the *Weltgeist* (World Spirit). For Marx, the *Weltgeist* realizes itself through technical progress. The subsistent life, which according to Hegel has no conscience of itself, these “small stereotype forms of social organism ... are disappearing, not so much through the brutal interference of the British tax-gatherer and the British soldier, as through the working of English steam and English free trade.”<sup>3</sup>

The British colonial government was not limited to looting, also behaved like a good investor. The connection to history took place through the construction of railroads, streets, and telegraph lines, whose mere upkeep was a revolution of technical abilities and was to result in the cosmopolitan knowledge of the population. This was a requirement for the expropriation of the expropriators at a later stage.

In Marx’s view, the crime of the colonial

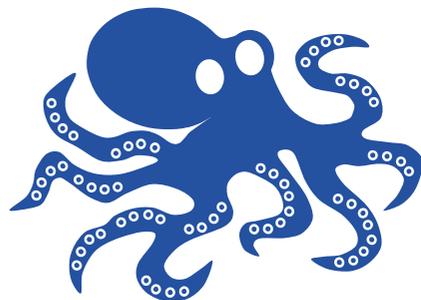
4  
Ibid., 217;  
[bit.ly/2CpWzMS](https://bit.ly/2CpWzMS)

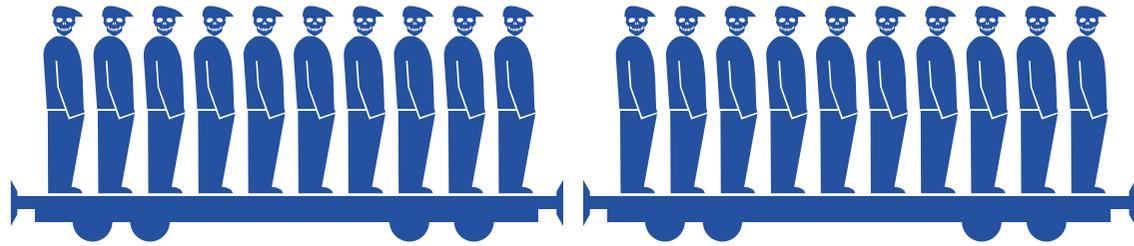
5  
Jason M. Colby, *The Business of Empire*  
(London: Cornell University Press, 2011),  
101.

government is a necessary force of history that here becomes nature—as sure, predictable, indispensable, and true as the course of history: “Bourgeois industry and commerce create these material conditions of a new world in the same way as geological revolutions have created the surface of the Earth. When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production, and subjected them to the common control of the most advanced peoples, then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous, pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain.”<sup>4</sup>

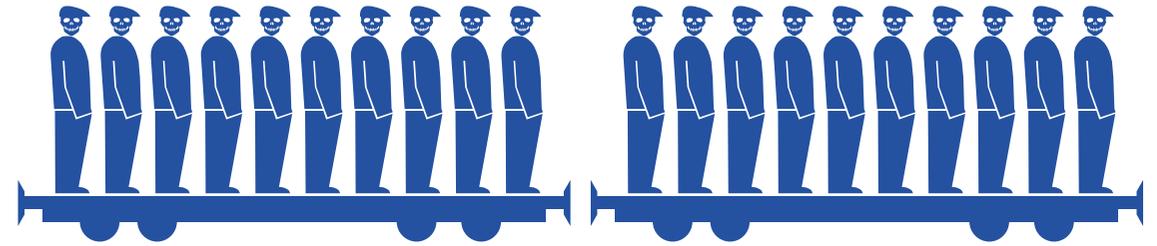
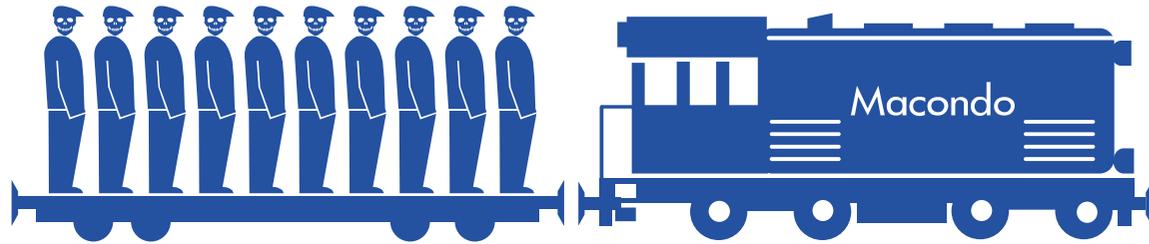
“There are some ... who make fun of us for thinking that (United Fruit President) Andrew Preston could come and take over Costa Rica for himself. It’s a pity that these writers haven’t ... read the history of modern conquests carefully. India did not lose its independence because Great Britain had declared war on the Indian princes. It was a merchant company similar to the United Fruit Company which created English interests there and was the precursor to Great Britain’s regular armies.”

Congressional Deputy Ricardo Jiménez,  
Costa Rica, 1907.<sup>5</sup>





Each figure 40 persons



## 2. Fickle tricks of memory

"It happened once when someone at the table complained about the ruin into which the town had sunk when the banana company had abandoned it, and Aureliano contradicted him. ... His point of view, contrary to the general interpretation, was that Macondo had been a prosperous place and well on its way until it was disordered and corrupted and suppressed by the banana company, whose engineers brought on the deluge as a pretext to avoid promises made to the workers. ... The child described with precise and convincing details how the army had machine-gunned more than three thousand workers penned up by the station and how

6  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez,  
*One Hundred Years of  
Solitude* (New York: Avon,  
1970), 168, 188.

they loaded the bodies onto a two-hundred-car train and threw them into the sea."

"Those fickle tricks of memory were even more critical when the killing of the workers was brought up. Every time that Aureliano mentioned the matter, not only the proprietress but some people older than she would repudiate the myth of the workers hemmed in at the station and the train with two hundred cars loaded with dead people, and they would even insist that, after all, everything had been set forth in judicial documents and in primary-school textbooks: that the banana company had never existed."<sup>6</sup>

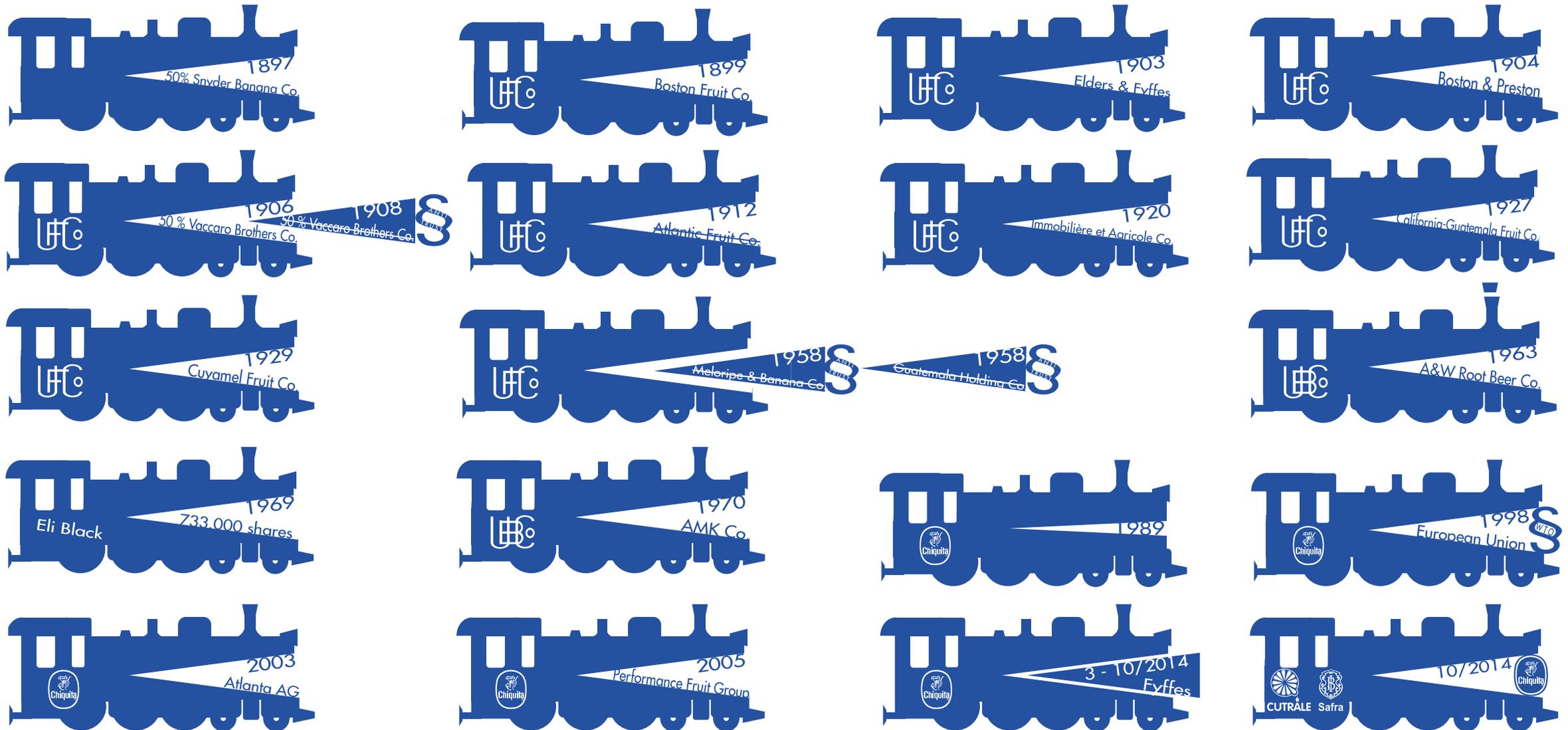


Punishment received by laborers drunk in the tasks of the engineer Henry Meiggs



### 3. Railroads

In 1855 financial juggler Henry Meiggs fled from San Francisco to Chile to escape prosecution for real-estate fraud. He became the railway king of Peru and Chile because his interests included the extraction of silver and guano, transported to the ports by rail. He died during the construction of a railroad in Costa Rica that was then completed by his nephew Minor C. Keith. How did the connection to world history unfold in Chile, Peru, and Costa Rica? Did the workers become engineers?

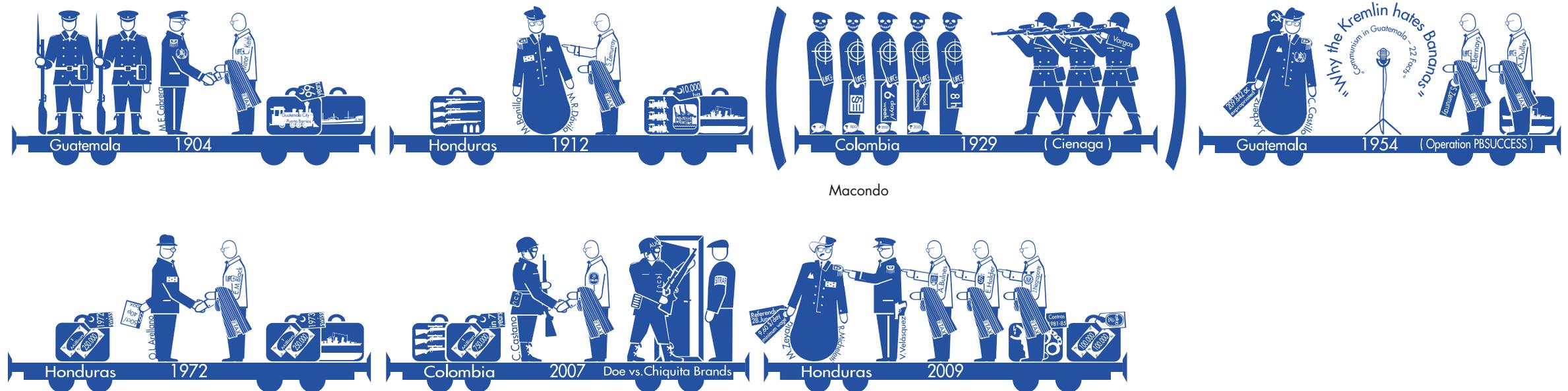


4. Departments of Plunder

The word “extractivism” originates from “extraction” and means extracting, disintegrating, gaining. Something is pulled out of the ground, brought to the port, and exported. Extractivism is part of a cyclical movement of capital (assets): the exploitation of resources when profit is in crisis due to the exploitation of labor. Why does the exploitation of labor get into crisis?

a) Department of Finances

The railroad completed by Minor C. Keith in Costa Rica generated no profit but became a transmission belt for the export of bananas to the USA. A history of competition, mergers, and hostile takeovers of fruit companies followed, continuing right up to the present day.



## b) Department of War

This history of trade wars is mirrored by the history of military interventions and corruption in the countries that produce bananas. It is a thinly-veiled history of colonial power, which treats these countries and their plantations as its own. Such military interventions are a war against the workers and against governments wishing to enforce labor rights or land reforms. This war continues to the present day.

### Macondo

In December 1928 the workers of Colombia's banana plantations went on strike. "They demand written contracts, eight-hour days, six-day weeks and the elimination of food coupons. The strike turns into the largest labor movement ever witnessed

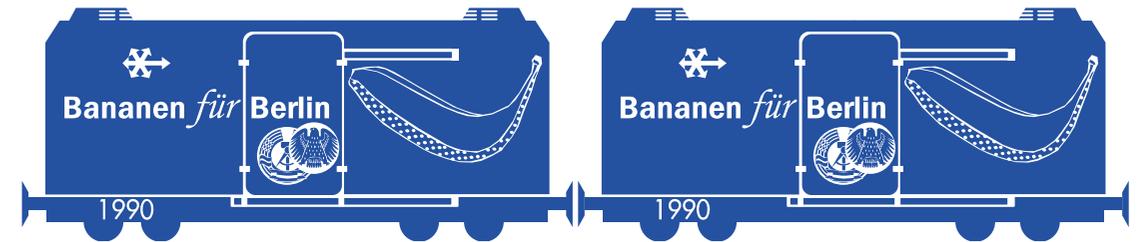
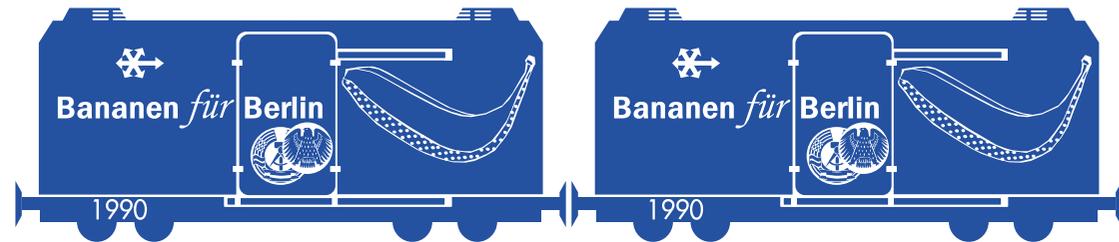
7

United Fruit Historical Society, 2001-2006, prepared by Marcelo Bucheli in collaboration with Ian Read: [bit.ly/2CnQsZ1](http://bit.ly/2CnQsZ1).

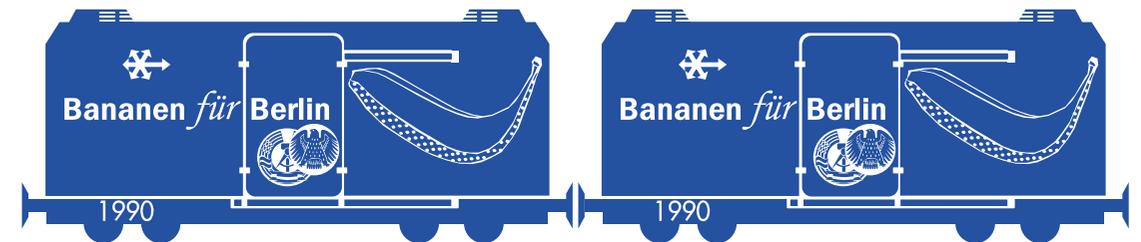
in the country and radical members of the Liberal Party and members of the Socialist and Communist Parties participate strongly. National Labor Union bigwigs Carlos Mahecha and Maria Cano travel to the 'Banana Zone' to organize the strike. They count on the help of Italian and Spanish anarchist immigrants for this. ... The banana workers' strike continues into January and gets national attention since it is supported by the Liberal Party. The Conservative Party, which controls the government, decides to send the army into the Banana Zone. During a demonstration in the main plaza of the city of Cienaga the army, commanded by Carlos Cortes Vargas, fires on the strikers and leaves an undetermined (and disputed) number of strikers dead. The government declares a state of siege in the Banana Zone and the strike eventually ends."<sup>7</sup>



Each figure 65 tons (GDR)



New Laender



## c) Department of Desire

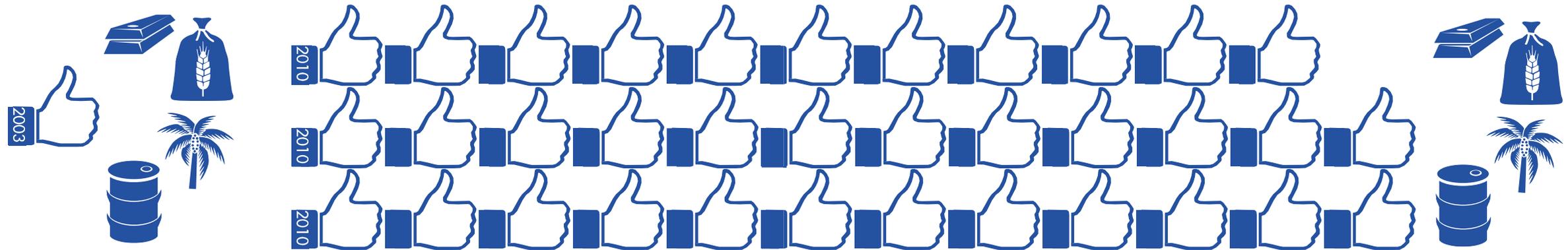
In 1926 United Fruit bought Cuyamel, its competitor, and became the largest banana exporter. The same year, United Fruit commissioned research into banana consumption in the USA. "The consultants' results say that bananas are consumed by a large sector of the country's middle class and are considered the perfect food for babies. After this report, United Fruit ... begins an aggressive campaign in national newspapers and magazines targeted at middle-class families.

Fruit Dispatch establishes the Education Department in addition to the Advertising

8  
ibid.

Department. The Education Department prints educational materials for classroom use promoting banana consumption."<sup>8</sup> This campaign still continues today.

As with the campaigns for sugar, coffee, tea, or cocoa, it does not correspond with need, but with the desire that is connected with ideologies. Tea and coffee are linked to civilization and education and motivation of the night shifts using the new electricity. Bananas are linked with a Fordist image of welfare and care. In 1914, economist Eugen Böhm von Bawerk described needs as the "locomotive" of an economy devised to fulfil demand. But this concept of demand fulfilment is wrong.



