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Editors

Editorial—“Alternative Economies”

We can now say with some certainty that one advantage of the Cold War was that it placed many of the complexities and contradictions of economic problems within a clear and singular binary between capitalism and communism. On top of that, arguments in favor of one or the other had massive geopolitical blocs backing them, and the sheer scale alone was enough to draw any economic argument into the tide of one side or the other. This made it only natural for dominant narratives following the dismantling of communism to profess the triumph of capitalism. However, it is only now that the logic of global capitalism has begun to collapse from within that we are forced to consider the fact that economic value and actual worth have actually been floating on parallel tracks this entire time.

Of course, in the field of art as we know it, easy solutions for this tension have never been an issue. On the contrary, the field has always been subsidized by public funding, wealthy patrons, and personal assets precisely on the basis that art surpasses clear and straightforward valuation in economic terms. On the one hand this has made for a strange hybrid economy where a humanist tradition also has its own commodity market, while on the other it has managed to remain a sphere in which a lack of faith in any terms for clear economic validation has somehow managed to remain intact. Even officially in many cases, public and private funding alike would flow to art precisely because art was understood to provide an exception to the geopolitical rule.

Now, all the signs say there is a good chance much of this support will dry up, and that before too long we will all be poor. But at the same time, this likelihood is not the result of a single political agenda (though many politicians in places like the US and the Netherlands welcome the cuts), but a much broader series of collapses in a global economic system that by now eludes the possibility of identifying clear ideological friends and enemies. The problem really affects us all.

Still, the sources of art’s livelihood have always been dispersed, somewhat self-serving, and partly non-existent. This means that survival will probably not be a problem, and furthermore that the terms for that survival will be extremely interesting—even transformative. Art has always been made in a ghostly and somewhat treacherous economy built on solidarities and speculations, piracy and ideals: an alternative economy par excellence. As Lawrence Liang writes in his essay in this issue,

> Alternative economies are alternative not just because they are quaint, but because they have figured out a way of being in the world that extends the limits of what they can know by drawing their own boundaries of the knowable. If we are to face up to the challenge of the crisis of the arts, it would be through a recognition that our potential lies beyond the

threshold of the possible.

Now that the threat of imminent poverty is shrinking the field of available possibilities, it seems to be the opportune moment to consider how the incredible resourcefulness of artistic work can be deployed towards a more general reformulation of its terms for survival. In issue 27 of *e-flux journal*, essays by Paul Glover, Elizabeth Povinelli, Raqs Media Collective, Franco Berardi, and Lawrence Liang begin to address the question through concrete strategies for gaining economic autonomy, the anthropology of the gift, our time spent on earth as part of a commons, capitalist hyper-acceleration in the absence of any future worth looking forward to, and a "pirate" sense that defiantly demands access.

—Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle

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Lawrence Liang

Is it a Bird? A Plane? No, It's a Magic Chair

Aren't our favorite Superman stories the ones in which Superman—drained of all his powers by Lex Luthor, who has hidden kryptonite in a pill or behind a painting, take your pick—must recover his strength to outwit Luthor? Reduced to a pile of muscles, the Man of Steel is momentarily vulnerable and forced to rely on the only superpower he has left—one that we ordinary mortals share with him: his creativity and imagination. The pleasures of these stories arise precisely from the challenge of things not being ideal. Given the perpetual threat under which Superman lives, it would not be inaccurate to say that he flies between the stratospheres of the ideal and the impossible. This hovering between perpetual impossibility and an absolute potential also measures the distance between the bespectacled, clumsy Clark Kent and his alter ego. But what if the true alter-ego of Superman is not Clark Kent, but Walter Mitty, the everyman from James Thurber's 1939 short story *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, who dreams his way into his absolute potential much like all of us? What if Superman is the necessary fiction that allows Kent/Mitty to fly, despite the heaviness of the real world around them? After all, Walter Mitty is the one who really understands that the most subversive power we possess is our imagination—it penetrates walls, stops bullets, flies across the world, and in it we are all light as air.

Italo Calvino urges us to take things a little lightly as we step into the twenty-first century. Enumerating lightness as one of the desirable attitudes to cultivate, Calvino says that when the entire world is turning into stone through a slow petrification, we should recall Perseus's refusal of Medusa's stone-heavy stare. To slay Medusa without allowing himself to be turned to stone, Perseus supports himself on lightest of things, the winds and the clouds, and "fixes his gaze upon what can be revealed only by indirect vision, an image caught in a mirror."[1] Calvino reminds us that Perseus's strength lay in his refusal to look directly, but not in a refusal of the reality in which he is fated to live. But what of those who live under the terror of the Gorgon—do they wait for their Perseus, their Superman? For his 2010 documentary on the crisis of the education system in the United States, Davis Guggenheim used the appropriate title *Waiting for Superman*, in reference to a Harlem teacher's childhood belief that a superhero would fix the problems of the ghetto, and his frightful realization when his mother tells him that superman does not exist.

The transformation of Clark Kent into Superman is always precipitated by a crisis, usually one large enough to potentially destroy the world. But what if it is not a monumental end-of-the-world that scares us, but the prospect of losing the small worlds that we inhabit and know: a bookstore disappearing, a public organization running out of funds, an independent gallery shutting down?

The crisis of funding in arts and culture threatens to destroy many such worlds with a slow petrification of our

Scene from the The Secret Life of Walter Mitty where Walter Mitty assumes the role of a surgeon.

sensibilities, and the understandable impulse is to despair and bemoan. It is, after all, no coincidence that a state of the economy—depression—also names or appropriates an affective state whereby a self-fulfilling prophesy is initiated: an economy drained of capital produces a draining of life. An alternative economy would have to seek a language that does not just name a different economic process, but names different psychic energies amidst the prediction of gloom that normally accompanies the retreat of capital from all forms of life, including creative life. And yet it remains important to maintain that the mere presence of healthy public institutions does not guarantee a richer cultural life, just as their absence does not necessitate a poverty of cultural life.

In his satirical poem mocking the sad passions of A. E. Housman by emulating his doom-filled verses, Ezra Pound writes:

> O woe, woe,
> People are born and die,
> We also shall be dead pretty soon
> Therefore let us act as if we were
> Dead already.

But the fact of the matter is that we are neither dead, nor indeed is the state of cultural life. We now inhabit a paradoxical moment in which, even as known spheres of cultural life are retreating, we find a simultaneous eruption of energetic practices and possibilities. A film club in Berlin screens downloaded films and hands out copies of the film to the viewers at the end of the film (when was the last time you went to an exhibition and walked away with the artwork?), cineastes in China curate samizdat collectible DVDs of world cinema combining the best of various legitimate DVDs, a website claims to have a better collection of video art than the MoMA, and young people across the world are experimenting with cheaper technologies that bridge the gap between the films they see and the ones they simultaneously make in their minds.

In most parts of the word, the crisis in art and culture is not a new one, and the absence of strong state or private

Pirate DVD stand. Photo: Eunheui.

support has been a perpetual condition whereby material constraints become both the precondition as well as the context in which various creative forms find forceful expression. Attesting to the vitality of the electronic everyday, Bhagwati Prasad and Amitabh Kumar's graphic novel *Tinker Solder Tap* narrates the story of most parts of the world from its vantage point in Delhi, where scarcity and abundance, creativity and decay dance together—sometimes flirtatiously, at other times threateningly. *Tinker Solder Tap* provides us with two images of Delhi's urban landscape as it morphed throughout the 1990s and 2000s into a mediascape of sensation and excitement, with extremely cheap media opening myriad possibilities for transforming everyday life though creativity and cultural production.

So the question might not be a matter of what is to be done, but rather what is to be done now that the six screen projections may not be possible? Is there hope, or are we doomed to live as though already dead? In his conversation with Mary Zournazi on the philosophy of hope, Michael Taussig suggests that it could be useful to think of hope as a kind of sense, much like our other senses. For Taussig, it is precisely because of the life-draining threat posed by our material circumstances that we need hope.[2] Elsewhere in the book, it is argued that hope is what one cultivates against all reasonable evidence suggesting that there should be none. Referring to the temporary autonomous zones that people create to test the outer possibilities of freedom, Taussig asserts that even when imminent failure looms, autonomous zones provide a glimmer of possibility. And is it not the case with hope that all it takes is a glimmer, and not a burning bush?

I would suggest that one could extend the idea of the hope sense into other domains rarely articulated as belonging to that of the senses or sensibility, engulfed as they are by their legal status. How, for instance, might we think of a pirate sense—like a hope-sense this is not a foregrounded sense, but a subterranean one, flying just below the radar

Bhagwati Prasad, Amitabh Kumar, last plate from Tinker Solder Tap.

of the visible and the audible, but ever alert to the possibilities offered in spite of the apparent impossibility of our material life? While our capacity to lead imaginative lives is dependent in part on conditions such as the availability of resources and infrastructure, it would be erroneous to subsume one under the other. Piracy has been over-analyzed in terms of its legality and access, yet under-theorized as a specific sensibility and attitude, and it may be useful to turn back a bit differently to Superman to see the heroic possibilities of a pirate sense.

Approximately eight hours away from the bright lights of India's financial and film capital of Bombay is a small non-descript town called Malegaon. The town is populated mainly by migrant Muslim laborers from North India who work in the power loom sector. Malegaon saw major riots after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 and became infamous in 2006 after a series of bomb blasts. But the town has recently been in the news for something else. It has emerged as the center of a parallel film industry that churns out remakes of Bollywood hits, re-contextualizing them to address local issues and to cater to local tastes. Thus, one of the biggest Indian blockbusters, *Sholay* (1975), is remade as *Malegaon ki Sholay*, and Oscar-nominated *Lagaan* (Taxes) is remade as *Malegaon ki Lagaan*, in which, instead of depicting opposition to colonial taxes, the film takes problems of civic amenities as its subject. All the actors in the film have become stars within the local community, and one of the reasons cited for the popularity of these remakes has been that the local community can see people they recognize on the big screen. The average budget of a Malegaon production is around Rs.50,000 ($1000), and runs in one of the fourteen local video theaters in the town, while now also circulating via VCD and DVD. It all started when Shaikh Nasir, a local videographer who shot wedding videos, decided to borrow money to make his own film. He shot it on video and used two VCRs to edit the film in real time. The film turned out to be a surprise hit, and thus started the Malegaon film industry.

Local workers in the various small-scale industries double as actors, and they try to stay as close to the original film as possible, emulating the same camera angles, lighting,

Left: Shaikh Nasir editing his film using two videos, 2003. Photo: Sukhija; Rigth: Faiza Khan, Supermen of Malegaon, 2008.

and so on. It is understandably difficult to emulate a large, mega-budget Bollywood film in a small town like Malegaon, so the Malegaon crew has learned to adapt and innovate using local resources. A bicycle stands in for dolly, and a bull cart is used for crane shots. While remaking Hindi epic *Shaan* (1980), the director realized that there was no way to hire a helicopter with a total budget of Rs.50,000 for the film, so they simply had to make do with a toy helicopter and shoot it in a way that made it look as authentic as possible.

Faiza Khan's documentary film *The Supermen of Malegaon* (2008) follows Nasir as he sets out on his most ambitious venture—a remake of *Superman* for Malegaon.[3] In the documentary, Nasir speaks about what made him arrive at *Superman*:

> I never went anywhere to learn to make films. I would select different English films to screen. After that, I found Hindi films boring. "Weak direction," I thought. So my film education was at the video hall, I learned master angles, master lighting, the works. I used to cut out newspaper listings of films being shown in Bombay, and play the same films here. I used to copy the posters and put them up outside my video hall. This is what obsession leads you to. I just wanted to do something differently—a little bit of this and a bit of that—and now the story has come to this. [Nasir holds up a picture of Superman.]

The film avoids what could easily have been a semi-patronizing, semi-amused look at a small film industry with its quaint and quirky films. By focusing instead on the creative impulse and passion that drives the filmmakers of Malegaon, *The Supermen of Malegaon* draws us into thinking about who a Superman is, what it means to believe you can fly, and how lightness overcomes the burden of the real. It takes for granted, as the filmmakers themselves do, the very limited resources with which they make their films, and it invites us instead to share the unlimited reserves of enthusiasm and energy that they bring to their craft. As a film writer in Malegaon says:

> When a writer has a thought in his head, whatever his vision, he never achieves more than 20 percent of it. Even if it is a *Titanic*, the output is 20 percent. To live with the other 80 percent—the vision, the characters who inhabit your head—no one can understand that pain. And no money can compensate for it.

