
INTERROGATING
THE SOCIAL
A Critical Sociology for the 21st Century
EDITED BY FUYUKI KURASAWA

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Contents

An Invitation to Critical Sociology

Fuyuki Kurasawa

What Is Critical Sociology Today?

Interrogating the Social collects the work of a group of scholars, the Canadian Network for Critical Sociology, who, over the course of the last five years, have collaborated to put forth a collective vision of what critical sociology is in the twenty-first century. This vision has taken shape via a research agenda organized around three themes: recasting the character of social relations and interactions in contemporary society, uncovering institutional and discursive configurations of socio-economic and political power at different scales, and understanding emerging cultural practices and their social implications.[1] Accordingly, the book's chapters put into practice a mode of sociological reasoning that moves beyond the divide between empirical and theoretical orientations, as well as between 'scientific' analysis and normative critique, by studying types of social relations, organizations and discourses, and cultural practices. Yet to refer to critical

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sociology is not an uncomplicated matter today, for it evokes a confusingly vast array of intellectual traditions stemming back several decades (Gouldner 1980; Mills 1956; Williams 2006; Hall et al. 1991; Horkheimer 1982; Habermas 1987). Rather than reviewing these traditions in great detail, however, it is preferable to identify two recent interventions that help to situate and clarify the iteration of critical sociology proposed here.

The first of these interventions is Burawoy's much-discussed appeal in favour of public sociology, notably his proposal for a 'critical public sociology' as a form of reflexive scholarly knowledge simultaneously addressed to academic and extra-academic audiences (Burawoy 2005a, b, c). Burawoy offers an insightful alternative to an excessively professionalized vision of sociology, which, because of its disciplinary self-referentiality, privileges careerism and credentialization above all else. While academic debates and professional concerns justifiably guide sociological research, a critical sociology equally values an emancipatory critique of the established social order designed to cultivate collective resistance to relations of power and apparatuses of reproduction of social injustices, as informed by debates and struggles within local, national, and global civil societies.[2]

If critical sociology is to be publicly minded in a substantive way, it should strive to accomplish two tasks. Firstly, it can act as a form of public intellectual work that employs conventional media outlets and social media platforms to intervene in current social and political debate, bringing research and specialized knowledge to bear on significant problems and questions.[3] Secondly, critical sociology can defend the robustness and vitality of public spheres by opposing the logics of fiscal austerity, privatization, and deregulation, which undermine principles of equity and universal access through which public services have been advanced and the notion of the public good has been sustained in the face of commodification and possessive individualism. By examining certain topics and making findings widely available, critical sociology can support informal groups, social movements, and organizations devoted to projects promoting the aforementioned notions of participatory self-management, egalitarian universalism, and autonomy.

The second intervention through which to define our version of critical sociology consists of an ongoing debate within French sociological circles between the proponents of a structurally oriented Bourdieusian

sociology and various post-Bourdieusian strands of an actor-focused interpretive sociological pragmatism (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Thévenot 2006; Boltanski 1990; Bénatouïl 1999; Latour 2005; Callon and Latour 1981).[4] On the one hand, the Bourdieusian school has produced a potent analytical framework, enabling researchers to bring to light the functioning of systems of social reproduction of material and symbolic domination, which are anchored in a vastly asymmetrical distribution of resources across domains of the social world (via the notions of capital and field). Furthermore, by linking structural constraints to situational forms of practice, Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides a compelling explanation of actors' dispositional tendencies and preferences according to their relational and hierarchically differentiated positions within fields (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990, 1997).

Nonetheless, the structuralism of Bourdieu's model can be excessively deterministic in its analysis of social action and culture, to the extent that his writings view the mapping out of entrenched structures and distributions of capital as pre-determining the outcomes of situational practices and the meanings of cultural works. Consequently, habitus can be reduced to the status of a transmission belt of structural realities, which direct subjects' actions in a manner that accords them limited agency and reflexivity. Indeed, for Bourdieu, actors regularly misrecognize the play of mechanisms of symbolic violence and social domination (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 167–168; Boltanski 2011). Relatedly, structuralist determinism undergirds the Bourdieusian tendency towards reification and 'black boxing' of structures, for the latter are frequently presumed to exist and to reproduce themselves over time rather than demonstrating their circumstantial and provisional formation in particular contexts through the work of temporarily stabilizing assemblages of social relations and the creation of normative compromises resulting from processes of critique and justification among social actors (Callon and Latour 1981; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). In turn, Bourdieusian sociology has a tendency to equate society and culture *in toto* to systems of domination and reproduction of hierarchies without fully considering the multiplicity of ways in which social actors deploy their critical capacities to intervene in or resist the circulatory and distributional processes through which power is exercised (Boltanski 2011).

On the other hand, in an attempt to establish a rupture with and distinguish themselves from Bourdieu's oeuvre, pragmatist strands of sociology favour a social hermeneutics that 'follow[s] the actors themselves' (Latour 2006, 22, 283) by analysing how these actors make sense of the social world, operate in specific institutional settings, and negotiate with others in morally pluralistic societies. Pragmatism treats subjects as reflexive agents, equipped with the necessary competences to give an account of themselves as well as to justify their actions and worldviews when encountering critiques (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006; Barthe and Lemieux 2002). Hence, sociological pragmatism approaches the social as a complex and contingent assemblage of relations and human and non-human connectors, forming networks that constantly must be put together from the ground up. The central sociological problem becomes that of social coordination, that is to say, the need to explain how connectors are momentarily organized into modes of action, networks, and institutions that, when aggregated, give shape to what is termed 'social order' (Thévenot 2006; Latour 2006).

Yet from our vantage point, pragmatist sociology's response to Bourdieu overcorrects his tendency towards structuralist determinism by implicitly falling into the converse trap of agentic determinism, leading to a voluntarism that underplays the constraining and dispositionally forming effects of distributional inequalities and institutionalized modes of domination upon social actors. Thus, actor-network theory tends to downplay the impact of network-exogenous social structures on the formation and extension of relations among actants within networks, whereas Boltanski and Thévenot's earlier formulations of their theory overstate actors' capacities for reflexive and morally based public justification in the face of critique (Boltanski 2011; Honneth 2010). To put it differently, they underestimate the extent to which structural factors create a hierarchical distribution of competences among a population regarding public accounting for a situationally specific course of action through appeal to meta-situational moral orders of worth. What is required, then, is greater recognition of the fact that, because of the uneven distribution of cultural and symbolic capital across a social space, actors are not equally equipped to participate in tests of public justification around key societal issues; they possess differing modes of communication accorded more or

less validity and weight by socio-political institutions and different levels of access to and understanding of institutionally consecrated justificatory norms and procedures.[5] Hence, as outlined here, critical sociology is inspired by Boltanski's recent move to reconcile Bourdieusian sociology with its pragmatist counterpart, as well as Lahire's reformulations of Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus, in order to combine a structuralist cartography of systemic material and symbolic mechanisms of domination with an interpretivist taxonomy of agents' modes of engagement in the social world (Boltanski 2011; Lahire 2012).

On Conceptual Oppositions and Tensions

Having discussed in general terms how *Interrogating the Social* is situated vis-à-vis major strands of contemporary critical sociology, I want to flesh out its contribution by specifying the ways in which it navigates between four classical conceptual oppositions in the human sciences.

Critical sociology's conceptual pairings	
Artistic	Scientific
Idiographic	Nomothetic
Normative	Analytical
Hermeneutical	Structuralist

The left-sided column lists concepts often grouped together to reflect subjectivist and humanistic currents of thought, whereas the right-sided one does the same for notions associated with objectivist and scientific influences on sociological, and more broadly social scientific, research. Instead of strictly favouring one side or the other of these pairings, which have given rise to numerous debates, the approach proposed here explores the generative dialectical tensions that they produce.

Artistic Versus Scientific

Particularly evident within sociology because of its distinctive disciplinary history (Lepenies 1988), the contest between artistic and scientific

aspirations marks the first conceptual pairing of note. Pointing to the literary and aesthetic influences upon the production of sociological knowledge does not signify equating the latter with radical subjectivism, that is to say, the kind of solipsistic expressionism consisting of personal reflections on one's experiences of the social world. Rather, recognizing the impact of aesthetics and artistic currents upon the human sciences means taking seriously the study of works of art, performances, and cultural artefacts—including documentary or fictional films, novels, plays, exhibitions, and music. These aesthetic manifestations need to be engaged with sociologically, for they may capture the *Zeitgeist* of a society or, more modestly, reflect the beliefs and practices of particular groups (generations, classes, ethno-racial communities, genders, political movements, etc.). Moreover, cultural artefacts and performances are frequently the progenitors of social scientific methods and concepts, whether we think of Goffman's dramaturgical accounts of the interactional order or of literature's phenomenologically dense renditions of the moral and emotional lifewords of characters (Laqueur 2001; Rorty 1998), which have inspired the narrative techniques of ethnographic description.[6]

At the same time, acknowledgement of aesthetic influences need not be incommensurable with scientific ambitions. Lest this create a misunderstanding, such an approach ought to be clearly distinguished from an attachment of scientism, as found in two common strands of social scientific thought: Comtian positivism and its neo-positivist derivations, with their project of developing a social physics that discovers universal and immutable laws of motion and properties of society, or the more widespread formulation of positivist empiricism, according to which sociology should restrict itself to measuring and analysing empirical reality (Comte 1988; Turner 1985)[7], and Popperian critical rationalism, with its insistence on falsifiability as the ultimate criteria to gauge a hypothesis's validity and thus demarcate scientific from non-scientific knowledge (Popper 2002). Scientism's mechanistic bias tends to parcel out the social into a series of discrete components or processes whose functioning can be isolated from each other, in order to be precisely quantified without interference from exogenous factors. Yet by insulating the study of variables from such factors, scientistic mechanism is incapable of generating systemic analyses unearthing the interdependence among components

and processes or the influence of apparently extra-sectorial forces, nor is it able to come to terms with how seemingly singular phenomena are interrelated to a mode of social organization taken as a whole.

Furthermore, scientism's confinement of research to what is considered to be observable social reality implies that the latter's legitimacy and reproduction over time are taken for granted as analytical and normative points of departure for inquiry; in this logic, the purpose of research is to discover how this social reality functions, not to interrogate its raison d'être or necessity (Adorno 1976; Horkheimer 1982). Differently stated, the scientistic assertion of objectivist measurement of elements of the existing social order, which takes the latter's stability as self-evident, has the tacit effect of favouring its perpetuation—revealing the value judgements found under its claims to value freedom. Similarly, the ideal of scientific activity as a pure, context transcendent, and disinterested search for truth is only possible if one detaches it from the socio-political circumstances under which it exists, whether these are the necessary involvement of capital (with multinational pharmaceutical corporations or private investment firms providing research funds) or that of civil society groups intervening in the analysis, publicization, and application of findings.[8] A scientistic mythology positing science as socially amoral or normatively neutral is even less credible if one ponders its socio-political consequences, particularly the ways and extents to which scientific knowledge is embedded in relations of power and control over the natural and social worlds (Habermas 1987) through epistemic cultures and discourses of expertise, technologies of social and moral regulation of populations, and modes of government over and intervention in life itself (via genetic engineering, biometrics, nanotechnologies, etc.).

This is to say, then, that the human sciences are no less scientifically rigorous than their natural counterparts, yet operate according to fundamentally different regimes of truth and epistemological systems with which to investigate empirical phenomena. I can point to two pivotal starting points in this respect: Weber's discussion of the interpretive roots of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (Weber 1978), according to which their essential aim is to make sense of the meaning of social action from the perspective of those engaging in it[9], and Gadamer's demonstration of the human sciences' fundamentally hermeneutical and historicizing dimensions,

which are derived from the 'linguisticality' of the social world and whose central purpose is the reconstruction and recovery of the meaning of texts (Gadamer 1976). Over the last few decades, non-scientistic social scientific paradigms have been bolstered by interpretivist and semiotic turns (Rabinow and Sullivan 1988; Geertz 1977; Scott and Keates 2001; Ricoeur 1981b), of which the most fruitful sociological extensions are the structural hermeneutics of the 'strong programme' in US cultural sociology (Alexander and Smith 2003), as well as post-positivist epistemological and methodological writings (Passeron 2006; Steinmetz 2005b; Reed 2011).

What should be noted is that these interpretivist renditions of the social sciences are compatible with recent tendencies in the natural sciences themselves, where determinist epistemologies based on linear causal and consequential reasoning are being challenged by recognition of the indeterminacy of complex systems, characterized by multi-causality and multi-consequentialism via feedback loops producing vicious or virtuous cycles—which may modify the form and content of these systems over time (Atlan 1986; Morin 1981). At the same time, critical sociology is informed by scholarship in the sociology and anthropology of science, which interrogates scientism's assertion about the *sine qua non* character of objectivity as a scientific principle. As ethnographies of laboratory-based scientific practice have shown, both experimental and applied forms of the natural sciences are informed by subjectivist factors: site-specific workplace cultures and interpersonal group dynamics among team members, struggles for professional recognition via the accumulation of symbolic capital, situational judgement calls about the definitional parameters of key concepts and the accuracy of findings (including acceptable margins of error in measurement and variability of results in the replication of experiments), and so on (Latour 1988; Latour and Woolgar 1986; Rabinow 2002). Truth itself—understood as the outcome of a process of evaluation and validation of knowledge claims—is less about a proposition's correspondence to an objectively existing reality than an intersubjectively generated consensus among researchers invested in the epistemological rules of the game of a certain scientific field. In other words, critical sociology considers truth to be a socio-historical convention arrived at, and generalized, via the collective production and

validation of explanatory claims, which are themselves intimately related to struggles for legitimation and consecration among scientists (Bourdieu 1975, 2001).