Each hand 13 Billion \$ over-the-counter market (OTC)

d) I will now briefly talk about extractivism

"I believe we are now living in a second phase of neo-liberalism. The first took place in the 1990s, you experienced it here in Ecuador, and there were a number of riots against it. This was the neo-liberalism of privatization: it arrived in Latin America, privatizing, raiding, destroying the state, and appropriating communitarian structures, including many state-owned companies. This stage concluded around the year 2000, but only because we stopped it ourselves, through resistance—there were dozens of popular uprisings throughout Latin America, from Mexico to Patagonia. Now we are seeing the start of a second neoliberal phase, which can be called extractivism ... A fundamental worldwide change is now taking place ... Countries occupying the center space are experiencing a severe crisis, which has also led to a crisis in production ... Production is no longer the principal source of capital accumulation, and we need to develop an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind this. Production always exists where there are people, men and women. It exists in rural and

9

Raol Zibechi, "Encuentro de los Pueblos del Anya Yala por el Agua y la Pachamama, Cuenca, Ecuador," July 10, 2011: [bit.ly/2pSCP1v](http://bit.ly/2pSCP1v)

farming communities, factories, and urban spaces. And it is in those spaces that we, at the bottom of society, have learnt to resist, to organize, so that we can frustrate capitalist exploitation and the extraction of value. As a result, capital has withdrawn from production, starting to accumulate through financial speculation and what we call extractivism. Capitalism has stepped up a level and now speculates with gold and silver, with land and water, and with life itself... Today, the most valued products are precious minerals (gold, silver, and so on) and food, and therefore what we are seeing is actually speculation over people's lives.

We people are a disturbance in this capital accumulation and, as I see it, we need to maintain a very clear understanding of this position. Regardless of who is in government, if they do not change the situation, they will continue to do the bidding of the powerful. ... Firstly, there is no extractivism, mining, soya farming or monocultures without the militarization of society. And this is not by mistake, militarization is part of the extractivism model. There is no open-pit mining, no mega-mining, without militarization."<sup>9</sup>

## 5. What we have to discuss

## Fear

The productivity of the economy doesn't align to needs, nor does it create development. Moreover, it is driven by the fears of its actors. It is not the fear of emptiness, but the fear of the other. The economy races because its actors chase after each other. Each individual actor is scared that one day they will be forced to jump out of the window. How do wars react to this fear regarding the capacity for exploitation of soils, fruit, and people? How can we discuss extractivism in relation to this?

## Rainy season

The banana company leaves Macondo in the rain, which lasts four years, eleven months and two days. The rain starts—like a punishing deluge—after the massacre of the workers. After the massacre, the banana company promises a

contract that is supposed to respond to the strikers' demands. The contract is to be signed when the rain stops. The rain is the time that elapses between demand and right, but instead the company leaves the place before the right is redeemed. It is not possible to conclude contracts between investors and workers, but rather ...

## Fickle tricks of memory

“And they would even insist that, after all, everything had been set forth in judicial documents and in primary-school textbooks: that the banana company had never existed.” So is Macondo a place where “they care not to what power it is transferred, or to what sovereign it devolves,” is it the place in the school-books? But we cannot content ourselves with this. We cannot forget this resistance and the time that elapses between a right and its redemption, because we keep alive the memory of the crime and its history.



February 3, 1975



10  
Christel Neusüß,  
quoted by Maria Mies  
in "Housewifisation,  
Globalisation, Subsistence-  
Perspective," in Marcel  
van der Linden, Karl Heinz  
Roth, eds., *Beyond Marx:  
Theorising the Global  
Labour Relations of the  
Twenty-First Century*  
(Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014),  
217.

6. Development

"Later, once it's been properly established, [capitalism] won't need violence anymore. It will work productively—peacefully, somewhat to the detriment of labour-power, it's true, but without anything resembling the murderous escapades of the conquistadors. This is the point at which our comrade [Rosa Luxemburg] strictly refuses to believe Marx. He's wrong, it's plain to see. Violence is booming ... The hour of birth can't possibly last this long, four hundred years, still oozing blood and filth."<sup>10</sup>

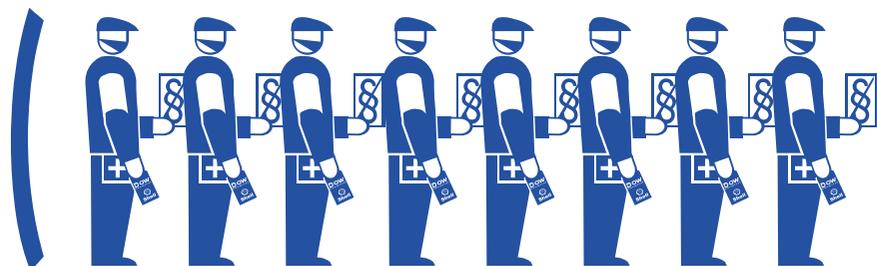
"It is subsistence that is fundamentally opposed to capital, not wage-labour. For capital, it is a question of transforming all autonomous life into commodities and inserting it into a commodity-relation. ... Capital has been waging war on subsistence for more than two hundred years. The former president of the World Bank, Robert McNamara, once formulated the actual goal of capitalism very clearly: 'to draw peasants

11  
Ibid., 231.

12  
Alberto Acosta, "El Buen Vivir en la senda de posdesarrollo," in Gabriela Massuh, ed., *Renunciar al bien común. Extractivismo y (pos)desarrollo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Mardulce, 2012).

away from subsistence and into commercial production'."<sup>11</sup>

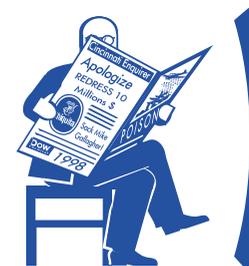
"The expression 'Buen vivir' (the Good Life) is not an elaborate political concept. Instead, it gathers possibilities for new forms of coexistence. It is not about adopting a recipe already outlined in official documents, such as the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador with their plans for development policy according to the criteria of the Good Life. The Good Life suggests a qualitative pattern to detach the traditional concept of progress from its productivist drift, as well as the one-sided orientation towards "development" and its mechanistic vision of economic growth, and many other such synonyms for "progress and development." But it is not just about this resolution. The Good Life ... attempts to conceive of a different relationship between production, exchange, cooperation, and accumulation. It tries to come up with criteria for sufficiency ... The Good Life defies the permanent betrayal of democracy ..."<sup>12</sup>



Each figure 1000 workers, since 1997...



Rainforest Alliance 1993



May 11, 1998



Foro Social de las Américas, Asunción, Paraguay, August 20

# In the Stomach of the Predators

There is a vault in Spitzbergen in the side of the mountain  
for all the seeds from all over the world.  
It was put there by the same companies  
that destroy these seeds  
by undertaking their appropriation.  
Now the companies are using this vault  
to perpetuate their own phenomenon  
as a universal form of expression.

Wolf: Of bread, of maize.  
Of manioc, of cassava.  
Of potatoes.  
Of rice.  
Of some trees made completely of flowers.  
Of the excess gold and pearls in Las Indias.  
Of the nature of that soil and how to extract all these riches.  
Of beeches.

Hyena: From the beeches shall you strip the fresh leaves  
only by hand  
in May and in June  
and in the allocated areas.

You should scrape resin from trees  
more than 4 feet tall  
every 2 years.  
And the cuts that you inflict  
must not exceed 2 inches.

Collect brush for brooms  
from the ground.  
Do not break it from the branches.

Failure to comply is punishable with a fine of 5 talers.  
Failure to pay is punishable with no less than 48 hours in jail  
or service in the woods  
of the proprietor,  
with 1 workday = to 2 days in jail.

That's how hard it is to serve the proprietor.

Alice Creischer

In the Stomach of the Predators

Sources: Joseph De Acosta,  
The Natural and Moral Historie  
of the Indies, trans. Edward  
Grimston (London, 1604).  
Minutes of the 6th Rhenish  
Provincial Diet, Coblenz 1841.  
Plato, Parmenides.  
Ion Creangă, "The Fairy-tale of  
the White Moor" (Povestea lui  
Harap-Alb) in Romanian Fairy  
Tales (Bucharest 1987).  
Translated by David Riff, 2013

There is a cadaster in Benin  
the same size as the entire country.  
It was implemented by the Millennium Challenge Program  
which dedicates its efforts to the advancement  
of the human right to the freedom of sale.  
The cadaster helps to turn the sale of land  
into a universal form of expression.  
Its data goes to Wall Street at a discount.

Bear: If 1 work day = 2 days in jail,  
then 1 is equal and unequal  
in the same moment of time.  
1 glove, 1 collar, 1 stick  
4 acres, 3 ares, 10 hectares  
can be 1 and nothing  
at the same moment.  
Because we have removed these equations from time  
taking them into our own hands.

Hyena: So great is the beauty of the proprietor's hand  
that it can now perpetrate its own equations as  
a universal form of expression.  
And everything partakes in it in this same moment  
because by partaking of it everything becomes 1.

In Istanbul there is a construction volume  
of 34.6 billion \$.  
It was bankrolled by investors from all over the world.  
The investors invest in order to make investments.  
The population can watch these investments  
from the outskirts of town, on bleachers of rubble.  
They look into the crater and bet  
on the permanence of the vacancy rates.

Sometimes it unsettles us to know  
that some things like  
fruit flies, peanuts, hair, and dust  
could name themselves as equations  
as they fall through our fingers.

This is why we will never look at these things  
as they fall  
for fear of sinking into the abyss of appearances,  
bad magic, card tricks, and bullshit.

And to see what no one wants to see -  
the trees with their crowns upside down,  
the cattle with its legs in the sky.  
And to see people stare at us with open mouths  
and not to know why you are staring  
and why you aren't amazed at your own beauty.

121-131

Petrocosmos

*Bureau d'Études*

Bureau d'Études: group of artists and teachers, live and work in Saint Menoux (F). For the past twenty years, the group has been developing research on the structures of power and capitalism ([www.bureaudetudes.org](http://www.bureaudetudes.org)). The group now lives in the countryside, working on a full-scale collective project across agriculture, commons, and resymbolizing experiments ([www.fermedelamhotte.fr](http://www.fermedelamhotte.fr)). Bureau d'Études is co-founder of the "Laboratory Planet" collective and journal ([laboratoryplanet.org](http://laboratoryplanet.org)) and of the "Aliens in Green" project ([aliensingreen.eu](http://aliensingreen.eu)). Some recent projects and exhibitions at Utrecht Science Park, Utrecht University (NL), 2015-2017 ([www.zerofoot-printcampus.nl](http://www.zerofoot-printcampus.nl)) and ZKM, Karlsruhe (2016).

“Who could have imagined the power of these fossil fuels which, emerging from the archives of the Earth where they had been buried for tens of millions of years, proceeded to heat up the atmosphere, the land, and the oceans, reawakening the specter of the fifth mass extinction event of 65 million years ago?”

Two centuries of fossil fuel usage have enthroned the North Pole as a pivotal region for centuries to come. As the ice melts in the twenty-first century, a new sea is emerging and what yesterday was frozen and hostile will soon be transformed into a temperate zone. Long largely deserted, Eurasia could well be a new Eldorado for populations from the regions in the south that have become uninhabitable.

Who could have imagined the power of these fossil fuels which, emerging from the archives of the Earth where they had been buried for tens of millions of years, proceeded to heat up the atmosphere, the land, and the oceans, reawakening the specter of the fifth mass extinction event of 65 million years ago? Greenhouse gas emissions seem to be recreating the climate of the Paleocene-Eocene, when the planet was tropical and ice-free. Homo sapiens did not yet exist, and nor did any known civilization ...

#### The push for the pole

No one on Earth today can imagine the eventual future of human societies. The melting of the Siberian permafrost is accelerating global heating by releasing huge clouds of carbon dioxide and of methane, a greenhouse gas thirty times more damaging than CO<sub>2</sub>. It also emits nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas three hundred times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub>, which was long used as an anesthetic for surgery and as an attraction in nineteenth-century fairgrounds, where it induced states of hilarity, euphoria, giggling, and hallucinations. The poet Robert Southey wrote: “I am sure the air in heaven must be this wonder working gas of delight.” And indeed, a dream arises from the melting of the Arctic ice: the land freed of ice could turn green while cities appear where once there was nothing but barren whiteness ...

This dream of a great northern civilization echoes an old story. For the North Pole is one of the mythical locations of the Earthly Paradise, witness the work by a former President of the University of Boston, Dr. Warren, entitled *The Paradise Found or the Cradle of the Human Race at the North Pole* (1893). This myth is making a comeback as the thaw gathers pace, announcing a new polar civilization: "What the Aegean Sea was to classical antiquity, what the Mediterranean was to the Roman world, what the Atlantic Ocean was to the expanding Europe of Renaissance days, the Arctic Ocean is becoming to the world of aircraft and atomic power."<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to Keenleyside's vision, the Arctic Ocean was not the Mediterranean of the Cold War. But as the East/West barrier recedes, it might well be the Mediterranean of the Anthropocene. According to the Russian parliament's State Committee for Northern Affairs, the Arctic icecap could have disappeared by 2070 ...

If the Mediterranean saw the birth of agricultural and pastoral civilizations with their accompanying cortege of malnutrition, epidemics, famine, and class divisions,<sup>2</sup> then one can wonder about the fate of a civilization centered around a temperate Arctic Ocean. The truth is, we have no idea. All we know is how oil has modified Earth's climate, ecosystems, and organisms. We know that plastics, these petrochemical materials that embodied modernity's promise to create a perfect world, clean and plentiful, under techno-scientific control, are now to be found in food chains and in our blood.

With annual global production at around 300 million cubic meters (2016), "enough plastic has been manufactured since the mid-20th century to cover Earth in a single layer of plastic wrap."<sup>3</sup> To take only phthalates—a class of synthetic polymers used as plasticizers, especially in cosmetic products such as nail

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Llewellyn Keenleyside, Canada's Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources (1942), quoted in Barry Scott Zellen, *Arctic Doom, Arctic Boom: The Geopolitics of Climate Change* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clío, 2009), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Cohen and George Armelagos, *Paleopathology at the Origins of Agriculture* (Cambridge: Academic Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Jan Zalasiewicz et al., "The Geological Cycle of Plastics and Their Use as a Stratigraphic Indicator of the Anthropocene," *Anthropocene* 13 (2016), 4-17.

varnish, perfumes, deodorants, shampoos, soaps, etc.—their toxic effects on animals and humans are known, interfering with biological systems (reproductive, digestive, endocrine, nervous) and causing a broad range of health problems. Phthalates are considered to be xenoestrogens that imitate hormones, disturbing endocrine functions and raising fears of a feminization of males.

Plastics have been found at North Pole where, together with other toxic substances, they are disrupting reproductive functions and causing anomalies in whales, seals, and seabirds. Several large-scale studies carried out in the Arctic have confirmed that the region's main predators, such as polar bears and belugas, are contaminated by chemical products including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), organochlorine pesticides, and flame retardants, and by the plastic residues that now circle the Earth's oceans in the form of huge floating continents.

The emergence of Eurasia  
Oil is the lifeblood of globalization, this planetary project of the world's elites. As the history of the twentieth century has abundantly shown, the interests of these largely Anglo-American elites have been underpinned by collaboration with the military, shareholders, and managers.<sup>4</sup> This alliance explains why American military bases, consultants, and private contractors continue to guard oilfields and pipelines in Colombia, in the Caspian, in Africa, in the Balkans, and in the Middle East.

From an institutional viewpoint, globalization was underpinned by the Bretton Woods system put in place in 1944, with US dollars as the principle currency for world business and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the central institutions managing this huge enterprise. Beginning in 1971, central banks

<sup>4</sup> Wright Mills, *The Power Elite: New Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

were obliged to keep dollars in reserve to protect against monetary crises, support export exchange rates, or finance oil imports. However, this great structure of global political and economic governance is now coming apart. The formation and reinforcement of interdependencies between China, Russia, Africa, Central Asia, and Europe reflects the emergence of a new continent that is home to the world's largest reserves of oil, coal, and gas. The vision of the political geographer Halford MacKinder seems to be becoming reality. In his famous text on "The Geographical Pivot of History," presented at the Royal Geographical Society in London in January 1904, he describes Eurasia as the natural seat of planetary power, determining the future of world politics on account of its access to resources and its strategic location. The heart of Eurasia is one that pumps oil and gas, traversed by the pipelines and railways of the New Silk Roads. MacKinder said: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland. Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island. Who rules the World Island commands the World."<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, as Nicholas Spykman has proclaimed, the formula has changed: "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the World."<sup>6</sup>

Eurasia is only now beginning to take shape as a continent. But one can already see a nexus of twenty-first-century civilization emerging, at the heart of what MacKinder calls the pivotal zone, the axis of world history. In this new continental organization, China occupies the position of the Central Kingdom. But it does not have a hegemonic vocation, and the Chinese Empire will not replace the American Empire.

The theory of hegemony, according to which the stability of global organization requires a single hegemon to serve as lender, market, and defender of last recourse,<sup>7</sup> is now in crisis.

5

Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1919), 150.

6

Nicholas Spykman, *The Geography of Peace* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1944), 43.

7

Charles P. Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

World wars to establish hegemony could be replaced by a different world order based on a sharing of responsibilities. Such a distributed globalism would replace the abstract rules imposed by the American hegemon.<sup>8</sup> This distributism differs from the regulation-based approach used by the Americans,<sup>9</sup> and could develop concepts other than those on which the Westphalian order was based: sovereignty, territorial states, and a balance of power.<sup>10</sup>

At present, the American project is in decline. The role of the dollar as the key reserve currency, which seemed to be carved in stone, is now being called into question. Whereas in October 2010, the Chinese yuan ranked thirty-fifth among the world's most used currencies, by December 2013 it had jumped to eighth place. And three years later, on July 1, 2016, the yuan became the fifth currency to be included by the IMF in its system of special drawing rights, taking third place behind the US dollar and the euro. Major globalization projects such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), were halted by President Donald Trump on his first full day in office at the end of January 2017. As part of the same dynamic, new multilateral institutions are emerging, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank that competes with the IMF and the World Bank; the Silk Road Fund created in 2014 to develop the infrastructures of the New Silk Roads; and the New Development Bank created in 2015 by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Territories without oil, territory  
without water

There is a direct territorial correlation between the use of energy, its control, and the development of civilization, just as there

8

Kent E. Calder, *Super Continent: The Logic of Eurasian Integration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

9

Theodore J. Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies, and Political Theory," *World Politics* 16, no. 4 (July 1964), pp. 676-716.

10

Paul Evans, "Historians and Chinese World Order: Fairbank, Wang, and the Matter of 'Intermediate Relevance,'" in *China and International Relations: The Chinese View and the Contribution of Wang Gungwu*, ed. Zheng Yongnian (New York: Routledge, 2010).

is a direct correlation between the presence of temperate water and the development of a biosphere. But the two zones do not meet in modern industrial society.

