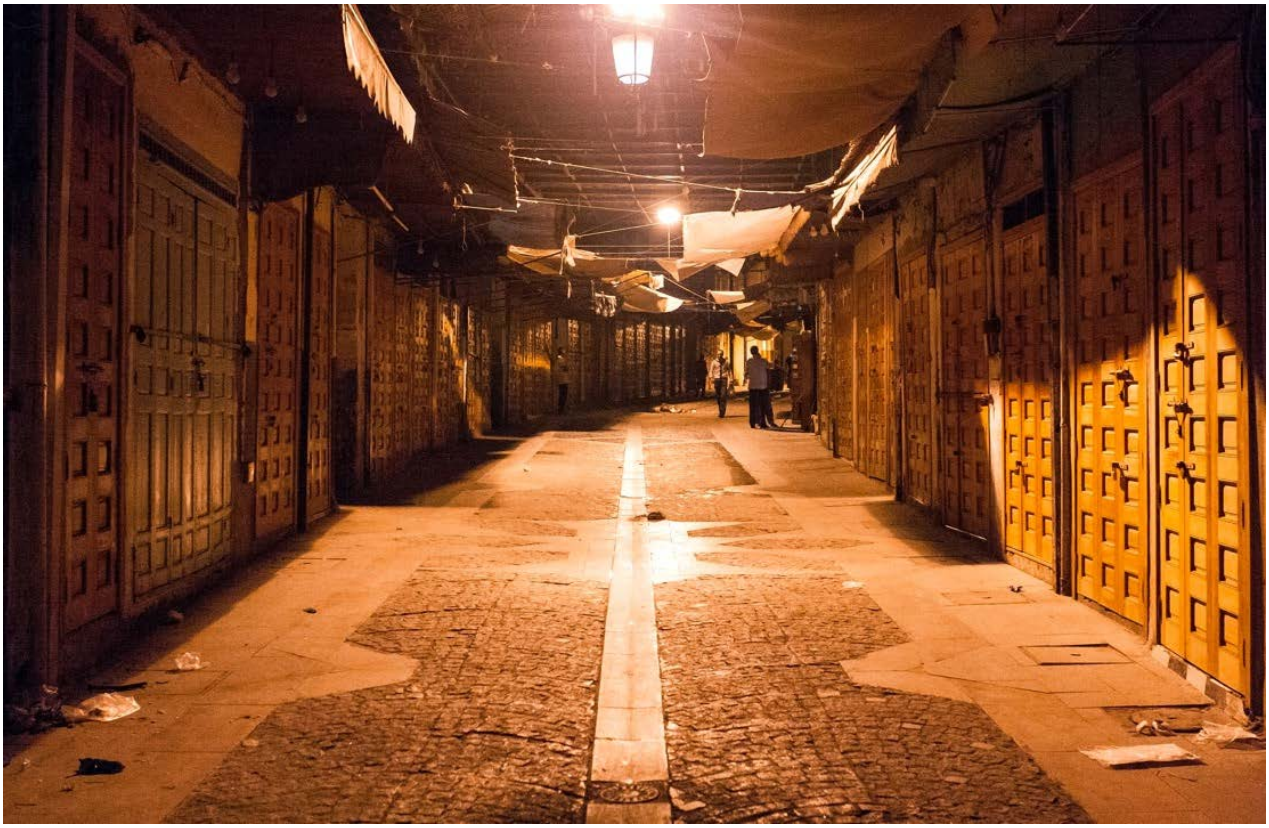
Cohabitation, Inhabitation, Dehabitation



SPECTRA: The Social Political Ethical, and Cultural Theory Archives

Volume 4, Issue 1, February 2015

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Editors' Introduction

The essays, papers and reviews collected in issue 4.1 of *SPECTRA: the ASPECT Journal*, are interwoven, marking collectively a question, blank space, or focal point oriented around the question of habitation. This theme, in all of its aspects, has recently gathered more attention from the academic community and the public at large. In its constructive and destructive aspects, the question of habitation continues to haunt all spheres social, political, ethical, and cultural: the annexation of the Crimean, justified by rhetoric about national and collective (be)longing; U.S. immigration policy, defending 'our turf' against 'them'; surveillance invading homes; suicide bombings threatening homes; war, poverty, and global-scale climate change eradicating homes. In what modes, to which ends, by what means do we cohabit, inhabit, and ultimately dehabit our planet?

The essays collected here discuss avenues, probe constellations, and offer inquiries related to the issue's theme. In Timothy Luke's paper *On Sustainabilization: Global Inequalities, Digital Habitats and Material Governance – A Critical Ecology*, the ecological point of intersection between inhabitation and dehabitation is discussed. Engaging recent discourses about the anthropocene – the newly proposed classification of the age of irreversible human inhabitation on the planet as a distinct geological age – Luke discussed the normative implications of 'sustainability' discourses. Maintaining the habitability of the planet, he argues, certainly comes with daunting costs. Yet, these costs are also discursively invoked to maintain networks of profit associated with greening technology and, ultimately, greening the economy. If inhabiting the planet economically is at odds with inhabiting it ecologically, which of the two will prevail?

M. Clark Sugata engages modes of inhabiting space directly, focusing in particular on the question of access to habitation. In *Spaces of Interest: Financial Governance and Debt Subjectivity*, Sugata discusses the strange resurgence of the subprime lending sector in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 financial crisis. In the legal form of Alternative Finance Service Providers (AFSPs), particularly payday and title loan lending, the operationalization of habitation as a commodity appears to be at odds with its status as a human necessity once again. Both the spaces inhabited and the bodies inhabiting the spaces of those subject to such dangerous and often borderline fraudulent lending practices are are affected in crucial ways. Openly thriving in a post-crisis environment of economic decay, the title loan and payday loan industries appear to be open to critical questions more than ever. If the notion of homes as commodities is at odds with inhabiting them humanly, which of them will prevail, and to whose ends?

With Kent Morris' intervention *You Can't Spell Crisis Without ISIS: Comments on "The Return of Geopolitics?"*, destructive dehabitation is put into focus. Departing from a discussion of the often-mentioned group ISIS (IS, Islamic State; or Islamic Caliphate), Morris engages a recent turn within political sciences: the turn to, or return of, geopolitics as a viable field of inquiry. Against the backdrop of violent placements and

replacements of political, social, ethical, and cultural boundaries, Morris discusses the trope of 'crisis' as a mode of conceptualizing international violence, and the implications it has for political order. In an age of dialectical oscillation between outside enemies and inside enemies – domestic whistleblowers, domestic terrorists; foreign terrorists, foreign traitors – how will a resolution of conflicts like ISIS be possible, and what role can geopolitics take in it?

Regarding a possible resistance to dehabitation – ecological destruction, financialized violence, outright physical devastation – Raluca Bejan's book review *The Untold Story of Changing Fate*, examining Slavoj Zizek's work *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, looks into finding possibilities for cohabitation. Once again we seem to find a political, social, ethical, and cultural inability of economic and ecological, economic and human spaces to coexist peacefully, refracted by Zizek and Bejan through recent global uprisings and upheavals. Yet, resistance to the violent ripple effects thereby engendered will, in turn, have to face a question: to which end does it resist, and by what means?

Finally, Johannes Grow discusses the separated yet mutually implied reality of space and time, social space and social time, in *Beyond the Spatial? A Temporal Perspective*, reviewing Sarah Sharma's *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics*. People may inhabit the same space at what is locally the same time, yet they do not cohabit: different time zones lead to jetlag; different speeds of everyday life lead to discontinuities; different discourses of time structure racialized, sexualized, marginalized temporal experiences. Cohabitation, if possible at all, is produced, it seems. If that is the case, have we come full circle, and is the economy of inhabiting time and space once more at odds with the ecology, or the human aspects thereof?

As always, we strongly urge those readers who are particularly moved by a piece or theme to submit responses for inclusion in a future issue. We encourage a broad range of conventional and creative contribution in a variety of formats, including articles, book reviews, essays, interviews and other works in addition to original multimedia pieces, including podcasts, digital videos, internet-hosted texts, artwork, comics, and photography.

Blacksburg, 9 February 2015

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On Sustainabilization: Global Inequalities, Digital Habitats, and Material Governance - A Critical Ecology

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Abstract: This paper explores how the recent turn to the Anthropocene in many environmental and political debates appears, first, to mystify the characteristics of the humans who are transforming the planet Earth on a biophysical scale in geological time, and, second, to justify the importance of new planetary eco-managerial interventions to administer the costs and benefits of these ecological events in the most efficient manner possible. As a result, the discourses of sustainability and resilience amid these worldwide changes appear to operate with increasingly conservative political agendas. On the one hand, they legitimate a strange fusion of ecological sustainability and economic development in green modernization programs, which could considered new policies for "sustainabilization." Yet, on the other hand, these codes of green performativity also work to preserve the historically inequitable distribution of wealth, technology, and power for those social forces that have caused the most ecological destruction around the world over the past 250 years.

Keywords: ANTHROPOCENE, ENVIRONMENTALISM, POLITICS, RESILIENCE, SUSTAINABILITY, TERRAFORMATIVITY

Introduction

In this discussion, I will be more than a bit contrary about one of today's most treasured pearls of conventional wisdom, namely, the notion of "the sustainable." As this concept circulates today, I question its wisdom, conventionality, and value. The idea of sustainability has attained a place in the policy lexicon almost as unquestioned as democracy, equality, freedom, growth, or liberty, but it also has become, like these other once vibrant ideals, more procedural, inequitable, limited, and vaporous. Such rhetorical qualities of conceptual plasticity, operational fogginess, or practical emptiness commonly are signs of ideology at work, and these changes are worth investigating.

Of course, any critical interrogation of sustainability will be irksome, because many corporate concerns and non-profit institutions commonly revere "the sustainable" as they piously seek sustainability certification, hire sustainability officers, tout sustainability plans, and support sustainability services. One also sees various colleges and universities gripped in a parallel craze, establishing new sustainability studies majors, sustainability centers, sustainability science faculties, and sustainability colleges. In many ways, the idea of modernization itself, which has never really gone away, despite so many efforts to criticize its practices and perspectives, is becoming intertwined with sustainability science to the point of becoming the highest form of modernity in the hybridized pursuits of "sustainabilization" in which sustainability and modernization are becoming blended to serve conflicting purposes.

Indeed, it is not clear, amidst our digital habitats, material systems, and global inequalities, that sustaining the planet and its ecologies is truly the mission of all the freshly mobilized programs, policies, and persons that now are being deployed to defend sustainability. The original inspiration once might have been well-worth pursuing in 1970, but is sustainability in 2015 headed elsewhere? Is sustainability now aiming at lesser targets, and serving lower purposes as it also becomes so vague that one almost cannot support it. On the one hand, its vapid values cloak everything with a sanctimonious air of "caring for Mother Earth" by praising ecological living and green growth. Yet, on the other hand, too many of its proponents are pushing ahead with improbable plans for sustainable coal production, sustainable pesticide manufacture, sustainable gas fracking or sustainable highway development? It is important, therefore, to articulate some doubts about the "sustainabilization" turn.

I. Sustainability and its Origins

The ideas of "sustainable development" crystallized several contradictory events and forces in the Cold War era of the late 1960s and early 1970s when the Earth had only around 3 billion people and atmospheric CO_2 levels were 317-325 ppm.[i] During these years, the world first witnessed space flights by the USSR and USA taking human beings into Earth's orbit, and then the Moon, as Moscow and Washington amassed huge stocks of thermonuclear weapons with the capacity to create tremendous environmental destruction in strategic missile strikes that could cause "ecocide."

Not surprisingly, then, academic, corporate, and government assessments of Earth sustainability, as a complex coupled Earth system, became a more frequent policy topic during the initial space faring efforts and intensive thermonuclear war-making preparations made by the Cold War-era superpowers. The "Spaceship Earth" trope, which was spun up in the media by philosophers, politicians, diplomats and columnists in the 1960s, envisioned the whole planet as one huge "space capsule." After dropping this term into many of his public speeches over the years, R. Buckminster Fuller finally expressed his thoughts about this meme in *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*.[ii] U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, used this idea in a 1965 presentation before the General Assembly, suggesting "We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable reserves of air and soil."[iii] During 1966, the British author, Barbara Ward, published her book, *Spaceship Earth*, and the well-known American economist, Kenneth Boulding, presented his article, "The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth" (1966). Boulding's presentation of his thoughts at a Resources for the Future forum in Washington, D.C. underscored the significance of making this rhetorical turn in the environmental policy community. And, many consulting firms and government agencies began to assess the scope of their operational responsibilities as steps taken toward caring more rationally, and perhaps even more ethically, for the ecology of "Spaceship Earth."[iv]

If the Earth is like a gigantic space capsule, then should its encapsulated spaces be planned, policed, and protected, which the *Limits to Growth* (1972) studies acclaimed as an important new societal norm?[v] Activists from the 1960s still pushed for sustaining the Earth's ecologies, but policy-makers in Moscow and Washington continued policies that favored rapid economic development to affirm the merits of socialism or capitalism.

Over the past three decades, this growth-minded agenda has become both more pressing and quite contested, as bigger and broader publics opened broader debates about the material realities of rapid climate change during the 1980s and 1990s, as the Cold War fizzled out. Never ones to let "a good crisis go to waste," it was not surprising to see global corporate players begin working with their supplier networks and consumers in ways that focused new green business thinking on the so-called "triple bottom line" of "people, planet, profit."[vi]

Meanwhile, emerging networks of scientists, citizens, journalists, and artists explored sustainability ideas for paths to preserve the Earth as it has been evolving for millennia. A few pragmatists admitted that an industrial economy could continue rationally regulating commercial growth to maintain a modern material existence for the human and nonhuman passengers carried within the encapsulated spaces of Spaceship Earth spinning through the cosmos. The Earth was clearly being endangered by greed and power lust echoing the "catastrophocapitalism" narratives first explored by Polyani in *The Great Transformation* (2001) and continued today by Naomi Klein.[vii] Instead of preserving long-term ecological sustainability of Earth as a habitat, however, humanity was burning down the home it occupied.[viii]

Still, critical analysis must note how ecology and environmentalism are moving away from the narratives of "catastrophism" that first were woven deeply through green rhetoric five decades ago with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Her persuasive aesthetic plea and powerful scientific case against the profligate use of DDT motivated many to see how horrendous industrial chemicals had catastrophic effects on wildlife, soil and water, human health, and the biosphere in general. Her rhetoric of biological catastrophe rang true, and innumerable other activists, academics, and authorities soon adopted similar intellectual and rhetorical narrative frames, from Barry Commoner in *The Closing Circle* (1971), Paul R. Ehrlich in *The Population Bomb* (1968), and Donella Meadows *et al*., *The Limits to Growth* (1972) to Bill McKibben *The End of Nature* (1989), Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2007), James Hansen, *Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity* (2009), and Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (2014).[ix]

Rapid climate change, obvious sea rise, and quickening ice loss continue, but at varying rates. In turn, climate change denialists have come to stiffly challenge catastrophism--not to the point of discrediting it entirely--but enough to raise major doubts about the die-hard environmentalists clinging to its interpretative frames, because catastrophes usually are understood as quick episodes of total crisis. Some, like Maniates and Meyer in *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice* (2010), recommend adopting new rhetorics of political response, like discipline, frugality or sacrifice, while others, like Lilley, McNally, Yuen and Davis in *Catastrophism: The Apocalyptic Politics of Collapse and Rebirth* (2012), dispute the mobilization of catastrophism in ecological policies almost *in toto*.[x]

Nonetheless, alternative critical visions for environmentalism, which embraced accepting and administering the Earth as truly "a processed world," have always existed in the green movement. Their logics were best articulated in the United States by the

less well-known Murray Bookchin writing under a pseudonym, Lewis Herber, as he presented a harsher ethico-political interpretation of post-war environmental crises in *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962).[xi] Carson's first edition book cover was colored lightly green with an impressionist sketch of a small brook or fresh spring flowing mysteriously into silence; Bookchin's displayed mid-town Manhattan from the air shrouded in smog with a stark black and white photograph. This minor design divergence in cover art layout, however, marks deeper intellectual and political splits in American environmentalism.