Accordingly, critical sociology can adopt social contextualism when considering the natural sciences, in order to underscore the socio-economic, cultural, political, and historical conditions under which it is produced and in which it is embedded, which inform all aspects of the scientific process, from the formulation of questions and problems to the determination of investigative methodologies and the criteria of valuation of evidence. In addition, social contextualism entails an awareness of the possible instrumentalization of scientific discourses and discoveries to facilitate the exercise of power, with critical sociology being particularly attentive to the contributions of such discourses and discoveries to the historical and contemporary subordination of marginalized groups (indigenous peoples, colonized subjects, women, the poor, persons of colour, queer communities, etc.) (Harding 1998).

Critical sociology can define itself as an interpretive science by upholding norms of scholarly rigour, which initially can be embodied in the idea of scholarship as craftwork, that is, engaging in the slow, gradual, and meticulous training required to learn methodological, theoretical, and analytical skills to gain conceptual precision and empirical exactitude (Bourdieu et al. 1991). This sort of intellectual *Bildung* strives to constantly renew and expand a researcher's stock of knowledge by learning the history of core social scientific debates as well as keeping abreast of current developments and tendencies. Rigour involves both breadth and depth of training, combining familiarity with multiple disciplinary and transdisciplinary bodies of literature with detailed understanding of certain subfields and substantive areas of research.

Scientifically minded scholarly rigour can also be operationalized via methodological systematicity, whereby research aims to study vast swaths of evidence and analytical data (e.g., by maximizing N values as well as temporal and geographical spans), or is capable of demonstrating that its case selection is representative of the full array of iterations of the phenomenon being examined. In methodological terms, systematicity also signifies pursuing 'thickly descriptive' hermeneutical immersion into subjects' and groups' ways of thinking and acting (Geertz 1977) over

lengthy spans of time in order to make sense of the symbolic conventions that they employ; the implicit meanings embedded in text, speech, and image; as well as unstated motivations and unintended consequences. Hence, systematicity opposes two commonplace tendencies in journalistic and lay accounts of social life: anecdotalism, according to which conclusions about a phenomenon, place, or group are drawn on the basis of anecdotal, and thus partial or selective, evidence, most often stemming from personal experience or hearsay, and impressionism, according to which such conclusions are gleaned from rapid impressions or shallow, hermeneutically thin overviews of the same phenomenon, place, or group. By rejecting both anecdotal and impressionistic renditions of the social world, the scientific orientation of critical sociology cultivates the puncturing of many commonsensical views of society and of the privileging of the expression of opinions over rigorous research.

Finally, scientific rigour signifies a commitment to structural or systemic analysis, namely, the contextual reframing of a particular event or instance in relation to systemic forces, signifying conventions, institutional mechanisms, and patterns of thought and action. Structural analysis, then, avoids approaching an object of study as a random, or nominal entity, preferring instead to determine whether and the extent to which it is a microcosm or iterative manifestation of systemic factors as well as tracing its causal, consequential, or mutually constitutive ties to other relevant phenomena, institutions, or actors. Accordingly, structural analysis can adopt a holistic outlook, for it examines the ways in which the tracing of these ties repositions seemingly isolated processes or situations as part of temporally or spatially reiterated, coherently structured ensembles of social relations or systems of social organization.[10] Moreover, holism allows for the reinterpretation of the meaning of these same processes or situations in terms of larger discursive regimes and socio-cultural imaginaries in specific settings.[11]

Idiographic Versus Nomothetic

Originally articulated during the German *Methodenstreit* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Weber 1949), the second

conceptual pairing informing critical sociology is that opposing idiographic to nomothetic methodologies in the social sciences. Critical sociology is idiographic in its aforementioned commitment to social contextualism and its recognition of the singularity of analytical objects, which are produced and function within particular historical and sociocultural circumstances that may not be replicated in other instances; this acknowledgement of particularity and situatedness is epistemologically vital. Consequently, each phenomenon is approached on its own terms via a deep historicism and cultural contextualism, in order to explain it through interpretively thick description. In other words, analysis of the singular case is valued for its own sake, not because it contributes to the building of general laws or universal principles through induction or extrapolation.

The idiographic components of critical sociology do not imply that it celebrates radical analytical contingency or undiluted nominalism, since the latter is tempered by nomothetic insights signifying less a dedication to the discovery of universally valid principles or social laws than a comparativism gauging similarities and differences between cases for the purpose of creating taxonomies of constants and variables, explanatory mechanisms, and models of regularities in social life. This nomothetic identification of consistent patterns and conventions of thought and action, as well as of institutional configurations and narrative or visual tropes, is exemplified by three recent and highly significant sociological approaches: the contentious politics framework studying repertoires of political struggle in different historical and geographical settings (McAdam et al. 2001; Tilly 2006), the strong programmes in cultural sociology locating binary discursive codes within the civil sphere (Alexander 2006; Smith 2010), and the pragmatist sociology of critique focused on morally inflected orders of worth and justification that actors utilize (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006).

Normative Versus Analytical

The tension between normative and analytical tendencies undergirds the development of the social sciences and is particularly formative for

critical sociology because the latter's drive to provide rigorous analysis of the existing social order is indissociable from a normatively grounded critique of it. Indeed, as mentioned above, since it is content to adopt an apparently value-free and detached stance towards the observable social world in order to circumscribe itself to empirically accurate or theoretically sophisticated description or explanation, a purely analytical stance indirectly contributes to the status quo's acceptance and perpetuation. Instead of problematizing how established institutional arrangements, discourses, and practices are implicated in the exercise of power and the entrenchment of socio-economic hierarchies, 'disinterested' analysis legitimates the continued functioning of these arrangements, discourses, and practices as self-evident or necessary features of social life. By contrast, critical sociology simultaneously aims to produce an explanatory diagnostic of the current mode of social organization and a radical putting into question of the systems of exclusion and mechanisms of domination undergirding it, informed by the emancipatory objective of overturning them to foster projects of personal and collective autonomy.

Nonetheless, critique must be anchored in aforementioned norms of analytical rigour to avoid devolving into simplistic sloganeering of the type that instrumentalizes or devalues the endogenous worth of academic work by subsuming it to requirements of political activism, thus generating work characterized by evidentiary selectivity, confirmation bias, or the hermeneutically impoverished a priori assumption that all social processes and actors can be reduced to the effects of the machinations of overarching ideologies, structures, and relations of power. Such a politically instrumentalizing form of critical scholarship often presumes the presence of these overarching forces rather than attempting to demonstrate whether they exist and how they function in the specific cases under study, while frequently depriving social actors of agency by assuming that they are the bearers of these same forces—without attempting to make sense of their self-understandings, experiences, or taking into consideration their capacity to negotiate, utilize, subvert, and transform subordinating and exclusionary structures and discourses. The emancipatory aims of critical research do not absolve it from the analytical burden of empirically and conceptually establishing how particular instances of what are claimed to be systemic modes of domination manifest themselves

and the devices and processes through which they operate, as well as their differential impacts upon persons and groups involved in concrete situations or events.

Accordingly, an analytically and normatively informed critical sociology performs a radical denaturalization of the established mode of social organization and punctures the commonsensical qualities of types of social interaction. Critique thereby undermines the naturalness or inexorability of structural configurations and interactional habits, revealing them to be contingent and arbitrary conventions that create and reproduce forms of domination; a social arrangement taken for granted as the only possibility ('there is no alternative') or a developmental zenith ('this is the final stage of history') is reframed as a partial and flawed socio-historical construct ('it could have been, and can be, otherwise'). Through the lens of denaturalizing critique, institutions and conventions can be viewed as incomplete products of compromises and struggles between social forces or temporary stabilizations of relations of power.

Critical sociology employs two well-known techniques of denaturalization, namely, immanent and transcendent critique. The former problematizes the social order by pinpointing and accentuating its endogenous contradictions, that is, the incommensurable gap between a society's or institution's stated ideals and actual practices or between subjects' intentions and the consequences of their actions, or yet again, frictions between two contrary structural requirements that result in systemic erosion and eventual collapse. For its part, transcendent critique has tended to consist of a philosophical technique of juxtaposition of observable reality to universal norms or foundational principles, such as equality or autonomy. However, critical sociology utilizes more socially grounded forms of transcendent critique, namely, perspectival historicization and ethnologization, whereby an existing mode of social organization is relativized and put into question by being contrasted to other ways of structuring social life in the past or elsewhere (Calhoun 1995; Kurasawa 2004; Fuchs 1993). Historicizing or ethnologizing the here and now estranges it by creating temporal and transcultural distance from its immediacy and familiarity, prompting the realization that social institutions and repertoires of thought and action believed to have always existed or to be present everywhere are in fact recent and geographically

circumscribed social constructs. That which is present and proximate thus can be shown to be a narrowing of the field of possibilities in relation to previous epochs and other socio-cultural settings; the uncanniness and exceptionality—rather than the self-evident normality or inevitability—of the current social order come to the fore.

An immanent and transcendent critical sociology, then, does not limit itself to the hermeneutical tasks of recovering textual meaning or making sense of actors' worldviews. Although, as explained above, these tasks are essential if we are to avert the sort of reductionist critique that portrays subjects as victims of ideological domination or situations as epiphenomenal manifestations of systemic forces, critical sociology must also point to the processes through which institutional discourses constitute meaning via a series of exclusions and silences, as well as the ways in which dominant forms of thought and practice inform persons' predispositions and self-understandings (Boltanski 2011; Ricoeur 1981a; Habermas 1987, 1988). In turn, this requires that we unearth hierarchical structures and mechanisms of power that reproduce social inequalities, their disproportionate consequences on vulnerable segments of the population, and, as a result, actors' unequal capacities to exercise agency in the face of techniques of domination and exclusion.

The negative dimension of critique can be coupled to a reconstructive counterpart derived from a normative project of political and socio-economic emancipation through structural transformation, made possible by engaging in ongoing processes of constitution and institutionalizing of personal and collective autonomy. Concretely, such a normative vision can be advanced by devising, supporting, and publicly justifying experiments with institutions devised along principles of social equity and participatory decision-making, as well as with alternative modes of practice and thought in everyday life. These experiments range from feminist revisionings of gender and sexual relations and the ecological reinvention of the human/non-human interface to public policy proposals for a different infrastructure of global economic governance (to replace the triumvirate of the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO), for the taxation of international currency speculation transactions, for the provision of a guaranteed living income to every human being, and so on.[12] Yet prior to their implementation, such experimental

proposals must be subjected to public deliberation and evaluation, to which critical sociology can contribute by participating in the creation of spaces within civil society where pluralistic debate and inclusionary decision-making can be enacted (e.g., participatory municipal budgeting and Occupy-like fora).[13]

Critical sociology's publicly minded interventions aim to assist members of historically and systemically marginalized groups to cultivate their capacities for critique of dominant institutional arrangements and relations of power (Barthe and Lemieux 2002) and, conversely, participate in democratic spaces of resistance and alternative mechanisms of self-governance. Such interventions can contribute to enabling all citizens to be involved in projects of economic, political, and social self-management according to which they reflexively create and institute equitable and inclusive laws, norms, and ways of organizing social life—while perpetually interrogating the latter's foundations and legitimacy (Castoriadis 1997).

Hermeneutical Versus Structuralist

Following previous efforts to pair interpretivist and structuralist frameworks—in the Western Marxist tradition of analysis of culture (Goldmann 1986; Benjamin 1999; Kracauer 1995; Eagleton 1990; Jameson 1990), Ricoeur's search for theoretical common ground (Ricoeur 1981c), and the structural hermeneutics of the strong programme in cultural sociology (Alexander and Smith 2003)—the version of critical sociology presented in *Interrogating the Social* aims to give equivalent analytical weight to each of the two poles while making them irreducible to the other. This perspective takes as one of its starting points the notion of hermeneutical reflexivity, whereby the researcher puts forth an analysis of the meaning of a contemporary form of social action, text, performance, or visual artefact by dialogically working through and locating such an analysis within existing traditions of interpretation. Consequently, interpretation requires taking into consideration canonical perspectives on forms of practice or thought, established taxonomies of genre and style, as well as overarching narratives

about historical and cultural periodization. In addition, as suggested in the discussion of sociological pragmatism above, an interpretivist critical sociology is focused on making sense of actors' experiences in the social world and their self-understandings, particularly the political and moral repertoires that they utilize to provide accounts of and justify their adoption of specific modes of thought and action.

Though a social hermeneutics generates interpretive density, exclusively relying on it for sociological analysis can lead to a sort of culturalist formalism, where the object of study is reified by solely examining its endogenous composition or meaning and is thus disconnected from the social context of its production and interpretation. To avert this pitfall, critical sociology turns towards structuralism, which foregrounds the exogenous political, economic, and cultural processes and institutions through which an object of study is created and understood. This kind of structuralist analysis can trace relations between actors and organizations that construct and attribute shared meanings to symbols and practices; the institutional or discursive delimitations of the range of socially recognized, politically effective, or culturally validated modes of thought and action; as well as the conventions that inform such collective modes (e.g., narrative tropes, moral codes, repertoires of political struggle, etc.). Critical sociology draws from Bourdieusian analysis of the structural distribution and hierarchical differentiation of capacities and resources among groups, as well as of the role of symbolic and material structures on social life, yet guards against the excesses of a structuralist determinism granting all causal determinacy to such structural factors in relation to supposedly epiphenomenal performances, worldviews, and events.