For me, the essence of *The Supermen of Malegaon* is captured in a statement by one of the weaver-actors when he says "We don't have the facilities but are we making films. That's what's special. We don't have great voices, but we are singing. That is what is exceptional ... We have no weapons but we are fighting a war, and we are winning it." The statement reminded me of a story by Guy Davenport in which he recalls a sports function where he saw a high school marching band. Noticing that one of the horn players was a young man with Down syndrome playing an imaginary horn—keeping step admirably, and intently playing his instrument—Davenport recounted:

> Tears came to my eyes, as I saw great metaphysical depths in it, and perhaps a metaphor for life itself as we now live it. I *hope* the boy really thought he was playing in the band (I wonder if he goes to practice?) and that he was overcoming the dreadful handicap in some way that counterfeited reality for him. He may even be a student in high school, pretending he can read and do arithmetic (just like my students). I then entertained a fantasy in which I, who can't sing or play a note, might be allowed to play an imaginary violin in a symphony orchestra.[4]

There is perhaps a lesson to be learned from *The Supermen of Malegaon* and their finely-tuned pirate sense that does not name the legality or illegality of an act, but marks an attitude—to time, to resources, and to creativity. If the state (as benign promoter of the arts) and private corporations (as owners of culture) both promise access on paternalistic terms, then a pirate sense is one that demands a defiant access. It refuses to wait for Superman, and instead pretends that it can fly. It is to be found in Borges's village librarian, who, upon finding that he cannot afford to buy the books he has read positive reviews of, proceeds to write those books on the basis of their title.

Alternative economies are alternative not just because they are quaint, but because they have figured out a way of being in the world that extends the limits of what they can know by drawing their own boundaries of the knowable. If we are to face up to the challenge of the crisis of the arts, it would be through a recognition that our potential lies beyond the threshold of the possible. As Brian Massumi

Faiza Khan, Supermen of Malegaon, 2008. Filmstill.

puts it:

> That vague sense of potential, we call it our "freedom," and defend it fiercely. But no matter how certainly we know that the potential is there, it always seems just out of reach, or maybe around the next bend. Because it isn't *actually* there—only virtually. But maybe if we can take little, practical, experimental, strategic measures to expand our emotional register, or limber up our thinking, we can access more of our potential at each step, have more of it actually available. Having more potentials available intensifies our life. We're not enslaved by our situations. Even if we never *have* our freedom, we're always experiencing a degree of freedom, or "wriggle room." Our degree of freedom at any one time corresponds to how much of our experiential "depth" we can access towards a next step—how intensely we are living and moving.[5]

Echoing Massumi, a recent text by the Cybermohalla ensemble describes a playful experiment with conditions of intellectual life and speech in localities:

> The magic chair is a condition everyone carries in them. It's a matter of its activation. How to build an environment around us that can bring the highest level of activation of this magic chair? In daily life, the place of the magic chair diminishes or expands depending on what and who it encounters. What can we or do we create around ourselves, in what ways can we enter that which has been made by others around us, so that an activation and expansion of the magic chair may happen in and around us?[6]

Avant-garde arts practices of the recent past have been so tightly coupled with institutional forms that this crisis could perhaps open a possibility for us to bring back what Jeebesh Bagchi describes as a spirit of the "rearguard." As both an attitude and a strategy, Bagchi describes the rearguard as a practice that knows that in order to survive, there is a need for many "do-it-yourself" tools. It acts like a craftsman and builds them. It knows that it is by multiplying throughout diverse paths and forms that one can breathe within debris. It takes this agility, porosity, and masking as a site for discovery, exploration, and connection.

Thus, the transformation of Clark Kent into Superman may not be a matter of a quick fix, running in and out of a magically-appearing telephone booth, but, instead, a careful combination of new skills and senses with which we, like Perseus, take flight. Indeed, the time has come to

talk of many things, of cabbages and kings and whether men have wings.

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1
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2
Mary Zournazi, "Carnival of the Senses: A Conversation with Michael Taussig," in *Hope: New Philosophies for Change* (New York: Psychology Press, 2003), 42.

3
See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkzR7yoIYKc .

4
Bernard Hoepffner, "Pleasant Hill: Interview with Guy Davenport," *Conjunctions* , no. 24 (Spring 1995). See http://wvorg.free.fr/hoepffner/PleasHillEng.html .

5
"Navigating Movements: A Conversation with Brian Massumi," in Zournazi, *Hope*, 214.

6
Love Anand, Azra Tabassum, Neelofar Shamsher Ali, Lakhmi Kohli, Jaanu Nagar Nasreen, Rabiya Quraishy, Rakesh Khairalia Babli Rai, and Tripan Kumar, *No Apologies for the Interruption* (New Delhi: The Director / Sarai-CSDS, 2011), 62. See https://issuu.com/raqsmediacollective/docs/no_apologies .

Planktons in the Sea: A Few Questions Regarding the Qualities of Time

To ask a human being to account for time is not very different from asking a floating fragment of plankton to account for the ocean. How does the plankton bank the ocean?

What is time?
What is the time?
The time is of your choosing.
The time is not of your choosing.
The time is out of joint.
The time has come.
The time needs changing.
The time has gone.
The time has come and gone.
The time has flown.
The time is not convenient.
The time is at hand.
The time has been spent well.
The time has been wasted.
The time is awkward.
The time is ripe.
The time has passed so swiftly.
The time is now.
What is the time?

We say "my time," "your time," but how do we tie these models of personhood, of being (me, you, us) to the medium within which all these me's and you's and us's all swim in? Heidegger says, "Being and time determine each other reciprocally, but in such a manner that neither can the former—Being—be addressed as something temporal nor can the latter—time—be addressed as a being."[1]

In *Confessions*, St. Augustine begins his discourse on time by confessing, "What then is time? Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know."[2] In our effort to account for time, we will confess to our confusions.

Neuroscience and Mental Time

Recent research in the neuroscience of how our brain processes time seems to indicate that there are several clocks, in fact several kinds of clocks running in our brain. A recent article by Burkhard Bilger in the *New Yorker* on neuroscientist David M. Eagleman explains,

> Eagleman borrows a conceit from Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities." [*sic*] The brain, he writes, is like Kublai Khan, the great Mongol emperor of the thirteenth century. It sits enthroned in its skull, "encased in darkness and silence," at a lofty remove from brute reality. Messengers stream in from every corner of the sensory kingdom, bringing word of distant sights, sounds, and smells. Their reports arrive at different rates, often long out of date, yet the details are all stitched together into a seamless chronology.

> The difference is that Kublai Khan was piecing together the past. The brain is describing the present—processing reams of disjointed data on the fly, editing everything down to an instantaneous now. How does it manage it?[3]

Bilger continues by detailing the context from which Eagleman's work emerges:

> Just how many clocks we contain still isn't clear. ... The circadian clock, which tracks the cycle of day and night, lurks in the suprachiasmatic nucleus, in the hypothalamus. The cerebellum, which governs muscle movements, may control timing on the order of a few seconds or minutes. The basal ganglia and various parts of the cortex have all been nominated as timekeepers, though there's some disagreement on the details. The standard model, proposed by the late Columbia psychologist John Gibbon in the nineteen-seventies, holds that the brain has "pacemaker" neurons that release steady pulses of neurotransmitters. More recently, at Duke, the neuroscientist Warren Meck has suggested that timing is governed by groups of neurons that oscillate at different frequencies. At U.C.L.A., Dean Buonomano believes that areas throughout the brain function as clocks, their tissue ticking with neural networks that change in predictable patterns. "Imagine a skyscraper at night," he told me. "Some people on the top floor work till midnight, while some on the lower floors may go to bed early. If you studied the patterns long enough, you could tell the time just by looking at which lights are on."
>
> Time isn't like the other senses, Eagleman says. Sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing are relatively easy to isolate in the brain. They have discrete functions that rarely overlap: it's hard to describe the taste of a sound, the color of a smell, or the scent of a feeling. ... But a sense of time is threaded through everything we perceive. It's there in the length of a song, the persistence of a scent, the flash of a light bulb. "There's always an impulse toward phrenology in neuroscience—toward saying, 'Here is the spot where it's happening,'" Eagleman told me. "But the interesting thing about the perception of time is that there is no spot. It's a distributed property. It's metasensory; it rides on top of all the others."[4]

In the Wake of Storms

It is not at all surprising that we are all thinking quite seriously about the actual possibility of thinking of time-based and spatially-located forms of exchange today. Whenever capitalism licks its wounds, looses confidence—as it is doing today—dormant economic imaginaries come into view.[5] Economists start talking to poets, artists, and lay people—those they are otherwise often keen to dismiss as madmen or ignoramuses.

The need-based systems that emerge in the aftermath of periodic crashes or in the wake of war and catastrophes are small conceptual windows on the realization of some of our desires of what a collective life based on mutuality, generosity, reciprocity, and trust might be. As capitalism eats away at the planet's resources, and spends more on destroying human life than it does on sustaining it, the lines between having no choice and desiring something different may begin to blur.

After-Work Time

As work-time becomes a less hallowed objective and criterion of living, as it becomes more insecure and unpredictable, incomprehensible and exhausting with inchoate repetition, the value of after-work and non-work time can reassert itself as the site of inventiveness of forms of life and mutuality. A wide spectrum of nineteenth-century thinkers imagined this experience of duration as the site of what life could aspire to become. Their vision was eclipsed by their twentieth-century epigones who ran amok over our imagination of duration with their frenzied worship of work-time and their paranoiac policing of time. How can we speak in the language of exchange without using the vocabulary of measure? How can the span of time that covers the length of a service could be evaluated and divided into exchangeable units?

The offerings and requests that are part of such project could be read both as a melancholic-ironic take on not being able to hold on to precious moments of life or as an incipient coming-into-view of an enormous spectrum of specific inventions that human beings can make for one another when the imperatives of work, security, achievement, and hierarchy are held in abeyance. It will be a challenge to enact and think through what this can mean for us today. At present, this enormous spectrum, like our Kublai Khan-brains, lives enclosed in silence and darkness. One could say that in a world where the division and hierarchy of labor functions as the dominant measure of life, we inevitably end up arranging various capacities and gifts as unequal but equivalent. But when we are not brought into a relationship of equivalence vis-à-vis one another and mediated by abstract labor power, but instead invoke and discover each other through acts, desires, gestures, requests, and offers that activate propensities towards new possibilities of intercourse that lie outside work-time, we are faced with an interesting enigma.

Perishables and Imperishables

The time of human life is a finite, perishable thing. Which is why two quantities, X and Y of perishable human time, can be brought into a relationship of fungibility only by means of a third thing, Z, that we agree upon as being imperishable, at least in comparison to human life. For thousands of years, this Z was condensed into units of precious metals, especially gold, which were treated as valuable precisely because their durability and their apparent imperishability made them appear as things that lived outside of time.

In India, a currency note declares, "I promise to pay the bearer the sum of X rupees." These rupees reflect the value of a certain sum of gold, which because of its imperishability is something that will be of the same quality, say ten years from now, as it is today, so that a "promise" made to pay the bearer may be redeemable in the future.

It is important to hold on to this notion of uniqueness and finitude, because lurking behind this calculation is the fact that if we view time from the point of view of the individual then the truths that each of us lives only once (hence each moment is unique) and that death is inevitable (hence, one day, our time will end) make time itself the most scarce commodity we have. That is why we buy time, save time, and hoard time. The irony is, we buy time with the time we take to do the things that fetch us the value against which we purchase time. We make time to buy time to sell time to buy time to make time. And key to all of this is the imperishability of gold. Even now, the fascination that ancient gold has over us has something to do with the fact that a gold ornament that is five thousand years old seems, somehow, as good as new. Its promise to pay its bearer the sum of its worth in weight is not diminished over time.

Alchemist's Gold

Now, the old alchemists dream of making gold and discovering the elixir of life make sense—both are quests for immortality, to make one's claim on time last longer than ever before.[6]

In today's world not even gold can guarantee the stability of value over time. At the end of World War Two, the Bretton Woods Agreements saw the world's major currencies abandoning their reliance on gold reserves as an expression of their value. Instead, they pegged their value to the rate at which they exchanged against the US dollar, with the understanding that at least the US dollar would exchange against gold.[7] However, in 1971, the United States under Richard Nixon abandoned the gold standard.[8] Since then, global financial and monetary systems have been in a kind of free fall. The gravity of the gold standard has given way to the free-floating levitation of the value of different currencies. The US dollar tries to do the job that gold did for thousands of years: by printing endless copies of itself which are then sent out into the world as a way of shoring up a system ultimately based on the faith that the world's governments have in the idea that the US government will outlast them, just as gold outlasts other materials.

Never in human history has so much rested on the fortunes of something as fragile as the destiny of an individual state in the world system of states. This is what lies behind the value of your time, my time, and our time—ultimately, the value of our life is pegged to the fetish of the free-falling, free-floating dollar bill. No wonder it says "In God We Trust"; when all else fails, the divine is the only thing left to turn to.