Rather than seeing Nature/Culture, Ecology/Economy, Environment/Humanity in such classically dichotomous terms, Bookchin was already asking the public, many decades before Timothy Morton (2007), to see "ecology without nature" in the material flux of autochthonous natural and anthropogenic technical forces continuously churning through chaotic hybridizing changes.[xii] His arguments implicitly anticipate the advent of a new rhetorical register embraced today by environmentalist and anti-environmentalist forces alike, namely, "the Anthropocene." In naming a new era in geological and historical time, the Anthropocene thesis sees our synthetic environment's anthropogenic changes as being so powerful, and now permanently enduring, that they now are a biogeophysical force, recording their effects in rock, marine sediments, aquatic flows, soil composition, ice layers, atmospheric chemistry, and overall biotic diversity.

Realizing how little political pull the older traditions of environmental catastrophism is giving green politics today, many ethicists, naturalists or philosophers await official clarification about "the Anthropocene" from paleontologists. They hope that the world's agro-industrial disasters now becoming marked in geological time will get more concentrated attention than the looming extinction of elephants, tigers or whales and the disappearance of salmon runs, reliable watershed flows or coral reefs in the oceans.

Inventing "the Anthropocene," then, is a fascinating intellectual and political intervention.[xiii] On the one hand, it resonates well around the world in declarations about a new ecological state of emergency from scientists anxious to mobilize nation-states "to do something" about the destruction "Man" has wrought in the environment for 250 years.[xiv] On the other hand, it anchors a protracted theoretical debate within the many scientific communities over whether or not this impact, if it is solely anthropogenic in origin, even exists on a geological time scale. And, if it does, then what practical import should its formal ratification bring to the business, educational, governmental, and scientific communities as well as lay publics that are concerned about maintaining the biotic carrying capacities of the Earth's environments?

The imperatives of sustainabilization as a political project for those who have the most to win or lose from greater ecological sustainability policing cannot be ignored in these theoretical deliberations. Hence, the rapid development and eager adoption of the Anthropocene thesis as a scientific foundation for new policy practices should be approached, conceptually and discursively, not so much as confirmed geophysical fact perhaps as instead "the history of actuality in the process of taking shape" all around us in the twenty-first century.[xv] Strangely enough when it comes to the Anthropocene concept, academic squabbles over the paleontological stratigraphy justifying its

acceptance or political proclamations already embracing the term as a foregone conclusion are both politicized new movements engaged in reimaging what humanity is becoming in the twenty-first century.

Leslie Paul Thiele in his efforts to define sustainability has highlighted this idea as a "key concept," because "learning to live and work sustainably is *the* practical challenge of our times."[xvi] This claim is often widely accepted, but he takes 199 pages to make his use of "the"--a definite article anchoring our practical challenge--much less definite, and quite diffuse. Such analyses are what enables sustainability to remain "one of the least meaningful and most overused words in the English language."[xvii] Its loss of meaning and overuse is attributable, at least in part, to this rapid turn toward "sustainabilization." The potent fusion of modernizing change with reverence toward Nature is energizing too many conflicting social forces. If the practices of living now require learning why our times are being defined by new planetarian-scale ecomanagerial agendas, then whose work is it to manage who and what will attain sustainable existences, who and what will maintain their material life, and who and what will not gain anything much? Even though many hard-working individuals and well-meaning groups still are energetically trying to attain deeper ecological values, like sustainability in its truly strongest sense more prevalent, it is evident that far more favor is being given to utterly weak sustainability in today's policy debates.

Barry Commoner first captured the challenging contradictions of sustainability in rethinking the historic tasks of materialistic growth-minded people preserving the planet's ecosphere and sustaining its biotic integrity for all life forms. In *The Closing Circle,* Commoner depicted his own research as "an effort to find out what the environmental crisis means," while he noted:

> Suddenly we have discovered what we should have known long before: that the ecosphere sustains people and everything that they do; that anything that fails to fit into the ecosphere is a threat to its finely tuned cycles; that wastes are not only unpleasant, not only toxic, but, more meaningfully evidence that the ecosphere is being driven towards collapse.[xviii]

Sustaining the whole ecosphere, therefore, demands staving off man-made collapse, and the survival of the planet's many life-forms should check, and then reverse any potential sources of ecosystemic collapse, like the much feared "population explosion" of the 1960s.[xix]

Yet, in 2014, we have over 7 billion people on Earth, and CO_2 ppm concentrations in the atmosphere about 400, or 50 ppm past what once was regarded as the safe upper limit. It is clear that "environmentally, the world is in an overshoot mode".[xx] The sustainabilization turn in development discourses, however, also allows many economists, who might be wary of an ecological collapse, to celebrate an almost

> 10-fold growth in the world economy since 1950 and the associated gains in living standards as the crowning achievement of our modern civilization. During this period, income per person worldwide climbed nearly fourfold, boosting living standards to previously unimaginable levels.[xxi]

Averages, however, are always deceptive, especially now when 85 individuals on the planet own as much wealth as the bottom 3.5 billion people. Economic output, once measured in billions of dollars, is now measured in trillions, but accumulating such wealth too rarely is tied directly to the miserable measures of the ecosphere's degradation and society's operational overshoot of its natural resources.[xxii]

Looking back, it appears that "ecology rhetoric" ideologically distorted "economic reality" enough to help enable this explosive rapid growth. Embracing sustainability ideas ironically became one easily adopted solution for *not* altering the course of history, curing the environmental crisis, or ending the post-war culture of growth. The ultimate political insurance for industrial democracy under the conditions of "actually existing capitalism" is continuous economic growth: "growth is a substitute for equality of income. So long as there is growth there is hope, and that makes large income differentials tolerable."[xxiii] To keep this hope alive, the sustainabilization turn sees good sense in recoloring it as "green."

Commoner maintained during the 1970s that the ecological pressures on the Earth are a simultaneous complex crush of contradictory events. He also noted that "none of us, singly or sitting in committee, can possibly blueprint a specific 'plan' for resolving the environmental crisis. To pretend otherwise is only to evade the real meaning of the environmental crisis: that the world is being carried to the brink of ecological disaster not by a singular fault, which some clever scheme can correct, but by the phalanx of powerful economic, political and social forces that constitute the march of progress."[xxiv]

II. Shifting Meaning and Sustainability as Modernity

Between the 1970s and today, the discursive uses of sustainability in public life have become more contradictory. When expressed with its original intent from the 1960s and 1970s, "sustainability" was understood as a very radical goal for human ethical codes and economic systems. Political ecology did hope then to lessen the most inequitable trends in capitalist economies, and maybe limit their most toxic industrial tendencies.[xxv] This radical change was required to assure the Earth's existence and to test sustainable forms of developed material life that would shift all human communities toward less materialistic ways of individual and collective everyday life.[xxvi] Many thinkers endorsed the moral imperatives of living simpler material lives. The best individual and collective responses to what appeared during the 1970s as resource shortages and looming ecological collapse were efforts at thorough, rapid, and permanent downsizing. Brown affirmed this point three decades ago, "creating a sustainable society will require fundamental economic and social changes, a wholesale alteration of economic priorities and population policies," but these most preferred choices still have yet to be made.[xxvii]

Sustainability, or unsustainability, is neither some minor convenience people adopt on their own nor larger conditions that determine their fate without their knowledge. Instead, such practices remake the thought and practice at the roots of modern milieux behind all of material life itself. For human beings, individually and collectively, these considerations are,

> …what they do and the way they do it. That is, the forms of rationality that organize their ways of doing things (the *technological aspect*) and the freedom with which they act within these practical systems, reacting to what others do, modifying the rules of the game, up to a certain point (this might be called the *strategic* side of the *practices*).[xxviii]

Indeed, sustainability per se comes broadly into common public currency around 1972 along with the initial Club of Rome studies and the 1974 Cocoyoc Declaration of the United Nations, and it came to be understood as "capable of being continued at a certain level" as anxieties about economic stagnation gripped the world during the so-called OPEC oil crises.

This semantic twist in sustainability today highlights a key motif in its original seventeenth century meanings, which implied some sense of being a "bearable," or even "defensible," condition, experience or situation. A bearable ordeal of suffering or a defensible site for bearing such suffering in 1610, as capitalism and nation-states took hold in the Atlantic world, then, became something equated--at least by the twentieth century--with accepting disasters like Bhopal, Chernobyl, Deepwater Horizon or Fukushima Daiichi. That is, sustainable development is a whole way of life tied to ever greater rates of commercial trade and technical innovation that are capable of being borne at a certain level of commodious, but also increasingly unbearable, being. Maintaining high-tech modernity at its high pitch of heavy environmental costs now is *the* "development" that must be made "sustainable," even though the early proponents of sustainability in the 1960s definitely implied that it should address protecting people and all other life thriving in the planet's biosphere.

Whether meaning emerges from behavior, or activity is shaped by thought, these operational dead-ends ironically are embedded in the very idea of the sustainable itself. Sustaining someone or something, as this notion is now understood in modern English, comes from the Middle English "susteinen," the Old French "sustinere," and most crucially here, the Latin "tenēre." With Latin's *surum*, "sus" implies "on" or "atop," while declensions of *tenēre* suggest "to hold, have or grasp;" and "to possess, occupy, or control;" and, finally, "to acquire, guard or keep." Sustainable development starkly implies a struggle to attain material gain with an aim to maintain this entire circuit of control.

Therefore, sustainability is, in part, economic growth that has been reached for, grasped solidly, controlled directly, and guarded carefully as an attainment. Gains that have been attained now must be kept and maintained. To keep, occupy, and hold that which has been attained and possessed, as the energy-intensive and resource-wasting gains of a maintainable carbon-intensive modernity for the masses, without any, or at least too many, limits bizarrely are understood as "sustainability." This green economic logic, in turn, defines our time--the so-called era of the Anthropocene--and "we" or those who have attained these gains will do anything to keep and maintain them.

Whether or not it is subtle cynicism or subconscious calculation, today's fusion of sustainability with developmentalism makes far more sense in this light. Even though becoming fixated upon holding what one controls is neither necessarily sustainable nor

developmental, it enables one to realize that transnational energy and agribusiness companies organizing serious discussions about advancing "sustainable oil and gas development" or "green agro-industrial operations" are not as rhetorically improbable as they first sound. Indeed, sustainability science seems to be something more like the professionally correct ideology that would-be modernizers/developers seeking national-statal "tenure track opportunities" need to pursue heedless growth. Once fresh modernization via economic development is gained, these gains must be maintained more leanly, cleanly, and greenly as those holding the "tenured position" of modernized materiality drive sustainabilization's search for endless efficiencies. At some level, the relations between the human race as living beings and their environment pertains to the environments constructed at Nature/Culture, Ecology/Economy, Planet/People interfaces, but these environments, as I have argued elsewhere, have multiple materialities with regard to their first, second or third natural properties.[xxix]

Recognizing and labelling the Anthropocene, not surprisingly, develops at around the same historic conjuncture as the advent of informational globality and telemetric territoriality.[xxx] That is, interactions of power, politics, and ideology in cyberspace are sparking qualitative changes in which

> new transnational flows of capital, people, commodities, information and culture are generating a cybersphere/telesphere that is coextensive with, but different from, first nature in the natural biosphere and second nature in the industrial technosphere. This new 'third nature' of cyberspatial/televisual/informational glocality fuses the local and the global in new everyday life-worlds. And, it is the hyperreal estate of these glocal territories which anchors many social struggles, political organizations, economic competitions and cultural creolizations in most regions of the existing capitalist world system.[xxxi]

One sees here the three decisive moments of reflection anchoring this conference. Our habitats are now, and have indeed been digital for years, given the operational iterations of cyberspatiality/televisuality/informationality as the "third nature" of the cybersphere/infosphere/telesphere colonizes the first nature's biosphere and second nature's technosphere. The localized degradation of our natural habitats by fossil fueled global metabolisms fuse acts and artifacts, ideas and implements, thoughts and things whose intended products and unintended by-products build up, on the one hand, the marvels of the developed world, and, on the other hand, the miseries of its detrital wash. That these flows converge in the tremendous disruptions now being traced in contemporary deposits into the Earth's geological record is no surprise inasmuch as sustainability seekers want to mediate these ephemeral fusions of the local and glocal in the timeless formations of terrestrial materiality.

The digital habitats of third nature are also a new regimen of material governance as the always already cybernetic qualities of built environments, material artifacts, and cultural acts are being fabricated. As IBM's current marketing campaigns to sell big data network technologies assert, the world must be made "smarter." The material governance of the industrial technosphere and natural biosphere has long been, despite

the putative "breakthroughs" of accepting the "new materialism" or "post-environmentalism;" and, engaged in steering vibrant matter, like the active objects, animate things, and agentic aggregates of smart materiality.[xxxii]

Architecture, engineering, construction, mining, design, planning, or manufacture to name but a few pursuits cannot occur without accepting how vibrant or actant many extant materialities already are. Activating ontologies of such object orientations with new proactant, coactant or reactant energies is simple; it merely certifies technifications under their material governance. Reification constitutes things, but things so constituted inevitably function as embedded legislation, congealed management, solidified adjudication, artificial intelligence, systematic sapience or serviceable sentience for things, which easily disclose how fully materiality and humanity collaborate, and collide, in the regimentation of reification.

Finally, global inequality is both manifest and masked in the glocalities of third nature. The domination of human beings precedes or coevolves with the domination of nonhuman beings, things, spaces or the domains of second and first nature. A quick reading of Aristotle's *Ethics* reminds us how women, slaves, children, and animals constitute much of any settled *oikos'* most vibrant matter, and the agricultural, industrial or international ecologies that unfold so banally for object-oriented ontologists reflect enduring embedded inequalities that have been misunderstood for too long as being quite neat, necessary or natural. Indeed, these ideological constructs have been identified, part and parcel, in the on-going terraformation of our biosphere, technosphere, and infosphere.[xxxiii] Yet, critical ecology must contest the ideological blocs at work behind their affirmative sustainability as well as their theories of sustaining affirmation.

The continuous churn of 24x7 commercial imperatives, under clean, green or lean capitalism, which Jameson might characterize as "a new social system beyond classical capitalism" multiplexing its operations through "the world space of multinational capital" is repositioning planetarian ecomanagerialism in these tracks for sustainabilization.[xxxiv] It perhaps becomes "a breakthrough" for "new modes of representing as individual and collective subjects" that "regain a capacity to act and struggle" with "the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as spatial scale" in the Anthropocene.[xxxv] Today's push and pull toward terraforming the Earth through geoengineering, rampant urbanization, and globalization in the collaborative engagements of commodification in the biosphere, technosphere, and infosphere all firmly reaffirm "performativity--that is, the best possible input/output equation. The State and/or company must abandon the idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial backers of research the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power."[xxxvi]

The technologies mobilized by institutes of global sustainability simply can adopt the performative logics of sustainabilized globality. Their informational and industrial technics fully affirm the premise that all technology must be enmeshed in managerial and machinic applications where its utilization pertains "not to the true, the just or the beautiful, etc., but to efficiency: a technical "move" is "good" when it does better and/or

expends less energy than another."[xxxvii] Centers for global sustainability, then, find their sustainability centered on the same agenda of mindful globalism at play with the world watch of Al Gore's Earth Inc.[xxxviii]

As performativity norms "spread to the applied science laboratories: hierarchy, centralized decision making, teamwork, calculation of individual and collective returns, the development of saleable programs, market research, and so on," sustainabilization takes command.[xxxix] When the informatic reality of third nature soaks into second and first nature, their coextensive manifestations in human actions can be easily categorized as the Anthropocene--an age when the performativity of global exchange is the default design behind the Earth's technified transformations. This systemic shift toward what essentially is "terraformativity" radically enhances the impact of informationalization and industrialization, fusing more closely many massive global changes and minute local shifts together as a "smarter planet."