Outlining Foundational Principles

In addition to the conceptual pairings and oppositions discussed in the previous section, the version of critical sociology presented in *Interrogating the Social* can be elaborated through five overlapping principles, which are adopted as alternatives to commonplace assumptions and can be operationalized in specific ways.

Level	Principle	Counter-principle	Operationalization
Ontological	Sociocentrism	Individualism	Collectivism
Epistemological	Social constructivism	Social naturalism	Historicization and ethnologization
Analytical	*A priori* indeterminacy	Determinism	Pragmatic determination
Methodological	Perspectivalism	Abstraction	Contextual situationalism
Theoretical	Pluralism	Paradigmaticism	Post-paradigmatic agnosticism

The first such principle is sociocentrism, the belief in the causal or explanatory primacy of societally based processes, group dynamics, and communal factors—such as collective memory, symbolic systems, and organizational influences—in the analysis of particular phenomena or situations. Durkheim's famed intervention in the Dreyfus Affair, 'Individualism and the Intellectuals,' advanced a classic sociocentric position in its assertion that, far from being a natural reflection of the ontological precedence of the individual over society, individualism was an effect of modern society; the cult of the individual was a sacred belief made possible by such a society, collectively shared among its members (Durkheim 1970). Hence, sociocentrism refutes the widespread belief that society can be reduced to an accumulation or aggregation of individuals, focusing instead on the play of collective forces that exist above such individuals and function independently of them. In addition, sociocentrism is opposed to moral individualism, the notion that persons are self-sufficient or self-interested persons representing monadic atoms competing with each other for finite resources and gains (as in the mythology of *homo economicus*). *Contra* rational-choice models of action, then, choice is less the expression of instrumentally rational calculation or the exercise of personal freedom of selection among an unlimited range of options than the outcome of a societally created and delimited range of possibilities and dispositions.

Critical sociology is supported by a social constructivist epistemology, designed to counter naturalizing explanations of the existing social order that portray the latter as an inexorable or necessary outcome of supposedly eternal and universal forces or, yet again, biologically

derived conceptions of human nature rooted in evolutionary or genetic determinism. By contrast, social constructivism denaturalizes the institutional status quo and the *doxa* of commonsensical beliefs and practices. The aforementioned processes of historicization and ethnologization unsettle the taken-for-granted character of this status quo and common sense by demonstrating that they represent socially arbitrary arrangements and conventions, resulting from ongoing struggles among actors, structures of domination, or provisional decisions to stabilize economic, political, and cultural factors in specific epochs and places. To this extent, the concomitant radical destabilization of the inevitability and legitimacy of systemic configurations and traditional worldviews can disrupt their unreflexive reproduction and repetition over time, while inciting persons and groups to imagine and experiment with alternative projects of collective organization of social life.

A priori indeterminacy, the third foundational principle of a critical sociology, is used here to indicate that the analytical weight and causal efficacy of a sphere of the social world (political, economic, cultural, etc.) relative to others cannot be theoretically pre-determined in explanations of particular phenomena or objects, nor can the primacy of an analytical dimension over the other in conceptual pairings (structure vs. agency, etc.). This state of indeterminacy is resolved only through the process of empirical analysis and supplying of an explanatory account, when the degree and kind of such weight and causal efficacy are established on a case-by-case basis. Accordingly, we can speak of a pragmatic process of situational determination of analytical or causal primacy, whereby the greater or lesser significance of one sphere or dimension varies from one case to another, or of mutual determination among spheres. Such analytical pragmatism opposes the *a priori* and generalized determinisms found in economism and culturalism, which assert that economic and cultural forces, respectively, are always already and intrinsically dominant—and, by rendering all other forces and aspects epiphenomenal, make investigation of the specificities of empirical cases and instances irrelevant.

Methodologically, critical sociology employs a perspectival approach that rejects ahistorical and acultural abstractions, producing a 'view from nowhere' extrapolated to apply everywhere. This sort of abstract thinking is manifest in presentist eternalization, that is, the assumption that modes

of social organization, institutions, and ways of thinking and acting have always existed as they currently do, which occurs when research lacks proper historical perspective by restricting its temporal horizons to the present moment. Abstraction also results from ethnocentric universalization, the generalization of findings from geographically proximate or culturally familiar settings to the rest of the world because of a parochialism failing to incorporate transcultural or multi-sited perspectives. As such, critical sociologists reject the Eurocentrism of diffusionist models asserting that socio-economic, political, or cultural trends in the North Atlantic region inevitably will spread to other parts of the globe, as well as of modernization narratives according to which non-Western societies eventually will evolve into mirror images of their more 'advanced' Western counterparts.

Conversely, perspectivalism holds that the historicization and ethnologization of an analytical object enables its being situated in broader temporal and transcultural contexts, which in turn strengthens scholarship in two ways: the specification of findings' historical and geographical applicability beyond the immediate setting being studied (i.e., to what extent, if any, are these findings relevant to other epochs or regions of the world); and the comparative gauging of similarities and differences between cases in order to draw out both unique and shared features among them. Perspectivalism aims less to devise singular and all-encompassing models that account for all possible instances of a particular phenomenon, situation, or social configuration—which would require a level of abstraction so removed from empirical reality as to be of very limited methodological utility—than to point to the co-existence of, and isomorphisms among, multiple types of institutional arrangements and cultural repertoires, which vary from one setting to another according to local customs, historical trajectories, and processes of vernacularization of global tendencies.[14]

In response to the dogmatic paradigmaticism defining the various 'theory wars' that raged in the human sciences over the past few decades, theoretical pluralism is the fifth and final principle to which the iteration of critical sociology espoused here subscribes. A post-paradigmatic stance of this kind is characterized by scepticism towards singular, all-encompassing theoretical frameworks or conceptual systems, portrayed by their adherents as flawlessly capable of explaining all phenomena and

dimensions of the social world as well as to provide us with a political-cum-normative social imaginary (Marxism, post-structuralism, etc.). No theory possesses absolute and perfect explanatory dominion over the social. As such, post-paradigmaticism steers clear of sectarian idealization and worship of intellectual idols, *maîtres penseurs,* whose ideas and claims are uncritically and faithfully repeated and adhered to by their disciples and followers in order to police how and what is thought and written about the social. On the contrary, critical sociology can adopt a position of theoretical agnosticism, whereby it becomes impossible to establish a paradigm's analytical worth *in abstracto*, outside of its demonstrated utility when applied to make sense of particular empirical objects or cases. Hence, a theory's analytical worth is not permanently determined or absolute but circumstantial and relative to how its merits and deficiencies compare to those of other theories. In other words, theoretical approaches are not necessarily incommensurable, or mutually exclusive entities to which scholars must pledge unfailing allegiance, but instead tools whose contingent value depends upon the extent to which, and manner in which, they assist in answering a conceptual problem, shed light on a specific question about the social world, or explain a defined empirical object. Post-paradigmatic agnosticism, then, has two implications for critical sociology: acknowledging that all theoretical paradigms have relative flaws and strengths, making them more or less well suited to certain types of research and objects because they foreground and background different aspects of social reality; and engaging in the work of inter-paradigmatic articulation in order to yield hybrid models out of constituent elements derived from different theoretical traditions, amalgams that will vary and adapt according to the topic being investigated.

Critical Sociology's Three Themes

Interrogating the Social is divided into three sections, each of which corresponds to a substantive concern of the iteration of critical sociology put forth here:

Substantive theme	Key concepts
'Rethinking Society'	Social ontology Sociological object Modes of sociality
'Configuring Power'	Organizational mechanisms Assemblages of relations Expert knowledge
'Practicing Culture'	Artefacts Performances Belief systems

The theme of 'Rethinking Society' consists of a reflection on the nature of the social relations and modes of interaction constitutive of modern society or, to put it differently, the effects of varying conceptual representations of the social and the social ontologies underpinning them. Implicitly, this also stands as an examination of the disciplinary specificities of sociology, which has upheld the distinctiveness and analytical irreducibility of its object, society, in contradistinction to the ways in which other social scientific disciplines approach it. To wit, political science subsumes society under the aegis of formal institutions of political rule and governance from which its features are posited to be derived, whereas sociology insists on the relative autonomy of civil society and its institutions, mechanisms, and forms of sociation—through which a polity constructs its architecture of governance and in which it grounds the latter's legitimacy. Economics is all too ready to equate society with the market by treating social relations as transactional exchanges between instrumentally calculating and self-maximizing individuals or to evacuate social factors through fictional *ceteris paribus* modelling. Against this, sociology opposes the argument that economic individualism is a historical product of modern capitalist culture that neglects communal and solidaristic types of conduct, and that the functioning of the 'free' market is made possible because of socially and politically institutionalized regulations. As for psychology, most of its branches represent society as an aggregation of individual behavioural traits, to which the sociological response has been to underline the impact of socio-cultural organizations, groups, and entrenched collective patterns and conventions that form a whole greater than any sum of individualized parts.

At the same time, critical sociology's revaluing of society as an analytical object does not depend upon asserting its territorial boundedness or intrinsic capacity for social integration, since two oft-documented dynamics must be taken into consideration at all times. The first is globalization, whereby transnational flows (Appadurai 1996) and processes (of migration, capital circulation, images, political struggles, etc.) have complicated the nation-state's necessary correspondence with and predominant influence over society and social actors within it. The nation state remains a major container of the social, of course, yet has become porous (Touraine 2003; Wagner 2000) as sociality has seeped above and below its borders to equally be found at the local and global level. For instance, residents of global cities in different regions of the world may share certain outlooks and experiences with each other to an extent that is unimaginable with their fellow citizens from rural areas. Neoliberal capitalism is the second dynamic significantly reshaping the social, for it is attempting to subjugate the totality of society to the reign of the principles of market deregulation, profit maximization, fiscal austerity, privatization, and 'efficiency'—framed strictly in the narrow terms of output-measured productivism and cost-benefit analyses harnessed to notions of corporate return on investment. Consequently, market orthodoxy is commodifying sectors and institutions historically structured according to ideals of universal access as a fundamental right and solidaristic notions of the public good (such as healthcare and education) (Kurasawa 2002; Block and Somers 2014) or those that have attempted to organize themselves on the basis of endogenous, anti-commercial criteria of legitimation (e.g., art for art's sake). Moreover, as a cultural discourse and worldview, neoliberalism is embedded in forms of subjectivity and types of social interaction through which actors encounter society as a realm of ruthless individualized competition in which they are playing a zero-sum game against others in the face of limited resources and opportunities. Communal projects and collectivist aspirations are marginalized in favour of the accumulation of privatized gains for individuals, who are developing techniques of management of the self as atomized and self-interested actors solely responsible for her or his social standing by inventing and marketing a 'personal brand'; the latter is akin to a stock-market portfolio in which one must 'invest' and which one must grow over time to minimize risk.

But must neoliberalism utterly determine the fate of the social and foreclose all other possibilities? The three chapters in the book's first section negatively answer this query by revisiting sociological classics that supply some of the conceptual tools to formulate alternative models of sociality, models that explicitly diverge from those in which market-based individual competition and purposive-instrumental action prevail. For Mallory, Adam Smith's writings on political friendship among strangers is just such a model, since it proposes that mutual sympathy and concern for others does not require intimate familiarity with them. Despite its limitations in addressing cultural pluralism and societal inequalities, political friendship can serve as a foundation to construct civically robust social bonds that prevent the dominance of neoliberal visions of the social. In a similar vein, Horgan goes back to Erving Goffman and Georg Simmel's pioneering observations about anonymity and inattention in urban settings, yet puts forth a notion of 'non-mutual indifference' that reflects the asymmetric character of social relations while explaining one of the micro-sociological sources of inequality between groups living in cities. However, non-mutual indifference need not lead to possessive individualism or voluntary blindness to systemic socio-economic inequalities, for a principle of 'minimal mutual recognition' can foster urban solidarity. Simmel and Ferdinand Tönnies, another German founder of sociology, are the figures to whom Steiner turns in his chapter in order to flesh out the missing social dimensions of Chantal Mouffe's well-known theory of agonistic politics. The resulting conception of societal agonism not only has the capacity to embrace globalized socio-cultural pluralism rather than assimilation of differences, but also fosters pluralistic discursive contest among persons and groups in a way that is civically minded and thus distinct from neoliberal principles of individualistic market competition and accumulation.

Critical sociology's second theme, 'Configuring Power,' explores the question of how relations of power at different scales operate through organizational mechanisms, modes of knowledge, as well as material and symbolic resources. Of particular focus are the processes of institutionalization of power (embedded in states, private corporations, international organizations, civil society groups, etc.) and its concrete application via social, political, and economic meta-discourses whose seemingly benign

meaning signification obscures vastly unequal effects among different populations and regions of the world (e.g., democratization, development, economic restructuring). Power circulates and is exercised through regimes of governance, assemblages of social relations, and techniques of control that are interwoven with forms of scientific and technocratic knowledge, as well as types of expertise and specialized epistemic cultures that validate or discredit truth claims about the social world. If unearthing structures of subjugation and resistance within formal organizations and consecrated discourses is pivotal, so is the identification of the 'micro-physics of power' (Foucault 1995) lodged in informal habits, beliefs, and everyday interactions. The mining of documents, statistics, and interviews with actors thus can reveal the rhetorical and institutional strategies of legitimation of a hierarchically organized social order.