Oil is a precondition for the creation of all commodities. It is, as Schumacher observed, a basic element as important to our societies as water, air, and soil. But after a century of oil-based civilization, a new situation is appearing: life in all its diversity is dying while commercial products multiply to infinity around the world. That which (besides the sun) sustains life is becoming scarce. Wetlands are disappearing everywhere due to the effects of climate heating. In Asia, more than 500 square kilometers vanish every year to make way for urbanization, industry, and irrigation. By 2080, with rising sea levels, 40 to 50 percent of the world's coastal wetlands will have disappeared. Desertification affects 3.6 billion hectares of land in more than one hundred countries, and irrigation increases the pressure on rivers, lakes, and groundwater."

Elsewhere, the first decade of the new millennium marked the passing of Hubbert's peak oil, signaling the future exhaustion of fossil resources and anticipating similar peaks for other raw materials. And it is true that these resources are now diminishing, by 2 percent per annum, causing huge direct and indirect economic and social damage to industrial society.

One can already foresee a worsening of wars for control over the remaining fossil fuels, wars that will only become more numerous, their violence growing as temperatures rise and fresh water becomes scarce.

Africa, where 70 percent of the population lives off the land, is one of the continents most affected by and most vulnerable to climate change. Expert estimates suggest that one third of Africa's population lives in zones subject to

11

Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, *L'or bleu: L'eau, le grand enjeu du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

drought and that close to 200 million people are exposed every year to its direct impact in the form of famine and epidemics. Drought, desertification, and resource scarcity have aggravated conflicts between agricultural and livestock farmers. The drying out of Lake Chad brings economic marginalization and creates a fertile breeding ground for recruitment by terrorist groups as social values and moral authority erode.

We can imagine the levels of violence that will accompany the advent of the post-oil world. We can imagine a new northern nexus of strategic, economic, and military interests. Looking down on the earth from space, we can imagine expanses of water surrounded by missile launchers.

For years now, scientists who measure the size of the polar ice sheet from space have been announcing that it has never been smaller. And each year marks a new record in its shrinking. Perceiving the human push northwards presupposes the ability to project the present into what is not yet there, into what does not (yet) exist, into the future—the emergence of the Pole as a geographical power. It is not only the point of orientation for every compass, but also a future habitat.

This habitat has some strange characteristics: the only direction is south, and the Pole is not in any time zone—it is the spot from which the lines of longitude begin. As the old realm of icy peace comes undone, it is in this strange place that new international shipping routes are opening up, with the North-West Passage connecting the markets of Asia, North America, and Europe, but without the vulnerable pinch-points of current routes like the Malacca Straits or the Panama and Suez Canals. A container ship sailing from China to New York via the Arctic rather than through the Panama

Canal would reduce its voyage by three thousand kilometers and save two million dollars in fuel costs.<sup>12</sup>

Such an outlook suffices to tame these once remote zones of empires and states, arid zones battered by wind and cold, plunged into darkness for half of the year, home to small populations living under extreme conditions. Now, as the Inuit of Nunavut have understood, the transformation of the Pole points to a future whose face is becoming more and more clearly visible with every passing day and which seems, for some, to be full of promise. The population of Greenland see the color in their country's name becoming a reality, imagining new fertile land for farming, abundant accessible raw materials, and new deposits of oil and gas. In a referendum held on November 25, 2008, 75 percent voted for increased autonomy.

However, there is nothing to suggest that the green lands of the North will become fertile. All that is certain is the prospect of a world without oil where soils will often be dried out and surrounded by acid oceans. The other certainty, as Italian anthropologist Alberto Angela puts it in his work of historical fiction *A Day in the Life of Ancient Rome*, is that a cup of gasoline is equivalent to the energy needed by fifty slaves to push a Fiat for two hours.<sup>13</sup>

Human energy is feeble compared with the power of oil, and a world without oil (in the absence of an equivalent substitute) would resemble a labor camp where it would be necessary to pedal twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for three years and eight months, without vacations, to produce the equivalent of one barrel of oil. An average North American who uses 23.6 barrels of oil every year would have to employ the equivalent of eighty-nine virtual slaves to cover this level of energy consumption, and a family of five would need almost five hundred,

12

Vice Admiral Thomas J. Barrett, USCG (Ret.), Deputy Secretary of Transportation, Remarks to the MARAD Arctic Transportation Conference, Washington, DC, June 5, 2008.

13

Alberto Angela, *A Day in the Life of Ancient Rome: Daily Life, Mysteries, and Curiosities* (New York: Europa Editions, 2009).

not taking into account the fact that they would consume more energy in food than they would produce by pedaling.<sup>14</sup> This world is as impossible as the world of oil has become. It will therefore be other worlds that we will have to force ourselves to bring into being. To achieve this, we will have to go back and ask those who for millennia have been developing the art of confronting the extraordinary.

14

Andrew Nikiforuk, *The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude* (Vancouver: Greystone, 2012).

# Every Day

## THE NEW FORESTS COMPANY

In 2004 the New Forests Company began  
with 5 million euros from the European Investment Bank,  
easily outbid by Agri-Vie,  
which has six seats on the supervisory board,  
which is in turn fed by the International Finance Co.,  
a branch, a bifurcation, a leaf-vein of the World Bank ...

In 2004 the New Forests Company began  
negotiations with the government in U  
on licensing land  
for 3 plants à 20,000 hectares  
to grow timber  
in the communities of Mubende, Kiboga, and Bugiri.

In Mubende, Kiboga, Bugiri.

The company promised:  
in 10 years  
A: to invest 47 million dollars  
B: to employ 1,400 persons.  
A: A taking of breath, a scraping of rakes on pebble driveways,  
boarding schools by mountain lakes.  
B: A connection to the dependency of survival on money

The dependency of survival on money.

The company had already planted 12 million pine trees beforehand  
in the same regions,  
to check their growth,  
and they are thriving excellently.

Excellently.

The investment has severe restrictions,  
says the company.  
It is forbidden to let livestock pasture under the trees,  
and no more lying in the grass and  
blowing on the blades.  
Under the trees it is forbidden  
to plant vegetables or collect wood,  
with which charcoal can be gained to prepare food.

All this demands,  
before the money flows,  
an examination  
of who is eligible to stay there and for what reason.  
The examination brought the right of residence for 31 families  
to the light of day.

Alice Creischer

In the Stomach of the Predators  
Every Day – THE NEW  
FORESTS COMPANY

Source: Mr. Augustin Allen  
Witness in: Oxfam Case Study  
The New Forests Company and  
its Uganda plantations  
September 22, 2011  
[https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/  
s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/  
cs-new-forest-company-uganda-  
plantations-220911-en\\_4.pdf](https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/cs-new-forest-company-uganda-plantations-220911-en_4.pdf)

To the day that cannot divide itself.

And it furthermore proved  
that the other residents are intruders,  
that the land belongs to the state,  
which is thus legitimized  
to issue licenses  
to the New Forests Company  
for a long period of time.

For a long period of time,  
a scraping of rakes on pebbles,  
mountain lakes and boarding schools by mountain lakes.  
Undivided days.  
Undivided days.

In 2005, resettlement started with tractors  
with 670 horsepower  
whose tanks drink 1,900 liters of gas at once  
and whose shovels plow villages  
like hair is shaven from the head with a knife.  
This took place in Kiboga in June 2006  
and in February 2006 in Mubende.

It is said that 22,500 people  
were displaced  
and that this number could be considerably higher.  
But the company says that it was  
15,191 at the most.  
This number was ascertained by a district official  
from Kiboga.

And that even this number  
is possibly  
too high,  
because the official is unreliable,  
because it is said  
—although they paid him for this survey—  
that he often lies in the grass  
instead of counting,  
under the rows of pine trees  
staring through the order of needles  
to the sky,  
as if it were a crater  
and not a mountain lake.

Remember my land,  
three acres of coffee, many trees,  
mangoes and avocados.  
I had five acres of banana,  
I had cows for milk, ten beehives, two beautiful houses.  
People used to call me Omataka –  
someone who owns land.  
Now that is no more.  
I am one of the poorest.

# Every Day

## FUNDING OF LAND

### TAXES IN POONA

Waiwand :

The tenants have to borrow to pay the taxes.

Pimpalgon

They even have to borrow in good years.

Deulgaon

They borrow in some cases.

Kanagaon

The harvests are seldom ripe when the tax is due,  
therefore the tenants have to borrow.

Nandgaon.

They borrow when there is little rain  
and pawn the uncut harvest.

Dhond

They borrow and pawn the harvest on the stalk.

Girim

They borrow to their account and pawn the harvest on the stalk.

Sonwari

They borrow to pay the taxes.

They sell the livestock.

Wadhana

They pay the first rate by borrowing on the stalk.

If the harvest fails, they sell the land.

Morgaon

They pay the first rate by borrowing on the harvest on the stalk.

When there is no harvest, they borrow against interest.

Ambi

Ditto

Tardoli

Ditto

Alice Greischer

In the Stomach of the Predators  
Every Day – FUNDING  
OF LAND TAXES IN POONA

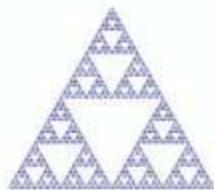
Source: Romesh Chunder Dutt,  
Famines and Land Assessments  
in India (London 1900)

139-157

Amazon Worker  
Cage

*Simon Denny*

Simon Denny: born in Auckland (NZ), studied at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland and Städelschule, Frankfurt (D). Solo exhibitions at institutions worldwide, including: MONA, Tasmania (until April 2020); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2017); OCAT Shenzhen (2017); Serpentine Galleries, London (2015); MoMa PS1, New York (2015); and MuMOK, Vienna (2013). In 2015, he represented New Zealand at the 56th Venice Biennale. He is professor of time-based media at University of Fine Arts, Hamburg (D).

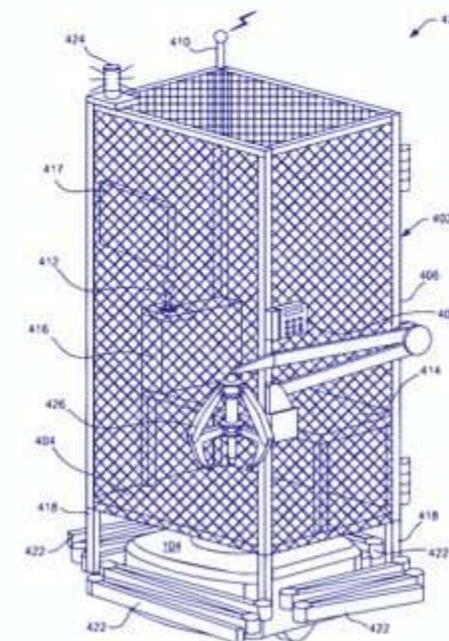
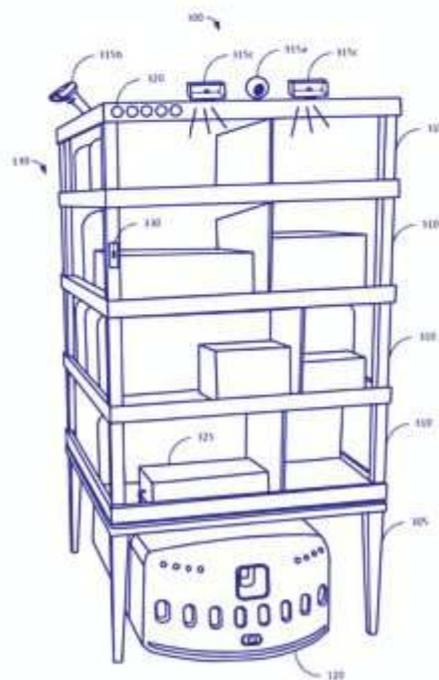


# Anatomy of an AI System

The Amazon Echo as an anatomical map of human labor, data and planetary resources

By Kate Crawford<sup>1</sup> and Vladan Joler<sup>2</sup>  
(2018)

[anatomyof.ai/](http://anatomyof.ai/)



optimize the movements of the robots and humans that collaborate in these warehouses. With the help from an electronic bracelet, the human worker is directed through warehouses the size of airplane hangars, filled with objects arranged in an opaque algorithmic order.<sup>36</sup>

Hidden among the thousands of other publicly available patents owned by Amazon, U.S. patent number 9,280,157 represents an extraordinary illustration of worker alienation, a stark moment in the relationship between humans and machines.<sup>37</sup> It depicts a metal cage intended for the worker, equipped with different cybernetic add-ons, that can be moved through a warehouse by the same motorized system that shifts shelves filled with merchandise. Here, the worker becomes a part of a machinic ballet, held upright in a cage which dictates and constrains their movement.

As we have seen time and time again in the research for our map, dystopian futures are built upon the unevenly distributed dystopian regimes of the past and present, scattered through an array of production chains for modern technical devices. The vanishingly few at the top of the fractal pyramid of value extraction live in extraordinary wealth and comfort. But the majority of the pyramids are made from the dark tunnels of mines, radioactive waste lakes, discarded shipping containers, and corporate factory dormitories.

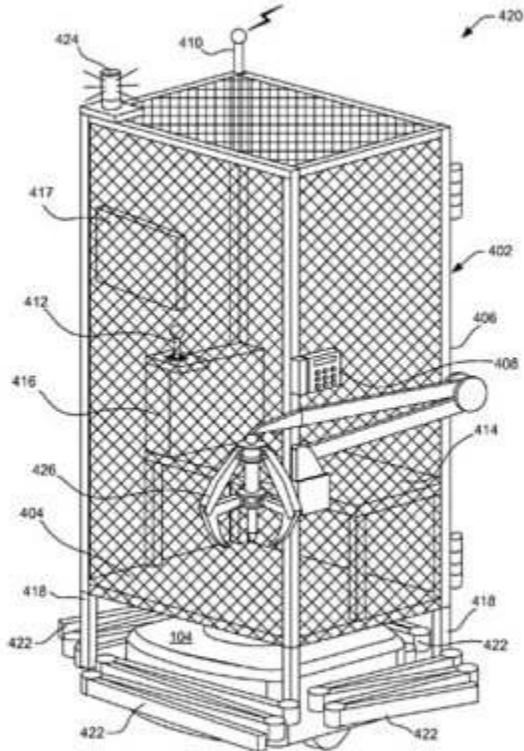
In 2018 Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler published Anatomy of an AI System, which described the Amazon Echo as “an anatomical map of human labor, data and planetary resources” in a diagram and an essay. In the course of their macro mapping of the Echo’s planetary and life impact, they highlighted an Amazon patent filing from 2016 for “a metal cage intended for the worker, equipped with different cybernetic add-ons,

that can be moved through a warehouse by the same motorized system that shifts shelves filled with merchandise.” They went on to describe this patented design as “an extraordinary illustration of worker alienation, a stark moment in the relationship between humans and machines. ... Here, the worker becomes a part of a machinic ballet, held upright in a cage which dictates and constrains their movement.”

# Amazon has patented a system that would put workers in a cage, on top of a robot

Originally published September 7, 2018 at 4:05 pm | Updated September 7, 2018 at 8:49 pm

a worker enclosure



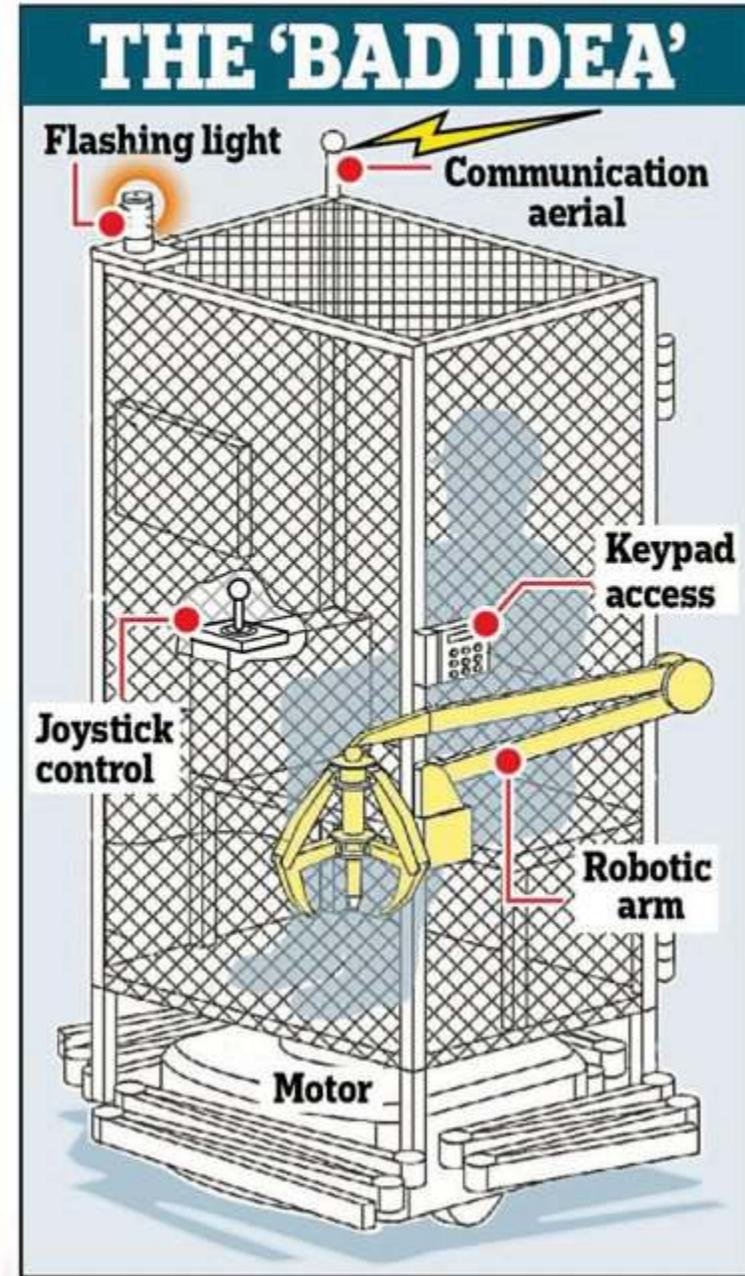
Amazon in 2016 was granted a patent for a system to transport humans, enclosed in a cage and on top of a robotic trolley, for work in areas full of... (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office) [More](#)

**Amazon said it never implemented the technology described in the patent, granted in 2016, and has no plans to.**

By [Matt Day](#) and [Benjamin Romano](#)

*Seattle Times business reporters*

**Share story**



As Crawford and Joler (and the patent itself) described, the cage design would insert the human worker into the same automated systems as the shelving units depicted in this article from *Business Insider*. Developed by Amazon Robotics (formerly Kiva Systems until an \$700m acquisition by Amazon in 2012), the orange floor units (at one point called Betty Bots, at others simply "drive" units) carry and sort large shelving units

full of Amazon stock. They optimize and organize stock according to principles of economy and not human legibility. These automated vehicles operate in "human exclusion zones" inside Amazon's "fulfillment centers". The patented cage becomes a way for humans to re-enter these machine-populated exclusion zones.