III. Terraformativity: Options and Limits

In some sense, my general comments here about now to advance a critical ecology of the present are an exploration of short passages in Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* which mention briefly "control over relations between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are a species, insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, the milieu in which they live."[xl] To speak of material governance and digital habitats for humanity is to recognize how extensively "the milieu in which they live" are indeed mixed, multiple and manifold.[xli] Whether it is architecture or informatics, these milieux shape the time, place, way, space, manner of life made possible by "control over relations between the human race."[xlii]

Foucault addresses these power/knowledge conjunctures, again quite briefly, in *the Birth of Biopolitics* when he suggests modalities of environmental governance iterate themselves through dispositifs and discourses "in which there is an environmental type of intervention instead of the internal subjugation of individuals."[xliii] The machinations and/or cybernations at work in producing second and third natures are grounded squarely in milieux as machinic formations of/for/by people engaged in multiplex ways of living.[xliv]

Sustainabilization evolves with the melding of third, second, and first nature in the terraforming designs of sustainability sciences that are now intent upon instituting substainability globally as a sustainabilization project. Indeed, one should concede how geoengineering possibilities also unfold from the terraforms of the Anthropocene. These elective affinities are putting forward new iterations of green governmentality by using today's planetarian ecomanagerialism to express, and then master, logics of terraformativity in planetarian management. While such economic development might be attributed to a caring conspiracy intent on instituting a control society over all domains of life, maybe it is far simpler? In the quest to put STEM (science, technology, engineering, and medicine) systems reasoning at the forefront, one finds biomimicry here coming full circle. Energy efficiency, closed loops, vital materialism are all watchwords in terraformitivity's quest to pound together the best possible input-output equations for sustainabilizing forces.

As a power/knowledge formation, terraformitivity is clearly at play in much of today's earth science, ecological policy, and environmental economics. Perhaps the Anthropocene is itself "the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping on a social and spatial scale."[xlv] Currently, for example, the publication, *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management* is seeking special issue papers on "landscape dynamics" for the enlightenment of ecosystem service analysts. Living in the Anthropocene, they claim, forces us to ask, "Which institutional adjustments are needed for the paradigm shift in ecosystem and resource management?" Terraforming-oriented theory and practice are assumed to have answers for "what are the opportunities and challenges of applying ecosystem services in science and policy?"

Since "terraformativity" plainly implies developing a conscious design and discipline for projects of *terranormativity*, sustainabilization centers also ask, "how can measuring, assessing, mapping and valorizing ES contribute to knowledge building about the link between ES providers-benefits-beneficiaries?"[xlvi] Third nature materially implies that nature itself--with society embedded within it--is planetary infrastructure, and all of these elements must be monitored, managed, and maintained on a planetary scale. Modernity's attainability self-evidently justifies its sustainability, but now the Anthropocenic turn calls energy and attention to the maintainability of the links between ecosystem service providers-benefits-beneficiaries. Hence, the substainabilization project must know more, have power within, and hash out continuously "What are the interrelations between ecosystem functions, ecosystem services, and human benefits?" Searching, of course, for "the best possible input/output equation," terraformativity mobilizes ecosystem services, methodologies and tools "to support and inform decisions" being made by planetarian ecomanagerialists who must be continuously engaged in "the identification of ecosystem service beneficiaries and providers, investigating interrelationships between landscape structure, ecosystem functions, ecosystem services, and human benefits."[xlvii]

In much the same way, resilience logics also being absorbed into terraformativity can be defined in terms of short-term responses to abrupt shocks, like natural disasters or weather emergencies, or long-term adaptive capacities to cope with unsteady conditions or recurrent disequilibria. In both instances, however, the root notions at the core of resilience, like recovery, recuperation or restoration in the "bounce-backability" of individuals and institutions, modulate their reactive or proactive range of recuperative interactions to recapture some former state of relative balance, normality or steadiness. Sophisticated versions of resilience admit the world is always contingent, complicated, and chaotic, but even that turbulence can attain a certain orderliness that enables an adaptive reset. Less sophisticated variants see the environment as more predictable, placid or permanent, so the goal becomes recapturing more normal conditions with some intrinsic ability to bounce back into its prior patterns.

Strangely enough, resilience thinking fits well in the logics of terraformativity. Human beings are now anthropocenarians creating or cultivating a diverse array of anthropoceneries in their terraformative impact on the surroundings. Whether one sees humans as adjusted to orderly turbulence, or as agents accustomed to predictable

patterns who must face abrupt shocks, the agendas of terraformativity are exerting terranormative imperatives to maintain productivity, safety, and stability in bouncing-back to patterned order, coping constantly with chaotic variations. Resiliency is another side of green governmentality producing particular subjects with the knowledge and power needed to maintain what was as well to push it all up, on, out to attain fresh productive advances in sustaining the development of new material worlds needing governance.

Critical ecologists, then, must be more incisive in conducting political ecocritique today, because we all live at the biopolitical conjunction of digital habitats, material governance, and global inequalities. This achievement, however, should not lead one to believe that humanity truly dominates every aspect of nature, modernity is a seamless envelope of technical perfection or equality is close to being attained in the very near future. To be terraformative cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be made equal to omnipotence.

Those who would doubt these ragged recalcitrant realities most of the time with regard to human beings living on the Earth need only recall two recent tragic incidents: the shoot-down of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 on July 17, 2014 and the mysterious vanishing of Flight 370 on March 8, 2014 whose losses have preoccupied the global media since March 2014. The case of MH17 is an apparent instance of mistaken targeting by an Ukranian separatist mobile anti-aircraft missile unit. In the breakaway hostilities associated with Russophone regions in Eastern Ukraine, the Malaysian Air Flight was shot down in a series of events that suggest modernity indeed is no guarantee of technical perfection today. The case of MH370, however, is more troubling. A *New York Times* headline about MH370 nearly two weeks later summed up the situation adroitly: “In a Wired World with Abundant Eyes, the Disappearance of a Jet Perplexes.”[xlviii] Given all media accounts to date, this baffling event already has cycled through multiple causal framings in the world’s mass media markets to cultivate a collective cultural consciousness of random risk. And, these narratives mostly appear now to have been scripted out digitally simulated, digitally implemented, and digitally dramatized crime stories slowly getting dressed up as a mystifying eventual accident. Its texture, however, reveals how much of our still largely unknown earthly habitat and its many inequalities are readily reducible to endlessly reprocessed bits whose digital ebb and flow is actually regarded by many as “reality.”

Google Earth, for example, is continuously digitizing multiple layers of spatial data about our planet. People routinely scan their cities and towns using satellite images to check out changes in their neighbors’ backyards behind high fences, look at beach houses for summer rentals for coming vacations or monitor how construction projects are advancing. Many nation-states keep the world under daily 24x7x365 surveillance for strategic, meteorological, and environmental purposes, while much of the world’s daily media, money, and management traffic moves as bits to sustain increasingly global supply chains.

NASA even has been slowly digitizing the topography of Mars for years with its Pathfinder, Spirit, Opportunity, and Curiosity robotic explorers. At time in which one can be telepresent on Martian landscapes via Curiosity’s color cameras, geochemical tools,

and mechanical wanderings, while the Mars Odyssey ahead also images the planet from space, how could a Boeing 777-200 with 239 people aboard simply vanish not only materially, but also informationally? Thinking about this event in Paul Virilio's terms, out in the open sky, how could the vision machine fail? Was this event a strategy of deception or an information bomb?

Flying here on IBM's "smarter planet," the Boeing 777-200 jetliner is a complex communicant machine moving through multiple machinic milieux, but it vanished. How could over 230 people's mobile wireless devices stay in "airplane mode"; how could so many nations' sophisticated radars all suddenly become uncommunicant; how could someone or something aboard Flight 370 disconnect most of its links, making it essentially go dark in our digital habitat's landscape of events? Without data, the co-conveyant/co-motive/co-accelerant human beings aboard this jetliner perhaps were already gone, but the plane's two Rolls Royce jet engines kept relaying maintenance pings on engine performance to satellites overhead for hours until the plane ran out of fuel. Where it hit the ocean remains a mystery, and it will remain one until nearly 23,000 square miles of the Indian Ocean's floor can be searched.[xlix]

The material governance of transport, security, publicity, safety, mobility all are informational and material events plugged into transnational firms, world cities, major states, national populations, and local economies. Again, who would think that this many people-in-flight on a communicant aircraft traversing numerous data fields, information grids, and imaging systems could simply vanish from all these habitats? Because so many of its co-monitored passengers were compatriots in the world's largest national population; its co-produced aircraft was produced and powered by the world's sole remaining superpower and one-time imperial hegemon; and, so much of the world's material commerce is in the care, and for the welfare, of many nation-states like the 15 countries with passengers on board, the production and reproduction of everyday economic, social, and technical existence, as governed materiality itself seems, if only as one futurism of that instant, vulnerable. Admitting that the Earth is still a known unknown, the oceans are deep and unmapped, the skies are vast and not always scanned, or many lands are remote and rarely visited are realities few acknowledge until the trance of human technological omnipotence breaks up against disruptive events--regardless of whatever the ill-fate of Flight 370 is, was or will turn out to be when discovered.

Moreover, nothing typifies global inequality like an international jet flight, even this Malaysian Air red-eye. Billions of people remain on the ground, stuck in place, barely surviving on a dollar a day. After all, it is spring again in the Northern hemisphere, and scores of boats are leaving from Haiti to America or sailing from Libya to Italy, but who knows how many vanish on any given day? Over 26,000 have arrived in Italy just from Libya from January to May 2014, but migrants' boats capsize all the time, as the European Union's Frontex border agency announced in mid-May, like the one that killed 17 people on May 13.[l] When they disappear at sea on overloaded ferries or fishing boats, no one in Australia, China or the Netherlands often knows, and few care about such people.

Yet, because two wired Rolls-Royce jet engines kept spinning for hours in touch with the manufacturer's maintenance shops to carry a handful of well-heeled and legally documented passengers, this tiny fraction of the world's daily load of airborne corporate patrons has triggered weeks of expert discussions, air-sea-and-searches, and what probably will be--if the search and eventual recovery of Air France flight 447 from the South Atlantic that took over two years and $160 million to complete is a baseline indicator--many years of toil, millions in spending, and thousands of people tracking down the lost materiality through whispers of digitality. The Earth is still in too many ways a barely known unknown, and totally losing one airline flight with its human conveyants easily can remain wholly shrouded in mystery for a long time.

Nevertheless, these linkages can still reveal much about our informational, industrial, and ideological ecologies, so tracing all of their imbricate ties in the articulation of sustainabilization is imperative. A Boeing 777-200 ER loaded like Flight 370 is 300 tons of vibrant matter--metal alloys, plastic, jet fuel, people, luggage, sophisticated computers—is capable of flying 7,000 miles at 550-600 mph. This machine's core fuselage structure is over 200 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 61 feet tall. Nonetheless, one or two wrong moves, and it all flips into an extraordinary instance of total unsustainability. As this incident suggests, developmental actuality is often nothing but a broken data trail, existence itself can end abruptly, and the sustainable can crash. The missing clues of this one unsustained flight, its terminal existences, and stark actuality as accidentality unexpectedly underscores how much more texture in the actual contours of our existing sustainabilization remains to be developed for critical ecology.

Meanwhile, those durable pieces of Air France Flight 447 not yet recovered, and those from Malaysian Air 370 still yet to be found, perhaps have come to rest in the ocean's sediments. New deposits from our fossil-fueled age, they gradually might become petrified, sedimented or fossiled into the Earth itself. If nothing else, the search for MH370 already has generated a series of new maps for nearly 60,000 square kilometers of the Indian Ocean's sea floor, revealing a "detailed tapestry of the sea bed" that has uncovered among many new things, including two hitherto unknown undersea volcanoes.[li]

As bits of evidence of the Anthropocene awaiting recovery during the centuries ahead, this wreckage should never be discounted. Markers of an industry proud of its corporate sustainability programs, which nonetheless dumped megatons of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere getting people and things from points A to points B, deep sea air crash debris fields, like those of Air France 447 or MH370, will be very significant. For whatever resilient higher life forms survive this watershed moment in history, they well might--as future paleontologists-- explore such sites with great interest. Rooting through the layers of our past and present from a future still to come, the practices of terraformativity caught up within our present routines of mysterious machinic life will perhaps allow them to learn how sustainabilization actually came to exist, and cemented the regimens of resilience into the rhythms of the Earth itself.

Notes

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[xii] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[xiii] Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer in 2000 proclaimed human beings were now a geological and ecological force in Nature powerful enough to change our collective understanding of geological time: To assign a more specific date to

the onset of the "anthropocene" seems somewhat arbitrary, but we propose the latter part of the 18th century, although we are aware that alternative proposals can be made (some may even want to include the entire Holocene). However, we choose this date because, during the past two centuries, the global effects of human activities have become clearly noticeable. This is the period when data retrieved from glacial ice cores show the beginning of a growth in atmospheric concentrations of several "greenhouse gases," in particular CO_2 and CH_4. Such a starting date also coincides with James Watt's invention of the steam engine in 1784 (2000). Like so many "scientific facts," the Anthropocene is "being made" as much as it is "being discovered" as more official scientific networks adopt the term in their sciences. As *Smithsonian* magazine observed in 2012, "This year, the word picked up velocity in elite science circles: It appeared in nearly 200 peer-reviewed articles, the publisher Elsevier has launched a new academic journal titled *Anthropocene* and IUGS (International Union of Geological Sciences) convened a group of scholars to decide by 2016 whether to officially declare that the Holocene is over and the Anthropocene has begun" (Stromberg, 2013).

[xiv] Timothy W. Luke, "Developing Planetarian Accountancy: Fabricating Nature as Stock, Service, and System for Green Governmentality," *Current Perspective in Social Theory* 26 (2009): 129-159.

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[xxix] Timothy W. Luke, "New World Order of Neo-world Orders: Power, Politics, and Ideology in Informationalizing Glocalities," in *Global Modernities*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1995), 27-48.

[xxx] Timothy W. Luke, "Simulated Sovereignty, Telematic Territoriality: The Political Economy of Cyberspace," in *Spaces of Culture: City-Nation-World*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 27-48.

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[xxxiii] Luke, *Ecocritique*, 106-110.

[xxxiv] Frederick Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 45.

[xxxv] Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, *Breakthrough*; Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 45.

[xxxvi] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 46.

[xxxvii] Ibid., 44.

[xxxviii] Al Gore, *The Future: Six Drivers of Global Change* (New York: Random House, 2013).

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[xlii] Ibid., 244.

[xliii] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collége de France 1978-1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 260.

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[xlv] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 45.

[xlvi] *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management*, "Special Issue Call for Papers: ESS Policies Landscape Dynamics," *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management*, 2014, http://explore.tandfonline.com/cfp/est/tbsm-si-orient-landscape.

[xlvii] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 46; *International Journal of Biodiversity*, "Special Issue Call for Papers."

[xlviii] Chris Buckley, "In a Wired World with Abundant Eyes, The Disappearance of a Jet Perplexes," *New York Times*, March 23, 2014, A14.