Time, Workers, and the Republic

The relationship between the time and effort that one puts into work, the nature of recompense that one receives, and the quality of one's participation in social life is a triangulated problem that seems to have been with us for thousands of years. Since Plato, if not earlier, we have been accustomed to the idea that those whose hands are busy all day long cannot have the "time" and the detachment necessary for an engagement with social questions. Hence, they must never be given the authority or the power to decide things, not even for themselves. This is somewhat circular—it automatically ensures that those who have power allocate themselves the freedom to not labor, with the excuse that those who labor cannot find the time to think on matters larger than themselves. In other words, the quality of the time of the thinker and the doer are seen to be two different things have hitherto been arranged hierarchically in all societies.

What happens when we begin to pay attention to the seconds and the hours? We remember them, tell stories about them, make poems out of tea breaks and songs out of time stolen from laboring. It is the gossip and idle chatter of seconds and hours that makes for society. We know what we know about each other because we tell each other the public secrets of capital. Stretched end to end, this chatter turns into history.

When we are done with accounting for our exhaustions, we are still left with the question of how, for instance, we value a person's life—the sum total of the value of their time on earth. The thing is, you can gauge the value of a thing only when you know what you miss when you lose it. The problem is, you would not be in a position to judge the worth of your life were you to lose it. And so, to one school of thinking, the worth of a life can only be gauged from what its absence means to those who inherit the loss.

Human Life Value: An Insurance Calculation

How is the insurance industry, with a little help from mortality figures and actuarial tables, able to tell you what you are worth, not to yourself, but to your inheritors?A clear way to assess one's financial worth is to calculate "human life value." This concept was developed in 1924 by Solomon S. Huebner of the Wharton School of Business. Huebner is considered a founding father of the life insurance industry and a dominant force in its professionalization.

Here is how human life value is calculated. First, deduct all personal expenses—food, clothes, travel, entertainment, and so on—from your annual income. Income includes salary, bonus, employee benefits like company contributions to pension funds, and income from investments. (It is important to make as complete and realistic an assessment of your income as possible, so you don't end up over-insuring.) What remains of your income after deducting personal expenses is what your family consumes.

Second, see how many years of earning you have left (your retirement age minus your present age). Project family expenses up to retirement, allowing for reasonable increments. Subtract any pension benefits they would receive if you die. Add non-recurring expenses, like your children's higher education, or their marriage. The shortfall is what you should insure for. And third, calculate the present value of the shortfall, allowing for a reasonable rate of inflation.[9]

Here is an example: suppose you earn 300,000 euros per year, and have twenty-five years until retirement. Your total earnings until you retire would be 20.9 million, after factoring in an annual increment of 10 percent. Say 60 percent of your income goes towards taxes and personal expenses. The rest would be family expenses. At the end of twenty-five years, then, your total family expenses would be 10.1 million. It is difficult to predict inflation over long periods, but following the current rate of 6.5 percent, the present value of your family expenses over twenty-five years would work out to 4.2 million. That is your financial worth in relation to your family.

So, if you were to die tomorrow, your family would have to earn 4.2 million units of currency over the next twenty-five years in order to compensate monetarily for your absence. This gives you an indication of how much you should insure yourself for. If you divide 4.2 million down to the last minute of all twenty-five years, you get 2.5 units per minute and 150 units per hour. That is the value of your time per minute and per hour over the next twenty-five years, according to the insurance industry. This is how the value of every minute is calculated backwards from the event of death.

Ian Walker's Formula for the Value of Your Time

Another way of computing the value of life-time is made available by Ian Walker, a professor at the Lancaster School of Business at Birmingham University. Walker has calculated what it means to value every minute of our time.[10] He even has a formula for it: V=(W((100-t)/100))/C, with "V" being the value of time, "W" the hourly wage rate, "t" the tax rate, and "C" the cost of living.

In 2002, when this study was done, it showed that time had become increasingly valuable over the last twenty-five years. This is a slightly different measure from that of insurance, mortality figures, and actuarial tables. If there we had sense of how much the absence of our time would cost others, here we get a sense of how much our time is worth to us as we live. The two figures can be different, as the second equation does not include several factors that the first one (being more socially embedded) includes. Does this mean that the same unit of time can be valued differently depending on whether we look at it from the point of view of the inevitability of death or, on the other hand, the contingency of life?

Walker claimed that his research showed that if people had an endless supply of money, more than 80 percent would use that money to buy time. In other words, he argued, most of us use money to by time. But given that time is money, we are back to where we were a little while ago, using time to buy time.

Regardless of whether we arrive at our value of time from death or from life, we are faced with the fact that key determinants of the calculation, wages, and the cost of living are in many instances completely out of our control. In a desperate, war-torn country, wages may be low, but the cost of living may be incredibly high. Even poorer people may have to "buy" themselves protection. We know this to be true from the fact that in many cases it is expensive to be poor, and that the rich are, in many instances, subsidized. These days they call it stimulus.

This leads to even more skewed results when it comes to the quality of time. The qualitative experience of time spent waiting in a long queue for food in a soup kitchen is very different from the experience of time earned by a rich patron in a restaurant that takes pride in delivering quick and efficient service. In both instances, a hungry person waited for food. In one case, they felt they exhausted their time in the wait, and in the other, they felt that they had earned the time of a good meal. If we are the meal, and our inheritors are the ones waiting to eat us up, then the value of our time can be sensed from how they recount their experience of waiting for us to die.

While on the subject of waiting, and the price of waiting, we could drift momentarily towards Howard Nemerov's poem, "Waiting Rooms":

What great genius invented the waiting room?
Every sublime idea no doubt is simple, but
Simplicity alone is never enough.
A cube sequestered in space and filled with time,
Pure time, refined, distilled, denatured time
Without qualities, without even dust ...
Dust in sunbeam between Venetian blinds
Where a boy and his mother wait ... Eternity!
But I am straying from the subject: waiting rooms.

All over the world, in the great terminals
And the tiny rooms of disbarred abortionists,
For transport, diagnosis, or divorce ...
Alas! Maybe this mighty and terrible theme
Is too much for me. But wait! I have an idea.

You've heard it said, of course, that anything
May instantly turn into everything
In this world secreting figures of itself
Forever and everywhere? How wonderful
That is, how horrible. Wherever you wait,
Between anticipation and regret,
Between the first desire and the second
Is but the razor of a moment, is
Not even time; and neither is motion more,
At sixty miles an hour or six hundred,
Than an illusion sent by devils to afford
Themselves illusory laughs at our expense
(we suffer, but they become happier).

Think how even in heaven where they wait
The Resurrection, even in the graves
Of heaven with the harps, this law applies:
One waiting room will get you to the next.
Even your room, even your very own,
With the old magazines on the end tables,
The goldfish in the bowl below the window
Where the sunbeam falls between Venetian blinds ...
And in the downstairs fall there is your mailbox,
One among many gathering paper and dust,
A waiting room figure, summing up
Much in a little, the legendary box
Where hope only remains. You wait and see.[11]

What really happens while we wait? Does our body, our consciousness register the passage of time in a coherent, unified, responsibly sovereign way?

Timecode Drift

Don't we all experience momentary blackouts, anomalies, premonitions, and short sharp bursts of déjà vu? And could it be that these snags and glitches and cracks and disturbances occur because our mental clocks are a little off-key?

It is interesting to consider what happens when two bits of digital sound or video are joined together. Essentially, this operation has to rely on the two bits of data first identified on the basis of their timecode stamps. A timecode stamp appears on images produced when you make a photograph with even a basic consumer end digital camera—it provides information including when the photograph was made and the frame number.

In a recent article, Gautam Pemmaraju tries to fathom the strangely anomalous phenomena that sometimes occur in the video editing room when joining two different bits of footage leads to unexpected outcomes:

> Timecode is essentially a labeling system for video, film and audio material wherein each frame has a unique identification address in *Hour:Minute:Second:Frame* format. As binary coded media metadata, timecode [*sic*] formats (standardized SMPTE, EBU) are practical ways to identify, locate, access and then manipulate recorded audio/visual data.[12]

Pemmaraju's story of footage and data going out of sync is familiar to anyone who has spent time in an editing suite. He recounts how he went into an editing suite for postproduction work with live footage from a music festival, and he soon realized, "to his utter dismay," the anguish that was in store for him:

> A multiplicity of timecode issues—drift, break, sync, control track—appeared on the master tapes and I was confronted with the horror of the loss of automated synchronization amongst other devilry. This perfidy cannot be overstated—the prospect of trying to achieve/repair sync, the flaws of which are in turn mischievously asynchronous, begins with the acceptance of many, many edit hours of painful remedial work. Someone or something fucked up and I had to pay for it.[13]

As he watched his material go progressively out of sync, Pemmaraju realized that he was confronted with a case of what he calls "timecode drift." He explains it as a mysterious de-syncing that happens in live (or "as live") TV production, where the inputs of multiple cameras are received simultaneously (and synchronously by Genlock) and are edited in real time to one recording source (called the "on-line master"). Pemmaraju notes that,

> Drift is loss of sync. The clocks drifted apart, or more precisely, the "master clock" was not able to

> consistently enslave its subordinates. And the drift itself was a variable, not a constant. Its value changed over time, bringing up the rather curious idea of a drifting apart of time over time. Multiple clocks, meant to be synchronously tethered to one another instead achieve a sort of frisson, a momentary excitement or perturbation, unannounced and governed perhaps by an incalculable whimsy as they break away from their moorings, leading then to schismatic clocks and parallel, fractured times.

Pondering on the phantasmagoric nature of these interlinked drifts, of time, and perception, leads him on "to consider paths crossing, or crossed paths, missed opportunities, and ultimately, an eschatological stoppage—a grinding halt of time."[14]

The Qualia of Time

Pemmaraju's story urges us to consider the occasional senses of temporal dislocation that we all experience from time to time—instances of timecode drift within our consciousness, small insurgencies of slave clocks against a tyrannical master clock. Little outbursts of the time of the id against the timetable of the super-ego? When thinking about the qualities or, to use a more precise term, the qualia of time—the ineffable, intrinsic, private, directly apprehensible sense of what happens when we are confronted with duration—be it in waiting for a bus, the arms of a lover, the walls of a prison, or by the shores of a sea—we realize that every instance of the apprehension of time's qualia is layered on the memory of other experiences, that in some incomprehensible way, the time spent in the arms of a lover is understood not just in reference to itself, but also in contrast to the time spent waiting our turn at a ticket counter. And often, at the ticket counter or on the assembly line, waiting while the clock weighs down on us, we are recalling the intensity and the comfort of the time spent in the arms of a lover. When we trade time, which time are we trading, which layer of qualia, and how can these add up and be accounted for when our own clocks drift away from each other, from time to time?

Dōgen on Time: The Universe in a Moment

All that we have discussed until now points to the difficulty in finding equivalences between different experiences of time. We have seen that the value of time looks different from the points of view of life and death, from the points of view of the different temporal rhythms we embody, and from the point of view of how the social world conditions the triangulation of waiting, anticipation, and entitlement. Finally, we know that our different histories make for different apprehensions of time.

Dōgen, the thirteenth-century initiator of Japanese Sōtō Zen, wrote extensively on the question of being and time. Here are a few fragments gathered from his text, *Shōbōgenzō*.

> We can never measure how long and distant or how short and pressing 24 hours is; but, just the same, we call it "24 hours." The leaving and coming of the directions and traces (of time) are clear, so people do not doubt it. They do not doubt it but that does not mean that they know it.
>
> We can say, for the present, however, that doubt is nothing other than time.
>
> Thus there are moments that are made up in the same moment of time and there are moments of time (plural) in which the same mind is made up. Practice and realization of the truth are also like this. Putting the self in order we see what it is. The truth that self is time is like this. We should learn in practice that because of this truth the whole earth includes myriad phenomena and hundreds of things, and each phenomenon and each thing exists in the whole Earth.
>
> Such toing and froing is the first step of practice. When we arrive on the solid ground of the ineffable, there is just one thing and just one phenomenon here and now, irrespective of whether we understand or do not understand things or phenomena. Because there is only this exact moment, all moments of existence-time are the whole of existence-time, and all existent things and phenomena are time. The whole of existence, the whole universe, exists in individual moments of time. Pause a moment and reflect whether or not any part of the whole of existence or of the whole universe has leaked away from the present moment of time.[15]

If each second contains the universe, how do we trade it? How do we loan it, buy it, save it? How do we accumulate interest on it? What can we do with it?

How, then, can my time trade for yours?