# People are horrified by an Amazon patent that puts workers in cages – but an Amazon exec said even 'bad ideas' get submitted

**BI** Isobel Asher Hamilton, Business Insider  
 © 11.09.2018, 13:02

[FACEBOOK](#)
[LINKEDIN](#)
[TWITTER](#)
[EMAIL](#)
[PRINT](#)



Amazon warehouses are already highly automated. Reuters



ANZEIGE  
**HANDY**  
**Preissturz bei Handyvertrag**

## We recommend



**Wir haben die besten Deals des Amazon Prime Days 2019 für euch rausgesucht**

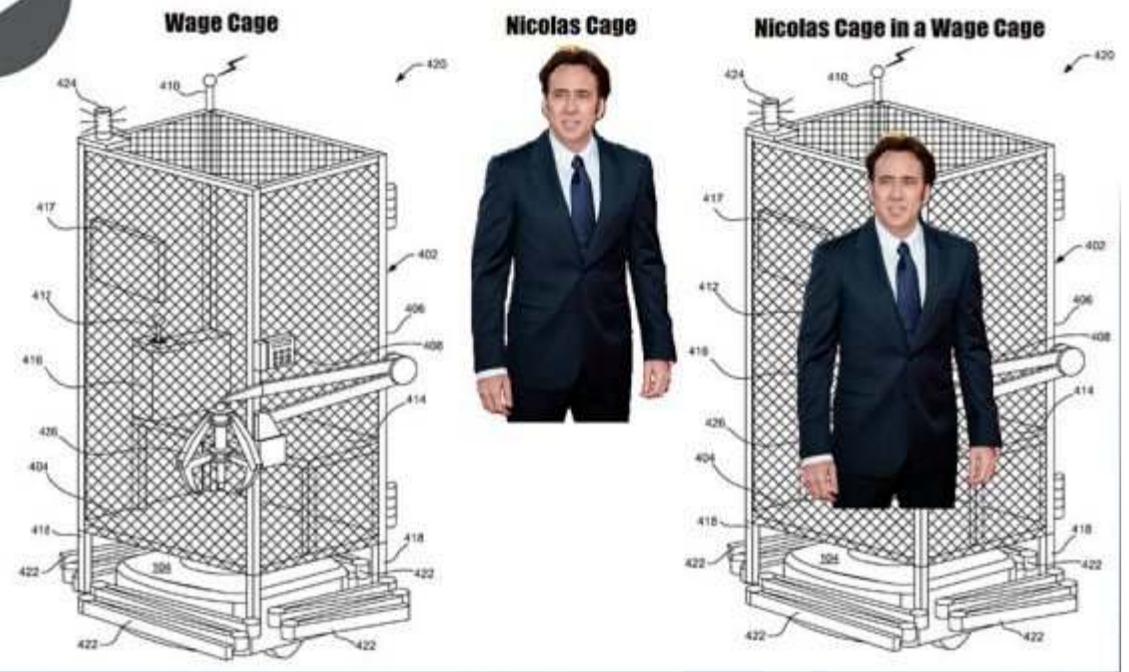


**Will Smith says he cried 'uncontrollably' when he realized he was with the wrong person after meeting Jada Pinkett Smith**

in an exclusive logistics system

The *Seattle Times* initiated mainstream press coverage on the cage (highlighting just one of the many developments described in Crawford and Joler's publication). The story received a moment of widespread attention, reverberated across Twitter and appeared in

a number of news outlets. Amazon commented that it had never implemented the technology and had no plans to do so. Pictured are excerpts from the first *Seattle Times* report and a journalist's attempt at explaining the intended use of the cage.



Fox News even went as far as making a kind of animated rendering showing how the cage was intended to be used. A meme also emerged, with the "Wage Cage" circulating in popular conservative channels on Reddit and 4chan. Familiar meme characters played out their usual narratives and power structures - with the cage representing poor working

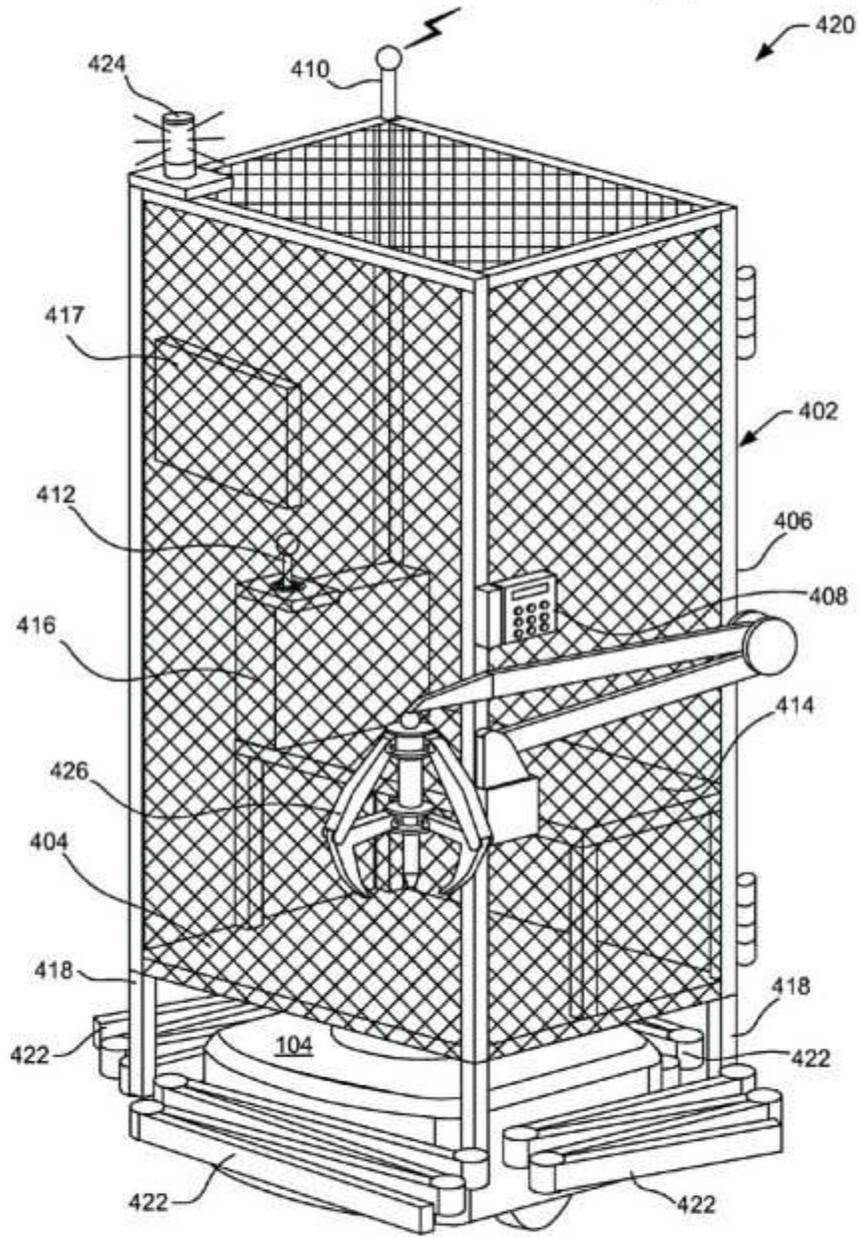
conditions and the worthlessness of waged work in a contemporary world faced with increasing automation (and the implied devaluation of human labor) and defined by extractive capitalism.

a model constructed

(12) **United States Patent**  
**Wurman et al.**

(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR  
TRANSPORTING PERSONNEL WITHIN AN  
ACTIVE WORKSPACE**

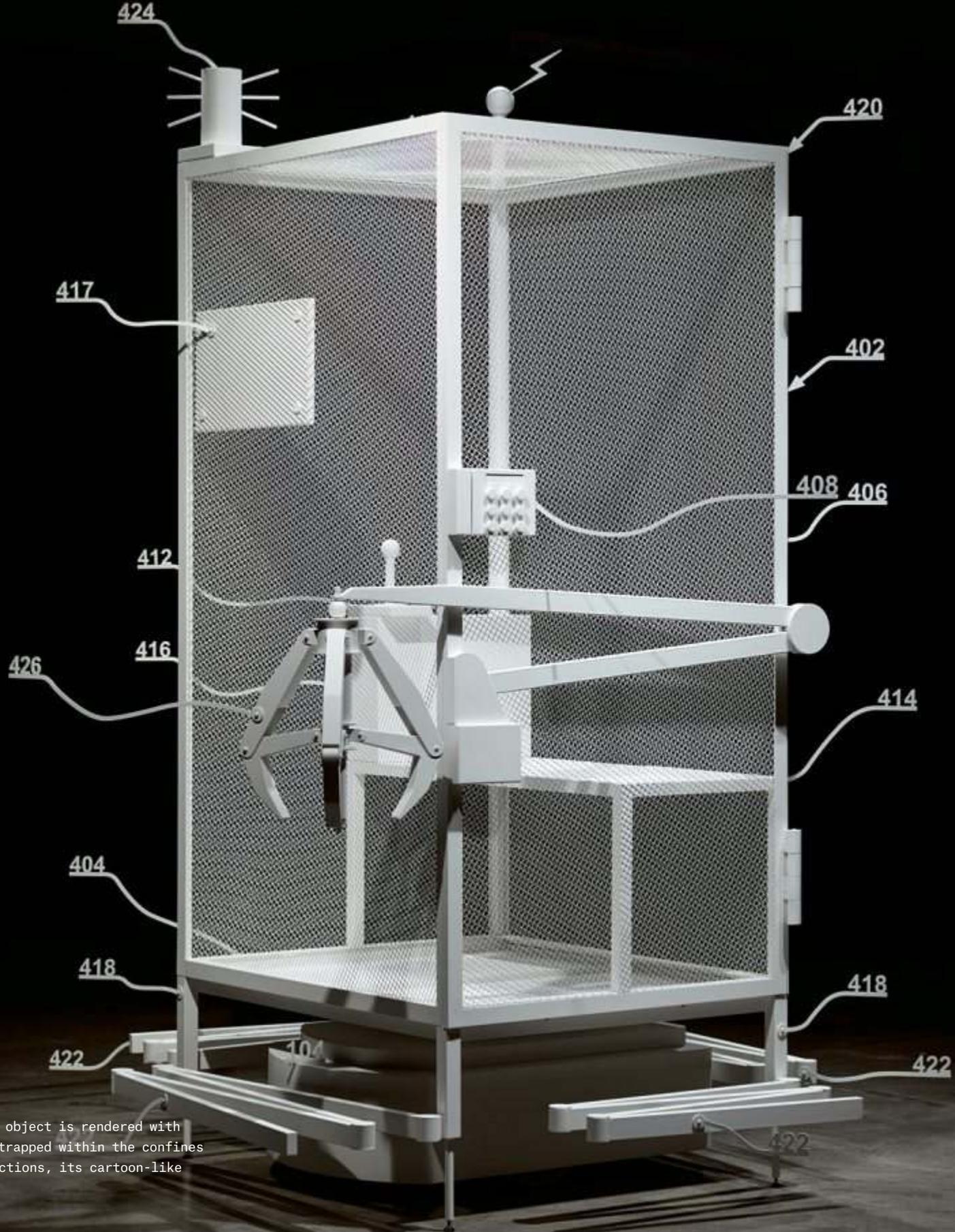
(71) Applicant: **Amazon Technologies, Inc., Reno, NV  
(US)**



**Fig. 4B**

The patent drawing was interpreted as faithfully as possible,  
and a full-sized model of the cage was built using metal.





Reflecting its origins in a document, the object is rendered with a uniform matt white surface. It remains trapped within the confines of a patent drawing: nothing depicted functions, its cartoon-like proportions are kept—it is a diagram.

426

404

418

422

Labeling numbers are also included in the sculptural rendering, complete with labeling lines mapped from the drawing. These numbers without explanation maintain a dependency on an external explanatory system.



**(12) United States Patent**  
**Wurman et al.**

(10) Patent No.: **US 9,280,157 B2**  
(45) Date of Patent: **Mar. 8, 2016**

**(54) SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR TRANSPORTING PERSONNEL WITHIN AN ACTIVE WORKSPACE**

(71) Applicant: **Amazon Technologies, Inc.**, Reno, NV (US)

(72) Inventors: **Peter R. Wurman**, Acton, MA (US); **Michael T. Barbebens**, North Reading, MA (US); **Matthew David Verminski**, North Andover, MA (US); **Michael Cordell Mountz**, Lexington, MA (US); **Dennis Polc**, North Reading, MA (US); **Andrew Edward Hoffman**, Lunenburg, MA (US); **James Raymond Albard**, Newton, MA (US); **Eryk Brian Nice**, Medford, MA (US)

(73) Assignee: **Amazon Technologies, Inc.**, Seattle, WA (US)

(\* ) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 52 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/018,317**

(22) Filed: **Sep. 4, 2013**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**  
US 2015/0066283 A1 Mar. 5, 2015

(51) **Int. Cl.**  
**G05D 1/02** (2006.01)  
**B65G 1/02** (2006.01)  
**B65G 1/00** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. CL.**  
**CPC** **G05D 1/0214** (2013.01); **B65G 1/00** (2013.01); **B65G 2/20740** (2013.01); **G05D 2/2010212** (2013.01); **G05D 2/2010216** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**  
**CPC** **A61G 1/0275**; **G05B 19/41895**; **G05D 2/2010216**; **G06Q 10/087**  
See application file for complete search history.

**(56) References Cited**

**U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS**

7,841,264 B1 *	11/7010	Jacobs	8/9/08
2002/0101363 A1 *	8/2002	Opura et al	3/8/02, 2
2005/0062604 A1 *	8/2005	Fong et al	3/8/05, 23
2005/0131645 A1	6/2005	Panopoulos	
2005/0183509 A1 *	8/2005	Solomon	8/1/11
2007/0293978 A1 *	12/2007	Wurman et al	7/6/11

(Continued)

**FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS**

WO WO/2013/1297 A1 8/2013

**OTHER PUBLICATIONS**

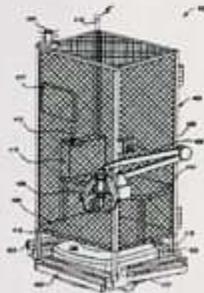
PCT Search Report & Written Opinion for Appl. No. PCT/US2014/053944, dated Nov. 26, 2014, 8 pages.

Primary Examiner — John R. Olczewski  
Assistant Examiner — Jason Robinson  
(74) Attorney, Agent, or Firm — Lee & Hayes, PLLC

**(57) ABSTRACT**

Disclosed herein is a human transport device and associated system to transport a user within an active workspace. The human transport device may include a platform to support a user, an enclosure coupled to the platform to surround the user, a drive subsystem to power the human transport device, and a control unit to control the movement of the human transport device in coordination with active mobile drive units moving within the workspace. A system implementing one or more human transport devices may include a management module to direct the movement of the one or more human transport devices and designate one or more areas within the workspace as protected areas. Unauthorized objects may be prohibited from entering the protected areas while the human transport device may be allowed within the protected areas.

17 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets

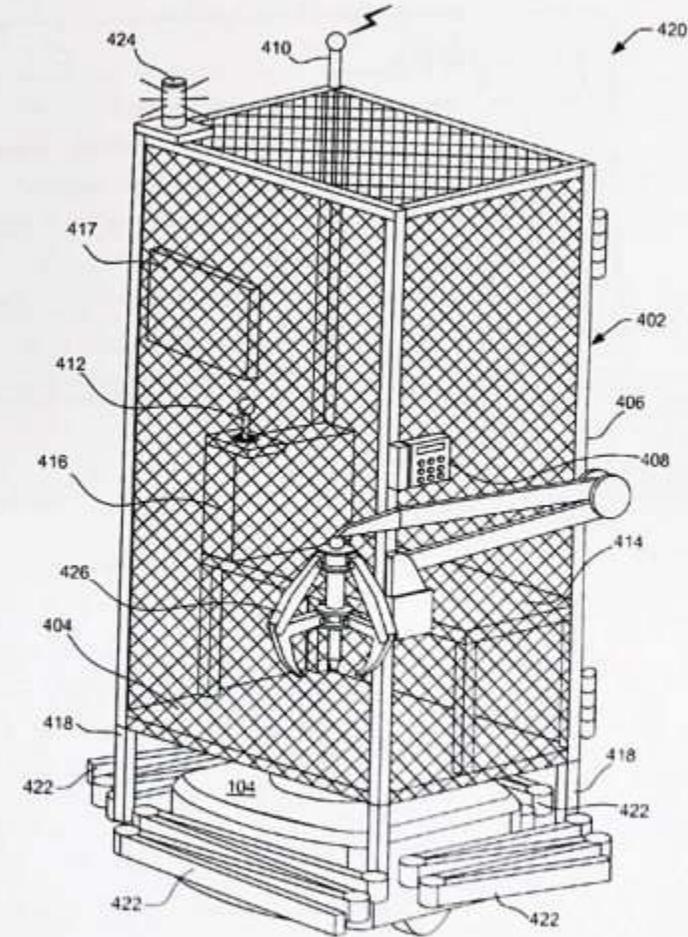


**U.S. Patent**

Mar. 8, 2016

Sheet 5 of 9

US 9,280,157 B2



**Fig. 4B**

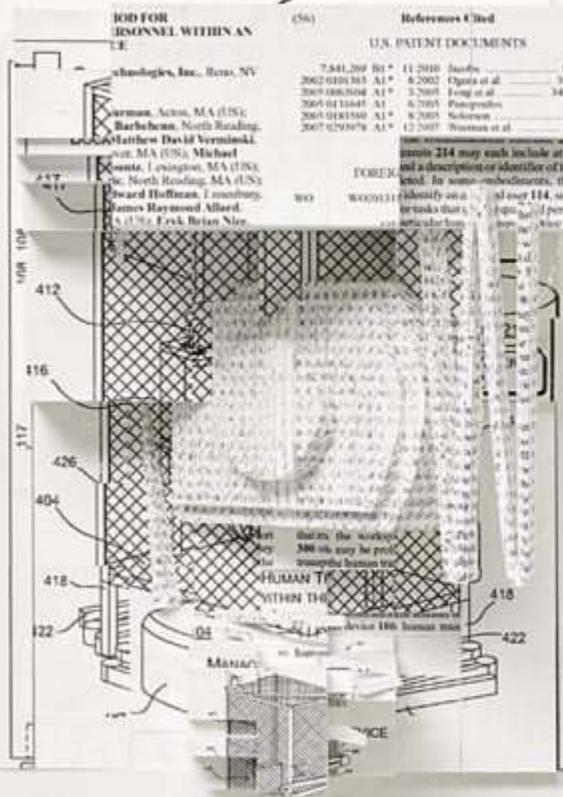


Fig. 4A

(12) United States Patent Wurman et al.