[xlix] "The Search for MH370: Deep Secrets," *The Economist*, September 6, 2014, http://www.economist.com/node/21615487/print.

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Spaces of Interest: Financial Governance and Debt Subjectivity

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Abstract: This paper considers the phenomenon of financialization, the integration of everyday life activities into the logic of finance capital, and the spatio-temporal fixes attached to emergent dynamics of capital circulation. I analyze the growing industry of Alternative Finance Service Providers (AFSPs), focusing on the rapid expansion of payday and title loan lending. I argue that the increased presence of AFSPs has occurred in conjunction with practices of finance capitalism, which serve to constitute a specific economic subject. Examining the practices of TMX Finance LLC, the largest title loan company in the United States, I argue that the preferential distribution of debt dramatically shapes the space we live in, and seeks to order the bodies that occupy those spaces.

Keywords: FINANCIALIZATION, GOVERNANCE, SUBJECTIVITY, DEBT, INEQUALITY, SPACE

Introduction

In her book, *The Senses Still*, Nadia Seremetakis[i] utilizes the notion of *stillness* as a heuristic device for disrupting the illusion of continuity and progress

that is infused into the cultural artifacts of our everyday lives. For Seremetakis, *stillness* does not denote a closure of the senses but rather an opening of oneself to the unfiltered experience of sense-memory. After having lived away for well over a decade, I returned to my hometown of Phoenix, Arizona in the spring of 2008 and experienced two distinct moments of *stillness* in which the entanglements of memory, history, and narrative, as described by Seremetakis, were brought to the surface. *Stillness,* as I experienced it, involved sifting through objects that had taken up residence in my unconsciousness. It involved disentangling memory from perceived reality and assigning new meaning to sedimentary structures.

The first moment began upon my immediate return and persisted for the next few months. Having rented a house less than half a mile from the home I grew up in, I was immersed back into the cultural surroundings of my childhood and struck by the familiarity of it all. In my years of absence, the neighborhood appeared to have changed very little. Safeway and Fry's still dominated the corner strip malls, St. Jude and Bethany Presbyterian still opened on Sunday, and dozens of businesses I never frequented but ever familiar to me were still there. And yet, there were signs of change. The space had weathered: buildings appeared under-maintained, restaurants were less busy, and homelessness was more visible. The *stillness* from these experiences involved confronting the contradiction between my comfort in the known and my uneasiness with the appearance of little new to be found. I saw little in this space to attract new business. Indeed, home values had dramatically declined[ii] and the median household income was well below the state average.[iii] The economic decline of my neighborhood, although still somewhat under the surface, was present enough, yet I cannot recall being aware of when all the changes actually occurred. The reciprocity through which we as individuals shape, and in turn, are shaped through our lived environment can lead to a cognitive erasure of sorts. Being embedded in the local environment, we lose ourselves in the landscape and the spatial changes fall upon us all at once. We are shocked by what we had always seen but never noticed because it reveals the extent to which we, ourselves, are implicated in the spatial changes we find around us.

This, then, was my second moment of *stillness*: when I became acutely aware of what had changed and what that change signified. The Great Recession,[iv] as it has been termed, shook the centers of global finance to their core, but in neighborhoods that were already struggling, the shaking merely unearthed the decay that was already there. For example, according to census bureau data, the number of businesses registered and operating in my zip code steadily declined from 830 operative businesses in 1998, to only 636 operative businesses in 2011.[v] By that time, vacancy had become an essential part of my urban landscape. The wave of foreclosures that hit Phoenix[vi] left neighborhoods eerily quiet. At one point, eleven out of the sixty-three homes on my half-mile street sat empty due to foreclosure. Businesses that had found a way to linger finally succumbed and began to close. Then, in early 2013, I began to recognize

a peculiar renovation in my urban space. A large number of the buildings that had been left empty were re-opening; they were being repurposed to house Alternative Financial Service Providers[vii] (AFSPs), particularly title loan stores.

At the corner of my major intersection, title loan agencies now operate on three adjacent corners. What used to be a Fish n' Chips shop, a convenience store, and a Mexican restaurant, all now advertise the best rates on high-interest loans. Spaces that had once offered discount meals and discount entertainment now pedal "discounted" short-term, high-interest debt. In a one-mile, square block radius from my home, there are now sixteen AFSPs, whereas in my youth I can recall only one (the local pawnshop). This outcropping of AFSPs is by no means confined to my neighborhood. According to the Department of Financial Institutions, there were 160 licensed title-lending branches in Phoenix during the years 2000-2008: since 2009, the number has skyrocketed to over 600.[viii] Such numbers are consistent with the national trend, which according to the Center for Responsible Lending (CRL) has seen the number of title loan lending agencies increase from less than 100 in the early 1990s to approximately 7,730 operating agencies in 2013.[ix]

Although I was aware of the general economic decline within my immediate spatial boundaries, I had not connected the dots between decades of wage stagnation, recent economic contraction, and a financial need to create new channels of liquidity through the issuance of alternative forms of interest accruing debt. A landscape that had weathered decades of retreating capital investment was quickly transforming to serve a different set of capital needs. Most striking was the reconstitution of spatial fixes[x] attached to the dynamics of capital circulation. More accurately, these changes to the environment reflect what David Harvey refers to as *spatio-temporal fixes*, which see the "the penetration of pre-existing social formations by capitalist social formations and institutional arrangements."[xi] Identifying such spatio-temporal fixes allows one to observe the manner in which capital is absorbed into the urban landscape for the intensive purpose of shaping that space to meet its needs of circulation.[xii] Hence, the renovation of urban space I was witnessing did not take the form of new high-rise apartment complexes, flashy retail centers, or even a build-up of mundane infrastructure; rather, capital was addressing its anemia through an effort to stimulate the spending of the working class and the urban poor.

What has become strikingly apparent--as the dust settles from the most recent financial crisis--is that the fallout was by no means equally distributed across populations. While the spiking unemployment rate[xiii] spoke to the precarious position facing the labor force as a whole, clear racial disparities emerged from the data. By 2010, the unemployment rate for Whites (8.7%) remained significantly below the national average of 9.5% while Blacks (16.0 %) and Hispanic (12.5 %) workers faced more uncertain prospects.[xiv] Taking income into account, the scales grow increasingly imbalanced. The Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston, calculated that for

households earning $150,000 or more, unemployment was only 3.2%, a number commensurable with what is considered to be full employment; comparatively, households earning $12,499 or less, experienced unemployment at a rate of 30.2%.[xv] This concentration of dramatic unemployment in low-income neighborhoods, where traditional banking was already in steady decline,[xvi] exacerbated the drag on an economy that was experiencing a historic contraction in consumer credit.[xvii] While the government scrambled to provide social assistance, finance was left to solve the puzzle of plummeting consumer demand within the space of the working class and the working poor.

If traditional forms of credit remained beyond the purview of these spaces then new channels would be opened. This analysis identifies AFSPs as one such channel. I choose to focus on the short-term lending practices of AFSPs, specifically payday and title loans, for two reasons. First, the expansion of AFSPs in conjunction with the most recent financial crisis speak to the myriad of ways the object of debt has become normalized not only as a financial instrument but also as a spatial phenomenon. Second, the lending practices of AFSPs produce traceable paths of capital flows from vulnerable populations to large financial institutions and global markets. This allows us to examine processes through which the poor are no longer excluded from finance but rather have become an integral component of finance capital's circulatory system. While short-term lending cannot be generalized as a descriptor of finance as a whole, locating the dramatic increase of these practices within the historical narrative of finance provides an opportunity to interrogate the disciplinary function of such practices and the relationship between subjectivity and space.

The argument of this paper is that the material embedding of AFSPs into the socio-economic fabric occurred in conjunction with multiple practices of *financialization,*[xviii] which have served to constitute a specific economic subject. Here, I build upon Maurizio Lazzarato's theoretical framework of debt subjectivity, which informs the extent to which the debtor-creditor relationship has come to constitute a specific relation of power that necessitates the "production and control of specific subjectivities."[xix] Lazzarato extends Michel Foucault's conceptions of *homo economicus* to speak not only of the diffusion of economic rationality throughout society but to consider the implications of occupying space where every transaction validates and reinforces the condition of debt. It is this form of subjectivity that he terms "indebted [hu]man"[xx] and that he posits as a *universal* power relation, as all individuals are implicated within it. Yet, despite the centrality of debt within political discourse today, it continues to exist as a specter of itself. This is to say that debt is regarded as a *conditional* object rather than the objectified condition of lived experience. Theoretical intercourse between the instruments of finance and the spatial concentrations of AFSPs allows for the consideration of the weighted conditions that are differentially applied across geographies and populations.

Spacing Change

Making sense of the material changes in my own urban landscape requires an understanding of the depth to which debt financing has become normalized as the primary medium for financial circulation within local, national and global markets.[xxi] Financial innovations, such as securitization, that originated in the 1980s and accelerated in the 90s relied upon a range of conduits to endlessly re-package and re-circulate debt, thereby lubricating the markets with fictitious liquidity to meet the *extensive* needs of capital. From the optic of debt, financialization is not merely as an expansion of economic activity but the simultaneous conditioning of a new subjectivity that is *extensive*, since it brings all forms of production (social and economic) under the logic of finance, and *intensive*, "since it encompasses the relationship to the self, in the guise of the entrepreneur of the self."[xxii] The historic expansion of credit meant that capital would inevitably be required to widen its base of borrowers/debtors to absorb the surplus being generated. It is unsurprising then that it was during the accelerated spread of credit in the 1990s that AFSPs also began to proliferate at a much faster rate. If capitalism in fact creates a physical landscape "in its own image, broadly appropriate to the purposes of production and reproduction" as Harvey[xxiii] maintains, then it was only a matter of time before the *short-term risk with high interest return* model that had become the modus operandi of the markets would find new spatial articulations.

While the 1990s is often remembered as an era of dramatic economic expansion spurred on by the IT revolution, the base of working class America remained stagnate in wage earnings[xxiv] straining their ability to meet a socially constructed standard of living that was being driven upwards through increased access to credit: "American median-income households have experienced unsecured debt levels well above yearly income levels since 1992."[xxv] Hence, the increasing need for quick access to credit/debt became an integral component within the discourse of the financialized-self and the AFSPs responded to meet these *needs* by embedding themselves into the urban landscape: nationally, "the number of payday loan offices grew from under 200 offices in the early 1990s to over 22,800 offices at the end of 2005."[xxvi]

To add perspective to these numbers, it is worth comparing the expansion of payday lending stores with a recognizable urban fixture, such as Starbucks Coffee Co., which also began in the early 1990s. By 2005, there were 8,569 Starbucks stores, compared to an estimated 22,000 payday loan stores.[xxvii] Such comparison is informative as it draws attention to the fact that financialization cannot be thought of outside of the spatial confines in which it is articulated. It must "be understood as a profoundly spatial phenomenon, because it describes the search for a financialized spatial-temporal fix(es)."[xxviii] Economic forces do not only shape the space we occupy, the economy is also shaped by our conceptions of that space. Spatial changes encroach on the intimate experience of our lives and conceptually alter our experience of the world. The saturation of AFSPs is not merely a response to a need or desire for debt, rather it is actively shaping such needs and desires. The inter-relation between space and body is

critical for it allows us to postulate the subject "as a way of thinking about the possibility of experience."[xxix] This moves financialization beyond the discourse of economic practices to a discourse of power, where the body and the space one occupies often determine the conditions of possibility.

Anatomy of a Beast

Similar to payday lending, the title lending industry as a whole has followed an upward trajectory of rapid expansion since the 1990s. According to a 2013 report by the CRL, approximately 7,730 title loan lenders now operate across 21 states "costing borrowers $3.6 billion each year in interest on $1.6 billion in loans."[xxx] Loans are typically made at $25-$40 interest per $100 borrowed and are paid or renewed every 30 days (compared to the two-week interest period associated with payday loans). Thus, while the APR tends to be somewhat lower (a mere 300%) than payday loans, the principle amount is typically much higher, often making it more difficult to repay. The average borrower renews a loan eight times and pays approximately $2,000 interest on every $1,000 borrowed.[xxxi] Yet, rather than focusing solely on the issue of usury, I seek to analyze title loans as conduits for financial flows. To comprehend the broader implications of the title loan industry, it is necessary to move beyond the accumulated rate of interest to consider the strategic processes through which interest is accumulated. To achieve this, I will examine the practices of TMX Finance LLC, more commonly known by its store brand name of TitleMax, the largest automobile title lender in the United States based on title loans receivable.[xxxii]

The purpose of this analysis is to examine the ways in which TitleMax serves as a node within the processes of financialization. It actively brings the logics of finance and capital into social space and dramatically shapes the lived experience of the individuals who acquire debt through them. Furthermore, TitleMax's short but dynamic history provides an opportunity to investigate the way capital flows move between financial institutions and financial subjects and the strategies employed to maximize the transfer of wealth from the individual to the financial sector. Equally important, it provides a marker by which we can readily identify the material presence of finance within specific spatial confines. The spatial concentration of TitleMax's operations allows for a deeper analysis that implicates specific bodies as part of an accumulation strategy.

TitleMax opened its first store in 1998, in the city of Savannah, GA, and experienced steady growth that accelerated when payday lending was terminated in Georgia in 2004. By 2009, it had expanded to over 500 store locations across seven states.[xxxiii] However, it has been the rate of growth within the past few years that is most striking. While most of the country lumbers through a tepid recovery[xxxiv]from the dramatic economic downturn associated with the 2008 financial crisis, TitleMax nearly doubled its operations in the last two years, opening 507 new stores since April of 2011.[xxxv] According to documents filed with the Securities Exchange Commission, the same two-year

span saw the company's holdings of title loans receivable increase 57% from $317.7 million to 497.6 million: total assets increased 66%, from $482.7 million to a staggering $802.2 million.[xxxvi]

Such rapid expansion can be attributed to the constant flows of interest accumulated that provide a steady stream of capital available to be re-circulated into its spatial machinery. Yet it must be noted that the model of short-term lending tends to work in a somewhat inverse relationship to the economic cycle. Thus, when times are good, demand for high interest loans will diminish. For example, in its financial statements, TitleMax acknowledges that first quarter earnings are traditionally its weakest as households are temporary buoyed by extra revenues from tax refunds.[xxxvii] Yet when the economy dips and credit is tightened as was occurring during the financial crisis, the demands for these types of loans should rise precipitously. It was then a matter of curiosity that TitleMax filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in 2009 during the peak of the recession, when the contracting economy and tightened credit streams should have been fueling a lending boom for such companies. In fact, this was the case, as statements made by CEO Tracy Young clearly revealed: "In 2008, TitleMax generated by far the highest revenues and profits in its history and 2009 is expected to be another record year."[xxxviii] This analysis raises the question of why TitleMax opted for bankruptcy protection despite its strong performance. The answer lies in capital's desire to optimize the potential for zero risk earnings, thus illuminating the direct linkages between the profits of high finance and the costs incurred by the individual subject. For TitleMax, chapter 11 was a restructuring of the terms of debt it sought to circulate and redistribute.