If my time and your time is the time of the universe, then how can we trade time for itself? Only if we reorder our orientation vis-à-vis time from one unduly governed by our sense of the finitude of our lifespans to the infinitude of death itself. This statement may seem surprising to some, and so might need a little unpacking.

The Circuit of Debt and Redemption: Life and Death Reconsidered

If wealth is controlled time, then, the sediment that is formed when duration is put under duress is its currency. The time spent in labor is hereby regained as its coinage, which I guarantee to exchange with the detritus of your time, for eternity. My time for yours, for now, for later, for the time of our choosing.[16]

The one thing that is equally available to all, and that does not perish and can never perish as long as there is life, is death itself. Our mortality should be the gold standard of our life's transactions with other lives. It is the metal to which we can peg all our currencies, all our instances of giving and taking to each other. Once we die, we can neither give nor receive, and all attempts to evade this fact, whether through inheritances or estates, are basically arbitrary attempts to pretend that death had in fact not occurred.

Consider the example of two people in two retirement communities in different parts of the world, who each decide to give each other a present—a gift of time. The first gives his gift of time to the second, who then dies and has no chance to reciprocate, and remains indebted to the person who is still alive. But it gets more complicated than this: this first person receives a gift of time from a third person, who then also dies, leaving the this person who is still living with no way of repaying him either. But before they died, each person gave and received gifts of time—through the intermediary of the person who remains alive. So, in fact, all debts have been cleared through this triangular relationship of gift giving. As we make this model progressively more complex, we realize that we all stand in a relationship of complex obligations and reciprocity where no one stands indebted to anyone else because of the way in which debts cancel each other out. And yet, everyone is simultaneously indebted to everyone else.[17]

In the second chapter of Derrida's *Given Time*, entitled "The Madness of Economic Reason," is a remarkable passage on the relationship between gifting and time. His analysis comes from a meditation on the problem of the relationship between the excess of gifting and the balance of reciprocity as established by Marcel Mauss in *The Gift*.

> The gift is not a gift, the gift only gives to the extent it *gives time*. The difference between a gift and every other operation of pure and simple exchange is that the gift gives time. *There where there is gift, there is time*. What it gives, the gift, is time. But the gift of time is also a demand of time. The thing must not be restituted *immediately and right away*. There must be time, it must last, there must be waiting—without forgetting (*l'attente—sans oubli*). It demands time, the thing, but it demands a delimited time, neither an instant nor an infinite time, but a time determined by a term, in other words, a rhythm, a cadence. The thing is not *in* time; it is or it has time, or rather it demands to have, to give, or to take time—and time as rhythm, a rhythm that does not befall a homogenous time but that structures it originally.[18]

This presupposes that we understand our time on earth as part of a commons, and our reciprocal actions as the motions of a grand orchestra in which the music continues to be played even though players come and go. This time actually devolves back to the commons when we die. It creates more time for other people. To paraphrase Marx, dead time makes fertile the ground of living time.[19]

Aristotle reminds us that, "[things] are contained by time in the same way that things which are in number are contained by number and things which are in place are contained by place. ... [T]hat to be in time is to be measured by time."[20] It is not the other way around, it is precisely *not to measure our time by the worth of our being*. It is time that has us, not we that have time.

We cannot have time, because in time we become ourselves and then cease to be ourselves. In earlier times, time was seen as the property of God, and that is why there were prohibitions on usury. You could not charge interest on a loan because what you were giving to another person was not necessarily money alone, but also time. As long as the borrower gave back the principal to you, that was all that mattered. A demand for a repayment of interest only made sense if you thought that the time he had kept the money with himself actually belonged to someone, and that that someone happened to be you. To assume this was to lay claim to time as one's fief, to make oneself a competitor of God.

The book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible has passages on time that continue to be of value to consider:

> A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
> A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
> A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
> A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.[21]

Even those of us who are not blessed with belief in the divine can make sense of the fact that there is something perverse and arrogant to laying claim to time as property.

The wage system miraculously offers entitlement to a fraction of time, but takes away entitlement to most of it, and yet, at the same time, insists that one should jealously guard the time one has left from theft by others. No wonder that thieves make excellent policemen and the biggest bank robbers are those who own and manage banks.

Our time began when we were born, and will end when we die. We have done nothing to earn it, so we cannot pretend that it is ours. How do we share and exchange that which is not ours? What does it mean to use words like sharing, exchange, and reciprocity in relation to something that cannot be owned?

X

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Raqs Media Collective (Monica Narula, Jeebesh Bagchi, Shuddhabrata
Sengupta) have been variously described as artists, curators, editors, and catalysts of cultural processes. Their work, which has been exhibited widely in major international spaces and events, locates them along the intersections of contemporary art, historical inquiry, philosophical speculation, research and theory—often taking the form of installations, online and offline media objects, performances and encounters. They live and work in Delhi, partly based at Sarai, Centre for
the Study of Developing Societies, an initiative they co-founded in 2000. They are members of the editorial collective of the *Sarai Reader* series, and have curated "The Rest of Now" and co-curated "Scenarios" for Manifesta 7.

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Elizabeth A. Povinelli

Routes/Worlds

For some time, I have been interested in developing an anthropology of the otherwise. This anthropology locates itself within forms of life that are at odds with dominant, and dominating, modes of being. One can often tell when or where one of these forms of life has emerged, because it typically produces an immunological response in the host mode of being. In other words, when a form of life emerges contrary to dominant modes of social being, the dominant mode experiences this form as inside and yet foreign to its body. For some, the dominant image of this mode of interior exteriority is the Mobius strip, for others the rhizome, and still others the parasite.[1] But what if the dominant visual metaphor of the anthropology of the otherwise were a woven bag?

How might one consider the anthropology of the otherwise through gift economies and alternative currencies and communities, and in turn consider emergent forms of social being in relation to what I am calling the *embagination* of space by the circulation of things? As I hope will become clear, conceptualizing social space as a kind of *embagination* foregrounds the fact that gift economies can close a world but never seal it. Every gift economy creates simultaneous surplus, excess, deficits, and abscesses in material and memory, and thus the most profound gift is given at the limit of community. Thus, in exchange for the invitation to participate in the publication you have before you, I offer a series of thoughts on how spheres of life emerge and collapse, and expand and deflate, as things move and are moved across space and time. I will begin with a discussion of the anthropology of the gift, turn to contemporary debates between Bruno Latour and Peter Sloterdijk about the relative values of network and sphere theory, and end with reflections on two recent projects—a graphic memoir and augmented reality venture—that elaborate what I mean by *embagination*.

1. The Gift

At the center of modern anthropological lore is a person who created a discipline by describing a practice wherein to give away was to receive more in return. The person was the Polish scholar Bronisław Malinowski, who chose to remain on the Trobriand Islands rather than spend the First World War in an Australian internment camp.[2] The practice was *Kula*. Malinowski claimed that, at its simplest, Kula was an inter-tribal exchange of ceremonial objects (red shell necklaces and white shell bracelets) that traveled in opposite directions in a closed circuit along established routes. No man—and for Malinowski it was always men, if not all men—knew where Kula objects traveled outside his local purview. And no man could keep the object he received nor, once in, could he opt out of this ritualized exchange.[3] "A partnership between two men is a permanent and lifelong affair."[4] The things that moved between them could also never stop moving. Once within

Edward S. Curtis, Tolowa Indian Measuring shell money, 1923. Photo: Edward S. Curtis Collection (Library of Congress)/Public Domain.

the circle of Kula exchange, ritual objects only left when they physically perished.[5] But if the ceremonial exchange of necklaces and bracelets publicly defined Kula, "a greater number of secondary activities and features" took place "under its cover," including the ordinary trade and barter of various goods and utilities that, although indispensible for everyday life, were often locally unavailable.[6] As a result, Kula embraced an inter-connected complex of activities, created an organic social whole out of disparate social parts, and established a hierarchy of prestige that defined this social world in part and in whole.[7] Ceremonial necklaces and bracelets were given, accepted, and reciprocated, but what returned was not mere jewelry, but a world. This world was fabricated by the hierarchies of power and prestige Kula established, represented, and conserved; and by the ordinary activities that went on under its cover, embedding these hierarchies of prestige ever deeper into the fabric of everyday life.

If we are interested in how Kula provides a genealogical backdrop to network and sphere theory, let alone to new forms of exchange communities, then three observations about Malinowski's methodological and conceptual claims are pertinent. First, Malinowski sought to found the discipline of anthropology on the premise that the anthropologist had a different analytical perspective on the social world than "the native," namely, that the anthropologist could see the total social system of exchange whereas "the native" could only see his local part. Second, in order to produce this anthropological point of view, the anthropologist had to abstract the Trobrianders from the diachronic nature of Kula (that Kula lines were always being made and remade) and himself from the history that connected him to his subjects. And third, anthropologists had to reconceptualize acts of reciprocity as the condition rather than the end to sociality—reciprocity does not end social relations, but knits them.

The understanding of "gift economies" as a vital part of the machinery of social power was essential to Marcel Mauss's reinterpretation of Malinowski's account of Kula and other ethnographies of the Pacific in *The Gift*. For Mauss, the gift had a straightforward tripartite structure—the obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. It also had a dominant spirit. Gift giving was not an exercise in treaty making. It was an exercise of aggression wrapped in dazzling ribbons and elaborate language. Although new networks are formed through seduction and wooing, the spirit of the gift was more akin to the gods of war than the gods of peace.[8] To offer a gift was to assert power (*mana*, *hau*) over another, a power that remained until the recipient could reverse the dynamic. In other words, if the offer of a gift was an invitation to sociality, it was also an announcement of the onset of a perpetual war of debt in which the books could never be settled. If the recipient of a gift was unable to reciprocate, then any *mana* he had accumulated in previous exchanges was nullified. Thus anyone who enters the Kula wages that he will acquire more prestige *in due time*; but he also risks losing all the prestige he has previously acquired—and more, since he might lose not only what he has gained but also, in coming to know what he might have had, might lose his innocence as well. In short, Malinowski and Mauss read Kula as a kind of bank, and banking as a kind of warfare. Before banks, before currency, valuable things were placed in circulation as *lines* of credit whose ultimate end was to return to the sender having accumulated surplus value. Participants gave in order to increase their holdings, but this interested act created something more than the interested rational subject—it created moral obligations and social worlds.[9]

The great French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, would take this insight and make it the foundation of the incest taboo and subsequently his structural anthropology. The incest taboo was not a prohibition against sex so much as a prohibition against hoarding. Men—and for Levi-Strauss, like Mauss, this was a man's world—had an obligation to indebt others by giving them valuables—the most valuable of all values being a woman. To indebt a person was not an antisocial act but the very conditions of sociality. Here Levi-Strauss followed Marx, who also saw hoarding as an antisocial practice. For Marx, as for Levi-Strauss, human sociality depended on a kind of reflexive fold that appears when one sends out a value in order for it to return having gained a surplus.[10] These reflexively structured routes make the worlds within which people dwell.