(54) SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR TRANSPORTING PERSONNEL WITH ACTIVE WORKSPACE

(71) Applicant: Amazon Technologies, Inc. (US)

(72) Inventors: Peter R. Wurman, Acton, MA (US); Matthew David North, Andover, MA (US); Y Cardell Monte, Lexington, MA (US); James Raymond Newman, MA (US); Erik Br Medford, MA (US)

(73) Assignee: Amazon Technologies, Inc. (US)

(\* Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 52 days.

(21) Appl. No.: 14/018,317

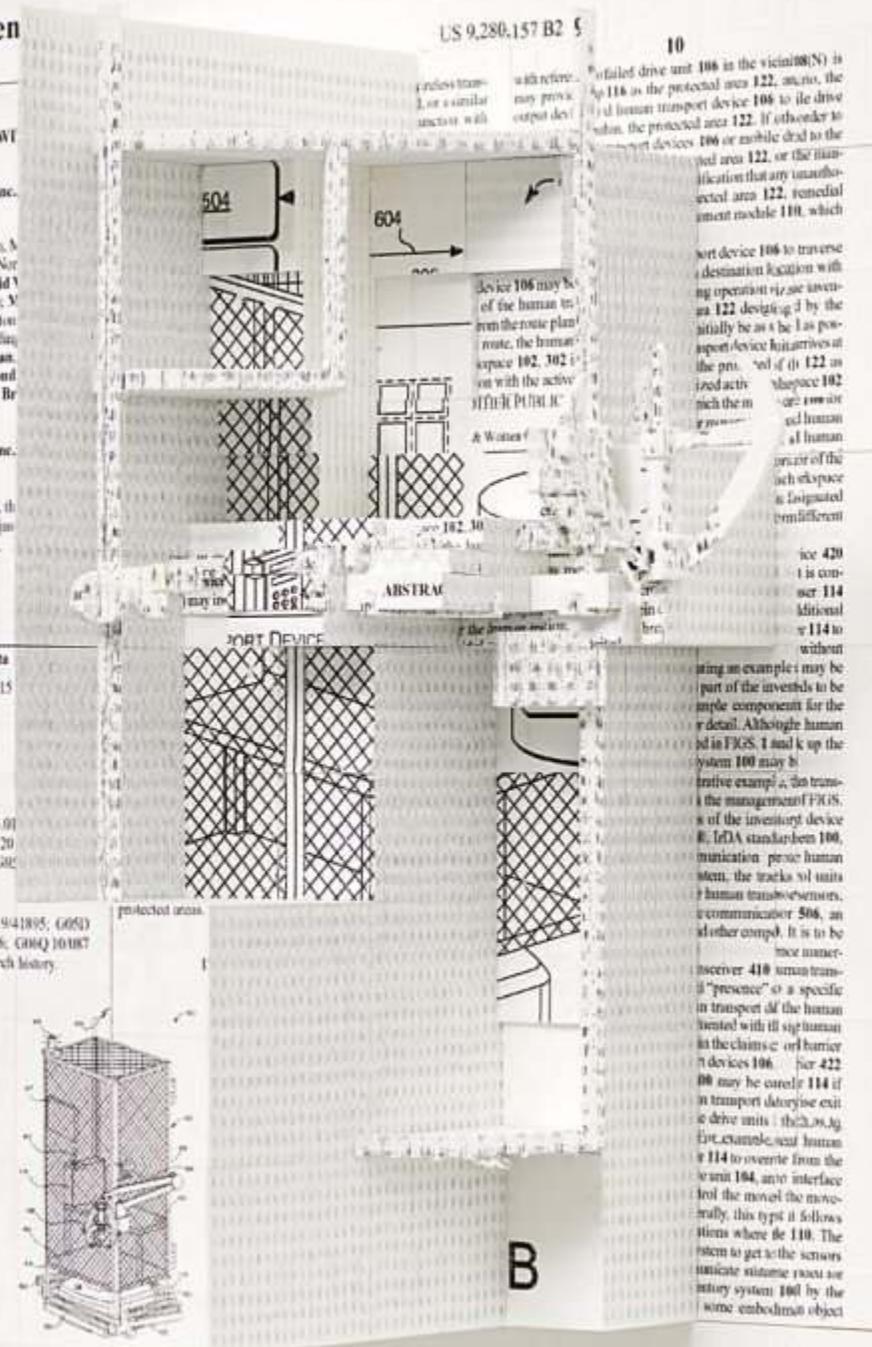
(22) Filed: Sep. 4, 2013

(65) Prior Publication Data US 2015/006283 A1 Mar. 5, 2015

(51) Int. Cl. G05D 1/02 (2006.01); B65G 1/02 (2006.01); B65G 1/00 (2006.01)

(52) U.S. Cl. CPC: G05D 1/0214 (2013.01); B65G 2207/40 (2013.01); B65G 2207/22 (2013.01); G06K 2201/0275 (2013.01); G06K 2201/0216 (2013.01); G06K 2201/01087 (2013.01)

(58) Field of Classification Search CPC: A63G 1/0275; G05D 1/0214; G06K 2201/0216; G06K 2201/01087 See application file for complete search history.



B

The resulting 1265 sheets of the patent were rendered into reliefs, where parts of the cage emerge from stacks of the patent document. A "negative" sculptural process reveals the cage's form, showing traces of the patent's text in document wall-mounted reliefs.

159-171

The Anarchist  
Banker

*Jan Peter Hammer*

Jan Peter Hammer: MFA from Hunter College, CUNY (2003); lives and works in Berlin and Oslo. Since 2016: artistic research fellow at Khi0, Oslo Academy of the Arts. His works have been shown at: Bergen Assembly (2019); 69th Berlinale (2018); Kunstverein in Hamburg (2018); MACBA, Barcelona (2015); 14th Istanbul Biennale (2015); Migros Museum, Zurich (2015); LABOR, Mexico City (2014); 4th Athens Biennale (2013); Steirischer Herbst (2013), Yerba Buena Art Center, San Francisco (2012); Galleria Lia Rumma, Naples (2012); 40th International Film Festival Rotterdam (2011).

“Granted, I don’t live like these protesters, they’re not true anarchists. I am. The theory and practice of anarchism meet in me, yes, in me—banker, financier, tycoon, if you will. You point out that I am not like these anti-globalization types in order to create a distinction. Well that’s true. I am not like them. They are anarchists in theory, whereas as I ...”

David Hall: Good evening and welcome to the ‘Interview Hour.’ I’m David Hall. Our guest tonight, Mr. Arthur Ashenking, has been dragged into the spotlight when it emerged that the investment bank he has been heading, the BG Bank, has applied for a government bailout after decades of unprecedented financial prosperity, while he himself walked out of the bank with one of the largest bonuses ever awarded to a single CEO. Visionary or villain is the question in most peoples mind when it comes to assessing the role played by his management style in one of our country’s most powerful financial institutions. Mr. Ashenking, usually an elusive personality, has refused to speak to the press or even to a congressional hearing. Tonight, however, Mr. Ashenking has agreed to come on our show to give his first in-depth interview to any news organization, so stay with us for a view of the man behind the scandal, his life, his views and his personal history. Mr. Ashenking, let me start by thanking you for coming on our show tonight. It is a real honor to have you with us.

Arthur Ashenking: Call me Art, Dave. Can I call you Dave?

Dave: Certainly, Art ... Art, I want to start by talking a little bit about the man behind the banker. I read some time ago that you used to call yourself an anarchist. Now, this was during a period in your life while you were working with the Pro-Act group. You were very much involved in their anti-Vietnam War movement and also in their pro-civil rights movement. You spent a good deal of time as a community organizer and were once even indicted for anti-government activities. Now, Art, I guess what puzzles me most is how you then came to become an investment banker, and indeed whilst being an investment banker you began implementing a policy of deregulation and lobbying for less government oversight in the financial markets.

Art: Because I’m still an anarchist.

Dave: In what way are you an anarchist? Unless you’re not using the word in its ...

Art: In the true sense of the word. Yes, I am.

Dave: So you mean to tell me that you are an anarchist in exactly the same way as, let’s say, anti-globalization groups are anarchists? Or the people who throw rocks at the police are anarchists?

Art No, what I mean is that there is no room, no contradiction, between my theories and the way I live my life. Granted, I don't live like these protesters, they're not true anarchists. I am. The theory and practice of anarchism meet in me, yes, in me—banker, financier, tycoon, if you will. You point out that I am not like these anti-globalization types in order to create a distinction. Well that's true. I am not like them. They are anarchists in theory, whereas as I ...

Dave Excuse me for interrupting you there. I think these anti-globalization groups are pretty clear in their agendas.

Art Yes, but I had an epiphany. I understand freedom and how to achieve it, because I understand repression and how it operates!

Dave Okay, and now you are displaying a bit of your Marxist leanings ...

Art Laugh if you want to, Dave ...

Dave I'm sorry sir, I don't want to joke. But how do you reconcile your life, and what I mean by that is your life in banking, your life and commerce, with this anarchist theory? If what you mean by "anarchist" is the same that ordinary people mean by anarchists? If I understand you correctly, well you're saying that you're different from them because you are more of an anarchist than they are, is that so?

Art It is.

Dave Okay? Then I don't understand at all.

Art Do you want to understand?

Dave I do Art, I do.

Art Listen, I was born working class in this city, I inherited nothing but a lousy social position, lousy living conditions. But I did get a good mind and a strong will. When I was twenty, I began to feel this anger, this rebellion against this ... against my fate and against the circumstances that created that fate. Not that my fate was as bad as it could have been, but I felt like I'd gotten a raw deal. That's when I began to read, and to study. I had always been rebellious,

but now I wanted to understand my rebellion. Gradually, I became a conscious and convinced anarchist.

Dave So, the theory and practices that you adhere to today are the same as what you believed in then?

Art Well, what is an anarchist but a person who is in revolt against injustice and social inequality? That's basically what he is—the psychological part. Just try and imagine any intelligent kid that isn't rebellious. I mean, what does he see, growing up? One man born the son of a millionaire, protected from cradle to grave, another man born in a slum like I was, just another mouth to feed. Nature gives somebody more strength, more talent, more energy. I can accept that. But, I will not accept somebody being superior to me by virtue of qualities that he was lucky enough to be born into.

Dave You could have become a socialist or adhered to some other similar social philosophy. That would have fitted in with your feelings of rebellion and resentments over these social inequalities, wouldn't you agree?

Art Yes.

Dave So, why did you choose anarchism, such an extreme form, and not one of the more moderate ones?

Art Yes, I'll tell you why. I have thought about this quite long, and I chose anarchism because ... The true evil that plagues mankind is convention, insidious social fictions that cover all natural realities. Money is a total fiction, as is the state. The institution of the family is as absurd as religion.

Dave Well, Art, you have your own family. Do you extend your criticism to them, too?

Art Yes, I have a wife and kids, but they belong to the natural reality, where the universal adapts itself to this or that material form. And before you attack me for evading the question of why I chose to get married when I don't believe in marriage—it's simple. I don't want the woman I love to have to suffer the embarrassment of being perceived as my mistress. That does not change the fact that these

conventions are evil and need to be abolished. All freethinking people understand that the system is unjust, and that there would be some advantage, some justice, in replacing it with a fairer system. But where does that idea of justice come from? What is natural, what is true? Well, something that's natural, it is completely natural, it is not half-natural, or a quarter, or an eighth, or natural because it seems natural—because we're used to it. Social democracy, for instance, seems natural to us but in reality it's just another fiction. And that's why I'm so critical of social democracy. It reverses the role of the oppressor and the oppressed in the most unnatural of ways, by protecting and privileging the weak at the expense of the strong.

Dave You engage in anti-authoritarian and individualistic rhetoric while speaking about social conventions and how they hinder personal development, but most people are not crushed by concepts, are they? They are crushed by circumstances.

Art Yes, can I finish my point please, Dave?

Dave Excuse me, go ahead.

Art You ask how I reconcile my profession with my anarchist beliefs. And you remember I mentioned an epiphany? I have found the embodiment of my radical anarchism in the idea of the free market. And that's what people misunderstand when they call me rightwing or conservative or whatever. I'm no conservative. I'm a freedom fighter. And freedom cannot be won by holding on to these social conventions, which keep dragging it down.

Dave Are you advocating social Darwinism now?

Art No, I am advocating egotism. Self-interest, and the benefits that follow from an individual's pursuit of his own wants and needs, is the only legitimate reason for acting.

Dave Max Stirner, right? Max Stirner ... Stirner however did not consider himself to be an anarchist.

Art Dave, you surprise me. I didn't know you had anarchist leanings.

Dave Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, I don't. But, Art, as far as the neoliberal discourse goes, a free-market society is by principle a democratic society. And now, I discover that you are actually in opposition to social democracy. So, Art, what is it that you actually want?

Art Freedom! Freedom for myself, for others, for humanity. To feel as free as we were when we were born. Right? Nature doesn't make us all equal, but we can still be equal. If it wasn't for these social conventions which prevent equality ...

Dave Seems to me to be a quite perverse usage of logic there, especially considering your concerns about social inequalities, and because of that I really don't understand your hostility towards the welfare state at all.

Art I've encountered this outrage before and I'm here to tell you that you are simply giving voice to fear—a fear that is not your own, a fear that is not worthy of a free person, a fear that oppresses and limits your own intelligence ...

Art No, no, Dave, let me continue. You worry about social welfare, but the very idea of social welfare includes, and justifies, social exclusion. In a society where free enterprise and the free market rule there's no need for welfare, nor is there any need for these demeaning safety nets or charities or ...

Dave I'm sorry, Art, but I really have to disagree. You speak as if everybody would be starting from a position of equality while you yourself experienced intense feelings of rebellion when confronted with these very same social inequalities ...

Art Yes, I did, I feel outraged over social inequalities, which is why I want to do get rid of the entire apparatus which perpetuates them. Can I give you an example? Let's say that my factory is polluting the river that runs through your city, which makes for a big problem, a polarizing problem. On the one hand we have the threat of job losses and on the other we have the ecological issues. I would restate it as a problem of "social cost," which means the question now becomes: Is the value of the fish lost greater or less than the value of the product that the pollution of the river makes possible? If the

answer to that question is that there is greater value lost if my factory has to close, then we will continue to pollute your river, and we will compensate you or pay to have your river moved elsewhere. Notice, too, that if you and I settle this matter between ourselves privately there's no need for government or the courts to muddy the waters, where our fishes will still be dying, with their hypocritical moral posturing, which is always the way the ruling political class manages to impede labor and enterprise.

Dave Well, you know, there are innumerable studies to prove that the market is not as free as you say it is, and that in fact government regulation is necessary in order to protect citizens and small businesses, who would otherwise be steamrolled ...

Art Granted, we're not there yet, but the point is that free market enterprise and the social revolution it embodies, the only social revolution that doesn't just replace one social fiction with another, will free us from all these social conventions.

Dave Well, Art, I really don't think it's a given that a free market creates a free society. You just have look at Chile, for example, where a free-market economy was put in place by a bloody coup.

Art Well, sometimes the present has to be sacrificed for the future, Dave. Yes, it's too bad about all the people who had to die, but if you ask Chileans how they'd like living in Cuba I am sure they would say not very much.

Dave I'm not sure about that, but you still haven't made clear how your beliefs led you to work in the various financial institutions which you've headed, and also how they might have influenced the leveraged investments you instituted at BG Bank. Moreover, sir, how you walked out of the bank with a multimillion-dollar bonus while thousands of others lost their jobs. What do you have to say?

Art When it comes to my personal life I think, okay, working for the future is fine. Working for others so they can be free is only right. But am I no one, what about me? If I were a Christian, I would happily work for others because I'd get my reward in heaven. Since I'm a materialist, I have to think of myself. I only have one life. This idea of duty, of human solidarity, can only be considered

natural if it brings with it some selfish reward. To give up a pleasure simply to give it up is not natural. To give up one pleasure for another is natural. If there are two things and you cannot have both, then you must choose.

Dave Uh, that hardly constitutes a confession, does it?

Art Well, you asked about the man behind the banker. I'm simply telling my own doubts and difficulties, and how I overcame them.

Dave What about the thousands of jobs lost? This was the question.

Art Oh, jobs. I remember when I was a community organizer, working with volunteers, I discovered something very strange about democracy, something terrible that grows among people who are volunteering out of their own goodwill—tyranny.

Dave Tyranny?

Art Tyranny, yes. I discovered that there are some people who really loved ordering other people around. Happens all the time. Some drift into being the boss, others drift into being the subordinates. You could see it in the most ordinary ways: Two guys walking down the street get to the corner where one has to go right, the other has to go left. One says to the other: "Hey why don't you come this way?" The other says, "No, sorry I have to go that way," but he ends up going with the other guy anyway. Sometimes it's persuasion, sometimes it's sheer persistence, but it's never logical. There's always something instinctive about this subordination, this bullying. That's just one little example, but you can see what I mean?

Dave Well, I think so, but I also don't see what's so wrong with that? I think it's perfectly natural. Within group gatherings, behavior patterns always develop.

Art Exactly so, and remember, this happened in a group with no importance, no influence. This was a tiny group of well-intentioned volunteers working together to try and build something. And what do they create—tyranny. You see the implications?

Dave Well ... Yes, I think I do. But I also don't see how that relates at all to ...

Art But then imagine a larger group, with more influence. People engaged in serious political struggle. You tell me if you can see anything resembling a free, human society emerging out of that tangle of intersecting tyrannies. It's odd, isn't it? And I tell you there are other odd things, too. Like the tyranny of helpfulness, for example.

Dave What? What do you mean by the tyranny of helpfulness?

Art Well, there were people among us who didn't order other people around. Instead they would help them. First, it doesn't look like tyranny of course, looks like just the opposite, but look at it carefully. It's just another form of tyranny.

Dave I'm sorry, Art, but how does being helpful do that?

Art Helping someone, my friend, it's just another way of assuming that they're incapable. And if they're not incapable, you're making them incapable. You're limiting the freedom of another person and basing your actions, at least unconsciously, on the idea that that person is either incapable of freedom or unworthy of respect.

Dave And so was this then your reason for the break with the Pro-Act group? Because I don't see them agreeing with you social ideas or ...

Art No, no, I gave up on politics when I could see that politicians cared nothing for freedom unless somebody else arranged for it, unless somebody else bestowed it upon them like a king bestows a title. Ideals have consequences, my friend, and they weren't ready for that! I was alone now. And the most I could do on my own would be to kill a member—or several members—of the oppressing parties.

Dave Okay, Art, you're not being serious anymore! Alright, let's shift gears here for a second. Let's talk about your ... let's talk about your views on the over-the-counter derivatives market. We've all seen how the practice of default swaps went far overboard. Wouldn't that, at least on your side, wouldn't you then acknowledge the necessity for at least some regulation in order to protect investors?