Instead of presuming the generalizability of a singular configuration of relations of power across all settings, the task is one of carefully distinguishing and comparing instances of isomorphic correspondence and divergence among institutional and discursive formations, as well as noting differential impacts on dominant and subordinate segments of given populations. Such an analytical lens not only results in more precise organizational and processual taxonomies of power—including of situational and local adaptations of systemic forces—but also assists in pinpointing the most effective moments and sites of intervention through which actors can resist or subvert structures of domination and work to construct egalitarian and socially inclusive institutional forms and types of knowledge.[15]

Given these preoccupations, the chapters in the second part of *Interrogating the Social* concern themselves with the institutionalization and deployment of power through a variety of epistemic cultures and expert knowledges. Hayes follows this thread by reconstructing macroeconomic theory's constitution of business cycles as measurable and observable phenomena with wide-ranging implications at the beginning of the twentieth century. By claiming that it could manage such cyclical fluctuations, economics acquired a disciplinary dominion over governance of the economy—a sectorial monopoly that it has maintained to this day, preventing alternative economic logics from gaining traction. Oliver and Tasson employ a similar perspective to examine the Ugandan

government's management of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on its territory, underscoring the implementation of neoliberal policies that the international development community and North Atlantic donor countries could impose via policy requirements and funding conditionality. Additionally, their chapter demonstrates that Uganda's success in diminishing transmission rates was rooted less in religious discourses of moral regulation of sexual behaviour than in centralized government programmes and local community participation. Like Hayes as well as Oliver and Tasson, Christensen studies technologies and cultures of expert intervention, albeit in the domain of international democracy assistance. His chapter recognizes the importance of professionalized, managerial devices of programme evaluation and outcome-driven decision-making procedures in this arena, which, aside from impoverishing implemented democratic projects, create asymmetric ties between North American democracy promotion organizations and local civil society groups that they sponsor in non-democratic or transitional contexts in the global South.

Regrouped under the rubric of 'Practicing Culture,' a third component of critical sociology's research agenda seeks to identify and make sense of emerging cultural tendencies and narratives in order to grasp their implications for social life. Rather than speaking of culture metaphysically or abstractly, the framework proposed here engages with situated cultural artefacts, performances, and movements enacted by certain subjects and groups in particular locations and at specific moments—thereby enabling hermeneutically and semiotically thick descriptions of a panoply of cultural manifestations so as to gauge their broader significance and paradoxical or ambiguous consequences. Correspondingly, the emphasis is more pragmatic than formalist, concentrating on what social actors situationally do with culture and the meanings that can be attributed to their practices on the ground instead of formal systems of rules and structures. Put differently, the central question is interpreting the ways in which persons and communities are putting culture into practice by creating, utilizing, modifying, and remixing symbols, discourses, ideas, and rituals, as well as whether these practices employ existing conventions and habitual interactional modes or inaugurate new ones.

This analytical perspective, then, shares two of cultural sociology's defining claims. Firstly, it blends the study of highbrow and popular

culture without establishing a hierarchy of worth between them, for it is interested in noting points of intersection of these two cultural genres and observing the variations in uses and responses to each that different segments of the population generate. Secondly, it posits an *a priori* causative indeterminacy among economic, political, and cultural forces, thus rejecting the attribution of necessary analytical primacy to the former vis-à-vis the latter. Culture matters, and cannot be treated as an epiphenomenal or superstructural sphere of ideological legitimation of supposedly more foundational arenas, nor can its meanings be treated solely as the outcomes of the asymmetric distribution of material and symbolic resources across the social fabric. Furthermore, our framework explores the dialectical relationship between the creative and reiterative features of contemporary cultural production. On the one hand, culture is a space of innovation and improvisation, in which actors invent new ways of thinking and acting or resignify established ones via aesthetic creation, linguistic games, emerging technologies, or bricolage. On the other hand, culture reiterates and is read through existing symbolic and discursive patterns, which are composed of conventions of signification (styles, genres, tropes, etc.), interpretive and evaluative repertoires (Lamont and Thévenot 2000), as well as organizational and sectorial regulations, norms, and expectations.

Accordingly, the chapters in *Interrogating the Social*'s third section highlight groundbreaking cultural phenomena and movements whose larger social significance hitherto has been overlooked. Liinamaa discusses the manner in which creativity, as a societal and aesthetic ideal, has been converted into a public policy discourse about the creative city yielding a view of culture as an instrument of urban revitalization and economic growth. However, while participatory art cultivates a sense of play among performers and audiences, the attendant vision of creativity and of the city is complicated by the responsibilities of citizenship and the kinds of social relations thereby generated. If these sorts of ludic aesthetic performances mark an important cultural development, so do large-scale exhibitions designed for mass appeal, such as 'Body Worlds,' which Rondinelli approaches as a populist site where art, commerce, and techno-science meet. Indeed, the exhibition's display of the plastinated body brings to the fore its standing as an emblematic contested cultural artefact and shifting

signifier, located in a techno-utopian imaginary blurring the boundaries between the authentic and the staged as well as the living and the dead. Finally, LeDrew analyses the rise of New Atheism as a cultural movement that rapidly is gaining traction within Western public discourse because of its scientistic hostility to all forms of religion. His chapter discovers a paradox at the heart of New Atheism, namely, that its elevation of evolutionism and rationalism to the status of sacralized cultural beliefs has moved it towards a form of quasi-religious dogmatism, which contradicts the capacity for self-critique undergirding the kind of progressive secularism of which it views itself as the heir.

By proposing a strategy of articulation of conceptual pairings commonly perceived as irreconcilable, elaborating a set of foundational principles to help guide inquiry, and developing research organized around the substantive and triangulated themes of recasting the character of society and social relations, studying historical and emerging organizational and discursive assemblages through which power is exercised, and making sense of the social and political implications of new cultural practices and narratives, the following chapters aim to chart a path forward for critical sociology.

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Notes

1. Each of these three themes is discussed in greater detail below. In order to advance this collaborative project, members of the Canadian Network for Critical Sociology organize and participate in a yearly workshop at which they discuss their ongoing research and debate ideas, as well as occasional informal events.
2. However, as Burawoy himself acknowledges (Burawoy 2009), his argument represents a response to the particularities of US sociology, which does not flawlessly map onto the conditions of development of the discipline in other national settings. For instance, the work of many Canadian

sociologists has been both critical and public *avant la lettre*, whether one thinks of Marcel Rioux, John Porter, and members of the Waffle or, more recently, of those of Louise Vandelac, Patricia Marchak, and Victor Satzewich, *inter alia*—to say nothing of extra-academic organizations, documentary filmmakers, and investigative journalists engaging in implicitly sociological research (ranging from the National Film Board of Canada to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Linda McQuaig).

3. For an example of this sort of public intervention using critical sociology, see Fuyuki Kurasawa et al., 'We Need to Take Campus Sexual Violence Seriously,' *The Toronto Star*, 15 September 2013, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2013/09/15/we_need_to_take_campus_sexual_violence_seriously.html (accessed 24 May 2016). More generally, see *Contexts*, the quarterly magazine published by the American Sociological Association: http://contexts.org (accessed 24 May 2016).
4. In France, Bourdieu's approach is referred to as 'critical sociology' (*sociologie critique*) *tout court*, yet I use the phrase 'Bourdieusian sociology' here in order to distinguish the latter from the more catholic understanding of critical sociology employed in this book.
5. In more recent work, Thévenot partly addresses this criticism by proposing a plurality of 'regimes of engagement,' of which the regime of justification discussed in *On Justification* is but one (the others being the planning regime, the regime of familiarity, and the exploratory regime). This analytical pluralizing acknowledges the reality of actors who participate in public discourse outside of the conventions of the regime of justification, doing so in order to avoid the sort of 'humiliating reduction' that these conventions require. Indeed, the regime of justification effectively compels all actors to conform to such requirements and principles, thereby potentially disqualifying their testimonies and experiences from consideration as legitimate contributions to public discourse (Thévenot 2006, 258). Nonetheless, Thévenot's revised perspective does not relate variations in actors' competences to engage in the regime of justification to institutional structures unevenly distributing capital among persons and groups—something that is vital in order to properly recognize the impact of systemically based social hierarchies on regimes of engagement in the world.
6. The cultivation of a phenomenological imagination through art is indispensable for sociologists, who aim to make sense of the experiential dimensions of subjugation and suffering or, conversely, of domination and privilege.
7. For a history of the impact of positivist empiricism on post-Second World War US sociology, see Steinmetz (2005a).

8. See Epstein (1996) on the role of the gay men's movement on HIV/AIDS research in the USA and (Callon and Rabeharisoa 2007) on the impact of a muscular dystrophy patients' organization on the study of the disease in France.
9. More recently, Thévenot has reformulated this aspect of interpretive social science as the rendering of actors' 'regimes of engagement with the world' (Thévenot 2006).
10. For instance, a systemically attuned critical sociology can link mass rural-to-urban migration in Africa's Sahel region to accelerating desertification driven by climate change or connect the coupling of spiralling post-secondary tuition fees with austerity measures to the adoption of neoliberal principles of administration of public services in most parts of the North Atlantic region.
11. The sort of structural analysis proposed here should be distinguished from structuralism as a paradigm since the latter tends to suffer from structural determinism. Thus, it treats a case as merely an epiphenomenal embodiment of a general or universal structure and actors as bearers of structures whose agency is either limited or non-existent.
12. As a model of critical sociology's reconstructive facet, see the 'Real Utopias Project' based at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, under the direction of Erik Olin Wright, as well as the book series of the same name published by Verso: https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/RealUtopias.htm and https://www.versobooks.com/series_collections/2-the-real-utopias-project (accessed 21 May 2016).
13. On the notion of 'hybrid fora,' which foster the engagement of scientific experts, politicians, and laypersons in dialogical processes of democratic deliberation regarding technical matters in society, see Callon et al. (2001).
14. For instance, rather than utilizing a notion of a universal modernity or of a homogeneous neoliberalism, perspectivalism fosters investigations of multiple or alternative modernities and of plural neoliberal regimes, of which several iterations exist in regions and countries because of their distinctive features.
15. For instance, understanding variations in degree and kind between configurations of power allows environmental groups to intervene in different ways to urge action on climate change, from backstage consultation with climate scientists to public and highly mediatized protests or disruptions of corporate meetings. Likewise, a critique of fiscal austerity can gain greater attention within public spheres if the groups and figures advancing it properly grasp and utilize distinctive histories and traditions of mutual aid and socio-economic egalitarianism.

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Part I

Rethinking Society

Political Friendship and the Social Bond

Peter Mallory

Introduction

Recently, scholars have been working to revive the Aristotelian notion of *civic* or *political* friendship and recast it as a theoretical construct that can address the problem of solidarity between strangers. This new scholarship challenges the contemporary view of friendship as a purely private and personal relation by revealing how horizontal bonds of affection between persons underlie and sustain the public and the political. Moreover, it shows how the positive norms of friendship—its connection to equality, trust, respect, sympathy, and concern for the other—sustain a vision of friendship as a just social bond which resonates within, but also beyond, the private sphere. In reconceptualizing the social bond, the new literature on friendship and politics holds significance for critical sociology and its project of provoking a radical denaturalization of the existing

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social order. It offers, for example, an alternative vision of sociality not grounded in competitive market-based individualism or instrumental-purposive action. Nonetheless, the transposition of friendship to the public sphere of strangers remains awkward, since it is still perceived as a pre-eminently private and personal bond. The chapter therefore turns to Adam Smith's subtle and original account of public friendships and uses both the strengths and flaws of his approach to develop a specifically critical sociology of social bonds.

Recent scholarship on civic and political forms of friendship (Allen 2004; Devere and Smith 2010; Kaplan 2016; Mallory 2012; Mallory and Carlson 2014; Scorza 2004; Schwarzenbach 2009; Schweitzer 2016; Smith 2011) takes as its central problematic the moral, horizontal, and affective bonds between strangers in public spaces and their salience for collective life. In focusing on social bonds, this scholarship is part of a general renewal of interest in social relations in the human sciences which includes, for example, communitarian or social capital approaches such as Robert Putnam's (2000) and the recent interest in Carl Schmitt's (2007) friend-enemy distinction (Mouffe 2005; Steiner, this volume). All of these approaches theorize the importance of friendship and social bonds beyond the private sphere. More specifically, they challenge the liberal imaginary of the individualized, calculating actor who may have true friends in a private sphere of altruism and affection but who is nonetheless able to rationally pursue his or her self-interest in a public sphere characterized by the clash of competing interests between morally indifferent strangers (Ludwig 2010; Silver 1997; Wellman 2001).

In spite of these apparent commonalities in the literature, however, scholarship on political friendship offers distinct advantages for theorizing the public significance of social bonds. Carl Schmitt's work emphasizes the enemy but offers little analysis of the friend. Indeed, he links the political friend-enemy dichotomy to the problem of sovereignty and analytically separates it from "social" binaries related to morality, aesthetics, and economics. Yet it is precisely the moral and symbolic qualities of friendship that are important for theorists of political friendship. Moreover, social life is more complex than the friend-enemy distinction, the social being based more on the non-binary interrelation of friend and stranger. On the other hand, communitarian writings, such as those of

Putnam (2000) on social capital, do address the friend in relation to the stranger. Their concern is the indifference of strangers, and they tend to emphasize how shared values and common membership in communities and networks can overcome indifference by drawing citizens into public and political life. One distinct advantage of political friendship scholarship, however, is that it does not presuppose the similarity of friends or their embedding in dense networks of social capital. Indeed, such friends need not be similar and may even be friends precisely through their differences. Significantly, friendship is a practice, a way of orienting to others, rather than merely a belief or a value. Moreover, it is a practice that manifests some of the highest ideals of interaction, such as trust, respect, sympathy, and an orientation to the other as an equal (Allen 2004; Blatterer 2013, 2015). These positive normative qualities make friendship a useful alternative analytical or philosophical construct for theorizing solidarity between strangers.