The trigger that prompted TitleMax to file bankruptcy protection in the spring of 2009 was the coming to term of $165 million worth of senior secured notes issued several years earlier by the company. The lender, Merrill Lynch & Co., was heavily mired in its own financial problems[xxxix] and unwillingly to renegotiate the interest rate on the loan. At this time in 2009, in the wake of the credit crunch that had frozen financial markets in 2007 and the near collapse of the markets the following year, the Federal Reserve was aggressively attempting to stimulate the circulation of credit by reducing the prime rate to historical lows.[xl] The sudden drop in the Fed prime rate dramatically lowered the cost of capital to those who were credit worthy enough to secure the confidence of a loan. As a result, borrowers across all sectors of the economy desperately sought to refinance their debt in order to steady the ship and position themselves for greater profitability in the future. Despite record earnings, TitleMax recognized an opportunity to renegotiate the interest rate it was paying on its own debt. Again CEO Tracy Young reiterated that the chapter 11 filings were "not due to operational or financial performance," rather it was seeking to maximize future earnings by expanding the yield between interest paid (at a premium rate) and interest received, which is upwards of 300 percent APR.[xli] TitleMax, whose solvency and sustained profitably is directly linked to the tightening economic conditions experienced by the lower and middle class, was able to leverage its

position in order to negotiate cheaper access to credit which could then be re-circulated at triple digit rates. There is a certain maddening genius to capital in that its destruction (as was the case for firms like Merrill Lynch) is so easily reorganized for greater capital gain at the expense of vulnerable populations. While increased unemployment, credit freezes, and the collapse of the housing market dramatically contracted the field of possibility for those desperately in need of money to sustain themselves, firms such as TitleMax were left to contemplate the possibilities of debt negotiation, and corporate expansion.

The Boom of Bankruptcy

That the rules of a capitalist system are designed to benefit capital should come as no surprise. As anticipated, TitleMax's restructuring of debt led to its most profitable years yet. The company exited Bankruptcy proceedings in April of 2010 having negotiated a new loan of $250 million of senior secured notes, that included a $25 million indenture provision, which guaranteed a credit line of $25 million that the company could utilize at its discretion assuming all payments on the senior loan were current.[xlii] These terms provided TitleMax with the capital tools to effectively reduce its own risk to a threshold of zero. Consider that in the first quarter of 2011, less than a year removed from bankruptcy protection, TitleMax paid $9.5 million in interest payments, including the amortization of debt issuance costs. During this time, while all operations were underwritten by the new $250 million senior secured notes, the net interest and fee income was an astounding $105.2 million. The immense margins of profit drove TitleMax into an aggressive phase of expansion that continues into the present. In May of 2011, it closed on an asset purchase agreement with Cashback Title Loans, Inc., acquiring 19 locations in Nevada for $6.7 million.[xliii] Two months later, it reached a $1.6 million agreement with Mid-America Credit, Inc., Mid-West General Finance Corp., and Rainbow Loan Co., to collectively purchase eight locations in Missouri, six in Nevada, and lease fourteen other properties[xliv]. By the end of the second quarter of the next year (2012), TitleMax would purchase an additional 150 new stores, expanding its presence into Arizona, Texas, and Virginia.[xlv] In the following twelve months, 307 new stores would be added, bringing its total operations to 1,108 stores across twelve states. A beast had been born, fashioned in the image of a system that privileges capital interests over the individual subject, consolidated through the protection of courts, and unleashed by the needs of the suffering.

In only the first three months of 2013, individuals transferred $181.3 million dollars into circuitry of this beast. $13.1 million of that amount moved back to financial institutions in the form of debt amortization to ultimately be re-circulated in global or domestic markets. The remaining $168.2 million funds the continual expansion of TitleMax's presence in the social space where lives are lived. Identifying the processes through which TitleMax has achieved such incredible profitability in such a short time informs the extent to which everyday lives and materialities are increasingly interconnected to the financial system:

companies such as TitleMax allow us to draw a straight line through the heart of the social pyramid. As Christian Marazzi points out, the new needs of financialization require that the credit-seeking base is widened; it demands the production of new populations to facilitate the circulation of debt which translates into profit on the other side of the ledger: "in order to raise and make profits, finance also needs to involve the poor…It is capitalism that turns bare life into a direct source of profit."[xlvi] In this way, TitleMax is an exemplar of the inter-relations between finance and the financial subject as it applies spatial fixes to capital needs. Where finance capital was once regarded as distinct from the sphere of the 'real economy,' the operations of companies like TitleMax demonstrate that finance-capitalism not only creates the poor but that it *requires* the poor.

In this way, the body of the poor is interpolated as something more than an accumulation strategy.[xlvii] It is not merely the perpetual accumulation of profit that is staked to the lives of the working class, it the very structure of capital's workings. The near collapse of the financial markets in 2007 reveals the extent to which the circuitry of finance is kinetically dependent upon levels of liquidity circulating within the veins of the capital system. As such, the body moves from being the point of labor extraction to an essential capillary of debt circulation. Hence, the emergent economy of debt/credit rearticulates the needs of both capital and labor in reciprocal fashion. Labor continues to require capital to meet material needs and capital requires labor to act as the necessary base for debt circulation. Irony aside, the rich have never needed the poor so badly.

Living in the Right(s) Space

Central to the argument being made throughout this essay is that the project of deregulation and the liberalization of capital flows since the 1970s has resulted in new spatial organizations of capital that vary across differing geographic, and socio-economic terrains.[xlviii] An example of this is found in the work of Leyshon et al.,[xlix] who demonstrate the importance of space and place relative to the accessibility of capital. Noting the ways traditional financial service providers utilize geo-demographic data to identify concentrations of profitable financial subjects, they theorize the withdrawal of traditional banking services from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the UK to be indicative of the exclusionary principles implicit to a system of finance that co-locates specific practices with specific spaces. From this position the physical infrastructure of traditional or alternative financial service providers serves as a network through which different subjectivities are linked to the circuitry of finance. These spatial arrangements mark the parameters of different financial ecologies, which dictate one's exclusion or inclusion into varying networks of capital that require different types of financial subjects. Hence while the processes of financialization collapses the space of finance and the material into one, we can also identify flows of spaces where each point of exclusion is always at once a point of inclusion into a differentiated space. Sarah Hall notes that socio-economically

deprived individuals who have been excluded from traditional banking services due to their perceived lack of profitably are relegated to a new space of vulnerability where they are "subjected to a range of more exploitative forms of financial provision."[l] This form of segmentation is supported by our investigation of TitleMax, which targets populations who "turn more to title lending because of a contraction of credit from other sources."[li]

In the Phoenix metropolitan area title loan lenders unsurprisingly cluster in lower income neighborhoods in central and west Phoenix, as well as, satellite cities such as Mesa and Glendale that have significantly higher percentages of Hispanic populations. Overlaying US Census Bureau data onto the geographical concentrations of title loan lenders in Phoenix reveals striking socio-economic correlations between income and the presence of AFSPs. A survey analysis conducted by the Arizona Republic reveals that in census tracts where there are no title loan lenders the average median income is $58,375; when one lender is present the average income dips to $47,774; in tracts with two lenders the number reduces to $38,442; and when three or more lenders are to be found, average income diminishes further to $36,442.[lii] Using the same data, we are able to see that tracts with higher numbers of title loan lenders have higher percentages of residents on public assistance and higher minority populations. These findings are consistent with Martin and Longa's studies that find "as a neighborhood's median household income increases and its residents' skin pigment whitens, AFSPs become increasingly scarce"[liii].

While no causal relationship can be determined from these data, the higher concentrations of AFSPs in lower income and minority spaces fits with the theoretical assertion that the normalization of debt as the primary mode of financial security results in new spatial organizations of capital that vary across socio-economic terrains. This proliferation of debt is sold to the public through a discourse of social inclusion eerily similar to the narratives employed to justify the disproportionate number of ethnic minorities who were targeted for subprime mortgages just years prior.[liv] In this way, the persistent and disproportionate movement of AFSPs into low-income, minority neighborhoods cannot be viewed as simply meeting a consumer demand, but as extending the newest articulation of power that confines particular bodies to spaces where rent/debt/interest is readily extracted.

Advocates for the payday and title loan industries decry the notion that such practices target the lower socio-economic strata and instead champion the *democratization of debt* for providing necessary liquidity to populations which are otherwise deprived of credit. Such language provides yet another avenue to interrogate the discursive forces that reinforce the material possibilities of these differentiated spaces. The democratization of debt appropriates a rights-based language to justify an accelerated mode of debt capitalism, which effectively transfers debt from financial institutions, such as Merrill Lynch and Bank of America, through an intermediary like TitleMax, and onto the working class poor at exurbanite rates of interest. Under such logic the poor have the right to debt

regardless of the diminishment of all other social rights regarding health, housing, or education. Hence, the democratization of debt should be viewed as a set of processes embedded within a political-economic strategy that sets to differentiate bodies through the productive capacities they engender. Such capacities must not be viewed in a strictly biological sense, but rather in conjunction with the social spaces these capacities are embedded in.

Conclusion

This inquiry began from an observation, a *still* recognition of the changes that, once noticed, were already upon me. Setting our gaze upon these social spaces colors our perceptual lens of the material nature of financialization. The normalization of debt embeds itself not only in the ideological formations of the social subject but also in the material articulations of financial intermediaries seeking to capitalize on accumulated interest associated with self-deficit spending. I have shown how AFSPs serve as conduits of a larger financial network, which appropriates discursive space and translates it into spatio-temporal fixes. These spatial articulations of financial power are not only to be found in the skylines of the city centers, rather the intermediary appendages of finance hold equal influence in reshaping the spatial dimensions of lived experience. Examining this experience then becomes crucial for it allows us to "make better sense of how the clash among globalizing discourses and localized social realities so often ends up prolonging personal and collective tragedy."[lv]

The phenomenon of AFSPs that overtook my lived environment is symptomatic of a financial logic that not only seeks to order space, but to also order bodies. Finance capital has been forced by its own hand to seek out new spaces to colonize, and as such "the relation between global flows and local logics raises powerfully the question of the struggle over the real."[lvi] The 'real' is then open for interpretation but the significance of space and place would seem to be paramount. If the socio-political dynamics are to change then it begins when we ascribe ourselves to a place in the social, rather than allowing the economic apparatus to inscribe us into a space.

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[i] Seremetakis, C. Nadia. *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

[ii] In my zip code of 85051, median home sale price fell from $160,000 in the first quarter of 2008 to just above $60,000 by the second quarter of 2009. See, "Zip Code Business Patterns." *Federal Census Bureau*. Accessed December 7, 2013. http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/zbpnaic/zbpsect.pl.

[iii] 2011 data shows the median household income in the 85051 zip code to be $40,910 while the estimated household income in Arizona was $46,709. See, "85051 Zip Code Detailed Profile." Accessed December 7, 2013. - http://www.city-data.com/zips/85051.html.

[iv] The Great Recession refers to the slowdown in economic activity in the US economy that began in December of 2007 and ended in June of 2009: the Dow Jones Industrial average fell 5,000 points to a twelve year low of 6,547 in March of 2009, resulting in $11.2 trillion in total losses. See, Paradis, Tim. "The Statistics of the Great Recession." The Huffington Post. October 10, 2009. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/10/the-statistics-of-the-gre_n_316548.html.

[v] Industry specific data further highlights the declining local business environment from 1998-2011: construction and manufacturing businesses decreased from 84 to 53 and retail trade establishments declined from 214 to 165. One of the only sectors to see positive gains in operative establishments was Health Care and Social Assistance which increased from 77 to 87. See, U.S. Department of Commerce. United States Census Bureau. *2011 ZIP Code Business Patterns (NAICS)*. http://censtats.census.gov/cgi-bin/zbpnaic/zbpsect.pl.

[vi] Fulmer, Melinda. "Foreclosure Rates: 20 Cities with Highest Filings and State-by-state Rankings." MSN Real Estate. 2011. http://realestate.msn.com/article.aspx?cp-documentid=28364347.

[vii] In this paper AFSPs refers to non-traditional banking institutions that provide short-term loan opportunities but include considerably higher fees and interest rates than traditional banks. The most common forms of AFSPs are check cashing services, pawnshops, payday loans, and title loans.

[viii] Brodesky, Josh, and Rob O'Dell. "Title Loans Hurt Poor, Critics Say." *AZcentral.com*, April 1, 2013. Accessed June 7, 2013. http://www.azcentral.com/business/news/articles/20130318title-loans-hurt-poor-critics.html.

[ix] *Driven to Disaster.* Publication. February 28, 2013. http://www.responsiblelending.org/other-consumer-loans/car-title-loans/research-analysis/driven-to-disaster.html.

[x] Harvey, David. *The Limits to Capital*. London: Verso, 2006.During periodic crises of over-accumulation, capital will embed itself in particular geographies resulting in a build-up of investment and thereby becoming “fixed” within specific socio-economic formations.

[xi] Harvey, David. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003: 115

[xii] Harvey, David. *The Limits to Capital*. London: Verso, 2006: 230The act of constant circulation is what allows money to transform itself into capital (money that creates more money). A capitalist system relies on the "smooth transformation of the circulation of revenues into the realization of capital through exchange"

[xiii] The US Department of Labor reported that the national unemployment rate effectively doubled from August, 2007 (4.6%) to May, 2009 (9.0 %). Six months later, it climbed to a high of 10%. http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000

[xiv] "Unemployment Rates of Race and Ethnicity, 2010." Chart. In *Bureau of Labor Statistics*. http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2011/ted_20111005.htm.

[xv] Sum, Andrew, and Ishwar Khatiwada. *Labor Underutilization Problems of U.S. Workers Across Household Income Groups at the End of the Great Recession: A Truly Great Depression Among the Nation's Low Income Workers Amidst Full Employment Among the Most Affluent*. Publication. Compiled by Sheila Palma. http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/Labor_Underutilization_Problems_of_U.pdf.

[xvi] Bon, Gatien. *Incubating Inner-City Branches for Acquisition by Financial Institutions*. Working paper no. 32. Mossavar-Rhamani Center for Business and Government, 2013. http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp_site/storage/fckeditor/file/pdfs/centers-programs/centers/mrcbg/publications/awp/Bon_Final.pdf.

[xvii] "United States Change in Consumer Credit." Chart. In *Trading Economics*. 2014. http://www.tradingeconomics.com/united-states/consumer-credit.

[xviii] This term will be interrogated further in the paper, here I define financialization as the process whereby key financial players gain greater influence over economic policy and economic outcomes, thereby transforming the fundamental systems of lived experience.

[xix] Lazzarato, Maurizo. *The Making of the Indebted Man.* Amsterdam: Semiotext, 2011: 30

[xx] Lazzarato uses the masculine form "indebted man;" however, as this condition is intended to be universal I will use the gender-neutral term "indebted human" throughout the paper.

[xxi] Harvey, David. *The Enigma of Capital: And the Crises of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; Harman, Chris. *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2010.

[xxii] Lazzarato, Maurizio. *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*. Los Angeles, Calif: Semiotext(e), 2012; 52.

[xxiii] Harvey, David. *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985: 36.

[xxiv] Palley, Thomas I. *Financialization: What It Is and Why It Matters*. Working paper no. 52. Washington, DC: Levy Economics Institute and Economics for Democratic and Open Societies, 2007. http://www.csun.edu/~sg4002/research/usury.html.Palley shows that while debt levels across all sectors of the economy, including household levels, have risen precipitously over the last three decades, real wages have not risen above 1979 levels.

[xxv] Montgomerie, Johnna. "The Pursuit of (Past) Happiness? Middle-class Indebtedness and American Financialisation." *New Political Economy* 14, no. 1 (2009): 18.

[xxvi] Elliehausen, Gregory. "An Analysis of Consumers' Use of Payday Loans." *Financial Services Research Program Monograph No. 41*, January 2009. Accessed September 27, 2013. http://www.cfsaa.com/portals/0/RelatedContent/Attachments/GWUAnalysis_01-2009.pdf: 1.

[xxvii] Graves, Steven M. "Payday Lenders vs. Starbucks." C.S.U.N Geography. http://www.csun.edu/~sg4002/research/research_home.html.