While Levi-Strauss's views about men's manipulation of women, words, and goods have been subjected to a thorough critique, his representation of the world of human exchange offered us a new visual metaphor—a sealed bag.[11] Several qualities of this sealed bag bare noting. First, whereas Levi-Strauss saw the social worlds

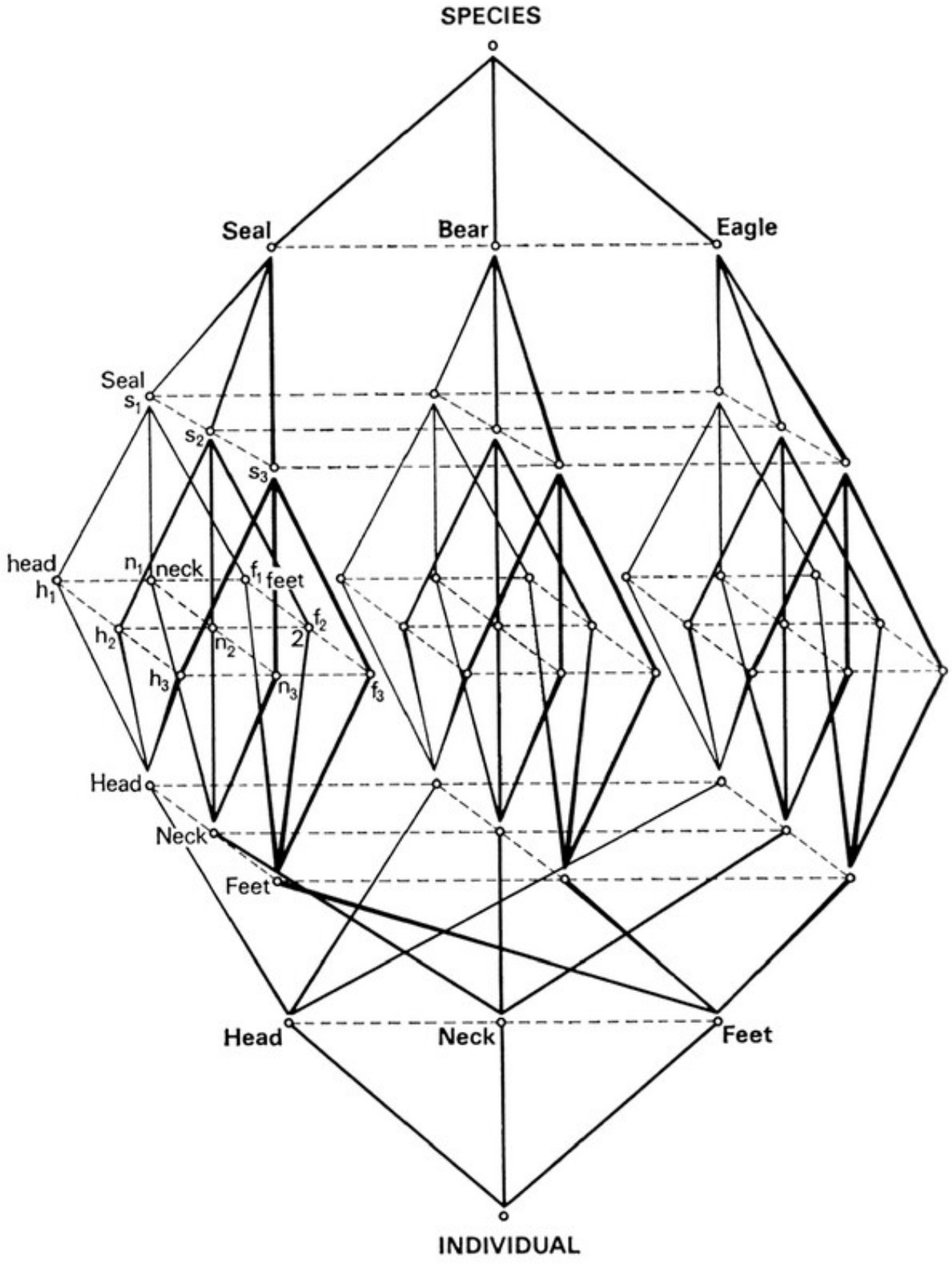


Illustration from Claude Levi-Strauss's book The Savage Mind (The Nature of Human Society Series [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966]. Transated by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman.)

that emerged in the circuit of credit and debt as a structurally closed totality, from a diachronic perspective, new social networks were always being added or removed such that the symmetrical form of the matrix was always being distorted. In other words, a bag might appear sealed off from other surrounding bags from a synchronic point of view, but if we take into account Mauss's argument that new lines of gift-exchange are always being created through seduction, then, from a diachronic point of view, the strings that open and shut it reappear. Second, Levi-Strauss gave volume to gift exchange. The famous signifying chain was revealed not to be a chain so much as a set of interlinked fences that enclose a world giving it semantic volume and weight, as well as pragmatic space and time. It would seem, then, that Levi-Strauss overcame a certain problem Sloterdijk would later diagnose as endemic to network theory (and here we could add to Malinowski's schematic representation of the gift). The problem with network theory, Sloterdijk claims, is that it overstates the linear connections of points within a planar surface to the detriment of the intrinsic volume of all social space—network theory replicates rather than analyses the Euclid hierarchy in which a point is that which has no part, lines are made out of these empty points, planes from lines, and spheres from planes. For Sloterdijk—and it would seem for Levi-Strauss as well—because humans cannot reside in a point, in the beginning there was the bubble.[12] Third, for Levi-Strauss, because every cultural world feels like a closed space to those within it, each cultural world is structured immunologically in the sense that each world interprets every difference within it as a possible foreign invasion and uses mechanisms to neutralize, expel, or extinguish this "invasion."

But whether they foreground a symmetrical (synchronic) or asymmetrical (diachronic) matrix, anthropologists of the gift saw the prohibition against hoarding valuables and the obligation to enter into debt/credit relations as vital to the creation of self-reflexive folds that make social and cultural worlds possible. If people were allowed to hoard their valuables, no social matrix could be fabricated out of the reflexive networks of giving and receiving. Social space would not bend back on itself and form pockets of communication and inhabitation. Instead, space would remain empty, negating any place for humans to dwell. We can think of these reflexive movements as a kind of *embagination* of space—the creation of a flexible receptacle closed in all places except where it can be tied and untied. But, again, this fold, or embagination, fabricates a world in which individuals, and competing worlds, attempt to dwell—to their advantage or disadvantage.

2. Routes and Worlds

It is in this light that the anthropology of the gift provides a genealogical backdrop to Latour's network theory and Sloterdjik's theory of spheres. To borrow from Latour, gift-exchange can be seen as one kind of network: they create nodes and linkages as things (whether men, women, boys, ritual bracelets, pigs, or words) circulate and are localized. And, insofar as gifts return, they create a specific kind of envelope—a self-reflexive sphere—in which a life-world might emerge. But this life-world relies not on points that have no part but on thick networks of differentiation where actual and potential meaningful inhabitation takes place.[13] Thus, for Malinowski, Kula stitched space together reflexively, creating enclosures that the Trobrianders experienced as *their* world. And Levi-Strauss believed that the universal circulation of women in particular ways, and the indebtedness and risk this circulation created, stitched together particular cultural spaces. For Levi-Strauss, women were the needles that men used to fabricate cultural spaces out of universal space, human enclosures out of abstract opens, each according to their particular pattern. But as feminist and queer scholars demonstrated the gendered nature of anthropological accounts of the gift, other needles came to emerge.[14]

Anthropology, even before the rise of structural anthropology, initially treated these human enclosures as if they had no drawstrings, ignoring the networks that allowed them to enter these embagged worlds in the first place (so Malinowski did not discuss the forms of circulation and governance that allowed him to chose between the Trobiand Islands and an Australian internment camp). But, following colonial, feminist, and anti-colonial critiques, anthropologists became interested in the networks that ran between and into clusters of embagged worlds, and how these networks pulsed with various forms of debt, risk, and power, with various hierarchies of being and existence.[15] When the strings forming and connecting embagged space began dominating disciplinary interest, the anthropology of globalization and transnationalism emerged.And this is one of the great lessons that the anthropology of the gift—and later the anthropology of circulation—bestowed on us: that things do not simply move. Routes *figure* space—they create worlds—and are figured by figurated space, by the worlds through which they move.[16] They are the condition of previous circulatory matrixes and become part of the matrix that decides which other kinds of things can pass through and be made sense of within this figured space. And routes configure things—they shape them into 3D manifestations. What "things" are—what counts as an entity—should be understood broadly. Whether container ships, kin or stranger socialities, psychic expectations, affective intensities, linguistic forms: all form, conform, and deform existing cultures of circulation. Social institutions, or "demanding environments," emerge around these material and affective curvatures, effectively controlling the further fabrication of things and their movements.[17]

As an example of the dynamic between the figurating function of routes, we need look no further than the

Panamax ship adrift.

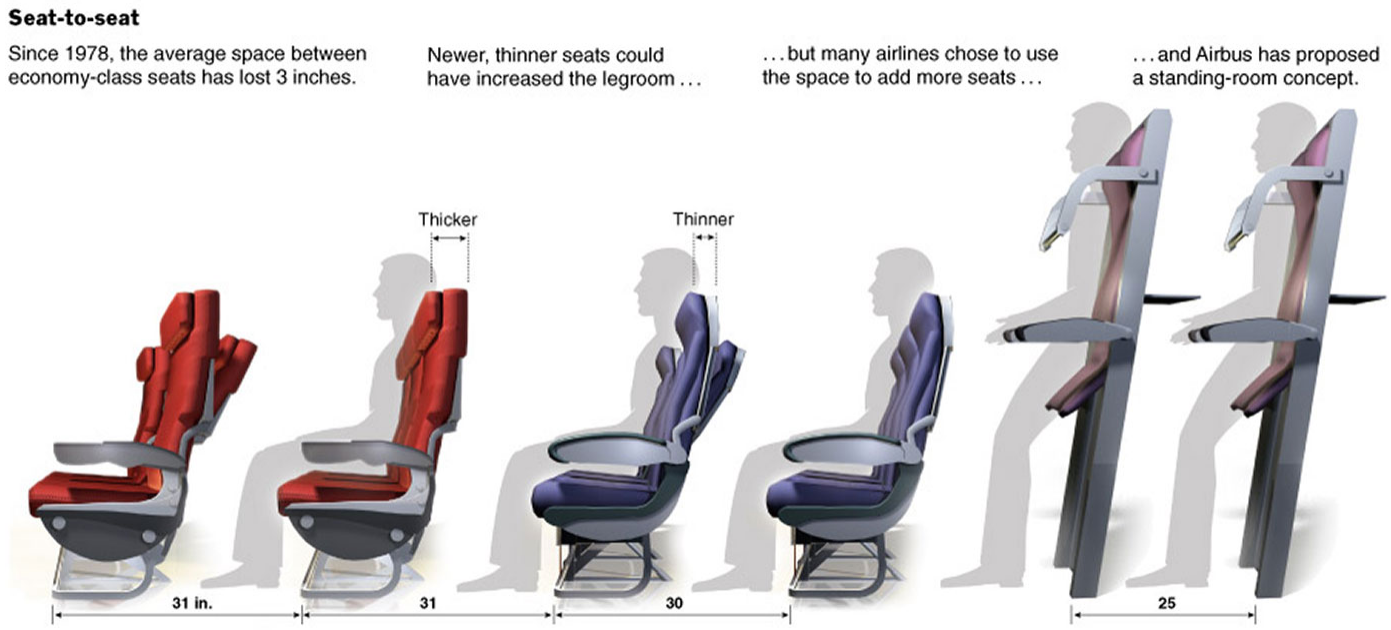
Panama Canal. Ashley Carse has examined how it was not only the landscapes around the Panama Canal that were reorganized by its creation and management, but the shipping that passed through it. To see what is at stake here we must first take seriously the materiality of the earth, and assume that moving goods across continents through waterways is not an abstract idea, but a history of material fabrication. Various routes exist or have been built to allow ships to minimize transport costs and maximize profit. The Panama Canal became one of the key transit points for shipping when it was completed in 1914. Originally, all sizes and shapes of ships passed through it, with the only constraint being that the ship should not exceed the width, depth, and buoyancy conditions of the canal. But, over time, in an effort to maximize profit, companies designed what came to be called a Panamax ship: transport vessels that occupied every meter of the canal's lock system and container boxes that could be stacked tightly side-by-side.

Another great lesson bestowed on us by the anthropology of the gift was the insight that these figurated spaces were subtended and distended by time. Social theorists originally focused on the interval of time between the act of giving (credit) and the act of reciprocating (debt payment). Levi-Strauss, for instance, argued that as men sought to expand their network advantageously, they developed increasingly complex temporal intervals between marriage givers and marriage takers.[18] Earlier, Marx attempted to understand the function of the interval between commodity production and money form, and exchange and use value. In his two-volume *The Civilizing Process*, the sociologist Norbert Elias argued that modern forms such as self-restraint, stranger sociality, and trust emerged out of increasingly complex networks of social connection across ever-vaster expanses or geographical social spaces.[19] As these increasingly complex exchanges unfolded across time and space, new social institutions (such as capital) came into being alongside their specific technologies (such as insurance).[20]

Bracketing debates in Marxism and anthropology over the differences and convergences between gift and commodity societies—such as the seeming differences of alienation, domination, and control (alienable versus inalienable objects, undisguised versus disguised

domination, utilitarian versus moral controls, the reification of objects versus the personification of subjects)—one can understand the temptation to understand financial capital as a form of Kula exchange. Participants in the market seem to believe in the independent power of the market, similar to how participants in Kula believed in the power of Kula. And they believe in and trust the market even though—no more than Kula participants—beyond their local currents and eddies, market participants can have a striking understanding of complex networks and spheres that they create and participate in. Moreover, there seems to be a necessary relationship between the ignorance of trust and the cunning of information for the system to work. This is nowhere more profoundly demonstrated than in the recent financial crisis involving Commercial Mortgage Backed Securities (CMBS). Even the critical understanding of the system as such doesn't guarantee a specific social outcome. If Marx sought to articulate a disenchantment with the black box of capital accumulation, countless speculators seek to beat the margin through a similar analytic acumen by creatiing new forms and networks, further complicating the circuit of capital and the spheres of its inhabitation.

most natural condition of *the world*. But no world is actual *one* world. The feeling that one lives in the best condition of the world unveils the intuition that there is always more than one world in the world *at any one time*. The very fact of Malinowski's presence, and his own argument that for the Trobrianders there were worlds within worlds, testifies to this claim. The material heterogeneity within any one sphere, and passing between any two spheres, allows new worlds to emerge and new networks to be added. This heterogeneity emerges in part because of the excesses and deficits arising from incommensurate and often competing interests within any given social space. These interests press materiality toward different futures even when operating within the same general social logic. Take, for instance, the different futures pressing into the materiality of contemporary air transportation. The pressure of human transport capital is to cram an ever-increasing number of people into limited space, while the pressure of agricapital is to increase the consumption habit of human beings, creating ever-larger human bodies. And both of these are subject to the speculative trade in oil and commodity futures driven as much by the gamble of bubbles as the logic of corporate functionality. But these futures are driven as much by the communicative networks that allow vast and high speed trading as the



Different airline seating designs from 1978 to the recent standing-room concep by Airbus.