While, in this chapter, I turn to Adam Smith as a resource for understanding political friendship, the version of Smith addressed here is not the famous or infamous one of *The Wealth of Nations*, which has been read and misread as the champion of self-interest and the virtues of free markets. Instead, I turn to his oft-overlooked social theory in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a book that develops a subtle theory of sympathy and mutual identification between strangers. Although the chapter concerns Adam Smith, it is not a work of Adam Smith scholarship *per se*. To borrow a distinction from Singer (2008), it is an attempt to think *with* rather than *about* Adam Smith. This points more generally to the use of the classics of social theory in the Canadian Network for Critical Sociology, whose members are deeply engaged in reading these classics, yet not merely to practice exegesis for its own sake. Instead, through their distance from the present, the classics can enable an estrangement from the seemingly self-evident dimensions of current debates and problems, thus helping us to think about the present in new ways.

The value of Smith's work for distancing us from current debates stems from the fact that he does not associate friendship with intimacy or the private realm, as most contemporary interpretations do, but instead develops a public and social understanding of friendship in the context of a modern society of strangers. He theorizes the friend, the stranger,

and their interrelationship in a manner so subtly wound in his work that scholars have recently coined the term "strangership" to describe his analysis of amicable bonds between strangers (Hill 2011; Horgan 2012; Silver 1997). By linking the two notions, Smith is able to treat stranger relations as a new type of social relation comparable in some ways to friendship. Moreover, all social bonds are animated by practices of sympathy, a rich concept that Smith develops in order to theorize solidarity and mutual identification between both friends and strangers.

While the value of Smith's work is his public approach to friendship, his work has a number of limitations that we must address if we are to develop a view of social bonds suited to critical sociology. First, Smith's notion of friendship is social and public but not necessarily political in the specific sense of producing a space of solidarity where the contingent and constructed nature of the collective order is subjected to critical reflection and action. Thus, while Smith's work certainly points the way to a political notion of friendship, he refuses to take the path himself. And with all the resources Smith offers—including a careful and sophisticated analysis of sympathy and mutual identification between strangers—an important question is why not. One possibility suggested by the reading of Smith offered here is that sympathy is compatible with inequality and injustice. Such an observation has contemporary relevance because many forms of social criticism, most obviously Putnam's (2000) social capital approach but also some writers on political friendship (Schwarzenbach 2009, 1), presume indifference, egoism, and the absence of social bonds to be the source of societal problems, the solution to which lies in the proliferation of sympathetic and communicative bonds between strangers. Smith's work, however, should give us pause as a careful analysis of its limitations and flaws suggests the issue is not the presence or absence of bonds per se but the way those bonds are constructed. The analysis of the limitations of sympathy in Smith, therefore, will help us revise a dominant tradition in social thought and develop possibilities for re-theorizing sympathy in a way compatible with critical sociology.

A further aspect of Smith's work that we must address from the perspective of critical sociology is his approach to the social. For Smith, the communication of sentiments through sympathy is the source of social bonds, but also of the immanent order and coherence of social life more

generally. If, for Smith, self-interest animates a market, it is sympathy that animates a group or society. Smith's account of the social as an immanent, determinate, and self-sufficient order that operates according to its own dynamics behind the backs of social actors is the founding move that makes his social theory possible. Yet he overstates the force of this immanent social order, which makes it difficult to raise the inequalities that the social order produces as a political problem, that is, to expose its contingency and contestability. Instead, the social in Smith empties reality of its contingency and naturalizes constructed patterns of inequality. Since critical sociology seeks a radical denaturalization of the social order, there is a value in considering how some accounts of the social such as Smith's have precisely the opposite effect. Before turning to Smith regarding social bonds, sympathy, and the idea of the social more generally, however, it will be useful to address the notion of political friendship and the stranger in more detail.

Political Friendship and the Stranger

One expression of the recent interest in friendship has been the revival of the Aristotelian notion of political friendship, a type of impersonal friendship between citizens that Aristotle took to be crucial to a just and flourishing political life in the polis. Scholars are currently debating whether such notions are relevant to modernity and capable of providing us with new insights (Allen 2004; Devere and Smith 2010; Schwarzenbach 2009). This recent research is useful here because it addresses the question of friend-like relations between the strangers that comprise a society in a distinct fashion from that of Schmitt or Mouffe, for whom the friend is best linked to the enemy or the adversary. The new literature on political friendship raises the question of the extent to which strangers who share public spaces can (or should) come to treat each other as friends. Although there is much disagreement about what political friendship involves, it can be broadly characterized as a non-intimate feeling of connection between those who share public or political spaces. It involves mutual respect and interest, an orientation toward equality or symmetry, and a willingness to act in concert (Schwarzenbach 2009, 5, 53). Its weak

version entails a minimal degree of respect and action, such as not begrudging the use of one's tax dollars to aid others (Schwarzenbach 2005, 235), while strong versions include egalitarianism and actions aimed at radically transforming unjust social structures, for example, in the forms of solidarity manifested during the 2011 Occupy movements.

The concept of political friendship clashes with predominantly private and personal interpretations of friendship in modernity. Hannah Arendt, for example, argues that the political significance of friendship has been lost to us in modernity, where we think of friendship as confined to the sphere of intimate relations (1968, 24). Sociologists of friendship such as Spencer and Pahl (2006) support this view with research that demonstrates that friendship is commonly interpreted as a warm, private, and personal bond. As Silver (1997, 69) notes, this highly idealized private notion of friendship contributes to an "invidious" and "unmerited" contrast between the purity and intimacy of private friendships and a wider public world of strangers supposedly premised on utility, calculation, and self-interest. In this interpretation, friendship is an interstitial phenomenon, existing at odds with dominant political and economic institutions.

Such an invidious distinction between friends and strangers is absent in Smith's work, which is precisely why it is useful for re-working a contemporary notion of political friendship. Smith treats stranger relations in line with the sociological literature on strangers. To be a stranger, as Simmel (1971) argued, is to stand in a particular relation to others. For this reason, strangerhood should be interpreted as a specific form of relationship rather than the absence of one—hence the recent use of the term strangership by sociologists (Horgan 2012, this volume). Furthermore, numerous sociological studies have revealed that anonymity, impersonality, and indifference do not emerge spontaneously or naturally when other more personal bonds melt away. Instead, impersonality and anonymity must be collectively instituted and sustained by the practices of social actors, as is evident, for example, in Goffman's classic account of civil inattention (1963, 83–88). Smith, too, seeks to explicate these practices of stranger relations and thus to reveal the seen but often unnoticed presence of bonds between strangers. He focuses his attention on the friendship-like bonds that can emerge directly between strangers, and the

emotional and symbolic aspects of solidarity that these bonds presuppose. He thus provides critical sociology with a significant theory of affective bonds between strangers outside the friend-enemy dichotomy.

The fundamental problematic of research on political friendship is the question of how anonymous strangers who share public spaces can feel connected on the basis of principle rather than personal knowledge. Schwarzenbach (2009, 1), for example, claims that the central question of political friendship is the question of "what holds a good and just society together?" These are not new questions, but they are rarely approached through the idea of friendship (Smith 2011, 15). Indeed, modern thinkers generally reject the idea of friendship as a source of broad-based solidarity (Schwarzenbach 1996, 98). Instead, social solidarity, at least in contemporary political thought, is more likely to be understood as the result of a shared interest in security and property, or something achieved through mutually advantageous political or economic contracts. Friendship, however, was not such a marginal theme in the founding texts of classical (i.e., eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) Euro-American social theory, particularly those of Smith, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, Tocqueville, and others. Indeed, the connection between friends and strangers is even clearer in the work of early social theorists than it is in that of classical philosophers such as Aristotle. Unlike the classical philosophical tradition where friendship is connected with self-perfection and virtue, especially for elite male citizens, the early social theorists interpret friendship in relation to the distinctly modern space of "society" or "the social". The modern discovery of the social corresponds to the rise of new forms of social bonds and new ways of representing them (Singer 2013). Most crucially, societies—and especially democratic societies—are composed of anonymous strangers who are simultaneously connected and disconnected. They are connected by rituals, practices, and social institutions but also disconnected in the sense that one is only linked to most others in an impersonal and abstract way. Early Euro-American social theorists drew on notions of friendship, including ancient Aristotelian notions of friendship, to make sense of this changed understanding of social bonds and the curious mixture of connection and disconnection between strangers (Mallory and Carlson 2014).

Friendship, Strangership, and the Social

In this section, I turn to Adam Smith's work, where we will see more clearly the connections between friendship and solidarity between strangers. Smith focuses so strongly on the significance of social bonds between friends and strangers because *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* as a whole aims to uncover a social bond not immediately dependent on the political order of society. The result of this focus was Smith's contribution to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discovery of the social.

The discovery or the emergence of the social refers to the development of the idea of society as a central concept for representing, interpreting, criticizing, and acting on collective life. Several aspects of the notion of the social are important. The first concerns the representation of order. Social thought involves the imputing of an (at least minimally) intelligible order which inheres in collective life, in the straightforward sense of what sociologists might call processes, dynamics, forces, institutions, or structures, which are the objectified forms of human action. On a more fundamental level, the discovery or the emergence of the social entails a new sociocentric representation of the collective where order can be deemed immanent to society and as cohering at a distance from, or independently of, the political (Singer 2013). The emergence of the social in this stronger sense corresponds to a new horizon of meaning which makes it possible to represent order as inherent within society and to a new epistemological stance which "provides a critique of the political will's claim to constitute the collectivity" (Singer 2004, 41). Smith is a social theorist in this more radical sense of the term, and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is an attempt to delineate a social space with its own half-hidden motions not immediately dependent on either political will or human reason. In one particularly clear passage, Smith refers to the "arrogance" and "conceit" of political actors who imagine that they "can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chessboard" (1982, 234). In his view, the social is precisely the immanent, spontaneous "principles of motion" that exist in excess of, and form a limit to, political will. Today the discovery of the social as the epistemological condition of sociology is taken for granted, and so there is a value to explicating this

moment in its discovery, particularly since some versions of the social such as Smith's are too strong to be compatible with critical sociology.

Smith uncovers the social by a change of perspective away from that of the lawmaker or philosopher to that of the everyday social actor. Unlike lawmakers or philosophers, the social actor does not act with a vision of the whole society or according to a purely rational sense of the utility of any action for the functioning of the whole. Instead, the social actor is concretely situated and oriented to other socially situated actors who may be friends, acquaintances, strangers, or enemies. Furthermore, the everyday actor's rational faculties are entwined with passions and sentiments that are formed and shaped through interaction with others. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is written from the *pragmatic* perspective of this everyday actor, which is why, when Smith discovers the social, he also discovers the theoretical significance of the social bond. For him, social bonds are formed through the communication of sentiments, and his term for this communication is sympathy. Sympathy is the most important concept of the work because it ultimately animates social life, gives it order and coherence, and forms its principles of motion.

Sympathy, for Smith, refers to the ability of bystanders to "bring home" to themselves the experiences of another and "enter into" his or her sentiments, passions, opinions, and tastes, as well as the circumstances that give rise to these and the actions that emerge from them. Smith (1982, 10) uses the term in a unique and unusually broad sense, whereby a person can sympathize with "every passion of which the mind of man is susceptible", not just pain or misfortune. Ultimately, sympathy is a principle of communication that bridges, without eliminating, the irreducible subjective distance between oneself and another.

Smith (1982, 16–17) contends that sympathy is the basis of moral judgment. If, after bringing the case of others "home to ourselves", we believe that we would think and act in the same manner as them, then we sympathize. If we think that we should feel and act differently, then we cannot sympathize with them, which is equivalent to moral disapproval. According to Smith, our capacities of imagination and moral judgment evolve directly from the tendency of social interaction to test and develop our capacity to enter into social life from others' points of view. Thus, sympathy should be understood as a social practice that must be cultivated,

rather than as an instinctive human quality. In this sense, sympathy in Smith is not like pity in Rousseau, instinctive and pre-rational (Forman-Barzilai 2005, 192). Instead, sympathy is a "demanding imaginative and critical exercise" (Phillipson 1983, 183). Smith (1982, 9) is clear that sympathy is a leap of the imagination rather than the transmission of sentiments from one agent to another. We can observe the circumstances and actions of others, but we can never in fact experience what they do. All one can do is read the external signs and use his or her imagination.

Mutual sympathy is pleasurable, according to Smith. We are pleased when others share our sentiments and pained by a lack of fellow-feeling when they do not (Smith 1982, 14–16). Smith is careful to state that this pleasure is unrelated to utility or self-interest, and that we desire to give and receive sympathy simply because it is pleasurable to be in harmony with others. As agents seek the pleasure and recognition of mutual sympathy, they each know that the other cannot feel what they feel with the same intensity. It follows that both the person who feels the original passion and the spectator must raise or lower the "pitch" of their sentiments, whether joy, grief, indignation, or other passions, to a level that the other can share. Through a mutual modulation of sentiments and passions, persons achieve not the unison of passions—which Smith believes is impossible—but a form of "harmony" or "concord" (Smith 1982, 22).