[xxviii] French, Shaun, Andrew Leyshon, and Thomas Wainwright. "Financializing Space, Spacing Financialization." *Progress in Human Geography*, 2011: 7

[xxix] Das, Veena, and Arthur Kleinman. "Introduction." In *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery*, 1-30. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001: 21.

[xxx] *Driven to Disaster.* Publication. February 28, 2013: 2. http://www.responsiblelending.org/other-consumer-loans/car-title-loans/research-analysis/driven-to-disaster.html.

[xxxi] *Driven to Disaster.* Publication. February 28, 2013: 2. http://www.responsiblelending.org/other-consumer-loans/car-title-loans/research-analysis/driven-to-disaster.html.

[xxxii] "Form 10-Q: TMX Finance LLC." *United States Securities and Exchange Commission*, March 31, 2011. http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1511967/000119312511153313/d10q.htm#toc.

[xxxiii] Larson, Erik. "TitleMax Seeks Bankruptcy Protection in Georgia." Bloomberg News. April 20, 2009. http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=akIBg67gt6pw.

[xxxiv] While the economy is showing signs of recovery it is historically the weakest recovery in the post-WWII era. GDP is only 9% higher than when the recovery first began four years prior. See for example, Walker, Dinah. "Quarterly Update: The U.S. Economic Recovery in Historical Context." Council on Foreign Relations. August 22, 2013. http://www.cfr.org/united-states/quarterly-update-us-economic-recovery-historical-context/p25774.

[xxxv] "Form 10-Q: TMX Finance LLC." April 2013: 21. http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1511967/000110465913041451/a13-8662_110q.htm#Item1_FinancialStatements__174753.

[xxxvi] "Form 10-Q: TMX Finance LLC." April 2013: 3. http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1511967/000110465913041451/a13-8662_110q.htm#Item1_FinancialStatements__174753.

[xxxvii] "Form 10-Q: TMX Finance LLC." April 2013: 7. http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1511967/000110465913041451/a13-8662_110q.htm#Item1_FinancialStatements__174753.

[xxxviii] Larson, Erik. "TitleMax Seeks Bankruptcy Protection in Georgia." Bloomberg News. April 20, 2009. http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=akIBg67gt6pw.

[xxxix] Merrill Lynch would soon be absorbed by Bank of America in yet another restructuring of capital

[xl] The effective Fed funds rate, which had remained above 5% since 2006, dropped dramatically to near 0% by the start of 2009. Throughout the 2009, the official rate stood at 0.25%. For historical data on the Fed prime rate see, "Effective Fed Funds Rate Chart." Accessed November 25, 2013. http://www.fedprimerate.com/fedfundsrate/federal-funds-target-rate_chart-graph-graphic.htm.

[xli] Larson, Erik. "TitleMax Seeks Bankruptcy Protection in Georgia." Bloomberg News. April 20, 2009. http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=akIBg67gt6pw.

[xlii] "Form 10-Q: TMX Finance LLC." *United States Securities and Exchange Commission*, March 31, 2011. http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1511967/000119312511153313/d10q.htm#toc.

[xliii] "Form 10-Q: TMX Finance LLC." *United States Securities and Exchange Commission*, March 31, 2011: 20. http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1511967/000119312511153313/d10q.htm#toc.

[xliv] Ibid

[xlv] United States. Securities and Exchange Commission. *TMX Finance LLC Second Quarter 2012 Earnings Conference Call*. http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1511967/000110465912062224/a12-20468_1ex99d1.htm.

[xlvi] Marazzi, Christian. *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2011: 39.

[xlvii] Harvey, David. "The Body as an Accumulation Strategy." *Society and Space* 16, (1998).

[xlviii] Harvey, David. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008; Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. New York, NY: Blackwell, 1984.

[xlix] Leyshon, Andrew, Shaun French, and Paola Signoretta. "Financial Exclusion and the Geography of Bank and Building Society Branch Closure in Britain." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33, no. 4 (2008): 447-65.

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ASPECT on Geopolitics 2014 – You Can't Spell Crisis Without ISIS: Comments on "The Return of Geopolitics?"

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Introduction

The following 'comments' brought together here attempt to bring the aforementioned question of "a return to geopolitics?" into a conversation with my current research endeavors of attempting to rethink the concept of "crisis" politically and socially, and not, to be sure economically. The benefits of such an attempt highlight the interaction between crisis discourses and security practices in the production of what I call "crisis thought." Paraphrasing Michel Foucault, crisis thought is operationally defined as *a modality of knowledge that eludes human consciousness, but provides it with a set of rules and structures in matters of thinking, living, and being in the phenomenal world.*[i] My concern with this ongoing research is with the effect of crisis' on the *ontology* (i.e., individual and collective identity; the basis of reality and knowledge) and *axiology* (i.e., values, morals, decisions, judgments) of political subjectivity in regards to present day domestic and international security concerns.[ii] Larry George defines political subjectivity as the "collective self-image with which the people of a nation identify the position, status, and role of each subject within that imagined community, and the sense of commonality engendered by the various practices through which that collective self-conception is reproduced."[iii] Stated differently, I am concerned with whether political subjects have, so to speak, "gotten used to" living with crises within a global political environment characterized by (among other things) states of emergency (i.e., exception), surveillance, and securitization.[iv] If so, what might it say about the foundations, arrangement, and quality of political experience – domestically and globally – in the present and towards the future.

There are linkages between the question of geopolitics and the attempt to rethink crisis noted above, but admittedly the transition between them could use a little work. Despite the inclusion of ISIS (Islamic State of Iran and Greater Syria) in the title of this piece, I speak very little about that non-state terrorist group.[v] The aforementioned question is timely in light of ongoing and contemporary events, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,[vi] the US-Mexico border crisis,[vii] Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula,[viii] and most recently, Ebola.[ix] Each of these topics directly or indirectly have geopolitical relevance, as they concern in their own way – to rip a title from Foucault's lecture series – security, territory, and population. The question posed would be: when did geopolitics ever go away and why is this return of geopolitics couched in crisis thought?

Commentary

Geopolitics is a concept that concerns the relationship between geography, space, or territory as a factor in political decision-making, governance, and military strategy. However, as Francois Debrix reminds us, geopolitics in international relations (IR) is about much more: "the way dominant and powerful sovereign nation-states have tried to make sense of and represent their global spatial environment with a view to

facilitating their foreign policy making…geopolitics is closely tied to the idea and practice of territorial and cartographical imagination of modern political forms, starting with the modern state…[and] the belief that power, control, and domination can be spatially pre-determined, territorially engraved and inscribed in texts and, often, in visual forms too."[x] Over the last twenty or so years, many IR theorists have been ringing the death knell of geopolitics. This can be summarized succinctly as deterritorialization, the indistiguishability or blurring of political borders, demarcations, and so forth; alongside a lack of conceptual clarity, examples of which I will get to in a moment. With globalization, non-state terrorism, and an increasingly integrated, and technology dependent world, tried and true notions of time/space, borders, and political "strategery" are said to be in a process of transformation, fluxuation, or gradual erosion. The point to make is that instead of "a return to geopolitics," what we (as in "we" global subjects) are witnessing is a different kind of geopolitics where the principles of geopolitics appear largely in tact, but are being modulated throughout IR practices, governance, and discourses. For now, I refuse to use the prefix "post" to describe this. Concurring with Timothy Luke, "anything that is post-X,Y, Z often seems to me to be just another articulation of what X, Y, and Z were."[xi]

The Novelty of Novelty (A Return of Geopolitics?)

RBJ Walker begins his *Inside/Outside* (1993) warning against the "novelty of novelty."[xii] Walker's statement is in context to notable post-1989 IR theories accounting for the beginning dissolution of the Soviet Union, including Francis Fukyama's "end of history" thesis,[xiii] United States President George H. W. Bush's "new world order,"[xiv] and what some scholars like Charles Kegley, Jr. described as the "neoidealist moment" in IR.[xv] For the first time since, let's say 1947, neorealism appeared inadequate to account for the changing face of global politics. Instead of Waltzian "self-help," and "balance of power" relations, globalization and democracy would spur something reminiscent of Kant's perpetual peace: vibrant trade, creativity, and progress.[xvi] These theories acknowledged the continued presence of antagonisms recurring from time to time: capitalists boom and bust cycles, small outbreaks of conflict, natural disasters, and the like. While the world would not be perfect, the liberalization of global politics would, it was believed, lead to something like world peace or one world. With the end of history, it seemed also too, to be the end of traditional geopolitics.

Walker's "novelty" seemed too contrarian at a time when politicians and scholars were basking in the radiant beams of a more peaceful, unified, and democratic world. Rather than everyone holding hands around the neoliberal rainbow, Walker suggests: "we are likely to see the emergence of a new order that looks suspiciously like the old. The players or the polarities may change but the rules of the game are likely to stay more or less the same. This, after all, is the lesson that continues to be taught in so many appeals to a canonical tradition of political realism…re-enforced through claims about the core principles of an international balance of power."[xvii] Walker is not suggesting that 1989 did not have an impact on then immediate, practical, or theoretical IR concerns – of course it did. Examples that come to mind are the Persian Gulf Wars (1990-1991) and both Bosnia (1992-1995) and Kosovo (1998-1999). Walker's

intervention is about certain tendencies we are all susceptible to: assuming that particular events in IR are more significant than they might actually be in the present and future direction of global politics, humankind, ways of life, national security, or more generally, the *status quo*. As Walker notes, "social and political thought and practice has been articulated around powerful claims about change, novelty, and transformation that have been common intellectual currency for at least two hundred years."[xviii]

Yet global happenings during this time, roughly 1989-1995, were already putting claims of a new world order and end of history in doubt. Peter Hough calls this the Cold War "hangover." For example, North and South Korea: the situation remains as it has been since 1953 (although recent news of Kim Jong-Un's poor health may alter this, perhaps).[xix] Chinese relations with the US and most western states remain rather "cold" (particularly regarding human rights and democracy), even as China is a pivot of global economic stability.[xx] Furthermore, US-Russia relations have increasingly taken on a Cold War-esque rivalry, 2007 beginning a new trend in these relations with old tropes of pointing nuclear missiles in such-and-such direction; as the 2014 Ukranian Revolution and subsequent 2014 Crimean Crisis exacerbating these relations with Russia whom is seemingly trying to restore its nationalism and geopolitical influence. Finally, there is little evidence to suggest that the US/West ever left the core principles of (neo)realism behind, continuing to heed the Waltzian dictum of "self-help,"[xxi] never losing sight of looking after number one – that is, its own national security interests.[xxii]

Political scholars have pointed out other reasons to doubt the significance of geopolitics even in light of the aforementioned examples. Alongside everything else political in late modernity, geopolitics has been said to be in a process of transformation. For Wendy Brown, the traditional constitution of politics and IR is turning into something both strangely new yet familiar; something that has yet to be given a name, something for which it is often said we lack a political language.[xxiii] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, among others, provide an account of global politics in the midst of an "interregnum," one in which "the modern national paradigm of political bodies is passing toward a new global form…populated by an abundance of new structures of power."[xxiv] This period has been revealing of a state of affairs oft-described as "global civil war," where multiple and potential conflicts can arise any where and at any time taking place within a "permanent [global] state of emergency."[xxv] Carlo Galli writes "global war is an aspect…of global politics…it is not an action but a situation; not an exception but a tragic normality. Its full manifestation on September 11 is not a crisis of globalization…but the *globalization of crisis*."[xxvi]

In Brown's *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (2010) she argues sovereignty – and thus the core principle from which geopolitics is derived –is "waning" in terms of state borders in the face of non-state terrorism and transnational flows of capital. Sovereignty is gradually being sublimated by neoliberal economics and religious extremism. Brown suggests global politics appears to be turning or entering into a "post-Westphalian order."[xxvii] Accounting for these, what we are witnessing are the vicissitudes of a political order in flux, the experience of our political signifiers becoming obsolete and anachronistic to effectively describe as a matter of certainty what is happening politically in the present. Taken together, these assertions have all put the

relevance of geopolitics in doubt even when geopolitics, or what is touted as geopolitics by state leaders and the 24/7 news media, is still relatively visible. Underlining all of this however, and as noted above in quoting Galli, is the subject of crisis. In the following section I want to address the subject of crisis in relation to geopolitics. Rather than a return of geopolitics, perhaps the question might be better phrased: is there a crisis of geopolitics?

The Crisis of Geopolitics

Crisis has been and continues to be used to define a number of unsettling prospects about the political, social, cultural, and economic conditions of late modernity. Cursory definitions of "crisis" describe the term as a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger when important (political) decisions must be made. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) provides the following definitions of crisis: 1) The point in the progress of a disease when an important development or change takes place which is decisive of recovery or death; the turning-point of a disease for better or worse; also applied to any marked or sudden variation occurring in the progress of a disease and to the phenomena accompanying it. 2) A vitally important or decisive stage in the progress of anything; a turning-point; also, a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent; now applied esp. to times of difficulty, insecurity, and suspense in politics or commerce. 3) Judgment, decision. 4) A point by which to judge; a criterion, token, sign.[xxviii]

What is intriguing about "crisis" is its ambiguity. By "ambiguity" I mean, first, the often frivolous and arbitrary use of term: the way crisis rolls off the tongue in everyday language, how it fills those gaps in political thinking and discourse where a more appropriate or precise noun could be used to describe or designate moments temporally; and second, how crisis is magnetic, attractive, or malleable to other similarly provocative terms or situations. For example: danger, risk, uncertainty, anxiety, conflict, antagonism, anomie, fear, panic, disorder, genocide, catastrophe, disaster, apocalypse, insecurity, conspiracy, and more common in political texts, war and revolution.[xxix] Reinhart Koselleck stresses that since its origins in antiquity crisis "never crystallized into a concept sufficiently clear to be used as a basic concept in social, economic, or political language, despite – or perhaps because of – its manifold meanings [this]…led to the…term [being] used essentially as a catchword."[xxx]

It is this ambiguity that, in part, Janet Roitman attempts to illuminate in *Anti-Crisis* (2014). Roitman suggests crisis discourses entail a "blind spot," that is, when "assuming crisis as a point of departure, we remain closed off in a politics of crisis…it obviates accounts of…pragmatic spaces of calculative possibility."[xxxi] The point is not to suggest there is or is not a crisis, multiple crises, or that crisis claims are false; rather, crisis as a blind spot is "to apprehend the ways [crisis] regulates narrative constructions."[xxxii] Crisis occludes political possibilities by compounding the difficulties and concerted attempts to assess determined crisis events, leaving available solutions or policy recommendations lost in the flurry of contingencies surrounding such-and-such event designated as a crisis, lapsing into a generalized kind of effect that is *not* a matter of paralysis, stasis, bewilderment, fear, or even warning. Rather, the effect of crisis is more closely

associated with terms that convey acceptance, consent, reception, response, affirmation, belief, compliance, normalization, or conformity especially when crisis is associated in discourses regarding security concerns (broadly defined). The salient example are states of emergency (i.e., exception), whereby moving such-and-such crisis from the political sphere and into the securitized realm of decision in order to expedite crisis solutions. This is the power of claiming or invoking crisis in matters of security. What might have been perceived as purely a political crisis resolved through deliberation, mediation, or diplomacy is all too often arbitrarily made into a matter of security.