Art I wasn't kidding, Dave. I thought about it. But suppose I took out a dozen capitalists. Would that alter the status quo? No. No, even if I would be successful in slaughtering a dozen capitalists, what would that get me? I'd be in prison, I'd be on the run, or I'd be dead, and the anarchists would have lost a fighter. Conventions are not people that you can shoot. It wouldn't be like a soldier shooting a dozen enemy soldiers. It would be like a soldier killing a dozen civilians. No, I could not hope to destroy conventions by killing the representatives. I would have to find a way to subjugate these conventions, to render them powerless. And that is exactly what I did! The most important convention of all, at least in our day and age, is what? Money. So, how could I subjugate money? The simplest way would be to remove myself from its influence, from civilization; to go out into the wild and eat roots and berries; and walk around naked like the animals. I wouldn't be combating anything; I would just be running away. Yes, anyone who avoids a fight avoids being defeated, but he is also morally defeated because he didn't fight. No, whatever I chose to do it would have to involve fighting and not fleeing. There was only one way. I would have to acquire money, and I would have to acquire enough of it not to feel its influence. The more I acquired, the freer I would be. And it was only when I realized that, it was only then that I entered the current and commercial phase of my anarchism.

Dave Gosh, Art, you blow my mind!

Art And that's not all, Dave. Do you remember that you began by drawing attention to the amount of my bonus and pension from BG Bank?

Dave And the thousands of jobs lost, sir.

Art Well, there it is.

Dave There is what?

Art I succeeded. I worked, I struggled, I earned money, I earned more money, and in the end I earned a lot of money. And I wasn't fussy about the means. I used whatever means I could—financial sophistry, unfair competition. I was fighting the most powerful convention there is, and I used whatever weapons I could. And I have realized the limited dream of a practical, clear-minded anarchist. I have achieved

the kind of freedom that's achievable, the kind of freedom that our imperfect society allows.

Dave The conditions of your course of action were not only to create freedom but also to *not* create tyranny. Art, I think you did create tyranny. As a banker, as an unscrupulous financier, as a tycoon—forgive me for using these terms, but you used them yourself—you created a tyranny. Now, Art, I would go so far as to say that you have created as much tyranny as these social conventions that you claim to be fighting.

Art No, you're wrong. Whatever tyranny came from my struggle against conventions is intrinsic to the conventions. I did not add to it. I created only freedom, my friend. I freed myself. The one person I was able to free, I freed.

Dave Okay, but Art, by the same token, one could be led to believe that no representative of power exercises tyranny. When in fact you yourself said that all representatives of power exercise tyranny ...

Art No, the tyranny is wielded by the conventions; these leaders are simply the tools those conventions use to tyrannize society in the same way a knife is the weapon of a murderer, who uses it to kill someone.

Dave Okay! And now, you're just being sophistic, you're not being intellectually honest at all ...

Art And you would hang the general who sacrifices his troops in order to win. If you go to war, you both win and lose.

Dave But there's another thing here Art ... an anarchist wants freedom not only for himself, but also for humanity, for the whole of humanity as far as I understand it.

Art Of course each person must free himself, anything else is inconsistent with anarchist principles. And I have freed myself; I have done my duty, and not only to myself, but to freedom. Why haven't others done the same? Did I stop them? No! I showed them every possible path to follow. What more could I do? Force them to follow the same path? No, I wouldn't have done so even if I could. It

would be inconsistent with my anarchist principles. Help them? No, I couldn't do that either, and for the same reasons. So, I'm guilty of being not more than one person. Why criticize me for achieving whatever freedom I could? Why don't you criticize the losers who haven't done so?

Dave Oh, Art, those men didn't do what you did because they lacked a certain amount of intelligence, or they lacked the willpower, or any number of other circumstances, which prevented them from succeeding in the way you did ...

Art Ah, my friend, the degree of intelligence and willpower of an individual is down to him and to nature. No, I think there might be some people who are born to be slaves, and who are incapable of sorting their own freedom. But what has that individual to do with a free society, or with freedom? If a man were born to be a slave, then freedom, being inconsistent with the quality of his mind, would be, for him, a tyranny. Wouldn't you agree?

Dave I'm just going to have to stop you there for a moment, Art. I'm getting a word in my ear that we're long overdue for a word from our sponsors. The conversation tonight took on an unusual twist, I have to admit that, but do stay with us for the second half of our show where I will be talking with our guest, Mr. Arthur Ashenking, and I will ask him about his views on the future of investment and indeed whether there is a chance of a stock market recovery.

Stay with us.

# Every Day

## TREVALI RESOURCES

The residents of the towns of Cenizo and Tres Estrellas  
near Colquisiri, Huaral Peru,  
express their worries about the degree of  
poisoning of their ground.  
They demand  
a statement by the authorities on this poisoning  
caused by the Maria Teresa mine  
operating in the entire district,  
80 kilometers from the capital.

The mine not only poisons the water and the ground,  
but also the people,  
who have headaches and often retch when swallowing,  
as if they had something in their throat  
that seeks to prevent this swallowing,  
that also no longer allows  
them to concentrate enough  
to form entire sentences,  
that determines the rate of miscarriages  
and the increase in cancer.

All this can be recorded statistically,  
just  
like trains travel ten times around the planet,  
or it can be recorded  
as  
the effect of a capacity  
that heaves 2,000 tons of rock  
on one day  
inside the mountain.

The residents urgently request  
that the authorities  
write letters to the company  
that in April was called Trevali Resources  
and had an address in Toronto,  
which then merged with Glencore International  
and was then sold to Kria,  
whose address is unknown,  
and little time remains to find it out  
if the hausse  
of lead  
continues  
on the markets.

Alice Creischer

Establishment of Matters  
of Fact / 3  
Every Day – TREVALI RESOURCES

Source: [http://intranet2.minem.gob.pe/web/dgaam/certificado\\_EIAS\\_new.asp?Anio=2003&Mes=00&radio1=F&submit=Consulta](http://intranet2.minem.gob.pe/web/dgaam/certificado_EIAS_new.asp?Anio=2003&Mes=00&radio1=F&submit=Consulta)  
Translated by Karl Hofmann /  
Edited by Matthew Hyland, 2015

175-183

Money and Zero:  
Quantification  
and Visualization  
of the Invisible  
in Early Modern  
Cultural Techniques

*Sybille Krämer*

Sybille Krämer: senior professor at Leuphana University Lüneburg; previously professor of philosophy at Freie Universität Berlin; visiting professorships at universities including Tokyo, Vienna, Zurich, Yale; honorary doctorate from Linköping University, Sweden. Research into theories of the mind, theories of cognition in Descartes and Leibniz; philosophy of language, writing, and the image; media philosophy and theory; reflecting on digitality. Latest publication: *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis. Grundlinien einer Diagrammatologie* (Suhrkamp, 2016).

“As we can see, money always mediates between things that are different, making them comparable by objectifying the value of goods and interpersonal credit/debt in terms of numbers on a scale. The key thing here, however, is that money not only expresses the homogenous within heterogeneity, but actually brought it forth and highlighted it during the evolution of exchange-based economies. Money does not merely represent the quantifiability of the qualitative—it is money that makes the qualitative quantifiable in the first place.”

#### Quantification and visualization

The astonishing dynamism of European imperialism in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries is commonly associated with a historically unique convergence of science and technology. What created this liaison, however, installing it as the motor of social development for several centuries, was calculability—a focus on the ubiquity of numbers that makes what can be measured and counted the incarnation of all that can be known. But unlike the Pythagorean view of numbers as the *substance* of the world, in the Early Modern period numbers became a *means of representation*, a kind of universal language in which the activities of counting and measuring made it possible to represent and manage heterogeneous things and events in a homogeneous manner. In this context, to quantify means to break down a more or less complex matter into distinct elements—quanta—in such a way that the matter in question can be represented in the language of numerical relations. As Alfred W. Crosby has shown for the period between 1250 and 1600, the quantification of space and time embodied by the mechanical clock<sup>1</sup> and maps based on lines of latitude and longitude<sup>2</sup> not only developed a force that permeated every field of culture, but also became a passion within society. At the same time, and this is the inspiring part of his study, Crosby made it clear that the resounding impact of calculability can only be understood in connection with a no less lastingly and passionately pursued gesture of visualization:<sup>3</sup> the skies, the earth, and the oceans were surveyed and mapped; central perspective geometrized artistic means of representation and rationalized the act of seeing; written scores made it possible to express the proportions between notes in a way that allowed entirely new music to be composed; on the battlefield, mass warfare was recast as a clock-

<sup>1</sup> David S. Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> John Noble Wilford, *The Mapmakers: The Story of the Great Pioneers in Cartography from Antiquity to the Space Age* (New York: Vintage, 1982), 79ff.

<sup>3</sup> “The new approach was simply this: reduce what you are trying to think about to the minimum required by its definition; visualize it on paper; [...] be it the fluctuation of wool prices [...] or the course of Mars through the heavens, and divide it, either by fact or imagination into equal quanta. Then you can measure it, that is, count the quanta.” Alfred W. Crosby, *The Measure of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 228.

work-like mechanism—to list just a few symptoms of quantification and visualization.

It was the philosopher René Descartes who, within the framework of his *athesis universalis*, postulated that numbers and proportions should be viewed as a universal language whose grammar is capable of expressing all that can be known.<sup>4</sup> But this rise of numbers to the status of a universal descriptive tool can in turn only be explained in connection with calculization—the invention of formulae by which structures of thought and cognitive semantics can be crystallized and objectified in the form of visual markings.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Early Modern period, a calculized numerical system has been in use whose written form brings abstract, invisible “knowledge objects”—including numbers themselves—into the register of visibility, thus rendering them operatively manipulable. [...]

On the cultural technique  
of the use of money

The rise of quantification to such prominence within the Early Modern mentality is inconceivable without the role played by money, which had emerged by the end of the sixteenth century as the defining social medium: since this time, the “invisible hand” of an anonymous market has penetrated and controlled almost every area of society. It is curious that so little attention has been devoted to the interplay of money and mind<sup>6</sup>—perhaps this insight was too long seen as the hallmark of a now obsolete Marxist worldview?<sup>7</sup>

But why is money so ideally suited to the formalization and quantification of practical work? To answer this, we must begin by asking another, simpler question: What, in fact, is money?<sup>8</sup>

In his pioneering study of the links between the number zero, the vanishing point, and imag-

4

Harold Henry Joachim, *Descartes's Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), 81–82.

5

Sybille Krämer, “Kann das geistige Auge‘ sehen? Visualisierung und die Konstitution epistemischer Gegenstände,” in Bettina Heintz, Jörg Huber, eds., *Mit dem Auge denken: Strategien der Sichtbarmachung in wissenschaftlichen und virtuellen Welten* (Zürich: Voldemeer, 2001), 347–66.

6

Exceptions: Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Das Geld, die bare Münze des Apriori* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1990); Jean-Joseph Goux, *Freud, Marx: Économie et symbolique* (Paris: Seuil, 1973).

7

There are, however, two studies offering more recent insights: Hartmut Winkler, *Diskursökonomie: Versuch über die innere Ökonomie der Medien* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004); Eske Bockelmann, *Im Takt des Geldes* (Springe: zu Klampen, 2004). Winkler discusses correspondences between the circulation of signs and commodities; Bockelmann addresses links between the evolution of money-based economies, the formalization of time signatures in music, and the scientific developments of the Early Modern period.

8

This is not an easy question! Riese assumes that “economics still has no idea what money is.” Hajo Riese, “Geld: Das letzte Rätsel der Nationalökonomie,” in Waltraud Schelke, Manfred Nitsch, eds., *Rätsel Geld: Annäherungen aus ökonomischer, soziologischer und historischer Sicht* (Marburg 1995), 45–62, here 45.

inary money,<sup>9</sup> Brian Rotman approaches money *semiologically*, focusing on its function as a sign or meta-sign. We, on the other hand, want to understand money less as a sign and rather, taking a *mediological* view, as a medium and mediator.<sup>10</sup> For this perspective reveals what it is about monetary transactions that created such fertile conditions for quantification: money embodies the quantitative as categorically distinct from the qualitative. Having cast off any characteristic as a concrete good, it embodies the absence of any specific quality. Money cannot be enjoyed, it cannot be consumed; it does not even get used up in circulation, as worn-out money is replaced by the authorizing institution.

In the following, we will be ignoring the diverse successive forms taken by money in the course of its historical evolution, from precious goods (barley, pearls, precious metals) to a universal means of payment. The money we are referring to here is a money that (a) has set itself apart from all specific commodities as a non-good and (b) no longer owes its value to a specific reference object that “covers” it.

It was the Greeks who first minted money in the form of coins, thus setting money apart from the goods whose exchange it was to mediate.<sup>11</sup> Here, then, money emancipated itself from an existence as a special good like gold or silver that still shaped the exchange of wares in the cultures of Babylon, India, and China. As coinage authorized by the state, the Ionian money was left with a single function: to embody in concrete form what makes different commodities comparable. In ancient Greece, however, the influence of money was limited to the “oikos,” to the purchasing of supplies for individual households, not yet having advanced to the status of a universal social medium.

That occurred in the Early Modern period when

9

Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing: The Semiotics of Zero* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

10

We understand signs and media here not as different classes of object, but as different perspectives from which symbolic practices can be viewed. The difference between the two perspectives lies in the respective relationship between visibility and invisibility. In the sign perspective, the signifiers are the objects of sensory perception, while the signified is the underlying invisible element. In the media perspective—at least when media usage functions seamlessly—what is displayed is the message, whereas the medium itself remains below the threshold of perception. See Sybille Krämer, “Die Heteronomie der Medien: Versuch einer Metaphysik der Medialität im Ausgang einer Reflexion des Boten,” *Journal Phänomenologie*, no. 22 (2004), 18–38.

11

Johannes Lohmann, “Die Erfindung des Geldes,” in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft*, no. 76 (1968/69), 415–20.

money—gradually—no longer served immediate household needs alone, instead regulating the whole of society via market relations. Only in the course of the sixteenth century did national and transnational economies take shape.<sup>12</sup> And from then on (almost) everything—goods, services, and labor—had a price that could be expressed in terms of monetary value. In this way, money became a kind of “universal language” in which all manner of things could be represented.

Money, then, reduces different kinds of things to a common denominator. And it makes sense to understand this denominator as the value of the thing in question. What money represents is not simply the quality of a buyable good, however, but the quality of a social relationship. To understand money as a medium for the circulation of commodities is to understand it as an agent of mediation between persons. Let us briefly recap on this. One person owns what another desires. Whereas in robbery (based on violence) and the giving of gifts (rooted in love) objects change owners in ways that leave behind forms of guilt or debt, the trick with buying and selling is the establishment of an intersubjective reciprocity of giving and taking between people. In this context, money’s etymological origins in religious sacrifice are interesting.<sup>13</sup> And indeed, as Georg Simmel points out in *The Philosophy of Money*, the price of a commodity defines the size of the “sacrifice” to be made by whoever wishes to acquire it.<sup>14</sup> In the “logic” of the money-based trade in goods, however, the one-sided sacrifice is rationalized (and secularized) in favor of a reciprocity of giving and taking: we only get something if we are prepared to give something in return. This is the trick by which we can persuade others to give up what we do not have ourselves, but which we would like to own.

The astonishing power of money to equalize asymmetrical states of desire between individ-

12

See Bockelmann, *Im Takt des Geldes*, 213ff.

13

For example the Latin word for money, *pecunia*, is derived from *pecus*, meaning sacrificial animal. On the sacrificial roots of money, see Bernhard Laum, *Heiliges Geld: Eine historische Untersuchung über den sakralen Ursprung des Geldes* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1924).

14

Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 81ff.

uals in a peaceful manner, allowing ownership to be transferred, is connected to its status as a medium. Media communicate by making themselves neutral in relation to that which they mediate.<sup>15</sup> This “self-neutralization” is the key to understanding the mediality of money.<sup>16</sup> Money sets itself apart from commodities—goods defined in terms of their content—as indifferent non-content.<sup>17</sup> And unlike qualitative utility value, money thus embodies something that is defined in exclusively quantitative terms, which is exchange value. To paraphrase Simmel, we could say that the quality of money consists in its quantity.<sup>18</sup>

Two facets of this relinquishment of the qualitative must be distinguished here. On the one hand, in the words of Hartmut Winkler, money is a “context detachment machine.”<sup>19</sup> Just as money does not show its origins, its future usage is not predetermined; in systemic terms, money is indexless and traceless. It is indifferent to both persons and things, allowing it to be transformed into anything that can be bought. In the words of Goethe: “This metal into all things we can mould.”<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, money is the objectification of an abstraction: money “makes comprehensible the most abstract concept.”<sup>21</sup> This is why the emergence of money as coins marks such a decisive cut-off point: exchange value and quantifiability are manifested in a substrate minted specifically for this purpose, allowing it to be dealt with. Coins take something invisible—value—and give it an unmistakable and meaningful form: with coins, the abstraction of value is manifested *empirically*. Consequently, the money-based economy becomes a place where matter and form, quality and quantity, utility value and exchange value are separated not just in conceptual terms, but in terms of their everyday reality. Value now possesses a body all of its own. The material substance of the “money body” may be variable (metal coins, paper

15

On this approach to media theory based on the idea of mediation and the mediator, which ties in to a degree with our everyday intuitions about media, see Krämer, “Die Heteronomie der Medien.”

16

The quantity theory of money that now dominates economics is also based on an assumption of neutrality. See David E. W. Laidler, *The Golden Age of Quantity Theory: The Development of Neoclassical Monetary Economics 1870–1914* (New York, 1991). For a critical response, see: Waltraud Schelkle, “Motive ökonomischer Geldkritik,” in Schelkle, Nitsch, eds., *Rätsel Geld*, 11–44.

17

Bockelmann often refers to this: “On the money side, value was conceived of as a pure, self-sufficient, self-determined unit, related to every conceivable content but also, and as a result, detached from it.” Bockelmann, *Im Takt des Geldes*, 224.

18

Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, 261.

19

Winkler, *Diskursökonomie*, 45.

20

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, line 5782 (London: Bell, 1919), 206.

21

Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, 128.

notes, in ledgers, on screens), but—and this is as trivial as it is significant—without some visible expression, and be it no more than a written sequence of numbers, there can be no money. Every embodiment of money must, however, fulfil *one* structural condition: it must take the form of easily transportable, non-perishable units or pieces; it must be divisible into discrete, countable elements.<sup>22</sup> Money is a “material” that is designed to be countable.