Finally, just as we judge others' passions (and their consequent acts) as proper or improper, meretricious or blameworthy, through our ability to sympathize with them, we know that others are also judging our motives, passions, and acts. The repeated practice of imagining ourselves from the perspective of others gives rise to a mechanism of social control that Smith calls the impartial spectator. While there are real impartial spectators—anonymous strangers with no particular connection to us—Smith is interested in how the impartial spectator can be internalized within each person in the form of conscience or, following Mead (1967), what we might now call "the generalized other". The impartial spectator "within" is the abstract representation of our imagined understanding of impartial strangers' sympathetic reactions if those others were fully informed of all of our situations, motives, sentiments, and actions (Smith 1982, 109–113). The impartial spectator corrects our tendency to favor

our own interests and, as such, guides moral action and sustains the social life of strangers.

Smith thus develops his account of social and moral life from the interactions of individuals who are social because they can imagine social life from the perspective of others. Ultimately, the communication of sentiments is the source of all social and political institutions. It would be possible and useful to address this in detail by considering the different passions, their corresponding virtues, and their connection to institutional structures. However, for my purposes, the details are less significant than the general point that Smith provides us with an interpretation of the social as fully sustained and animated by its own immanent processes (Singer 2004). While these processes may, in Smith's view, have been set into motion by a divine will, they operate spontaneously and independently of human will and reason.

Theorizing the social through sympathy, Smith discovers the theoretical significance of social relations between both friends and strangers. Indeed, Smith elaborates an important account of personal relationships. Here he develops an important distinction between the strong sympathies that we develop for those closest to us—our families, colleagues, and neighbors—which he claims are involuntary because they are "imposed by the necessity of the situation" (Smith 1982, 224), and a form of genuine friendship that he calls "sacred and venerable". Genuine friendship, for Smith, is different from the "habitual sympathy" of relations imposed by the necessity of the situation (Smith 1982, 225), whether the demands of an external environment that requires mutual accommodation or the exigencies of family, neighborhood, or profession (Silver 1997). Instead, friendship involves affection and respect on the basis of the other's "personal qualities" (Smith 1982, 225). Furthermore, friendship, as a bond of affection and respect, is valued for its own sake, independently of the utility or advantage that the friends may receive. For friends, the moral value of friendship is not the exchange of "good offices" but the "harmony of their hearts" (Smith 1982, 39).

We should not, however, exaggerate Smith's enthusiasm for friendship. Because friendship is mediated by the imaginative work of the internalized impartial spectator within each socialized person (Smith 1982, 40, 214), his depiction is more moderate and less emotionally intense than

representations of friendship in other writers. Nowhere does Smith speak of friends as "one soul in two bodies", as Montaigne does (1958, 99). Nor do we "communicate our whole self" in friendship as Kant suggests (1991, 241). Further, friendship in Smith is not based on a demanding form of inter-subjective transparency as in Rousseau (Starobinski 1988, 5). Smith may speak of the harmony of hearts but never of their transparency or communion. As well, Smith may limit the purest friendships to "men of virtue" but virtue for him is social. The virtuous individual is the socialized individual, the one who can control his or her passions and their expressions so as to achieve concord with others. In other words, the virtuous friend is not the "beautiful soul" required by Rousseau but the friend with exceptional skill in what Goffman (1959) calls impression management (Smith 1982, 23–25). This is why we can have confidence in the "conduct and behaviour" of the friend (Smith 1982, 225). The friend meets our social expectations and, as such, we can have confidence in her character and feel that we know her. Friendship is a particular, affectionate, maybe even an intimate bond, and yet it is structured and interpreted through the eyes of that more impersonal other, the impartial spectator, who is necessarily present within any person virtuous enough to be capable of friendship.

Smith is highly original in linking friendship not with transparency but with impression management, because he can decouple it from intimacy and locate it in the public world of strangers. Indeed, Smith only values friendship to the extent that it opens up the friends to the wider world of strangers. To retreat into one's own home, with one's friends and family, is to lose touch with the moral quality of the world of strangers and to lose the connection to social reality (Smith 1982, 22–23, 154–156, 230–234). Absent in Smith is the more common and contemporary contrast between the warmth and trust of pure friendship in private vis-à-vis a supposed indifferent and lonely public world where civil and political bonds are based on contracts and interests, a view which has received its clearest critique in Richard Sennett's (1976) *The Fall of Public Man*. Instead, Smith describes a meaningful public world where one moves and acts with strangers qua strangers, which, while impersonal, is nonetheless animated by friendship and sympathy. Actions may be scripted and ritualized and impressions and sentiments may be managed, but they are

still deeply meaningful and not false or dissimulated. The public world of strangers, for Smith, is not a veneer, as in Rousseau, that masks a deeper, more authentic underlying reality, but is a space of appearance where moral and social life are enacted and produced through interactions with others.

This pragmatist and interactionist vision of a deeply meaningful public space has attracted the interest of recent theorists of friendship and stranger relations (Hill 2011; Silver 1997). The social distance between strangers in Smith's interpretation does not weaken the moral order but instead facilitates a general and impersonal sympathy that permeates society and gives rise to a universal form of sociability (Silver 1997, 54). The result, as Silver argues, is that sympathy becomes the new regulating principle of civil society. Sympathy "generates a kind of social lubrication throughout civil society, and is key to a deinstitutionalized moral order no longer authoritatively sustained by religious, economic, and political institutions" (Silver 1997, 55). "Strangership", then, indicates the specific way in which Smith believed stranger relations are enacted in the new universal space of commercial civil society. Indeed, strangership in Smith can best be understood as a form of friendship, one which is much less intense than the rarer "sacred and venerable" form but which can be extended, as Hill (2011, 113) notes, "to almost anybody whom one has contact with in the course of the business day". This newly dominant mode of stranger relations in commercial civil society is imbued with a generalized atmosphere of goodwill, generosity, and trust in a space where interactions are predictable, civil, calm, and friendly. Unlike what we may expect from an early liberal theorist of commercial society, at the foundation of civil society is not the autonomous, calculating, self-interested individual but friendship, sympathy, and the social bond. Nonetheless, if we stopped here, our view of Smith would be one-sided and devolve into a form of liberal Aristotelianism that would confine political friendship to a certain privileged class. If we want an interpretation of Smith apposite to critical sociology, we must look deeper into the contradictions of his work. One way to do so is to ask what and who is excluded from this ideal interpretation of public space and consider a second form of strangership in his work, one based on inequality and the denial of sympathy.

Strangers and Inequality

Sympathy, as noted above, is a demanding critical exercise whereby agents make an effort to enter into the sentiments of others. Sympathy is also reflexive in that we attempt to understand how the expression of our own passions through our actions (or inaction) will impact others. As the basis of solidarity between strangers, sympathy seems linked to the expansion of the ethical imagination that Smith associated with commercial society. Could it form the basis for a type of political friendship where strangers take an interest in each other's lives and are willing to act on the basis of that mutual concern, even without personal gain? Furthermore, is the type of sympathetic solidarity that Smith describes political, in the sense that it can produce a type of solidarity calling into question unjust elements of society or social institutions, particularly the division of wealth, power, and privilege? While we must respond negatively on all accounts, the intriguing question is why Smith's work does not lead to a political notion of friendship, precisely when it appears that it could do so. Considering Smith's limitation on this front will help us develop a more critical sociological account of political friendship.

The type of universal civil strangership that Silver (1997) and Hill (2011) identify is only one form of strangership in Smith's work, which is universal in principle, but not in practice. Moreover, it is a type of strangership with profound limitations for understanding stranger relations today. Most significant, the Smithian notion of strangership is based on similarity and presupposes a common lifeworld, specifically the lifeworld of "modestly Christian merchant gentlemen" (Pahl 2000, 61). For these reasons, an uncritical approach to Smithian strangership would not be helpful for theorizing strangership in the context of pluralist and multicultural societies in which citizens are divided by gender, class, racial, ethnic, and religious inequalities. This is because in its generality, strangership abstracts from group differences and the inequalities and oppressions emerging therefrom. Furthermore, even in Smith's work, we glimpse the emergence of a second type of strangership that he obscures even as he discovers it, one premised not on a general and abstract sympathy and the minimal recognition it presupposes, but on exclusion and the denial

of sympathy and recognition. Since scholars have overlooked this second form of strangership, I turn to it now.

The second form of strangership emerges at the margins of the first type and belies the latter's claims of abstract universality and equality. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, it can be found in relation to the poor, and we should note a certain contemporaneousness of Smith's description of sentiments that still appear in attempts to regulate or criminalize panhandling or remove poor people from tourist and business areas. Moreover, in the following quotation, Smith is clearly attuned to what Sennett and Cobb (1972) have called the hidden injuries of class:

> The poor man […] is ashamed of his poverty. He feels that it either places him out of the sight of mankind, or, that if they take any notice of him, they have, however, scarce any fellow-feeling with the misery and distress which he suffers. He is mortified upon both accounts […] The poor man goes out and comes in unheeded, and when in the midst of a crowd is in the same obscurity as if shut up in his own hovel […]. [Others] turn away their eyes from him, or if the extremity of his distress forces them to look at him, it is only to spurn so disagreeable an object from among them. The fortunate and the proud wonder at the insolence of human wretchedness, that it should dare to present itself before them, and with the loathsome aspect of its misery presume to disturb the serenity of their happiness. (Smith 1982, 51)

The form of estrangement experienced by the poor is clearly different from the civil strangership of commercial society. The latter form of strangership presupposes a "deinstitutionalized" space where interactions between strangers are regulated by the impersonal mechanism of sympathy, where fellow-feeling is distributed "in an essentially democratic spirit" (Silver 1997, 55). However, commercial society clearly has a form and an institutional structure, namely, the hierarchical structure of wealth, power, and privilege which Smith (1982, 230) refers to as a society's "constitution". Furthermore, in such a hierarchy, sympathy and fellow-feeling are not distributed equally. Instead, the strength of sympathy dissipates at the margins, giving rise to a second form of strangership constituted by an *absence* of impersonal and general sympathy.

Nonetheless, as Singer (2004) has shown, it is sympathy that ultimately animates and sustains the unequal society. For Smith, the actual reason that people seek wealth and power is because it attracts the gaze and sympathy of others (1982, 50–51), just as to lack wealth is to suffer in obscurity and ignominy through the general disposition to "despise, or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition" (Smith 1982, 61).

Smith expresses regret that wealth and power receive the respect due only to virtue and that poverty receives the contempt due only to vice, but he does not really question the unequal distribution of wealth and power. Instead, he argues that things are as they should be. In mistaking the *signs* of happiness (wealth and power) for happiness itself (which can be found in any rank, according to Smith), the ambitious multitude labors and struggles to advance in rank and, in so doing, contributes to progress and the production of wealth. It does not matter that a few "lordly masters" receive the best part of this wealth, since they must nonetheless share it and, as he famously claims, "are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants" (Smith 1982, 184–185). The hidden injuries of class would seem, for Smith, to be balanced out by their hidden benefits. In the end, Smith provides a depoliticized notion of strangership according to which the sympathy that animates it generates only weak ethical demands. In the first form of strangership, one shares a social space with others who are formally the same as oneself and share a common lifeworld. However, at the margins of this strangership is a second type, based on indifference, exclusion, and abjection, which Smith claims is unjust but nevertheless defends as beneficial and necessary. The second form of strangership troubles the first, even as the first form obscures and hides the presence of the second. Even as Smith uncovers the second form, he must cover it again; otherwise, the representation of societal divisions might become political and disrupt the smooth social harmony of mutual sympathy. A strong concept of political friendship is absent in Smith precisely because he marginalizes the second form of strangership.

One reason for the absence of a political form of friendship is Smith's overly sociocentric approach. When Smith discovers the social beneath the political, he interprets it as fully self-sufficient (Singer 2004),

emerging spontaneously and operating independently of human reason and will. If social processes are designed or willed at all, it could only be by a divine will. With such a strong sense of the social, no space remains for a political moment, for a space of speech and action between citizens with the potential to alter the division of wealth, power, and privilege. In one sense, Smith points out the divisions of society, its deeply hierarchical structure that produces estrangement and injustice. And yet, as soon as he underscores this division, he sublimates it into an account of the social as a harmonious whole animated by an invisible hand. In a view as strongly sociocentric as Smith's, which presupposes an immanent harmony, any political moment with the potential to alter the constitution of society will necessarily appear threatening (Singer 2004, 49). While Smith's account of the social challenges the myth of the unobstructed political will of the lawmaker (1982, 234), his work also institutes a new social myth, in Barthes' (1973) sense of the term, because it represents the historical and contingent divisions of wealth and power as natural, necessary, and irresistible social processes. As a result, his discovery of the social actually blocks the development of a specifically critical form of sociology that would reveal the contingent, constructed, and mutable nature of domination (Boltanski 2011; Kurasawa, this volume).