At this point we must return to the real fundamental insight of the anthropology of the gift. While dramatic displays of wealth, such as Kula rituals and CMBS structures, might focus the social eye, "a greater number of secondary activities and features" are done "under its cover." These other unperceived activities carried out in plain sight carry out the routine of creating the subjects who then take these routes and worlds as the best and

slow production and life of the transportation industry. And here we return again to an insight gleaned from the gift: the potential futures internal to every actual world do not emerge willy-nilly. Debt/credit relationships tie up and encumber the future with present obligations, and these obligations are literally carved into landscapes and subjects.

And it is here, in the excessive heterogeneity of social life, that the anthropology of the otherwise meets contemporary theories of routes and worlds, networks and spheres. Bataille is the name we usually associate with the critique of the economy of the gift as oriented to a balancing of accounts rather than radical expenditure, pure waste, or senseless excess. But the anthropology of the gift was also always an anthropology of an otherwise, and of radical deracination—of a part that has no part as of yet. Alongside their interests in gift economies, these anthropologists were also interested in the formless, in radical expenditure/deficit, and in the abject that exposed, escaped, or was produced by these systematizations of circulation and exchange. These excesses, deficiencies, and abscesses in the complex relationship between networks and spheres, routes and worlds, and the potential new worlds that emerge out of them has been the focus of two ongoing projects of mine.

3. Excesses and Deficits

For the last year, I have been working on a graphic memoir about the incommensurate social imaginaries that defined the relationship between my grandparents and me. Like many graphic memoirs, this one attempts to poetically condense a series of visual and written texts. It uses standard representational logics to probe a set of questions about how life worlds ravel and unravel in the historical unfolding of empire, nation-state, and global capital, and how these ravelings and unravelings create new social imaginaries that may or may not develop the institutional supports to inflate and sustain themselves. Like other things, these gifts of memory move along specific routes, raveling and unraveling worlds in the process. Memory does or doesn't transfer across space (as organized kinds of places) and time (in the sense of generational logics), and it is here that we can see, perhaps most clearly, that gifts can be given long after the spherical world in which they make sense has collapsed. And gifts can return from a world not yet fully made to a world long since passed away. If these are the gifts of death, then gifts of death are indeed the condition for true beginnings.

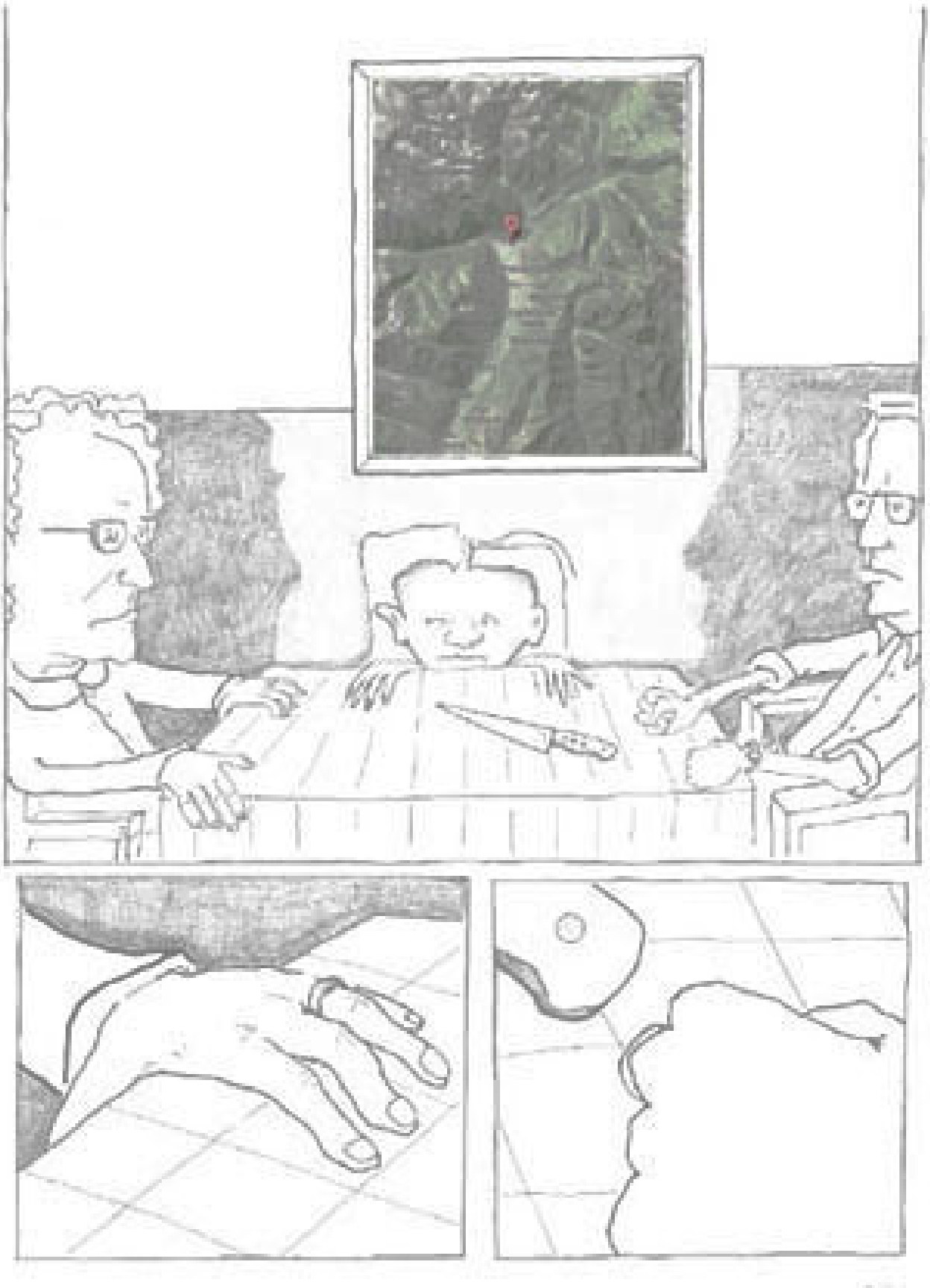
The book is broken into three sections, " *Topologies*," " *Mythologies*," and " *Analogies*," and is written from the perspective of a six- to eight-year-old girl. The first section, *Topologies*, centers on an image in a frame that hung in my paternal grandparents' dining room. This image riveted my paternal relatives, causing fights, evoking tears, and staging long silences. The image itself was incomprehensible to me at the time. I would retrospectively learn that it was a topological rendering of the mountains of the Trentino-Alto Adige region. My paternal grandparents were born in a small village called Carisole, just north-west of Trento in Italy, where their families had lived for countless generations. The Trentino-Alto Adige region was divided between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Italian state prior to World War I, incorporated into Italy only after the War. During the war, the region saw vicious trench warfare and mass slaughter, and my grandparents left soon after World War I, taking with them a life-world that I could not see. For this reason, the image within the picture frame carried significant symbolic weight for them. Family fights would erupt when anyone would tack down the referent of this sign. When I would ask my father what the picture meant (What's that? "That's where our village Carisole is." Where's Carisole? "It's in Italy."), my grandfather would fly into a fury that rippled across older relatives. But when my grandfather described what the picture portrayed ("That's our village Carisole." Where's Carisole? "It's in the Empire."), it failed to align with any of my known social cartographies.

The second section, *Mythologies*, in turn presents the core myth of each of my grandparents. For instance, the condensed story of my maternal grandfather was that of his parents' attempt to survive in Alsace Lorraine as hyperinflation was burning through the German Empire, which put him on a boat to the US with five dollars in his pocket. He was a gambler and womanizer as a young man, knocking up my mother's mother, marrying her, and then descending into extreme poverty. One day he won big at the horse races, bought a butcher's shop, got lung cancer, lived long enough to see my mother marry, and then died. The final section, *Analogies*, shows how the small child attempts to make sense of this history in the 1960s in the racialized and racist American South.

Behind the drawings is a mediation on how *forms* and *practices* of sense become impractical as one sphere of life collapses into another—how a spherical world can continue to send out gifts of memory long after it has collapsed. The deformations and reformations of memory I try to capture here are possible because of the excesses and deficits that emerge as routes force open worlds and migrate objects (here subjects, my grandparents) into the midst of other worlds, creating embagged forms of life. In standard condensed graphic form, I can conjure the actual routes and localizations, the embagination of world, the tensions internal to these new worlds because of networks already running through them, and the potential networks and worlds that emerge out of the unwindings and rewindings of memories in motion.

4. Augmented Reality

A second project on which I have been working focuses on the media and mediation of memory as memory travels across time and space, and the effect of this mediation on the worlds in which people dwell. In this case, very old Indigenous friends and colleagues and I are trying to build an augmented reality project that would allow access to



Elizabeth Povinelli, sketch from the graphic memoir The Knifegrinder's Daughter.

Rex Edmunds, Karrabing Indigenous Corporation. Photo: Liza Johnson.

stories about place, in places. The project started about five years ago, when new smartphone software such as 2D barcode-readers and GPS were just emerging to allow for augmented reality.

We were calling what we tried to envision "the mobile phone project," a digital project seeking to use mixed-reality technology to embed traditional, historical, and contemporary knowledge back into the landscape. More specifically, it would create a land-based "living library" by geotagging media files in such a way that they would be playable only within a certain proximity of a physical site. The idea was to develop software that creates three unique interfaces—for tourists, land management, and Indigenous families, the latter having management authority over the entire project and content—and provide a dynamic feedback loop for the input of new information and media. Imagine a tourist, or one of our great-great-grandchildren in the same area. They open our website, which shows where a GPS-activated mixed-reality story is located. They download this information into their smartphone. Now imagine this same person floating off the shore of a pristine beach in Anson Bay. She activates her GPS and video camera and holds up her smartphone. As she moves the phone around she sees various hypertexts and video options available to her. Suddenly the land is speaking its history and culture without any long-term material impact on the landscape. And the person can only hear this story in the place from which it came.

I understand media as a demanding environment striated by other demanding environments (or, a complexly networked sphere). In other words, media, like the gift, is not an empty space, but aggressive spacing within already existing routes and worlds. Media does not open itself up to make room for a new object so much as it makes a demand on how the object gives itself over to the spacing. More so perhaps than the graphic memoir project, this augmented reality project suggests how an anthropology

of the otherwise encounters the excessive heterogeneity of contemporary routes and worlds, networks and spheres.

The project itself emerged out of noncorrespondence within settler colonial logics of domination. My Indigenous colleagues had spent their lives, as had their parents and grandparents, in a small rural Indigenous community across the Darwin harbor in Australia. They had grown up in the shadow of the land rights movement and the celebration of Indigenous cultural difference. Land rights and cultural recognition in Australia was exemplary of the logic of care in late liberalism—by making a space for traditional Indigenous culture, the state argued it was making a space for this traditional culture to care for Indigenous people.

However imperfect, this way of life started to unravel in 2007. As reported in the local Darwin newspaper, on March 15, 2007, members of this project were threatened with chainsaws and pipes, watched as their cars and houses were torched, and their dogs beaten to death. Four families lost rare, well-paying jobs in education, housing, and water works. Public meetings were held, and were attended by the leaders of Department of Family, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs in the Northern Territory Labor government. In these meetings, the displaced people were held up as examples of the failures of land rights policies to protect Indigenous people living in communities outside their traditional country. The families driven out were promised new housing, schooling, and jobs at Bulgul, a site closer to their traditional countries. Fifty people promptly moved to Bulgul and set up a tent settlement.

But on June 21, 2007, John Howard, then prime minister of Australia, declared a "national emergency in relation to the abuse of children in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory." Indigenous people living in remote communities, or those like my friends who were promised housing in or nearer to their traditional country, were told to move closer to the cities where infrastructural and service delivery costs were lower, even if doing so would endanger their lives. The people who made the promises to the displaced persons confronted the budgetary consequences of these promises and suddenly became difficult to reach. In the year that followed, the income of two of the six families driven off went from roughly $AUD28,000 to $AUD12,000 per year after they lost their permanent jobs and were moved onto the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP, a work and training program within a social welfare framework, loosely called "work for the dole").