Let us draw a first conclusion: where money acts as a mediator, there is always heterogeneity. At first glance, this means the variety of goods, rendered comparable (and thus tradable) by the equivalence of money. Here, money is a medium that levels qualitative differences by means of prices that represent the dimension in which the different qualities stand in calculable proportions to one another. At second glance, the heterogeneity to be bridged appears as one of social needs and relations, reflecting the gap that exists between someone who wants what another has. But this is a difference that can crystallize out in the social relationship between debtor and creditor. In this dimension, money becomes a medium for the fulfillment of contracts.<sup>23</sup>

As we can see, money always mediates between things that are different, making them comparable by objectifying the value of goods and interpersonal credit/debt in terms of numbers on a scale. The key thing here, however, is that money not only expresses the homogenous within heterogeneity, but actually brought it forth and highlighted it during the evolution of exchange-based economies. Money does not merely represent the quantifiability of the qualitative—it is money that makes the qualitative quantifiable in the first place.

At this point, we must speak of the performativity of money. The validity of money is bound

22

Walter Seitter, *Physik der Medien: Materialien, Apparate, Präsentierungen* (Weimar: VDG, 2002), 181f: “The form of money, then, is thoroughly thing-like, a quality manifested in the form of pieces, giving the added nuance of calculability.” In this book, Seitter goes into more detail on the notion of the unit/piece (*Stück* in German).

23

Riese calls money the “ultimate medium for fulfilling contracts” (Riese, “Das letzte Rätsel der Nationalökonomie”, 47). In this context, he develops a theory of the “genesis of money out of credit” (*ibid.*, 55) and the view that “the money function is based not on acts of exchange but on relations of debt” (*ibid.*, 57f.).

to an institution. A good becomes money by being enthroned as such by a central body.<sup>24</sup> In modern societies, this authority that controls the creation and supply of money is the central bank. Thanks to the power of this institutional authorization, the mediating function of money as a means of payment rests solely on the belief and expectations of those who use it, and no longer on any “covering” reference to actual goods. In a certain way, at least according to economist Hajo Riese, the central bank creates money “out of nothing,” as money is neither a good nor a resource: “Which is why the genius of this medium lies in the fact that the value of a banknote ... can be multiplied by ten by printing an extra zero on it.”<sup>25</sup>

24

*Ibid.*, 56.

25

*Ibid.*, 56f.

185-195

Europium

*Lisa Rave*

Lisa Rave: born 1979 in Guildford (UK), lives and works in Berlin. Studied experimental film at University of the Arts Berlin with Heinz Emigholz and photography at Bard College New York. Currently works at the Academy of Fine Arts in Nuremberg (D). Recent screenings and exhibitions at Toronto Biennale; Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt; Berlinische Galerie; mumok Vienna (all 2019); Museum of Modern Art, Dubrovnik; Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) Berlin; Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore (all 2018); Lofoten International Art Festival LIAF (2017).

“The Europium anomaly, found primarily in the mountains of China, is now being discovered in large concentrations in the earth’s sea bed, as well as on the moon. The deep sea organism uses Europium in the construction of its shell. [...] The natural material absorbs energy into its atomic structure and emits that energy as visible light.”

The word animism is taken from its Latin root *anima*, meaning soul or life.

Coined by ethnologists in the nineteenth century at the peak of colonialism, animism describes a worldview in which things—animate or inanimate objects, dead or living matter—all possess a spiritual essence and are treated accordingly.

Europeans applied the term to the foreign religions they encountered amongst the native communities of the South Seas.



— Lisa Rave, *Europium*  
(filmstill), 2014

The indigenous people did not distinguish between the spiritual and the material worlds. Animals, plants, rocks, rivers, mountains, thunder, wind and shadow existed as endowed spiritual things.

Man-made objects, fetish objects, would be prayed to and wielded a supernatural power.

The aboriginals' ignorance of science and rational thinking was considered primitive by the European explorers.

The French rationalist August Comte considered fetishism to be the most underdeveloped form of belief. This perspective led to missionary movements of reeducation, integration, and bestowing upon the travelers half a world away the intellectual right of possession.

The Sea was named Bismarck, and the land was called Deutsch Neuguinea.



— A page from *Bilder aus der deutschen Südsee: Fotografien 1884-1921* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), photographed by the artist.

James Cook, the early explorer of the South Seas, brought the word taboo into the English language. A word which he understood to mean that which is forbidden, consecrated, and beyond the tangible world of man.

To the Tolai, a community living along the coast, Tabu was also the name for their form of currency, in which shell accumulation was a symbol of individual power.

Saltwater clamshells, harvested from the sea, collected along coastlines, were wrapped systematically and methodically along the strands of rattan, its value determined by its length.

Produce and products were exchanged between the communities, whereas the Tabu currency was used solely as gift giving.

\*

A process of exchange, in which the receiver of the Tabu became indebted to the giver and was therefore compelled by custom to offer a gift in return of equal or greater value to reverse the order of debt.

With the arrival of Europeans in the nineteenth century and the island's inevitable introduction into the world economy the shell currency Tabu was transformed and commodified, becoming a measured object of exchange for goods and services and shedding its sacred value.

With the growing demand for coconuts, pearls, and exotic feathers the European products given in exchange were starting to saturate the local economy; the Tolai began asking for Tabu.

Through trade, Tabu became a form of money.

Because of initial difficulties faced by the Europeans in obtaining Tabu, Germans began producing forgeries of the shell currency in Europe. The counterfeits were inevitably discovered as such, as in the words of one Tolai man;

"Their shell money was too clean, their Tabu was never threaded, sized, cut, given, bought, broken, whipped, nor touched by the hands of our ancestors, there was never any value in it to begin with."

The empty shell, devoid of the life that once possessed it, smooth, glossy, rough to the touch, it arouses the instinct to covet and adorn.

The nautilus—sacred to the people of Papua New Guinea—was hung outside their doors to ward off foreign spirits.

Cut open and sliced in half, it reveals a continuous form of growth. The organism changes its size through accumulation, but never changes its original shape, its essence.

With each new additional growth spurt the organism copies the preexisting chain and grows exponentially from its original shape.

Its organic form, a rhythmic spiral, came to symbolize the perfect harmony and beauty found in nature, called the "divine proportion."

Mathematicians in ancient Greece translated the nautilus's natural form into a formula called the Golden Ratio that has since defined the boundaries of perspective and aesthetics.

The animal builds its shell from the very material of its environment. It is filtered

through the body and uses the diluted minerals of its surroundings to build and grow its shell, its form.

The material composition of shells is analyzed as a document of their material world.

First the shell is crushed into a powder. The powder is further reduced through a chemical reaction.

The experiment reveals an unusually high concentration of Europium, an elemental particle discovered in the twentieth century and categorized as a rare earth.

\*

The europium anomaly, found primarily in the mountains of China, is now being discovered in large concentrations on Earth's seafloors, as well as on the moon.

The deep-sea organism uses europium in the construction of its shell.

Though its actual presence is buried deep within and hidden to the eye, traces can be found by mechanical and chemical means.

The value of europium lies in its natural phosphorescence, a distinctive feature that cannot be imitated artificially or in other forms.

The natural material absorbs energy into its atomic structure and emits that energy as visible light.

Because of this distinction, europium revolutionized the color television industry in the 1960s, enhancing color picture quality and brilliance.



— Lisa Rave, *Europium*  
(filmstills), 2014

Europium is embedded wherever an image is projected on a display.

Sir William Crookes, a nineteenth-century British chemist, once wrote: "The rare earth elements perplex us in our researches, baffle us in our speculations, and haunt us in our very dreams."

— Lisa Rave, *Europium*  
(filmstills), 2014



A former World War II bunker on the outskirts of Frankfurt has been converted into a high-security storage facility for rare earths. With two-meter-thick walls, video surveillance, security personnel, and a direct connection to the police, Tradium offers private investors a physical alternative to paper, gold, and virtual money. Europium is purchased, stored, transformed, and commodified.

It is wrapped systematically and methodically.

In order to prevent forgery, the euro banknotes were designed with europium embedded in their surfaces, authenticating the money as real currency.



— Lisa Rave, *Europium*  
(filmstill), 2014

In various concentrations throughout the money, the europium defines the shapes of Europe's architecture... in bridges, in land, and in symbol.

\*

*Interview with Heiko Felderhoff, Reederei Harren & Partner, Bremen, in cooperation with Nautilus Minerals Inc.*

"This is an animation of the machines, of how they are being lowered from the production vessel into the water and all the way down to the seafloor. And to emphasize this again; we are talking about a depth of 1,600 meters, which is a real technical challenge.

As we can see here, the seafloor is not just flat, there are mountains as well. Therefore we use this specific machine to remove the mountain and to create a flat surface.

Here we can see how the minerals are mined and crushed at the same time for transportation to the ship above.

There is gold, nickel, copper, rare earths - an enormous amount of materials that can be used commercially. And what we know is that we have enough material there for at least five years of production, mining 6,000 tons daily. The field there is enormous.

Australians will be working on the ship, but also local people from Papua New Guinea. We will be integrating local content and helping the local communities to support the people in that region.

These are the machines that will operate on the seafloor. It's quite a challenge and a very interesting operation down there. Basically, it's surgery at a depth of 1,600 meters."

— Lisa Rave, *Europium*  
(filmstill), 2014



197-211

The Question  
of the Economy

*Felwine Sarr*

Felwine Sarr: born 1972 in Senegal, studied economics and has been teaching at Université Gaston Berger, Saint-Louis (Senegal), since 2007. In 2011, he became dean of the university's Economics and Management faculty and head of the new faculty of Civilizations, Religions, Arts and Communication (CRAC). In November 2018, together with Bénédicte Savoy, he presented a report commissioned by France's president Emmanuel Macron on the restitution of African art looted by France, sparking debate worldwide.

“Shocks as significant as four centuries of the trans-atlantic slave trade and a century of colonialization had major demographic, economic, political, and cultural consequences, throwing sand in the works and inflicting huge costs on the societies of sub-Saharan African. Some of these shocks had effects that still persist today. Economists call the degree of persistence of the effects of a shock *hysteresis*.”

The way the question of the economy has been viewed in Africa is symptomatic of discourse on the continent in general. It has been analyzed chiefly in the mode of comparison and, particularly, disparity. Efforts to understand the factors determining economic growth in African countries have focused on the reasons for an absence of such growth and, above all, on the gap between them and countries considered to be *developed*.<sup>1</sup> The second characteristic is short-term analysis or, more precisely, what I call wave trough thinking. A certain school of economic historiography only thinks about the continent going back to the 1960s, the period when many African countries gained independence; sometimes it goes back to colonization; and its most distant temporal horizon is the slave trade, beyond which things get lost in the fog. It offers no economic history beyond the specific moments chosen as points of reference. A longer-term economic history of the African continent reveals a complex trajectory and allows us to reposition such “stylized” facts within a longer perspective.

Geography, Agriculture, and Demography  
 Geography is an important economic factor. It determines the type of agriculture practiced, the natural and mineable resources available, the ecological niche, the methods used to circulate people and goods, the types of technology produced or adopted. However, economies shouldn't only be defined by geography. Many peoples have known how to make the best of difficult geographies and, inversely, sometimes have made poor use of favorable zones.

Africa is a continent with a surface area of thirty million square kilometers, composed of fifty-four states. The United States, China, India, and part of Western Europe can all fit inside the geographical area of Africa. Populated

<sup>1</sup> Economists such as Paul Collier, William Easterly, and Ross Levine, in their work on the African continent, focused on explaining the reasons for what they call the failures of African growth, or the lost decades of growth in Africa. Taking as reference points the worst performances of the 1980s, they concluded that there was an opaque mystery to be elucidated. Nearly two decades of growth on the African continent would have been needed, notes Morten Jerven, for them to begin to readjust their discourse on the growth of these countries. The strength of their metaphors (“the lost decades of growth,” “the bottom billion,” “the poverty trap”) had a greater impact on the perceptions of public opinion and sometimes even on those of academics than the reality of empirical data. When Tanzania doubles its per capita income, increasing it from 500 to 1,000 dollars, instead of investigating the determining factors of this growth, it is compared with Japan, which at the time had a PCI of 20,000 dollars (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). For a more exhaustive treatment of this aspect, see Morten Jerven, *Africa, Why Economists Get It Wrong* (London: Zed, 2015).

by nearly one billion people, with a growth rate of 2.6%, in half a century Africa will be the most populous continent with 2.2 billion inhabitants—a quarter of the global population. The continent contains a quarter of the world's land, 60% of all unused arable land, and a third of the world's natural resources. It is brimming with mineable resources and energy, nine-tenths of which have not yet been exploited. Urbanization is growing: today about 45% of the population lives in cities, compared to the beginning of the twentieth century, when 95% of the population was rural. Since 2000, economic growth has been greater than 5%.<sup>2</sup> African nations are well represented among countries with the highest growth rates in the world from 2008 to 2013 (Sierra Leone 9.4%, Rwanda 8.4%, Ethiopia 8.4%, Ghana 8.11%, Mozambique 7.25%).

Africans had to face a complex geography: an old continent, the heart of which is composed of vast, rocky plateaus stratified by erosion, where altitudes often surpass two thousand meters, composed primarily of ancient bedrock with volcanic fractures (The Rift Valley). Its northern and southern extremities are characterized by Mediterranean climates; from the Equator, tropical forest gives way to savanna and desert. African peasants were able to adapt to diverse climate conditions and to adopt appropriate cultivation techniques: a polyculture of subsistence crops on the high plateaus, the adoption of suitable grains, tubers, and legumes depending on the environment;<sup>3</sup> lands left fallow and burnt to the ground for regeneration, and the periodic migration of villages to conquer new lands.<sup>4</sup> The peasants were able to create flexible agricultural systems and adopt technological innovations adapted to their environmental conditions.<sup>5</sup>

[...]

2

Its GNP represents 4.5% of global GNP in terms of purchasing power and equals around 2,200 billion dollars.

3

Corn and manioc are American plants more calorie-dense than millet and sorghum. These American crops were introduced by the Portuguese in the fourteenth century. African peasants adopted them and they progressively spread across the continent.

4

African soils are poor, apart from the Nile Valley and a few other strips of fertile volcanic land. In the savanna bordering the Sahel, where millet and sorghum are cultivated the rainy season lasts four months. In equatorial zones, the rains are abundant, but the streaming water washes out the soil and strips it of mineral salts. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Petite histoire de l'Afrique* (Paris: la Découverte, 2011).

5

Certain technological innovations appeared rather late in African agriculture. Mastery of iron allowed for the making of hoes. The wheel, although adopted in the Nile Valley, was adopted rather late in other regions of the continent. The wheel wasn't necessary given the abundance of land and the low population density that allowed populations to reach an equilibrium between production and consumption.

## Demography and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The struggle to increase the number of men and women has thus always been a major characteristic of African history.<sup>6</sup> In the sixteenth century Africans had a demographic advantage. The population of Africa was estimated at 100 million, 20% of the world population. By the end of the nineteenth century, the continent represented just 9% of the world population. For two centuries, the slave trade interrupted population growth in West Africa. The most conservative estimates indicate that 11,061,800 people were deported from the African continent via the Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> The highest estimates report 24 million people transported and 200 million deaths related to capture, transportation, and the various wars and raids caused by the slave trade. The end of demographic growth in Africa took place in the eighteenth century, the period marking the apogee of the slave trade's drain on Africa's population. However, a more precise evaluation of the cost of the demographic draining due to transatlantic human trafficking cannot be obtained by simply subtracting the number of deportees from the African population at the time. Africa's demographic growth in the eighteenth century must be compared to what it would have become in the absence of the transatlantic slave trade. Based on a model of demographic processes, Patrick Manning has estimated that in 1850, in the absence of the slave trade, the population of sub-Saharan Africa should have been 100 million people.<sup>8</sup> Africa's population at that time was only 50 million people while the population of China doubled in the eighteenth century and Europe's population, after a brief stagnation in the seventeenth century, began to grow again. This growth was key during Europe's industrial revolution. Between 1600 and 1900, Africa's share of the world population (Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the New World) fell from 30% to 10%.

6

John Iliffe, *Les Africains. Histoire d'un continent* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), 275.

7

William and Mary Quarterly, *The Volume and the Structure of Transatlantic Slave Trade: a Reassessment*, 3:58 (2001), 44.

8

Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983).

Transatlantic deportation also exposed Africa to new diseases: Europeans introduced tuberculosis, bacterial pneumonia, smallpox, and venereal syphilis. Sub-Saharan Africa was, for a long time, protected from the plague. But in the seventeenth century, plague epidemics hit the Kingdom of Kongo (present-day Angola) along with the coasts of Senegal and Guinea around 1744. These same illnesses returned with colonization and after World War II, but Africans were better prepared and therefore more resilient. Added to all of this are the vagaries of a capricious climate. The continent experienced long cycles of drought with occasional respites, epidemics and epizootic diseases (cattle plague). What would the African continent have become without the transatlantic slave trade? We will never know.

#### Roots of the Present

The transatlantic slave trade (deportation) and colonialism were synonymous with the draining of wealth and resources as well as people, disintegrating societies, distorting institutions, raping cultures, causing alienation, and setting dominated societies on disadvantageous paths. According to Jan Vansina,<sup>9</sup> the European conquest of Belgian Congo between 1876 and 1920 resulted in the destruction of nearly half of the total population of the region. Having long denied or minimized the impact of colonialism on the economic trajectory of independent African nations, the field of economics brought forth an abundant literature in the 2000s (Acemoglu, Robinson, et al.).<sup>10</sup> This literature highlights the fact that colonialism negatively impacted the development and growth of formerly dominated nations. Colonial heritage—measured in terms of the degree of economic penetration by the former European ruler, the dependence of formerly dominated nations on and shared institutional identity with the former colonial power—is a

9

Jan Vansina, *Les Anciens Royaumes de la savane, les États des savanes méridionales de l'Afrique centrale, des origines à l'occupation coloniale*, 2e édition (Kinshasa: Presses universitaires du Zaïre, 1976), 183.

10

D. Acemoglu, S. Johnson and J.A. Robinson, "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation", *American Economic Review* 91:5 (2001), 1369–1401; D. Acemoglu, S. Johnson and J.A. Robinson, "Why is Africa Poor?", *Economic History of Developing Regions* 25:1 (2010), 21–50.

factor that helps to explain the weak economic performance of African countries. Institutional economics has largely documented the fact that institutions have an impact on the economic and social progress of nations.<sup>11</sup> Bad institutions can trap nations in a state of under-production, resulting in weak levels of wealth creation.

Colonial powers created political institutions in their colonies that mirrored European models: Spain transplanted feudal institutions to Latin America that protected the nobility; Britain introduced decentralized political institutions and property rights that promoted competition; France favored monopolistic institutions that were notably less protective of financial innovations. Colonization, by altering the process of accumulating production factors, had a negative impact on the development of colonized countries (economic and institutional distortions). As Abdallah Zouache notes, the most harmful effects were generated by the Portuguese, Belgian, and French models.<sup>12</sup>

The factors determining each nation's economic performance are diverse. In addition to factor endowment, geography, human labor, and technology, history also plays a role. Understanding this requires an evaluation of the channels through which historical shocks are transmitted. Thus, the economic performance of African nations is linked in part to the initial conditions bequeathed to them after independence by the former European rulers: in the recent economic history of the continent, these conditions primarily manifested as the destructuring of economies (especially former modes of production) and the creation of dependency, the establishment of slave trade and extraction economies, with the flimsy industrial fabric of economies that are extraverted, lack diversification, export raw materials, and are therefore vulnerable to price volatility.