Critical sociology must be able to recognize the dynamics of Smith's approach because similarly strong versions of the social are so often invoked today by state leaders and policy makers and for similar reasons. Such strong versions have a depoliticizing effect because they point to an immanent necessity demanding a specific course of action: that there is, for example, no alternative to capitalist institutional arrangements or dominant directions of public policy. Today, sympathy is less likely to be understood as the animating force of social life than is economic exchange, and the social may be invoked to characterize not only immanent harmony but also the forces that threaten disorder and disaster. The dangers of invoking the social in a mythical fashion, as Smith does, stem from the fact that such an invocation allows one to adopt a managerial stance and appear as post-ideological, as a realist or administrator responding to immanent and necessary laws that leave us no choice. To invoke the social in this mythical sense, therefore, is a way to symbolically empty history of its contingency and to naturalize the existing patterns

of social and economic domination. Critical sociology, with its attention not only to the immanent order of social life but also to its constructed nature, fault lines, and contingencies, is uniquely positioned to demystify the political uses of the strong version of the social today.

Writers on political friendship often justify their attention to the topic by pointing to a modern breakdown of social bonds (Schwarzenbach 2009, 1; Scorza 2004, 87). Their expectation is that an analogy of personal friendships might provide normative resources to reveal and encourage democratic connections between strangers. However, Smith's work gives us reason to be cautious. Since it obscures asymmetrical power relations, his form of public friendship remains politically weak. What we learn from Smith is how unfounded is the belief that mutual identification between strangers alone would open the way toward a more just society. For example, is the solution to the hidden injuries of class described above simply the expansion of civil strangership with its polite, respectful, and friendly modes of interaction so that social bonds between the wealthy and the poor are constructed through sympathy rather than indifference or disdain? The construction of sympathetic bonds, it is worth noting, could even provide a source of social capital, in Putnam's sense, as the excluded become integrated in networks of exchange and reciprocity able to provide both resources and recognition. However, an interpretation of political friendship appropriate to a pluralist society of unequal strangers cannot ignore asymmetrical power relations and still be grounded in the reality of the common social world. Therefore, a rigorous notion of political friendship would not merely involve sympathy between strangers but would also have to treat such sympathy in a way that recognizes and challenges, rather than obscures, asymmetrical power relations between strangers, including, in this case, the social processes that both produce and naturalize the unequal structure of society. A convincing account of political friendship, then, would not just involve the establishment of social bonds where none existed before, that is, between dissociated indifferent strangers, but must also denaturalize and challenge the asymmetrical power relations of currently instituted social bonds. The distinction is significant since a dominant tradition in social thought treats the absence of social bonds—in alienation, excessive individualism, anomie, or egoism—as the source of social problems and the solution as

the reestablishment of sympathetic bonds. To mention one final example, the coeval Occupy and Tea Party movements both drew large numbers of citizens into public and political life; both minimized indifference and drew people into public debates; both critiqued the status quo; and both could be seen as generating social capital. Yet only the former would be an example of political friendship as I have defined it here because its participants did not bracket inequality, attempting instead to produce a form of solidarity aimed at challenging the institutionalized structures of social inequality.

Critical sociologists should take special note of the paradox involved in the fact that Smith claims that the social is animated by sympathy, but he also invokes the social to prevent the expansion of sympathy from taking a political turn. Perhaps Smith was right about sympathy but wrong about moderation. Though Smith has little respect for the "melancholy moralists" that would stretch sympathy beyond its natural limits (1982, 139–140), there is no reason that critical sociologists need accept Smith's depiction of the impartial spectator as always only *moderating* our sympathies. Indeed, one crucial possibility in this regard is that the critical denaturalization of the existing social order is capable of generating fundamentally *immoderate* (but deeply conscientious) collective passions in support of Smith's second type of stranger, the marginalized and vilified, passions such as righteous indignation and moral outrage, passions capable of undergirding powerful forms of political friendship between diverse social actors. What is more, when Smith's theory of moral sentiments is placed within an historical frame, forms of sympathetic strangership may be seen as capable of developing and perhaps expanding.

Conclusion

Like many contemporary scholars, Smith is interested in friendship for its positive ethical qualities, but he is narrow in the qualities that he selects. He emphasizes the way that friends practice sympathy and moderate the expression of their sentiments to achieve harmony or concord. However, by focusing on other traits of friendship that Smith overlooks, it is possible to develop a richer account of political friendship—one more attuned to

critical sociology. Many scholars have noted that friendship is fundamentally egalitarian and that there is no place in it for hierarchy or authority (Allan 1989, 20; Allen 2004, 129; Pahl 2000, 162). Furthermore, since friendship is not necessarily based on unity or a fusional model of solidarity, friends need not be similar or resemble one another. Scorza (2004) also emphasizes the importance of truth in friendship, in the form of frankness or directness that sometimes requires incivility and discord. A more convincing concept of political friendship would presuppose discord—especially of a political kind—and, as such, would challenge Smith's notion of an immanent social harmony. Indeed, what is most promising about friendship as a rubric through which to theorize stranger relations is that friendship is not a value, belief, or shared idea of the good around which friends unite and thus must be distinguished from communitarian approaches (Kahane 1999). Instead, friendship is a practice, a way of orienting to others that does not presuppose the similarity of the friends (Scorza 2004). As a practice, friendship involves unity and division, agreement and disagreement, or harmony and discord. It is possible, then, to avoid Smith's one-sided view of harmonious friendship and develop a notion of political friendship more suited to diverse, unequal societies.

Even if Smith's work does not provide us with a convincing concept of political friendship, it still provides resources for thinking about friendship politically. What is valuable in Smith is that he poses the problem of solidarity between strangers and how a feeling of connection is possible between them based on practices of sympathy. Crucially, then, Smith decouples friendship from intimacy and uses friendship to understand public spaces where strangers meet. Indeed, there can be no political concept of friendship without this conceptual move. However, Smith's approach to friendship and strangership remains weak and is not political in the sense of being able to question established relations of inequality and exclusion. The connection of inequality to political friendship is not arbitrary, but is inherent in the concept, because the basis of friendship is equality and one cannot wish one's friends, whether personal or political, to be unequal or inferior. The sympathetic identification involved in political friendship must be oriented toward revealing and transforming structural conditions of inequality, and thereby expanding the possibility

of solidarity. Curiously, it is through his social approach to theorizing that Smith is able to develop an account of sympathetic social bonds between strangers in public that would seem to point the way to a genuinely political notion of friendship. At the same time, it is also his overly deterministic, sociocentric approach to social theorizing that prevents him from developing his interpretation of these social bonds in a decidedly political direction. The reason for this is precisely that Smith's social theory empties social inequality of its contingency by naturalizing it and thereby obscuring the mutable character of domination. A critical sociology of friendship can thus draw much from Smith but must ultimately break with the way his sociocentrism naturalizes and forecloses a political approach to inequality.

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Interaction, Indifference, Injustice: Elements of a Normative Theory of Urban Solidarity

Mervyn Horgan

Introduction

Sociologists have long been interested in cities as places where the close proximity of strangers produces particular kinds of social relations, political formations, and social institutions. As social and spatial forms, cities require a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives and methodological tools to tackle their complexity, and urban scholars have worked hard to develop these tools and perspectives over the last century.[1] Clearly, the

This chapter benefitted from audience feedback at the University of Guelph, University of Calgary, York University, St. Francis Xavier University, Acadia University, and at meetings of the Canadian Sociological Association and the American Sociological Association, where various elements of the argument were presented. I also benefitted from discussion of drafts with graduate students in my theory seminars at Acadia University and the University of Guelph. Special thanks to Marcia Oliver and Fuyuki Kurasawa for their close readings and feedback, and to members of Canadian Network for Critical Sociology (CNCS) for their input.

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variety and intensity of urban experience makes available a near endless source of data for novel and recombinatory theorization.

In that spirit, this chapter seeks to expand conversations around the 'right to the city' in critical social scientific scholarship (Lefebvre 1996; Harvey 2003; Mitchell 2003) by connecting the theoretically ambitious and politically progressive but empirically thin and sociologically underground concerns of recognition scholarship in contemporary political thought (Benhabib 2002; Fraser 1997; Taylor 1994) with the narrower focus and sociologically microscopic but politically thin concerns of studies of the 'interaction order' by microsociologists (Goffman 1983; Rawls 2009; Drew and Wootton 1988). Since their explicitly stated goals seem to differ so radically, these literatures are rarely discussed in tandem, but in this chapter I discern some implicitly shared concerns. As a step towards bridging these literatures in order to contribute to critical sociology, I provide some conceptual tools for thinking through the development, sustenance, and dissolution of solidarity between strangers in cities.[2]

My argument operates according to the principle of 'post-paradigmatic agnosticism' (Kurasawa, this volume) that undergirds the theoretical orientation that the CNCS both advocates and practices. This involves bringing microsociological studies of what I call the 'urban interaction order' into conversation with the broader themes of recognition and social justice to be found in political theory. Through this conversation, I advance a position that inspects the existing social order but rather than rejecting it outright (as is the want of orthodox critical theory), I glean glimpses of normatively inflected action in the present. At a general level, my analysis and the claims that I make align in some ways with the 'ideal of city life' offered by Iris Marion Young (1990), and in terms of *political* theory at least, my position most closely approximates Young's. As a contribution to critical *social* theory of the kind that the CNCS seeks to advance, my analysis is more sociologically informed but is by no means determined by that discipline's boundaries (Kurasawa, this volume).

Today, at more than any time in human history, dwelling amongst strangers is a basic fact of collective life. Thus, in what follows I treat the city as a *space of strangership* (Horgan 2012). Understanding strangership as characteristic of everyday urban life makes it possible to analyse the

sustenance of social order, and, in line with Young, treat the city in its ideal form, as a social space of assumed equality and respect for difference. I extend Young's claims around the ideal of city life, to argue that the kinds of interactions (and indeed, non-interactions) to be found in cities are infused with a politics and practice of recognition that instantiate solidarity, albeit in a relatively weak and subtle form—what I call *soft solidarity*. I use this term in contrast to 'hard' solidarity, in an equivalent way to the distinction that is made between the 'hard' and 'soft' sciences. The 'hard' sciences are explicitly nomothethic and privilege empirically verifiable data as the means by which to uncover direct—often causal—ties between persons, objects, phenomena and categories rendered as variables with a particular *value*. Similarly, I use the term 'hard solidarity' to refer to the kinds of collective formations whose existence is empirically verifiable and whose activity is explicitly oriented to the achievement of specific external goals. In general, hard solidarity involves some degree of formally institutionalized boundedness (think, for example, of sports teams in competition, armies at war, and unions organizing for strike action), where the orientation of interactants and the organization of interaction is towards an object that is exogenous to the interaction. The form of solidarity dealt with in this chapter, 'soft solidarity,' operates according to different principles. As with the soft sciences, soft solidarity is less amenable to quantification, it revolves more around *values* than value. More specifically, I use this term to refer to the implicit sense of membership in a collective that emerges amongst copresent individuals through very loosely shared understandings (rather than knowledge) and generalized experience (rather than specifically goal-oriented behaviour) that are necessarily unarticulated but which can be discerned though interpretive analysis. It is a form of loose boundedness that does not necessitate formal institutions but rather is always and only informally negotiated in situ. For the purposes of this chapter, 'soft solidarity' makes collective life amongst copresent strangers possible—and sometimes even pleasurable.[3]

This chapter sketches the internal organization of what I call the *urban interaction order* by formulating strangership as a core element of urban sociation and social order. The urban interaction order rests on consistently patterned demonstrations of soft solidarity, which depend on what I

call *minimal mutual recognition*. I explain how the city's basic interactional form—mutual indifference—is constitutive of the urban interaction order and counter-intuitively, how, since it is dependent on minimal mutual recognition, this interactional form can be interpreted as a kind of urban solidarity. Following Alexander, I take it that '[j]ustice depends on solidarity' (2006: 13; see also, Kymlicka 1995: 173–174), and so the kind of soft solidarity that I discern in everyday urban life can, I argue, also be read as a basic precondition for justice. I conclude by proposing that contexts where minimal mutual recognition is absent give interactional grounding and expression to structural inequality, thus mitigating against possibilities for achieving urban social justice. Put more forcefully, I claim that the absence or elision of minimal mutual recognition is both symptomatic and constitutive of injustice. Consequently, I propose that without minimal mutual recognition, urban social justice will remain illusive.

To be clear, I am guided by a search for the minimal conditions that demonstrate solidarity and so make justice possible. These are by no means the conditions under which solidarity and justice flourish but are rather the conditions under which solidarity is at least demonstrably present, and thus some modicum of justice *may* be achieved. My focus on discerning these conditions in everyday life derives from a phenomenologically grounded sociology which posits that any adequate theory of social reality must account for, and treat as foundational, 'the paramount reality of the *Lebenswelt*' (Schutz 1959: 96).

As outlined above, the conceptual underpinnings of my argument involve identifying a lacuna that exists between political thought and microsociology, two literatures that are very rarely read alongside one another. More specifically, I tease out some complementarities between contemporary liberal and critical political philosophy and political theory, on the one hand, and studies of the micro-foundations of social order in the sociology of everyday life, on the other.[4] But before entering the breach between political philosophy and microsociology in order to propose new foundations for critical sociology, I will first provide some context from the particular socio-spatial milieu—the ground—out of which grew the abstract formulations of relatively mundane social processes that form the main body of my argument.