If this project emerged out of the material and discursive networks that moved my colleagues across social landscapes, then the communicative sphere into which they sought to insert their modes of memory and memorialization retain their own forms of reflexive movement and figurating force. I will mention only three. First, all objects that are placed into our augmented reality project are treated according to specific software routes that create semantic worldings. No matter which semantic ideology underpins this routing—such as the new Ontological Web Language (OWL)—it nevertheless demands that the entextualized memory and knowledge conform to it. Second, although many postcolonial archives and digital projects seek to develop software that would encode local protocols of information circulation and retrieval—such as restrictions based on kinship, gender, or ritual status—it remains that, in order to be part of the global condition of the contemporary internet, such information must be universally available before it can be sorted based on user particularities. In other words, user protocols—the software that takes into account local social principles of circulation and retrieval—are always secondary and subordinate to the infrastructure of the Web itself. Finally, the ability to hinge information to place is mediated by a specific set of demanding environments and the institutions that support them.

But remember: all embagged spaces are the result of not merely two strings hanging from the end of an open, if concealed mouth, but many strings tying and retying the body and its contents.

X

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1
The names we would usually attach to the Mobius strip, rhizome, and parasite are respectively Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Serres.

2
See George W. Stocking, Jr., "Maclay, Kubary, Malinowski: Archetypes from the Dreamtime of Anthropology" in *Colonial Situations: Essays in the Contextualizations of Knowledge* , ed. George W.Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 212–275.

3
Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1992).

4
Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984).

5
What constitutes this demise need not be the loss of the carrying materiality. A new "body" to carry the spirit of the gift can be fabricated without the *thing* being lost.

6
Mauss notes early on that Kula is the ritualized expression of the hierarchy of values created through "a vast system of services rendered and reciprocated, which indeed seems to embrace the whole of Trobriand economic and civil life." Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (New York: Norton, 2000), 34.

7
Gustav Peebles. "The Anthropology of Credit and Debt." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010): 225–240.

8
Mauss, *The Gift*, 35–6.

9
We should also not be lulled by the semantic weight of the English terms, "participants" and "participation" (*participare*). Beca use the world that Kula makes is there before the participant enters into it, to participate is a demand.

10
See Peebles "The Anthropology of Credit and Debt."

11
See, for instance, Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986); Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

12
Peter Sloterdijk. *Bubbles: Spheres Volume I: Microspherology* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2011).

13
I understand a life world as a space of inhabitable existence. See also Bruno Latour, "Some Experiments in Art and Politics," *e-flux journal* no. 23 (March 2011), see https://www.e-flux.com/journal/23/67790/some-experiments-in-art-and-politics/ .

14
See for instance Gayle Rubin's two seminal essays,"The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" in *Toward an Anthropology of Women* , ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press,1975); and "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger* , ed. Carole Vance (London: Routledge & Kegan, Paul, 1984).

15
See *Anthropologyand the Colonial Encounter* , ed. Talal Asad (Amherst: Prometheus Books,1995).

16
See Benjamin Lee and Edward Lipuma, "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity," *Public Culture* 14 (January 2002): 191–213

17
See Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "Technologies of Public Form: Circulation, Transfiguration, Recognition." *Public Culture* 15 (March2003): 385–398.

18
Claude Levi-Strauss, *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

19
Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000). More, recently, Mary Poovey has examined the rhetorics of finance that supported the elaborate and geographically extensive networks of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Western European finance. See Mary Poovey "Writing about Finance in Victorian England: Disclosure and Secrecy in the Culture of Investment," *Victorian Studies* 45 (January 2000): 17–41.

20
Lorraine J. Daston, "The Domestication of Risk: Mathematical Probability and Insurance 1650–1830" in *The Pro babilistic Revolution Volume 1: Ideas in History* , ed. Lorenz Kruger, Lorraine J.Daston, and Michael Heidelberger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 237–260.

Franco “Bifo” Berardi

Time, Acceleration, and Violence

What do you store in a bank? You store time. But is the money that is stored in the bank my past time—the time that I have spent in the past? Or does this money give me the possibility of buying a future?

These distinctions between storing and investing are linked to essential changes from early bourgeois capitalism to late capitalism, and also to the history of the relationship between capitalism and our lives, our subjectivity and our singularity. Here I will try to find some reference points for understanding recent shifts in the perception of this relation between money, language, and time.

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Yves Marchand, Romain Meffre, *Melted clock, Cass Technical High School*, 2008. Courtesy of the artists.

]

If we begin with a look at the current European landscape, we find Germany to be the only happy place at the moment. The Greeks, the Portuguese, not to mention the Irish, were happy some years ago and have now suddenly changed their mood, while the Germans have not. Why is this the case? Because German banks have stored Greek time, Portuguese time, Irish time, and now they are asking for their money back. Something in this exchange is not working, but how can we locate the problem?

This is precisely the necessary enigma or secret within the age of financial capitalism—but is it a secret or an enigma? We can say that the secret is something that is hidden in a box. If you find the right key, the secret will become truth. On the other hand, an enigma has no key and no truth. Christian Marazzi would say that financial capitalism is constructed as an enigma—you cannot find the truth because it is based upon the fact that the truth has dissolved. It is no longer there.

In his 1976 book *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard wrote that the whole financial system is falling into indeterminacy, for financial capitalism is essentially the loss of the relationship between time and value. In the very first chapter of *Capital*, Marx explains that value is time, the accumulation of time—time objectified, time that has become things, goods. It is not the time of work, of working in time, that produces value, for it matters little whether one is lazy or efficient. The important determination of value concerns the average time needed to produce a certain good.

All of this is clear: value is time, capital is value, or accumulated time, and the banks store this accumulated time. Then, all of a sudden, something new happens in the relationship between time, work, and value, and something happens in technology. Work ceases to be the strong, muscular work of industrial production, and begins producing signs—products that are essentially semiotic.

In order to establish the average time needed to produce a glass, one simply needs to understand the material labor involved in converting sand into glass, and so forth. But try to decide how much time is needed to produce an idea, a project, a style, a creation, and you find that the production process becomes semiotic, with the relationship between time, work, and value suddenly evaporating, melting into air.

[figure ff8f96dde7849ba0837597a7fcb24f82.jpg
Elvis Presley meets President Richard Nixon, 1970.

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Baudrillard was the first thinker to understand this passage in 1976, but some years before that, President Richard Nixon did something very, very farsighted: he canceled the gold standard and the Bretton Woods system, which fixed the relationship between different monies throughout the world. The dollar became, let's say, free, independent, autonomous. And the possibility for a universal measurement of the amount of time needed to produce a thing or a good was effectively gone. Of course, this meant that the United States of America would then decide the exchangeability of the dollar, but according to what terms? The financialization of the economy would use violence in place of measurement. This relationship is not extemporaneous or casual, but absolutely structural: there is no financialization without violence, because violence becomes the only means of producing value in the place of a standard. I will return to this later, but in order to do so, I will first consider how time can be made to forget the bank.

My generation, which we can call the last modern generation, was accustomed to thinking of time in terms of progress, as a process of growth and even perfectibility. The idea of the future was crucial to this modern conception of time, as we find in Marinetti's 1909 Futurist Manifesto, where one finds the essential feature of modern capitalism: an understanding of time as a process of growing potency and of acceleration. While the concept of acceleration is new in the history of thought and in the history of art, one already finds in Cézanne's paintings a slowed-down vision; and if the perception of time can be slowed, so can it also be accelerated, altered. Henri Bergson has described this as a shift from a concept of time to a concept of duration, seen from the point of view of perception, and not spatially as extension. This crucial change marked the shift away from the classical bourgeois representation of time.

In speaking about time as acceleration, the Italian Futurists articulated a modern potency that is also a masculine potency—a masculinization of the perception of time, of the perception of politics, of perception itself, which was a central problem of acceleration in Italian modernity. You cannot understand Italian Fascism without starting from its attempt to defeminize the culture. Italian Fascism is about despising the woman, and it is one of the crucial points of the Futurist Manifesto just as it is one of the crucial points of the creation of the ridiculous national pride of the Italians. In the Italian poetry of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Leopardi, Foscollo, and so forth, Italy is always characterized in the feminine—as a beautiful woman, a desired feminine body, as Venus emerging from the waters of the Mediterranean, and so forth. Before Italian modernity, when it was not shameful to be Italian, Italian self-identification was feminine. Italian Fascism thus marked a crucial point of passage from feminine shame to masculine acceleration, to pride, aggressiveness, war, industrial growth, and so forth. But it remains a search for another perception of time, for a way of forgetting one's own laziness, slowness, and sensitivity by asserting a perception of time in which one is a master—a warrior and builder of industry.

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German children playing with money during the 1920s hyperinflation.
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So what happened to the century that trusted in the future? If we look to the year 1977, we find it to be especially important in the history of mankind. It is the year Charlie Chaplin died, a moment that that, to my mind, marked the end of a possibility for a kind of a humane and gentle modernity. It is the end of a contradictory, controversial perception of time in modernity, the time of the horrible machine, invading and destroying my life. That same year, Uri Andropov, former head of the KGB, wrote a letter to Leonid Brezhnev, explaining that the USSR had five years left to close the gap with the United States in the field of information technology, or all would be lost. We all know how that story ended. But 1977 is also the year that, in a small Silicon Valley lab, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak created user-friendly interfaces bearing the Apple trademark. This is not about the Indiani Metropolitani in Rome and in Bologna, but about Sid Vicious crying "no future" in 1977: the future is over—don't think about your future, because you don't have one. In a sense, this cry was the final premonition of the end of the modern age, of the end of industrial capitalism and the beginning of a new age of total violence. If capitalism is to go on in the history of mankind, then the history of mankind must become the place of total violence, because only the violence of competition can decide the value of time.

Also in 1977, "competition" became the crucial word for the economy, whose project was to submit human relationships to the singular imperative of competition. The term itself became naturalized to the point where saying "competition" was like saying "work." But competition is not the same as work. Competition is like crime, like violence, like murder, like rape. Competition equals war. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari say that fascism is "when a war machine is installed in each hole, in every niche."[1] And I would say that an economic regime

based on competition is fascism perfected. But how does this violence arrive in the economic sphere?

William Burroughs has said that inflation is essentially when you need more money to buy fewer things. It's simple: you need more and more signs, words, information, to buy less and less meaning. It is hyper-acceleration used as a crucial capitalist tool. When Marx speaks of relative surplus value, he's speaking about acceleration: if you want a growth in productivity—which is also a growth in surplus value—you need to accelerate work time. But when the main tool for production ceases to be material labor and becomes cognitive labor, acceleration enters another phase, another dimension, because an increase in semiocapitalist productivity comes essentially from the acceleration of the info-sphere—the environment from which information arrives in your brain.

Do not forget that your brain functions in time, and needs time in order to give attention and understanding. But attention cannot be infinitely accelerated. Marx described a crisis of overproduction in industrial capitalism—when production surpasses demand, an excess workforce is fired, who in turn have less money to buy products, resulting in an overall effect of economic decline. In the sphere of semiocapital, however, overproduction is linked to the relation between the amount of semiotic goods being produced in relation to the amount of attentive time being disposed of. You can accelerate attention by taking amphetamines, for instance, or using other techniques or drugs that give you the possibility of being more attentive, more productive in the field of attention. But you know how it ends.

[figure splitpage
78197ae4b1095c9780ba3ea7fe5fb2b4.jpg Federal Reserve Bank, New York.
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One can recall a time around the dot-com crash of 2000 when a number of books dealing with the topic of the attention economy appeared in bookstores. Economists suddenly became aware of the simple fact that in a semiocapitalist world, the main commodity becomes attention. The 1990s saw an era of increasing productivity, increasing enthusiasm for production, increasing happiness of intellectual workers, who became entrepreneurs and so forth in the dot-com mania. But the 1990s was also the Prozac decade. You cannot explain what Alan Greenspan called the "irrational exuberance" in the markets without recalling the simple fact that millions of cognitive workers were consuming tons of cocaine, amphetamines, and Prozac throughout the 1990s. Greenspan was not speaking of the economy, but the cocaine effect in the brains of millions of cognitive workers all over the world. And the dot-com crash was the sudden disappearance of this amphetamine from the brains of those workers.