11

Institutions include rules of behavior, habits, conventions, customs, but also ways of thinking, modeled by culture, religious beliefs and practices; they determine and regulate human behavior.

12

Abdallah Zouache, "De la question coloniale chez les anciens et néo-institutionnalistes," *Revue d'économie politique* 124:1 (2014).

A second reason for such weak performances is linked to poor economic governance by the leaders of the newly independent African nations, who for the most part made poor economic choices,<sup>13</sup> and to power relations that were and are unfavorable to the continent both in terms of international economic competition (international trade rules) and in terms of the choice of strategic options in economic policy (an absence of autonomy in the choice of such policies: structural adjustment programs, Washington Consensus and Washington Consensus Plus, WCO, etc.). All in all, an unfavorable convergence of internal and external dynamics has led to economic performance that falls far short of the continent's economic potential.

#### Hysteresis and Resilience

The question of the lasting effects of shocks to the socioeconomic structure of African countries is a crucial one. Often, a discourse that sees itself as responsible and that smacks slightly of self-flagellation absolutely attempts to deny the consequences of the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism on the current trajectories of African countries. It calls on them to assume responsibility and, above all, to come to terms with the failures linked to poor post-independence governance, to stop evoking the past and accusing others to justify their own failures. Which is legitimate, incidentally, but only in part.

Post-independence era rulers were responsible for managing the resources, institutions, and conditions that existed when they came to office. It was incumbent upon them to transform these conditions. Most of these rulers failed by making poor economic and political choices, some by pillaging the wealth of their countries for the benefit of their own clans. In this way, many useful years for establishing the solid foun-

13

Under-adapted models of industrialization, bad structural and economic politics, unsustainable level of debt, absence of economic diversification, inadequate choice of primary specialization, wasteful management of public finances.

dations of prosperous nations were lost. They are not, however, accountable for the initial conditions handed to them by history, nor for the unfavorable dynamics inscribed within their inherited societal trajectories. Simplifying things to the extreme and denying the impact of historical dynamics on the fate of peoples is a demonstration of ignorance or of intellectual bad faith. Shocks as significant as four centuries of the transatlantic slave trade and a century of colonialization had major demographic, economic, political, and cultural consequences, throwing sand in the works and inflicting huge costs on the societies of sub-Saharan African. Some of these shocks had effects that still persist today. Economists call the degree of persistence of the effects of a shock *hysteresis*. One of the issues at hand involves estimating this to appreciate the level of dependence on initial conditions. Following this historic cycle, were the conditions immediately after independence favorable to political stability and economic recovery? The answer is no. Especially because these shocks were combined with the effects of persisting unfavorable conditions: formal independences were conceded in exchange for the perpetuation of a system of political, economic, and cultural dependence, all to maintain control over the resources of the African continent. Predation of these resources continues today via imbalanced contracts to exploit natural resources, unequal exchange, flows of illegal capital leaving the continent equivalent in volume to incoming direct investment and foreign aid,<sup>14</sup> economic recolonization by former colonial powers (Ivory Coast, Senegal, Gabon ... ) whose big companies (Bolloré, Total, Eiffage, Areva ... ) control the essential elements of the productive private sector and the commercial banks in sub-Saharan African countries. To all this is now added China's economic penetration, which is to

14

See Léonce Ndikumana and James K. Boyce, *Africa's Odious Debts: How Foreign Loans and Capital Flight Bled a Continent* (Zed Books, 2012).

the detriment of the continent: a little infrastructure in return for the pillaging of Africa's natural resources and the colonizing of its lands.

Calling attention to these facts is neither adopting a form of fatalism, nor is it refusing to face responsibilities. Moreover, pointing to these *stylized facts* as part of the explanation for the African continent's present economic difficulties is not synonymous with obscuring the responsibility of bad post-independence governance and the poor choices of African leaders. But the phenomenon must be given back its historical density and its complexity by proceeding to a precise, clinical examination, classifying the causes and evaluating their relative importance, as well as identifying those among them that persist today. Identifying the exact causes of an illness is a prerequisite for remedy and healing. Once this work is done, the most urgent question is whether resilience and rebound are possible. It is this that concerns us here: reflecting on the conditions for regeneration. Throughout their history, African peoples have displayed great resilience and great endurance in the face of ordeals. The demographic vitality regained in barely a century is proof of this mettle. No dynamic system returns to its original state. The same can be said of societies. They can, however, regain balance and evolve toward a state that maximizes their chance for survival and growth.

It is this dynamic equilibrium that must be rediscovered. Initial conditions do not completely determine future conditions. The complex dynamic systems that we call societies have the property of equifinality, they can reach the same result coming from different initial conditions. For this task, demographic, economic, institutional, and mental resilience is required.

As far as demography is concerned, the continent is on its way to regaining the advantage

it had in the early sixteenth century. By 2050, Africa will represent a quarter of the world's population. A century ago, Africa counted 100 million people, with 95% living in rural areas. Today it has a population of one billion, 45% of them city dwellers. By 2050, there will be 2.5 billion, with 60% in urban areas. The fifty-year demographic explosion that brought this tenfold population increase did not start until 1950. By 2050, the largest section of the world's healthy and active population will be African. In terms of human capital, transforming this demographic dividend into a productive resource poses challenges that must be taken up.

Achieving economic resilience is more delicate, requiring ruptures with the models of production and accumulation inherited from the colonial period. But it is not impossible, others elsewhere have succeeded at it. Most of the African economies that are currently experiencing growth export oil and minable resources.<sup>15</sup> African economic growth is driven mainly by extractive industries and services. Regardless of the slim foreign currency gains they generate, however, an end must be put to enclave and extraction economies. They do not help bring about overall development, instead creating environmental and social problems, feeding corruption, and biasing intertemporal choice and resource allocation.

African leaders often face the tricky question of whether to exploit their resources and natural wealth in the context of an urgent need for foreign currency to balance the public finances of their states. Most often, short-term choices take precedence in their strategies, as this has an immediate impact on the fiscal revenues and financial resources of states facing a range of equally urgent needs. These needs lead them to accept an absolutely imbalanced and unjust distribution of the wealth extracted from their own land; multinationals carve out the lion's

15  
Sylvie Brunel, *L'Afrique est-elle si bien partie?* (Auxerre: Science humaines Éditions, 2014).

share for themselves, under the pretext of technology transfer or the development of resources that would otherwise remain untapped. Whereas in reality, it is long-term investment choices that modify the structure of the economy and allow it to grow sustainably and in a balanced manner. The crux here is to escape from the dictatorship of emergencies, to not cheaply sell off the resources of a continent rich in all kinds of reserves—especially in the case of oil and gas, which are nonrenewable energy sources that will run out within a century.

Giving citizens control over mining contracts signed by their governments, and over the use of the resulting profits, is an important part of the solution to this problem. The ultimate key lies in improved transgenerational awareness among African politicians and a more long-term focus in their actions. One could imagine institutional apparatuses that delegate the management of a nation's natural resources to institutions independent from the electoral cycle and from the regimes in place. These issues are joined by that of food security, which makes Africa's arable lands a new object of desire. Foreign multinationals, with the complicity of nation-states, are trying to appropriate these lands in anticipation of future global needs for agricultural products.

Here, too, questions of intertemporal choice, of political and economic sovereignty arise. They must be confronted head-on, with the main responsibility falling to politicians. A better awareness within African civil societies of what is at stake here could help them in this task.

#### Reinforcing Improvements

Recent progress in terms of economic growth in several African countries indicates that an upturn is underway.<sup>16</sup> Literature that analyzes and takes stock of this situation is abundant,

16

Of the ten countries with double-digit growth rates, eight are African.

and the conclusions it draws are accurate, in part. Literature that recommends solutions to accelerate growth dynamics in African countries, to make them stronger, more sustainable, and inclusive, is also accurate in part, and on a number of questions (though not all) there is a consensus on what should be done. If this return of growth is to be translated into enhanced quality of life, there must be vigorous public policies, investments in basic socio-economic infrastructures, as well as strategic choices targeted at a structural transformation of African economies. Tackling the economic challenges of the African continent and responding adequately to the basic needs of its populations by guaranteeing decent living conditions is an absolute necessity. To do this, it is essential to make good use of the continent's productive capacities, to transform its resources and human capital into wealth, to equitably divide up this wealth, and to qualitatively transform African societies by raising the quality of life of the continent's populations and making funds available to finance basic psychosocial functions, meaning those that ensure psychological wellbeing and the proper health of Africa's civilizational models.

Most economists agree on the necessity of increasing investments in human capital (education and health) and in infrastructure, on the need to diversify economies, to resolve issues relating to food security, to improve overall yield on production factors via technological innovation, to take better advantage of benefits arising from factor endowments, and on the need for high-quality institutions and economic governance. Countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, Cape Verde, Ghana, Ethiopia, Botswana, Uganda, and Mauritius, having opted for some of these solutions, have seen excellent performance in terms of economic growth during the past decade.

However, it is necessary to reinforce these improvements, to export the replicable aspects of these models to other African countries, to broaden the options for new beginnings, to structurally transform economies, to intensify investments in human capital, and above all to mobilize cultural dynamics and put them to work for the continent's economies; these dynamics are largely under-exploited and could act as a lever.

#### Thinking about African Economies in their Cultural Substratum

A key characteristic of the economic models employed for the past fifty years on the African continent is their external origin. Neither the practices nor the modes of production from which they result are internal. Hence the dualism of systems characterized by the coexistence of a "formal" economy and a popular economy based on a socio-culture and referred to as "informal," that, nonetheless, allows most of the population to survive and makes a major contribution to GDP (54.2% in sub-Saharan Africa).<sup>17</sup> A primordial question that is not sufficiently addressed in the various analyses of African economies is how these economies connect with their respective socio-cultures. From a theoretical point of view, we cannot continue to ignore the essential role played by economic practices that allow Africans to secure their livelihoods just because these practices belong to an economy deemed to be informal, given that this informal economy has emerged from a relationship to the economic shaped by their own culture.

In traditional African societies,<sup>18</sup> the economic was included in a much broader social system. While fulfilling its classical functions (subsistence, resource allocation, etc.), most importantly it was subordinate to social, cultural, and civilizational objectives. This is no longer the case in contemporary societies

17

J. Charmes, "The contribution of informal sector to GDP in Developing Countries: Assessment, Estimates, Methods, Orientations for the future", *OECD EUROSTAT* State Statistical Committee of the Russian Federation, Non-Observed Economy Workshop, October 16th-20th (2000), 14

18

This analysis is confined to traditional sub-Saharan societies.

where the economic order tends to become hegemonic, overflowing its natural space and seeking to impose its meanings and logic on every dimension of human existence.<sup>19</sup> Culture has an impact on perceptions, attitudes, consumer habits, investments and savings, individual and collective choices; it remains a principal determinant of the economic act. In human groups, the imaginary constitutes social relations, even the most material ones. The economic act is first and foremost a social relation. The imaginary and the symbolic determine its production. Cultural factors thus influence economic performance.

The first idea being championed here is that the efficiency of an economic system is strongly tied to its degree of appropriateness to its cultural context. African economies would take off if they ran on their own motors. The second idea is that we must go further than simply thinking of the effectiveness of African economics in terms of a better embedding within African cultures. It is above all a question of examining, in the African context, the interconnection of these two orders, culture and economy, with an intention that can be called civilizational—allowing the realization of those objectives judged to be *the best* by both the individual and the group.<sup>20</sup> To accomplish this, it is necessary to consider the social project in its entirety by analyzing the multiple interactions between its environmental dimensions; those that aim to assure the conditions for existence (economy, ecology) with that address the meaning of existence itself (culture, philosophies, orders of purpose). It is thus a matter of thinking which place the economic order should be assigned within the social dynamic. Moreover, it is our hypothesis that an interconnection of the economic and cultural orders that avoided confusing their respective objectives would make societal projects more coherent.

19

Economics has become a discipline that has lost awareness of its place within the whole (anomy), that overflows its natural space and engulfs all social relationships by imposing its meanings and its logic of profit (privative appropriation of nature, space, public goods, transformation of social relationships by the labor force).

20

Those promoted by groups and individuals.

**Publication****Authors**

Bureau d'Études  
Alice Creischer  
Colin Crouch  
Simon Denny  
Søren Grammel  
Jan Peter Hammer  
Sybille Krämer  
Stephan Lessenich  
Lisa Rave  
Felwine Sarr  
Andreas Siekmann  
Hito Steyerl

**Text credits****15–24**

Excerpt and translation from Dr. Stephan Lessenich, *Grenzen der Demokratie. Teilhabe als Verteilungsproblem* (Ditzingen: Philipp Reclam jun. Verlag GmbH, 2019).

**27–59**

Excerpt from Colin Crouch, *The Globalization Backlash* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019)

**67–90**

*Duty-Free Art* by Hito Steyerl was first published in e-flux journal #63, March 2015. Credits: Commissioned by Artists Space New York as a lecture. The text tremendously benefitted from editing by Adam Kleinman and Richard Birkett.

**93–115**

Text by Andreas Siekmann first published in 2014 for the exhibition *A Chronicle of Interventions* at the Project Space, Tate Modern, London; Teor/ética San José; curator: Inti Guerrero.

**121–131**

Translation of a text accompanying the *Petropolitica* map, 2019, by Bureau d'Études, artist group, September 2019. It gives the broad perspectives and shows some of the formal input that shaped the map's design.

**139–157**

Text and images by Simon Denny, 2019.

**159–171**

Transcript of the video *Anarchist Banker*, 2010, by Jan Peter Hammer.

**175–183**

Excerpt and translation from Sybille Krämer, "Das Geld und die Null: Die Quantifizierung und die Visualisierung des Unsichtbaren in Kulturtechniken der frühen Neuzeit," in: *Macht Wissen Wahrheit*, ed. Klaus W. Hempfer and Anita Traninger (Freiburg: Rombach, 2005).

**185–195**

Transcript of the video *Europium*, 2014, by Lisa Rave.

**197–211**

Excerpt from Felwine Sarr "The Question of the Economy," in: *Afrotopia*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

**60–65, 116–119,****132–137, 172–173**

Alice Creischer  
Poems, 2012–2014  
The poems were created as part of the exhibition: *Establishment of Matters of Fact*, at KOW Galerie Berlin 2012. In the context of the exhibition situation, they were encoded and installed as posters. The poem on p. 116–119 was developed for the film *In the Stomach of the Predators*, 2012/2013.

**Image credits****Cover**

Drawn by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1526/30–1569)  
Engraved by Frans Huys (1522–1562)  
Published by Hieronymus Cock (1518–1570)  
*Armed Four-Master Sailing Towards a Port*, c. 1561/62  
Copperplate engraving on handmade paper  
Kunstmuseum Basel, Inv. X.2314 (rotated 180°)

**Inside cover**

Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1497/98–1543)

*Typus cosmographicus universalis* (world map with America, Europe, Africa, and Asia), 1537. Woodcut from two blocks. Purchased by Kunstmuseum Basel in 1933, Inv. 1933.278 (colors inverted)

**Concept**

Søren Grammel

**Editor**

Eva Falge

**Design**

Thomas Buxó (L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X) and Klaartje van Eijk (inDesign™)

**Copy-editing German**

Ulrike Ritter

**Copy-editing English**

Nicholas Grindell  
Meredith Dale

**Proofreading**

Nicholas Grindell

**Translations**

Nicholas Grindell

**Printer**

DZA Druckerei zu Altenburg GmbH, Germany

**Print-run**

900

The curator wishes to express sincere thanks to all individuals and parties who have provided texts or rights for texts.

© Kunstmuseum Basel | Gegenwart  
St. Alban-Rheinweg 60,  
4010 Basel, Schweiz  
www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch

ISBN: 978-3-7204-0244-6

**Exhibition**

December 7, 2019 —  
May 3, 2020

**Artists**

Ursula Biemann  
Wang Bing  
Bureau d'Études  
Alice Creischer  
Simon Denny  
Melanie Gilligan  
Ulrike Grossarth

Jan Peter Hammer  
Fred Lonidier  
Richard Mosse  
Marion von Osten  
Lisa Rave, Claus Richter  
Cameron Rowland  
Andreas Siekmann.

As well as these invited artists, the exhibition features works from the Kunstmuseum Basel collection.

**Curator**

Søren Grammel

**Assistant Curators**

Eva Falge, Philipp Selzer  
Stefanie Thierstein

**Registrar**

Monique Meyer

**Conservators**

Sonia Fontana  
Annette Fritsch  
Annegret Seger  
Caroline Wyss-Illgen  
Lina Wyss

**Exhibition construction & technology**

Hans-Peter Arni  
Felix Böttiger  
Claude Bosch  
Philipp Gueniat  
Martin Imhof  
Fredi Zumkehr

**Video technology**

Tweaklab AG

**Kunstmuseum Basel****Director**

Josef Helfenstein

**Deputy Director**

Anita Haldemann

**Head of Art Care**

Werner Müller

**Head of Finance & Operations**

Matthias Schwarz

**Head of Marketing & Development**

Mirjam Baitsch

**Head of Programs**

Daniel Kurjaković

**Head of Art Education**

Hannah Horst

Many thanks to  
Simon Baier  
Ursula Biemann  
Wang Bing  
Bureau d'Études  
Thomas Buxó  
Marietta Clages  
Alice Creischer  
Colin Crouch  
Chantal Crousel  
Simon Denny  
Klaartje van Eijk  
Eva Falge  
Melanie Gilligan  
Maxwell Graham  
Dominique Grisard  
Ulrike Grossarth  
Jan Peter Hammer  
Markus Klammer  
Naomi Klein  
Sybille Krämer  
Chantal Küng  
Stephan Lessenich  
Fred Lonidier  
Karl Marx  
Max Mayer  
Richard Mosse  
Marion von Osten  
Lisa Rave  
Claus Richter  
Cameron Rowland  
Felwine Sarr  
Matthias Schwarz  
Philipp Selzer  
Andreas Siekmann  
Hito Steyerl  
Stefanie Thierstein

e-flux (New York)  
Philipp Reclam jun. Verlag  
GmbH (Ditzingen)  
Polity (Cambridge)  
Rombach (Freiburg)  
University of Minnesota  
Press (Minneapolis)



Bureau d'Études  
Alice Creischer  
Colin Crouch  
Simon Denny  
Søren Grammel [Ed.]  
Jan Peter Hammer  
Sybille Krämer  
Stephan Lessenich  
Lisa Rave  
Felwine Sarr  
Andreas Siekmann  
Hito Steyerl



kunstmuseum basel