Crisis works as a discursive formation, defined by Debrix as "a principle or technique of organization, calculation, arrangement, or redistribution of discourse or language…[they] are interventions, directions, or specifications at the level of discourse…with a view to attaining or realizing certain preferred meanings or representations."[xxxiii] Crisis attaches itself to a number of other, different types of similar, but often times inaccurate, provocative, and hyperbolic signifiers to describe particular moments, situations, thoughts, or feelings towards what C. Wright Mills calls "troubles and issues" in world politics and everyday life.[xxxiv] Crisis constitutes a discursive formation that works in conjunction with other similarly provocative signifiers as a temporal boundary-setting or demarcating apparatus that not only propels political modernity linearly, but functions to secure the political foundations or "pillars", if you will, of modernity: sovereignty, liberalism, and Enlightenment rationality. Put in this way, crisis functions as a *dispositif* (i.e., mechanism, apparatus, technology) of security, and is therefore, partly at least, significant to the possibilities of politics and the formation of political subjectivity specific to the ways crisis and security interact ontologically and axiologically.[xxxv]

The ambiguity of crisis as a moment, situation, or sensation is implicit in a variety of choice words and phrasing on part of the speaker that are often hyperbolic and efficacious in their invocations by political officials and media elites. Crises are often (but not always) constructed in such a way that subjects receive crisis claims as no less than imperative for such-and-such justification of political action, expediency, *realpolitik*, or geopolitical calculations on the world stage. Crises function to secure the self-evident institutions of political modernity (and thus geopolitical stability), solidifying what Foucault calls a "regime of truth" as the unquestionable grounds of political experience.[xxxvi] Political modernity is reinforced by the discourses and power relations that constitute such a regime, both of which are essential in the development of human political relations and the formation of political subjectivity.[xxxvii]

For example, in the summer of 2013, the Obama administration and 24/7 news media abruptly shifted their coverage from the fall out from Edward Snowden's National Security Administration (NSA) "revelations" regarding the sweeping global surveillance techniques,[xxxviii] and began to cover in earnest the turmoil in Syria, touting it as a "crisis" demanding international/US intervention (humanitarian, or in the very least, high intensity police action/reprimand) for the use of chemical weapons.[xxxix] The 24/7 news media headlines and corresponding Internet coverage proclaimed: "crisis in Syria;"[xl] with President Obama's national address on September 10, 2013 declaring that US "ideals

and principles, as well as our national security, are at stake in Syria."[xli] Yet less than forty-eight hours before the POTUS addressed the world, Russian President Vladimir Putin, ally to the Assad regime, decided to mediate the "crisis." Afterwards, the "crisis in Syria" evaporated in the White House and 24/7 media narrative as the death and destruction continued in Syria relatively unabated.[xlii] Almost a year to the day of the 2013 speech, President Obama addressed the world again regarding the threat of ISIS which in turn has led the US to side with the Assad regime in a multifront international coalition against this new terrorist "supervillain."

The question "a return to geopolitics" might wish to delve deeper into the nature of crisis. It seems to me that many of the crises claimed by elected officials, 24/7 news media, and felt both internally and externally by the subject, are in direct and indirect ways related to geopolitical configurations, arrangements, and practices. If this geopolitical "truth" is called into question, then all political, social, cultural, and economic contingencies, including law, authority, and legitimacy are put in a precarious position. Without the certainty of well defined and demarcated space, a politics of security appears to become a politics of insecurity, followed by incessant crisis claims that continue to be (re)produced in the attempt of clinging on to anachronistic conceptions of geopolitics even as the concept continues to transform.

Digital Geopolitics

One of the more immediate issues regarding the question of geopolitics to everyday life would be the digital geopoliticalization of cyber security. That is, geopolitical paradigms are being transferred to demarcate a realm that is supposedly without boundaries. As implied above, so much of politics is contingent on some demarcated space, territory, or as good Lockean liberals, private property. For example: the prominence of the term "domain" for all sorts of websites. To be "hacked" – which is the cyber security equivalent of being "attacked" – to have people's private information and credit card numbers stolen is analagous to the most sophisticated of James Bond-style espionage parallel to that of modern intelligence and security practices. No pun intended, but such recent "targets" such as Target and Home Depot, where credit card numbers and personal information were stolen, could be types of 'collateral damage' we all might have to deal with in our desires to be online and enjoy the Internet. Even as we speak, cyber wars are being waged – crucial infrastructural systems to our everday life and private corporate data are being bombarded by attempts to cause disruption for whatever purpose. In a recent article, Zygmunt Bauman, RBJ Walker and others write that "Cyberspace is a battlefield and states must build up their own cyber capabilities in order to defend themselves and/or must engage in international coalitions in order to face the challenges posed by mass suveillance and digital espionage."[xliii] The digitization of geopolitics is linked to concerns over NSA surveillance and how such geopoliticalization might generate further cause by the state (i.e., a digitized reason of the state, no doubt) to increase the level of surveillance over the conduct and lives of users of the Internet in the name of cyber security.

Summary

A return of geopolitics is somewhat of a misnomer in terms of "return." Rather, "transformation," or "evolution" of geopolitics is perhaps more befitting of the topic in the current interregnum we are going through, if one is to take that as being the case. Or, one could chalk this up to the contradictions and aporias emblematic of modernity itself. Some might say as everything is changing, the more things stay the same, albeit, with some necessary qualifications. Despite changes in geopolitical practices and discourses, it seems we continued to be informed by what came before, and perhaps always will be: more of the same but with new accouterments. Students and scholars of IR should maintain some reservations about political moments and global happenings in the world as they unfold, particularly when these moments are predicated or described as "crisis." This is not to say that we should not recognize or understand such instances empirically or theoretically in light of larger concerns or questions. Rather, it is to remind ourselves that not every moment or geopolitical event in international relations is a world changing, epoch-making, paradigm altering, crisis that will change the course of international politics. Students and scholars alike should pursue more intriguing questions regarding the productive and affective changes in the formation of new practices and modalities of politics via the transformation of geopolitics into something new, but not entirely unfamiliar. Unfortunately, the 'unfamiliar,' inasmuch as 'political change' is more often than not predicated by 'crisis' which only serves to obviate and occlude those questions, inasmuch as the most prudent path international relations might take for a more peaceful future.

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i Michel Foucault, The Order of Things (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), xi.

ii Janet Roitman, Anti-Crisis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 4. Roitman states: "crisis as an axiological problem, or the questioning of the epistemological or ethical grounds of certain domains of life and thought."

iii Larry N. George, "American Insecurities and the Ontopolitics of US Pharmacotic Wars," in *The Geopolitics of American Insecurity: Terror, Power, and Foreign Policy*, ed. Francois Debrix and Mark J. Lacy (New York: Routledge, 2009), 36.

iv Alan Collins, *Contemporary Security Studies*. 2nd ed. Alan Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 425. Collins states: "a concern is framed as a security issue and moved from the politicized to the securitized." An issue is effectively securitized "when it requires emergency actions beyond the state's standard political procedures."

v Michael Crowley/JIDDA, "Coalition of the Wary," TIME, September 29, 2014, 25.

vi Josh Levs, "This Time, Gaza Fighting is 'proxy war' for entire Middle East" cnn.com http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/31/world/meast/israel-gaza-region/ (Accessed October 3, 2014).

vii Robert W. Merry, "Why America's Immigration Crisis Matters," nationalinterest.org http://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-americas-immigration-crisis-matters-10917 (Accessed October 3, 2014).

viii BBC News Europe, "Ukraine Crisis: Crimea Parliament asks to join Russia," bbc.com http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26465962 (Accessed October 3, 2014).

ix Benedict Carey, “Experts Offer Steps for Avoiding Public Hysteria, a Different Contagious Threat” nytimes.com, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/16/health/ebolas-other-contagious-threat-hysteria.html?_r=1 (Accessed October 22, 2014).

x Francois Debrix, Tabloid Terror: War, Culture, and Geopolitics (New York: Routledge, 2008), 9.

xi Patricia Mooney Nickel, “Timothy W. Luke,” in North American Critical Theory After Postmodernism: Contemporary Dialogues – Interviews with Ben Agger, Andrew Arato, Robert J. Antonio, Seyla Benhabiv, Craig Calhoun, Nancy Fraser, Douglas Kellner, and Timothy W. Luke, ed. Patricia Mooney Nickel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 24.

xii R.B.J. Walker, Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2.

xiii Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” The National Interest (Summer 1989).

xiv Timothy W. Luke, “The Discipline of Security Studies and the Codes of Containment: Learning From Kuwait,” Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, vol. 16. No. 3 (Summer 1991): 327. Luke states: “In October 1990, President Bush asked the United Nations for its assistance in his crusade against Saddam, because its resolute aid could help ‘bring about a new day. A new world order and long era of peace.” President Bush would later go on to repeat the phrase “new world order” several times for different symbolic and rhetorical domestic and foreign purposes.

xv Charles Kegely Jr, “The Neoidealist Moment in International Studies? Realist Myths and the New International Realities,” International Studies Quarterly, vol. 37, no. 2 (June 1993).

xvi Immaneul Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” in Political Writings, ed. H.S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 93.

xvii Walker, Inside/Outside, 2.

xviii Walker, Inside/Outside, 3.

xix Colin Freeman, “Kim Jong-un 'so fat he has fractured his ankles'” telegraph.co.uk http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/northkorea/11131885/Kim-Jong-un-so-fat-he-has-fractured-his-ankles.html (Accessed October 1, 2014).

xx Stephen S. Cohen and J. Bradford DeLong, The End of Influence: What Happens When Other Countries Have The Money (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 5. Cohen and DeLong state: “The Chinese government holds about 42.5 trillion in foreign reserves, probably 70 percent of that in U.S. obligations. This comes to over $20,000 per U.S. household; there is no way the United States could readily pay it back. Because it also amounts to about half of China’s GDP, China can’t just write off. Thus, China and the United States are economically co-dependent, the producer and the consumer, the creditor and the debtor.”

xxi Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Relations (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1979).

xxii Peter Hough, Understanding Global Security. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 45-47.

xxiii Wendy Brown, “Neoliberalism and The End of Liberal Democracy,” in Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 52.
xxiv Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Multitude (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 162-163.
xxv Giorgio Agamben, State of Exception, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 2.
xxvi Carlo Galli, Political Spaces and Global War, trans. Elisabeth Fey, ed. Adam Sitze (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 182.
xxvii Wendy Brown, Walled States, Waning Sovereignty (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 21.
xxviii “Crisis,” OED Online. June 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44539?redirected (Accessed July 30, 2014).
xxix Antonio Y. Vazquez-Arroyo, “How Not to Learn From Catastrophe: Habermas, Critical Theory and the ‘Catastrophization’ of Political Life”, Political Theory, vol. 41, no. 5 (2013).
xxx Reinhart Koselleck, “Crisis”, trans. Michaela Richter, Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. 67, no. 2 (2006): 367.
xxxi Roitman, Anti-Crisis, 12-13.
xxxii Roitman, Anti-Crisis, 94.
xxxiii Debrix, Tabloid Terror, 13.
xxxiv C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination. 40th anniv. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959): 8-9. Mills states: “Troubles…occur within the character of the individual and within the range of [their] immediate relations with others…within the scope of [their] immediate milieu – the social setting that is directly open to [their] personal experience and to some extent [their] willful activity. A trouble is a private matter: values cherished by an individual [seem] to be threatened…Issues have to do with matters that transcend those local environments of the individual and the range of [their] inner life…An issue is a public matter: some value cherished by publics is felt to be threatened…it cannot very well be defined in terms of the immediate and everyday environments of ordinary men. An issue, in fact, often involves a crisis in institutional arrangements, and often too, it involves what Marxists call contradictions and antagonisms.”
xxxv Roitman, Anti-Crisis, 4. Roitman states: “evoking crisis entails reference to a norm because it requires a comparative state for judgment: crisis compared to what? That question evokes the significance of crisis as an axiological problem, or the questioning of the epistemological or ethical grounds of certain domains of life and thought.”
xxxvi Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power” in Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 131-132. Foucault states: “Truth is a thing of this world,” Foucault suggests, “it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true.”

xxxvii Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity (Malden: Polity Press, 2000), 55. Bauman states: “Order…means monotony, regularity, repetitiveness and predictability; we call a setting ‘orderly’ if and only if some events are considerably more likely to happen in it than their alternatives, while some other events are highly unlikely to occur or are altogether out of the question.”

xxxviii See: Glen Greenwald and Ewen Macaskill “NSA Prism Program taps in to user data of Apple, Google and others” theguardian.com, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jun/06/us-tech-giants-nsa-data (Accessed June 10th, 2013). Greenwald and Macaskill state: “The NSA access is part of previously undisclosed program called Prism, which allows officials to collect materials including search history, the content of emails, file transfers and live chats;” and Glen Greenwald, “XKeyscore: NSA tool collects 'nearly everything a user does on the internet'” theguardian.com, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/31/nsa-top-secret-program-online-data (Accessed August 1, 2013).

xxxix UN News Centre, “UN human rights probe panel reports continuing ‘gross’ violations in Syria,” un.org http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42079#.U112a8f6Epk (Accessed April 27, 2014).

xl CNN Staff, “Syrian crisis: Keeping up with key developments,” CNN.com http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/10/world/meast/syria-developments/index.html?hpt=hp_t1 (Accessed November 2, 2013).

xli Tom Cohen, “Obama seeks support for attacking Syria while pursuing diplomacy,” CNN.com http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/10/politics/obama-syria/index.html?hpt=hp_t1 (Accessed November 2, 2013).

xlii Notable too are the number of political errors made in the construction of this crisis to achieve whatever US national security objective striking Syria would have provided. This ranges from Secretary of State John Kerry’s poor choice of words, President Obama’s “red line,” an awkward national presidential address, and hence the subsequent disappearance of the issue from the national conversation afterwards.

xliii Zygmunt Bauman, Dider Bigo, Paulo Esteves, Elspeth Cuild, Vivienne Jabri, David Lyon, and RBJ Walker “After Snowden: Rethinking the Impact of Surveillance” *International Political Sociology*, vol. 8 (2014): 131-132.

The Untold Story of Changing Fate: Thoughts in Reading Slavoj Žižek's *Year of Dreaming Dangerously*

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Introduction

Slavoj Žižek's *Year of Dreaming Dangerously* is a start-to-finish book. Nonetheless, the reviewer had difficulties in formulating a clear position on the paperback. In line with similar Žižekian works, the text seemed to concomitantly develop a mixture of scintillating yet equivocal ideas, thus anchoring the reader into a state of abstract ambiguity.

Devoid of a clearly defined purpose, Žižek scratches the surface of just about all contemporary issues within our postmodern societies: the immigrant threat, Zionist politics, neo-Marxist class struggles and contestations of state supported social democratism. Yet thinking about all of them makes one dream dangerously.

This book review is not a mot-à-mot review. It merely works through Žižek's subversive thoughts that may well open up transformative possibilities of change. It insists on: 1) contestations and conceptualizations of resistance or mobilization efforts and 2) shortcomings of our socially responsible capitalism—what Žižek calls the postmodern capitalism.

Are We Fighting the Right Battles? Rebranding the Middleclass into the New Superclass

Žižek speaks of 2011 as an antagonistic year of emancipatory dreams. Positioned against global capitalism, he states that the 2011 Western protests were non-proletarian in essence.[i] Representing those lucky enough to be employed, such dissents have been carried out by a new class of citizens—the salaried bourgeoisie. Capitalism distorted to such an extent, that long-term employment (what Žižek calls the opportunity of being exploited in a long-standing durable job) is nowadays a privilege. Workers are not temporarily unemployed but rather structurally unemployable. Therefore, the old bourgeoisie is no longer the old bourgeoisie as we know it. Re-functionalized as a class of salaried managers (i.e. companies' executives), servicing in returns big banks and corporations, this new class, shifts the locus of privilege from appropriating surplus value to appropriating surplus wage. Grounding class struggles in the formation of a new class altogether, Žižek brings forward a theoretical approach that opposes capitalism beyond the traditional 1% versus 99% dichotomies.