By the early years of the new millennium, a collapse of the capitalist or capitalistic economies all over the world seemed inevitable. Then September 11 provided the solution for everything. Only an insane doctor would prescribe amphetamines for a depressive patient, but what came after September 11 was exactly that. The cognitive workers were both economically and chemically depressed, and because the attention economy was oversaturated, it was time to start the infinite war, the preemptive war, the never-ending war. This is what the Bush years brought: while using a lie to start a war in Iraq seemed crazy, the purpose was never to win or lose, but to fight a war that would never end.

More and more signs buy less and less meaning. In a letter to linguist and semiologist Thomas Seboek, Bill Gates wrote that "the digital revolution is all about … tools to make things easy."[2] It seems that Bill Gates ingeniously grasped the problem in the relationship between meaning and power. Built under a hippie principle of bringing information to the people, the friendly interfaces developed by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak began a dangerous process of making things easy: if you make things easy, a large majority of people will follow you. In this way, we find the evolution of the internet to be the evolution of a totalitarian system that begins as a channel for research and discovery, for creation and invention, to become essentially a place where things are easy. It is in this way that meaning can be totally forgotten, but information can continue to move. When more signs buy less meaning, when there is an inflation in meaning, when the info-sphere accelerates and your attention is unable to keep up, what do you need? You need someone who makes things easy for you. It's a problem of time.

The end of modernity arrived with the collapse of the future, as Johnny Rotten signaled. But postmodernism, as far as we can tell, has only produced a techno-linguistic machine permeating every recess of daily life, every space of the social brain. In a 1977 book by American anthropologist Rose Goldsen entitled *The Show and Tell Machine*, Goldsen wrote that a new generation of human beings will gain its primal impressions from a machine rather than from the mother.[3] That generation is here. This generation, which experiences a problematic relationship between language and the body, between words and affection, separates language from the body of the mother, and from the body in general—for language in human history has always been connected to a fear of trusting the body. In this situation, we need to reactivate our ability to connect language and desire, or the situation will become extremely bad. If the relationship between the signifier and the signified can no longer be guaranteed by the presence of the body, we lose our relationship to the world. Our relationship to the world will become purely functional, operational—probably faster, but precarious.

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1
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 214.

2
Arthur Kroker, Michael A. Weinstein, *Data Trash: The Theory of Virtual Class* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 13.

3
Rose K. Goldsen, *The Show and Tell Machine* (New York: Dial Press, 1977), ix.

Paul Glover

Anti-Monopoly Money

Perhaps you or someone you know does not have enough money. And perhaps you or they are artists, since most artists typically do not have enough money—especially in the United States, where art is always the last thing to be funded. And artists are generally so dedicated to art that they ignore profit.

But artists are cultural leaders, and for this reason they can become financial leaders, because money is primarily a cultural product. Money often takes the form of official-looking pieces of paper designed by artists, but furthermore, the credibility of any money rests on cultural messages that validate the institutions claiming power over commerce. And much of our society relies on the cultural messages transmitted through official-looking pieces of paper, from mortgages to graduation diplomas. The graphic, written, and musical arts reinforce the belief that financial institutions are authorized to issue and to control money.

Just as artists are essential to the movement of armies, which gather around music, uniforms, flags, so does the artist have a pivotal role in determining the future of money, and the future of the economy. So why shouldn't artists create their own money? It will not be Monopoly money, but anti-monopoly money. It will be real money to the extent that people trade with it. Community currency does not necessarily replace national currency, but the lack of national currency in places where it does not reach. Even at times when a lot of money is circulating, it is not necessarily being distributed well.

All national currencies, I believe, are funny money. Regardless of whether the value of a currency is higher today or lower the next day, all national currencies are in debt to nature, because all human economies are extracting resources from nature faster than they can be renewed. This is the ecological significance of local economies: you cannot have an economy unless you have a planet with trees and water, with soil for growing food. Business relies on the environment. For this reason, real money is money that renews nature.

In the US, money has become especially worthless because it is no longer backed by gold, but by less than nothing—by rusting industry and trillions of dollars of national debt. During the past 50 years, the primary guarantor of the dollar has been the US military, now based in 150 nations and losing its grip on cheap oil, cheap minerals, and cheap labor. Even the euro depends on natural gas imported from Russia to maintain its vitality. In the next decade one might invest in rubles to make a profit, however, when Russia's gas, minerals, and forests are eventually exhausted, the only credible money will be that which begins to repair centuries of damage.

Today, even when the official economy is doing well, millions of people are unemployed, millions work jobs they hate, species are eradicated, and the planet's generous

Unknown author, Allegory of inflation, pre-1868 (Bakumatsu era), Japan. Photo: Japan Currency Museum/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0

resources are destroyed. While many prefer to work to create beautiful goods or grow beautiful food, to share with others, most official jobs still contribute to corporate domination. The only real money is therefore money that rebuilds communities, rebuilds nature, and rebuilds the future.

These are main reasons why, twenty years ago, I designed paper money for Ithaca, New York. I sensed that the community had done many good things, but needed a way to bind these good things together. During the recession in the early 1990s, my friends and I needed more money—more control over money and what it does. We needed more control of investment, and we wanted to depend less on the American empire. We wanted to strengthen local small businesses. We wanted to reduce interest rates. We wanted to meet more local needs and contribute to a sense of community.

And we wanted to bring humanity to the marketplace. The global marketplace trades numbers at the speed of light, without regard for the damage done to communities or nature. Every big company will say they care about nature, but the imperative is always to make the maximum profit. By contrast, the local marketplace is a real place where people become friends, lovers, and political allies. Through local trade, we become surrounded by people we trust. That has economic and social value, as well a health value.

Whether you seek to be a famous artist or something else, you exist within an economy and you occupy a planet. You need economies that replenish the planet rather than destroy it. And the younger you are, the more urgent it should become that the planet be more bountiful, rather than less. Local currencies have this capability, and in fact they strengthen national currencies. Just as the large lobes of our lungs are healthy when the millions of tiny air sacs they consist of (known as alveoli) are happy, so do tiny neighborhood economies and village economies—which are strengthened by local currencies—actually contribute to the strength and vitality of national economies and their currencies.

As an artist, it was easy for me to design money—colorful money, with pictures of local children, waterfalls, trolley cars, lizards, and an insect found only near Ithaca. We honor this bug, because such tiny things convert fallen trees into soil, which creates food, which we eat. I called the money HOURS, because it would be backed by labor time rather than property, gold, or law. One HOUR equals $10, or one hour of basic labor. We all have time, and—without gold or silver, which the dollar does not have

Unknown author, Allegory of inflation, pre-1868 (Bakumatsu era), Japan. Photo: Japan Currency Museum/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0

either—we created money backed by our time. It is flexible—if a professional needs $100 an hour, he or she can charge 10 Ithaca HOURS per hour.

The next task was to find people who would use it. So I began waving around to friends, saying, "This is going to be money; we'll trade it with each other; sign up here," and handed them my clipboard. To their credit, they didn't say it was dumb idea. They didn't say I would get them all in trouble. They said, "OK, let's try this."

To then to expand the system, I began to create a culture of affection around this money and its use. I spoke with thousands of people and hundreds of businesses over the first eight years of Ithaca HOURS, convincing them to join. I published a newspaper directory six times a year to promote the system. Over the next few years, thousands of individuals and five hundred businesses traded HOURS—a bank, a hospital, the transit system, movie theatres, the public library, the bowling alley, restaurants. You can buy land and you can pay rent. Food was the largest category. Our directory rivaled the telephone directory. We even created our own local nonprofit health insurance. Grants of HOURS have been made to over a hundred community organizations. Loans of HOURS worth tens of thousands of dollars have been made without interest charges. Millions of dollars worth of this money have been transacted over the last twenty years.

This system began three years before email, and I soon began to collect email addresses, which made it easier to communicate with people. I created a list of eight thousand residents to keep us up to date on the latest developments. Yet, although I set the table, it was the people who brought the feast. They explained the money to each other, and there were tens of thousands of conversations about why this money was good and why it was important to control money. We call our money HOURS rather than dollars or euros or any other national name, since we are all fellow workers and fellow citizens.

This was a vastly cultural and artistic process relying extensively on graphic arts, symbols, and cartoons. My newspaper, *HOUR Town*, published three hundred success stories featuring our local currency. I asked people how they earned Ithaca HOURS, how they spent Ithaca HOURS, and why they liked them, and their answers emphasized four benefits: they gained extra income, they wanted to be less dependent on the empire, they wanted to clean the environment, and they wanted to enrich their community.

Gold vending machine, Augsburger bank, Germany.

After spending eight extremely enjoyable years working hard as full-time HOUR networker, I transferred the HOUR system entirely to its elected board of directors so that I could develop a health cooperative I had started—the Ithaca Health Alliance. The Ithaca HOURS board of directors has been dedicated and intelligent, and did some things better than I did, but they did not find another person to promote the system by walking the streets, and the system is now smaller as a result. Across the United States, about eighty other HOUR monies began based on Ithaca's, and most of them have faded away for the same reason. Initiated by enthusiastic friends or neighbors wanting to create a community institution much like a food co-op or credit union, they did not realize how labor-intensive their currency system would become. For this reason, I suggest the following Recipe for Successful Local Currency, with six ingredients:

1. Hire a networker. Ithaca's HOURS became huge because, as I said, during their first eight years they could rely on a full-time networker to constantly promote, facilitate, and troubleshoot circulation. This meant lots of talking and listening. Just as national currencies have armies of brokers who help the money to move, local currencies need at least one paid networker. You can offset the need to pay the networker with national currency by finding someone to donate housing, then find others to donate harvest, health care, entertainment, and so forth.

2. Design credible money. Make it look both majestic and cheerful to reflect your community's spirit. Feature the most widely-respected symbols of nature, buildings, and people. Use as many colors as you can afford, and then add an anti-counterfeit device. Ithaca has used local handmade paper made of local weed fiber, but recently settled on 50/50 hemp/cotton. Design the notes professionally—cash is an emblem of community pride.

Ithaca Hour notes designed by Paul Glover.

3. Be everywhere. Prepare for everyone in the region to understand and embrace this money so that it can purchase everything, whether listed in the directory or not. This means broadcasting an email newsletter, publishing a newspaper at least quarterly, sending press releases, blogging, cartooning, gathering testimonials, writing songs, hosting events and contests, managing a booth at festivals, and perhaps producing a cable or radio show. Do what you enjoy, do what you can. Imagine millions of dollars worth of this currency circulating to stimulate new enterprise, as dollars fade away in the meantime.

4. Be easy to use. Local money should be at least as easy to use as national money, not harder. No punitive "demurrage" stamps—inflation is demurrage enough. No expiration dates—instead, inspire spending by emphasizing the benefits of keeping the money moving to each and to all. Hungry people want food, not paper, so hard times can speed circulation. Get ready to issue interest-free loans. The interest you earn is community interest—your greater capability to hire and help one another. Start with small loans to reliable businesses and individuals. Give grants to groups.

5. Be honest and open. All records of currency disbursement are displayed upon request. Limit the quantity issued for administration (office, staff, and so forth) to 5% of total to restrain inflation. We make this very clear so that people do not think that we are creating some kind of a racket or trick—to emphasize that the currency is for the community, not for us. We are building a service.

6. Be proudly political. Local folks from all political backgrounds find common ground using local cash. But local money is a great way to introduce new people to the benefits of green economics and solidarity. I enjoyed arguing with local conservatives, then agreeing on the power we both gain by trading our money. Hey, we're creating jobs without clearcutting, prisons, taxes, and war!

You can make it more likely that your money is spent for grassroots eco-development by publishing articles that reinforce these values.

When you control money, you not only meet more local needs, create more jobs, and develop a friendlier local economy. You will have created a powerful tool with which

to rebuild civilization. I have always intended for Ithaca HOURS and other currencies to lead to vast change. That's because I'm from America, which is falling apart. I have long believed that American cities need to be entirely rebuilt to be in harmony with nature, so that we do not need fossil fuels to keep our homes warm and to cool them. It's so ridiculous that we have built a civilization that depends on destroying the planet to keep ourselves alive today.

The formal economy often confines broader human aspirations. Some people are quite satisfied, and simply want lots of money and a comfortable part in the existing system. Artists, on the other hand, define the world. Most commerce depends on artists to brand and market goods. Buildings are designed with artistic intentions, for better or worse. And every artist must decide which future he or she will serve.

Whether you consider yourself an artist or not, anyone can start their own money system, backed by their own networks of trust. Any city has hundreds of significant networks of trust, whether professional, religious, hobby-based, neighborhood, and so forth. Bring them together to trade, on any scale, and you have started a revolution. These networks can become the basis of regional, national, and global money that respects labor, respects this planet, and respects the arts.

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Paul Glover is founder of Ithaca HOURS local currency and 18 other community organizations. He is author of several related books, and consults for community economic development.