For Žižek, many of today's anti-capitalist protests are merely mobilized efforts against the gradual erosion of a political privileged position. Joking with and about Ayn Rand's ideological fantasy of capitalists going on strike, Žižek brands our current dissents as mobilizations of the

salaried (bourgeois) middle class, whose complicity maintains a stable capitalist hierarchy: it is those with middle class statuses that have the power to politically engage, driven by the fear of losing their surplus over the wage. It seems that Žižek criticizes a certain type of bourgeoisie, represented by the hipsters and the bo-bos who, despite endorsing assumed characteristics of being good leftists (i.e. biking everywhere, caring for the environment, shopping at thrift stores and fighting for theoretical inequality), fail to acknowledge their privileged position that allows them to foster such thinking.[ii] While the hipster fights for the poor, the hipster was never poor. Acting for hypothetical equality while maintaining a matter-of-fact inequality, the left might perpetuate capitalism more so even than the right, as it combats the passé war of owning surplus property from the privileged position of owning waged benefits.

Žižek refers to Greece as an illustrative example of how recent uprisings reflect this so called "proletarization of the lower salaried bourgeoisie," threatened by anticipated privilege loss.[iii] Indeed, the neoliberal austerity mania, characterized by restructuring and downloading responsibility for state deficits onto its people, was deeply felt by the Greek society in a series of drastic public service cuts that included jobs, wages and pensions.[iv] The Greek dissents, although highly engaged forms of political participation, were far from being proletarian in essence. Rather, they were "protests against the threat of being reduced to a proletarian status. In other words, who dares to strike today when having the security of a permanent job is itself becoming a privilege?"[v] That said, such movements should not be easily dismissed Žižek warns; they still have a radical potential, with Greeks retaliating against the "European economic establishment" and possibly electing SYRIZA as a viable leftist alternative to outmaneuver the "EU-IMF program of austerity and fiscal reform."[vi] Žižek nevertheless avoids the faux pas generalization of all protests as revolts of the salaried bourgeoisie. By contrast the Tahrir Square crowds have embodied Rousseau's *volonté générale* he states, as for the Arab Spring, people revolted against an oppressive regime and rapid economical worsening.[vii] Despite being branded by the West as fragmented desires of being like the West, the Arab Spring protests were not a quest for liberal values but merely social justice demands.

Žižek concludes this train of thought by mocking western expectations of a lawful Egypt, albeit the long-lasting and systematic unlawfulness of the Mubarak regime. Then again, he does not set forth clear propositions vis-à-vis this newly established class of salaried bourgeoisie, although he suggests a systemic subversiveity: opposing the status quo, seeking out the germs of the new in the present, and reasoning about alternative forms of political organization.

Postmodern Capitalism, Neoliberalism and the Welfare State: How Do They All Connect?

Žižek pencils in another "dangerous" point: our newly reformed postmodern capitalism, which he strictly defines as the all-practiced socially responsible private entrepreneurship.

Contesting the archetypal model of the western welfare state, Žižek challenges the viability of a social market economy or a socially responsible capitalism. The eco and socio-enterprise efforts of regulating capitalism are the ones to humanize the very same capitalism they aim to reverse, Žižek argues. Sustaining a highly organized corporate capitalism as socialism within capitalism, equates to supporting a fairer exploitative system in lieu of eradicating exploitation. The collective interests of the Capital are particularly supported by social democratic positions (i.e Obama's support for Wall Street), he posits, which polarize the 1% and the 99% even more during hard-hitting economic times. It is publically supported that the poor should get poorer and the rich should get richer. Congruent with scholarly positions showing that economic growth depends on state institutions for support, Žižek contests the capitalist reproduction propelled by liberal democratic frameworks. State support for the market subsequently translates into less support for its people (i.e downloading responsibility for the 2008 financial downturn to ordinary people via public interventions footing corporate bills).

For Žižek, state supported welfarerism is what promulgates this new, postmodern and neoliberal capitalism. Democratic rights and neoliberal economic politics are two sides of the same coin. Global capitalism undermines democracy, yet it is the democratic-liberal framework that sustains capitalism by promulgating its democratization. Žižek contests the doxic universality of the liberal-democratic values, alluding to the inherent illusion(s) dividing those participating in the Dream and those left behind: having a choice between either playing by the rules or acting out translates into a lack of a real choice, into a type of conflict between society and non-society, between consumers and those unable to realize themselves via consuming.

Yet the solution to Wall Street is not Main Street, Žižek argues. Rather, we need to dismantle the system "in which Main Street is dependent on Wall Street."[viii] While the western political rhetoric has abandoned class struggles in favor of anti-racist and feminist debates, capitalism is nowadays stronger than ever: the market is constantly referred to as if it was a living entity (i.e. the market is not easily satisfied); or whole countries' destinies are determined by the speculative game of the Capital (i.e. a state in ecological decay or human misery might still be referred to as financially healthy, so long as its Capital flows). How can we then go beyond social democratic reforms, Žižek rhetorically asks, when the notion of resistance is merely a social democratic product? When choice is structured on the inability and impossibility of real choice in a society perceptually based on individual freedom of choice? How can we collectively change fate if we are deprived of the opportunity of changing it? Resistance is for Žižek a false change; the antinomy of the welfare state, a priori appropriated by authority. It implies the ongoing perpetration of the system and legitimizes the system. He calls it a hopeless resistance—resist although you know that you will finally lose.

Whereas the resistance rhetoric does not acknowledge the possibility of changing the system we aim to resist, Žižek proposes a subversive and radical rupture from the dominant structure: "difficult as this is to imagine today, from time to time, the very dispositifs we resist

are themselves subject to change."[ix] Seeing that capitalism keeps shifting, those refusing to change are truly the real agents of change, he argues. The only way of stopping the system is to stop resisting it. Stop fighting small battles and focus on the big ones ahead. Resistance is part of the game and keeps the system alive. Nevertheless, accepting no future for the system might create an opening for change (i.e. transporting isolated protests of chaotic resistance into a positive program of global social change): "Foolish is the person who misses his chance and afterwards reproaches fate."[x] Not resisting fate but changing it instead.

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[i] Žižek refers to the notions of 'proletarian' and 'proletarization' in class based Marxist terms, equating proletarians' with those receiving minimum wage. Slavoj Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London: Verso Books, 2012), 10.

[ii]See Mark Kingwell, *Unruly Voices: Essays on Democracy, Civility and the Human Imagination* (Toronto, ON: Bibioasis, 2012).

[iii] Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, 12.

[iv]Global austerity measures have been initially backed up by the famous Reinhart-Rogoff paper (published soon after Greece officially stepped into crisis), which claimed that debt levels exceeding 90% of GDP automatically trigger sharp economic drops. Paul Krugman, "The Reinhart-Rogoff Depression: Austerity Imposed on the Basis of a Flawed Economic Paper," *CCPA Monitor* 20 (2013): 26; Peter Davy, "Trust in Greek Pensions Fades," *Financial News*, March 5, 2012.

[v]Žižek, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*, 12.

[vi] Ibid 13, 14. SYRIZA stands as an acronym for the Greek coalition of several radical left wing political parties.

[vii] Ibid 88.

[viii] Ibid 78.

[ix] Ibid 107.

[x]Ibid 64.

Beyond the Spatial? A Temporal Perspective. A Review of Sarah Sharma's *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics*

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Introduction

Declarations such as "time is speeding up" or "the world is getting faster" are becoming increasingly common in everyday discourse. Articles, such as "Slow Down: How Our Fast-Paced World Is Making Us Sick," assume that the world has sped up to such an extent that we must take steps to slow ourselves down, to recalibrate ourselves in order to prevent the "psychological and social stressors," which, according to Buzzell, affect us all on a daily basis.[1] We live in a supposedly "hyper-mediated" world in which we must keep up or, failing that, become sick, inefficient, etc. It is this very assumption of speed that Sarah Sharma's *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics* seeks to challenge. Indeed, Sharma calls for "critiques of a tacit acceptance that the world is getting faster by examining instead how the discourse of speedup is part of the problematic cultural context in which people understand and experience time."[2] Rather than assuming that the world continues at a similar speed for everyone, Sarah Sharma investigates a multiplicity of temporalities within the global capitalist system. In other words, she investigates how the discourse of speed "privileges certain populations and disavows others while it upholds normalizing conceptions of time."[3]

In an attempt to provide answers to these questions, Sharma introduces the reader to her concept of "power-chronography." Sharma bases this term on a conception of time as "lived experience," a time that is always political and is produced at the intersection among various "social differences and institutions."[4] Through a methodological mixture of ethnographic interviews, discourse analysis, political economic analysis, and critical theory, Sharma is able to trace the various trajectories of discourse that support certain subjects and devalue others within a "temporal normativization" framework.[5] The main chapters in her work consist of a series of ethnographic investigations of different temporal and spatial subjects ranging from those bodies of "temporal worth," who welcome the biopolitical intervention, to those subjects who are divested from the "temporal architecture" and yet remain within the jurisdiction of biopolitical regulation thus forming the very foundation upon which the privileged temporal architecture rests on. Her book paints a vivid picture, with each of her ethnographic chapters connected to the next, illustrating the connection across both levels of temporality and spatiality.

This Foucaultian move allows Sharma to differentiate between various kinds of "temporal labor" in order to elucidate the intersection of labor and biopower and thus illustrate the resulting temporal differences that are at the foundation of the current neoliberal global economy. Sharma successfully highlights this temporal difference through a contrasting of the jet-lagged airline business passenger in her first chapter

and, in her intriguing second chapter, the taxi driver who lives at the "margins of temporality."[6] Indeed, rather than time speeding up, Sharma points out that because the taxi drivers support and keep up with the temporal needs of others (such as the business man or the jet-lagged traveler) their sense of temporality is quite different. The control of time is vital for both the taxi driver and the frequent business traveler, yet what separates them is the biopolitical investment that not only supports temporal architecture of the business traveler but also adds to the illusion that these subjects are self-sufficient and are in control of their own time. This illusion hides the reality that their time is completely dependent on other subjects. In this case, the taxi driver or hotel maid are necessary to support the temporal architecture, oftentimes to the detriment of their own bodies.

The result of this dependency is reflected in the "cab lag," or, in Sharma's terms, "a condition of labor of where people exist in a differential and inequitable temporal relation with another group with whom they are expected to synch up."[7] Thus, these bodies, (e.g., housemaids, city workers, taxi drivers) are required to "synch up" with those bodies that exist in the privileged realms of temporality; these impoverished bodies live in the margins or the boundaries of time. The differences, then, among these various groups all living under global capitalism are connected through time, rather than space. In addition to both the marginalized bodies of the taxi driver, the housemaid, or the security guard and those privileged bodies that rely on the maintenance of the temporal architecture, are those bodies that live within a "temporal normativity."[8]

In the latter half of her book, Sharma investigates the "most normal of time, the most structured of temporalities."[9] Indeed, different from the privileged frequent business traveler who relies on a temporal architecture to keep up with time and the temporal "bare life" that composes the temporality of the taxi driver, the desk worker or the sedentary body lies within a "temporal normativity."[10] That is to say the temporal order, which is home to millions of nine to five workers, consists of those who are "both a sped up capitalism subject of global capital who needs to slow down and a slowed down body who needs to get up to speed."[11] In order to maintain their sedentary lifestyle, and thus remain valuable to the capitalist global economy, these workers must be "recalibrated," not only to lessen the negative health effects of a sedentary lifestyle but also to become more efficient. Sharma contends that the corporate yoga instructors, as temporal mechanics, are those who, through the recalibration of the desk worker, renew the desk worker as a biopolitical subject.[12] Yet, this biopolitical intervention is hidden under the guise of a discourse that provides workers the ability to "slowdown" and recuperate. Indeed, desk workers must take care of themselves in order to reproduce these conditions of social reproduction. An important aspect of this discourse is the emphasis on a neoliberal hyper-individuality. That is to say, the employer allows time for yoga as part of the biopolitical intervention, but the desk worker must take it upon him or herself, as a "good" individual, to pay for the yoga in order to "slow down" and thus remain productive and thus maintain the system. In addition to the increase in a discourse concerning the need for us to slowdown, Sharma notes that there has been a concomitant increase in discourse that extols the importance of "slow living."

Specifically, a discourse based on various local and slow food movements that supposedly protect the subject from the constant speedup of life.

Yet, Sharma argues that despite the emphasis by the "slow lifers" on the resistance to both the speedup of time and money, they nonetheless occlude, perhaps because of their obsession with the spatial instead of the temporal, the myriad temporalities of difference. Sharma notes that spaces of "slowness" are reserved for those who have the privilege to slowdown. Her examples of the Caretta Shidome and the "Slow Food Movement" in San Francisco are prime examples of the spatial nature of the slow movement.[13] Indeed, the discourse that requires individuals to "step out of time" only further normalizes the present temporal order. Only those subjects who have the material means to "slowdown" are thus able to "transcend" time. For Sharma, the emphasis on "slowness" organizes the relations of space as well as the structure of time which "naturally" occludes those subjects, for example wage laborers and night-shift workers, from inhabiting these spaces of "slowness."

In addition, Sharma adds that we must not solely focus on the speedup of time, but rather she argues that we must recognize how our own time management impacts, and at times constricts, the time of others. Indeed, Sharma provides an insightful and timely critique of the current obsession of the speedup of time and increasing globalization of the world. Moreover, through a thoughtful engagement with Foucault's theory of biopower, Sharma uncovers the continuing unevenness of globalization and a multiplicity of different temporalities of socio-economic realities hidden by this cultural fixation on "speed up."

Yet, the conclusion of the book leaves the reader wondering if her thoughtful and provocative discussion of multiple temporalities ever actually escapes the spatial fixation that she accuses the speed theorists of maintaining. Sharma presages that "a temporal perspective does not try to create more free time; it strives to free time from this fixation."[14] Nonetheless, her examples of the taxi driver, the Caretta Shidome, and even her starting point, the Shibuya Station in Tokyo, remain trapped within specific spatial contexts. It would seem that the inability to discuss these "spaces" without falling back on a discourse that is saturated with images of the spatial is indicative of the challenge of overcoming our fixation on, in Sharma's terms, "spatial pluralism." Thus, despite the novel approach presented in *In the Meantime*, spatiality remains crucial to Sharma's argument.[15] Can we become more temporally aware without grounding our discourse in the spatial? To that end, then, rather than freeing us from the spatial fixation completely, the next step would perhaps be to highlight the importance of temporality without completely discounting the role of the spatial. Although she does analyze "politics of differential time," one has to wonder about similarity of politics across various temporalities and spaces. For example, what connects if anything, the protesters in Missouri, Ferguson to those protesters in Hong Kong when they simultaneously employ the "hands up, don't shoot" gesture?

In general, Sharma's call for a collective sharing of time, a reimagining of the temporal that would free it from our individual fixations on having too little time, and thus

incorporate those who live in the shadows or margins of our global, temporal, capital world, is an ambitious and laudable project. *In the Meantime*, then, provides, through a mix of personal anecdotes and interviews, an engaging account from both the margins and heart of global capitalism.

1Linda Buzzell, "Slow Down: How Our Fast-Paced World is Making Us Sick," *AlterNet*, (2013), http://www.alternet.org/story/140994/slow_down%3A_how_our_fast-paced_world_is_making_us_sick/

[2]Sarah Sharma, *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 8.

[3] Sharma, *In the Meantime*, 9.

[4] Sharma, 15.

[5] Sharma, 15-16.

[6] Ibid, 63.

[7] Ibid, 79.

[8] Ibid, 83.

[9] Ibid, 83.

[10] Ibid, 100.

[11] Ibid, 84.

[12] Ibid, 84-86.

[13] Ibid, 116-119.

[14] Ibid, 150.

[15] Ibid, 146.