Differentiation and Indifference

While conducting research on the cultural effects of rapid economic change at the neighbourhood level, I became particularly interested in the lived experiences of people in gentrifying areas. The characteristic spatial organization of gentrifying neighbourhoods tends to magnify structural divides by bringing socially differentiated populations in to close physical proximity with one another. The neighbourhood that I studied, Parkdale, is in Toronto, Canada's largest and most diverse urban centre and a second-tier global city that is North America's fifth largest city (after Mexico City, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago). Located in Toronto's West End, Parkdale has had some notoriety since the mid-1970s for its high density of ex-psychiatric patients, rooming houses, and, more recently, for its gentrification (see Whitzman 2009). Compared to Toronto, more generally, Parkdale traditionally has had a disproportionate number of rooming houses and other forms of subdivided houses since the mid-twentieth century (Whitzman 2009: 137). The most contentious part of the neighbourhood is South Parkdale, where such buildings were once abundant but where clear demographic changes have occurred over the last 15 years.[5] As part of my ethnographic work, between 2006 and 2008, I conducted a series of interviews with area residents, business owners, and service providers. Among these were semi-structured interviews with homeowners who had moved into the South Parkdale area since 2002. Going in to these interviews, I was interested in instances of interaction between roomers and property owners, hoping (naively perhaps) to find evidence of positive cross-class interaction (Caulfield 1989)—maybe even friendship—between precariously housed renters in rooming houses and new middle-class homeowners buying and deconverting those same rooming houses. Between December 2006 and August 2008, I carried out 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews, and out of these interviews, something altogether different emerged. In the course of my interviews, I began to discern a very particular kind of invocation of the term 'neighbour,' a narrative mobilization of the term as a form of boundary production and maintenance that afforded recognition to some residents while denying it to others. The quotations that follow

demonstrate this, and I want to draw attention to the particular ways that the term 'neighbour' figures here as this bears on the conceptual elaboration that follows.

> *Dave*: 'the neighbours, the direct neighbour relation thing is amazing […] our neighbours are great – you know they are the same kind of people as you'
> *Sally*: 'it's kind of a weird mix for us, 'cause had we not had such great neighbours I'm not sure if we could have handled living here'
> *Lisa*: 'well, I mean, you know you have to be really open minded to live in this type of neighbourhood, so all of the people who live in your neighbourhood are of the same nature'
> *Maggie*: 'if you're buying here the chances are that your neighbours are exactly like you'

While my interviews with middle-class homeowners who were new to the neighbourhood were wide ranging—dealing with, among other things, property markets, sweat equity, zoning issues, schools, parks, and restaurants—curiously absent from our discussions of neighbours was a large proportion of a specific category of their actual physical neighbours, namely, rooming house residents. Of the four interviewees quoted above, three lived on the same block as a rooming house and two of these lived within three properties of a rooming house, yet they did not count residents of rooming houses among their neighbours. Relations between rooming house residents and new property owners exemplify the mixture of physical proximity and social distance that characterizes the stranger as formulated by Simmel (1971). While rooming house residents may be neighbours in a purely physical sense (in that they live in physically proximate properties), in a social sense, rooming house residents are distant.

The cultivation of an implicit distinction between neighbour and rooming house resident emerged only in the act of narrating a sense of who is close and who is not, who is recognized as a neighbour, and who is, symbolically at least, erased. In this neighbourhood, property owners have been displacing rooming house residents consistently and at an accelerating pace over the last decade and a half (PNLT 2017). Though not necessarily a representative sample, the new property owners that I interviewed either ignored this pattern of displacement or only abstractly

made reference to it. For example, in other parts of my interviews, where we discussed the act of renovation, all of my interviewees focused on the physical labour involved in renovating a former rooming house to make it into a single family home, and only one made any mention of the fact that anywhere between 6 and 18 people had been displaced. Rooming house residents figured only as present absences.

Needless to say, rooming house residents were not unaware of the patterns of purchase and displacement that came to characterize the neighbourhood through the first decade of the 2000s. Robert, a long-term neighbourhood resident who moved regularly between rooming houses, put it best: 'roomers', he said, 'are becoming rumours'.

I ask the reader to keep the above in mind as we move from this small glimpse at specific interview data from a gentrifying neighbourhood to a conceptualization of the city's 'interactional landscape' (Horgan 2013: 189–190) in the abstract, where life is necessarily lived amongst strangers, where affective ties are coeval with relations of mutual indifference, and, as I will show, where indifference, when it is unevenly and asymmetrically distributed and enacted, gives us analytic and normative purchase on questions of solidarity and, thus, of justice.

Conceptual Contributions

Let us shift back, then, from the specifics of this urban neighbourhood to the broader theoretical context in which this chapter intervenes. As I suggested at the outset, the theoretical impetus for this chapter derives from my desire to connect two very different literatures: on one side, the relatively esoteric and narrow domain of microsociology, concerned with detailed phenomenological description of the mundane (Goffman 1963, 1983; Rawls 2009; Schutz 1967), and on the other, the big questions of solidarity, justice, and inclusion that form part of the broader concerns of recognition scholarship in liberal and critical political thought over the last quarter century (Fraser 1997, 2001, 2009; Honneth 1996, 2007; Kymlicka 1995; Taylor 1994). To produce an adequately robust and experientially verifiable theory of justice, I draw on conceptual foundations from these unlikely bedfellows. Lacing together the lofty ambitions

of justice-oriented political thought with the quotidian obsessions of microsociology will, I believe, serve a range of theoretical, disciplinary, and substantive purposes—notably for critical sociology.

First, theoretically, I broaden the traditionally narrow specializations of microsociology by demonstrating how they can be used to both animate and problematize abstract political thought. Put differently, this chapter takes contemporary recognition scholarship, all too often concerned with formal mechanisms and procedural justice, and gives it some sociological grounding—and thus a thicker social foundation—in the mundane realities of the everyday experience of urban life. This theoretical contribution feeds into a second set of contributions in terms of the discipline of sociology in the Canadian context. My aspirations here concern the division of both intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary labour. While English Canada has a tradition of diverse kinds of microsociology (Michalko 2002; Prus 1996; Shaffir and Stebbins 1991; van den Hoonaard 2012),[6] it is largely overshadowed by the macro-level concerns of stratification research and the political economy of technology, health, and work that have been ascendant throughout the discipline's national history (Armstrong et al. 2001; Clement and Myles 1994; Innis 1962; Porter 1968; Watkins 1992). And though the dominant strand of Québécois sociology has paid close attention to culture, the orientation has been largely towards macro-level articulations of the core socio-cultural traits of Québécois society and national identity (Dumont 1993; Rioux 1987). When everyday life *is* taken seriously in Canadian sociology, it is treated as a source of examples and iterations of the intrusion of the state or broader structural forces into everyday life (Braedley and Luxton 2010; Cormack and Cosgrave 2012; Kinsman and Gentile 2010; Rioux et al. 1973; Ruppert 2006; Smith 2005; Valverde 2012). Everyday life amongst strangers beyond formal institutions is rarely treated as a source of data to be analysed, or a thing to be theorized in its own right, and even less so as a social site where we might learn about solidarity.[7] Thus, I offer an *intra*disciplinary corrective by theorizing the production, maintenance, and dissolution of solidarity through some ordinary dimensions of everyday life amongst strangers in cities.

In addition, I work in an *inter*disciplinary way at the interstices of social and political theory. At the fuzzy boundaries of the discipline, we encounter internationally recognized Canadian political philosophers and

theorists (Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka, and, to some extent, Michael Ignatieff), who are clearly of relevance to sociologists, but who make little or no reference in their works to sociological findings nor for that matter explicitly reference much social (or sociological) theory. While their work is overarchingly concerned with governance of the political sphere, it is also implicitly concerned with social order and solidarity, which are arguably the founding concerns of sociology. Their focus on the conceptual underpinnings of governance, policy, and proceduralism, and the development of formal means for protecting and expanding rights and solidarity has much to recommend it, but the lived experience and production of solidarity in everyday life has been neglected as a thing to be theorized and a base from which to develop general concepts in Canadian social and political theory.[8]

In addition to these theoretical, intradisciplinary, and interdisciplinary contributions, I also offer a third contribution of a more substantive nature. This chapter takes seriously urban public spaces as the sites and scenes where encounters between strangers happen ceaselessly, and in so doing, seeks out iterations of soft solidarity in everyday life. I demonstrate how mundane life provides a grounding from which to think anew about how we might go about refusing solidarity and justice without losing sight of the experiential level at which we actually live our lives amongst unknown others. While the range and scope of these contributions may appear to be ambitious, they develop directly out of an ongoing interest in giving sociological flesh to the dry bones of abstract political thought.

Rethinking Recognition: Sociology at the Limits of Political Philosophy

As the twentieth century drew to a close, many social and political philosophers and theorists working in the critical tradition moved towards consideration of the extent to which the redistributive claims towards which those concerned with social justice had oriented themselves over the previous century could not, on their own, lead to the sort of justice we desire in the present. As I outline below, many contemporary critical thinkers recognize that redistributive claims alone, if fulfilled, will not

enact justice in a substantive way. Most notably, Honneth (1996) has returned to Hegel (1807) to argue for the need to take recognition seriously as a principle of justice. More broadly, exploring the confluences and contradictions between redistribution and recognition has uncovered an incredibly rich vein of philosophical inquiry that takes up groundbreaking work by Fraser (1997), Honneth (1996, 2007), Fraser and Honneth (2003), and Taylor (1994), builds upon it, critiques it, and brings it in new directions.[9] Somewhat more grounded recognition scholarship seeking to organize, inform, and reorient state policy has also burgeoned (Kymlicka 1995; Habermas 1994, 2002; Taylor 1994).[10] These works attempt to parlay insights from political philosophy in the abstract into an emphasis on the formal-legal means by which recognition might be enacted through state policy. This particularly rich tradition has brought international attention to Canadian scholarship in political theory.

To understand the operations of recognition across broad swaths of social life, Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition* (1996: 92–130), develops a comprehensive theory of recognition at three scales: the purely intersubjective level ('love'), the level of the community ('solidarity'), and the level of the state ('rights'). While his theory is internally consistent, he does not provide for a concrete understanding of the intersubjective achievement of recognition between *strangers*. Love and solidarity appear as primarily affective and rights as formally institutionalized. More importantly, Honneth deems these to be *explicitly* articulated. Thus, he does not provide an account of the kind of recognition that may be discerned between copresent strangers in everyday urban life.[11] Recognition, then, remains a philosophical bone awaiting sociological flesh.

While few empirically minded sociologists and anthropologists have explicitly taken up the question of recognition as a theoretical concern, some have begun to connect misrecognition with the problems of social suffering more generally. For these social scientists, misrecognition provides a lens through which to avoid the twin pitfalls of an overly particularistic, reductivist, and asocially psychologistic description of pain and the metaphysical abstraction of suffering into a mere existential condition deriving from the very fact of our living in a world of others. Here, the concept of social suffering provides a tool for the thick description

and interpretation of marginality and exclusion and of the ordinary ways in which suffering is both socially produced and experienced. By using social suffering as a sensitizing concept—which I take to be philosophically underpinned by an implicit understanding of the centrality of recognition to social justice—many sociologists and anthropologists have found themselves capable of mining a rich vein of research through their traditional methods of participant observation and in-depth interviews.[12] In these works, social suffering appears as a consequence of domination and exclusion, whether through neoliberal welfare state restructuring, the rapid erasure of the traditional manufacturing bases of Western working class employment, and claims that historical wrongs ought to be forgotten. While some of this work does not claim to be explicitly about recognition, studies of social suffering may be interpreted as a cipher for attesting to the salience of misrecognition in contextualizing persistent, socially produced emiseration.[13]

What, though, of mundane experience? Recent work on the everyday lived experience of multiculturalism examines the development of informal and negotiated solidarities in urban neighbourhoods through, for example, street markets and leisure activities, identifying 'transversal practices […] that foster everyday relationships across cultural difference in multicultural settings' (Wise 2009: 21). This kind of work is richly descriptive and, through fine-grained ethnographic work, motions towards a theory of solidarity (see also, Wise and Velayutham 2009; Lamont and Aksartova 2002; Oosterlynck et al. 2017). That said, because it focuses on the development of warm affective bonds between urban dwellers who were once strangers to one another, this work tells us little about the genesis and course of solidarity between strangers in everyday urban life. What is lacking is an understanding of solidarity production and dissolution as a generalized social process that connects recognition to the world of everyday life amongst strangers *qua* strangers.

To reiterate, then, the argument presented here is informed by political science's concern with formal legal institutions, the abstractions of political philosophy, the thick descriptions of social suffering, on the one hand, and ties of friendship across cultural difference, on the other hand, within empirically focused scholarship in the social sciences. To develop this argument, I turn to the mundane practices of everyday life amongst

strangers in urban settings and connect these to broader theoretical questions around recognition. By forcing a conceptual confluence between the abstractions of liberal and critical political thought and the naturalistic study of face-to-face interaction, we are provided with an opportunity to theorize recognition between solidarity and strangership. To do this, I want to demonstrate how ordinary social contexts—in particular, everyday life in the city—are infused with recognition of the most mundane kind between strangers. I examine ordinary forms of recognition, those forms that found the interactional dynamics that permeate, preserve, and protect the state of ordinariness in the city—what I call the urban interaction order. Partially a critical sociology of everyday life, informed by but not restricted to the scope of microsociological scholarship, the approach proposed here theorizes how recognition is threaded through mundane everyday life in cities, and thus how this most ordinary kind of recognition demonstrates the persistence of some form of social solidarity, even when the latter is apparently absent. To do this, I give phenomenological grounding to recognition scholarship, and I draw out the under-excavated normative potential of microsociological studies of the interaction order.[14] This will sketch out an understanding of what the everyday life worlds of recognition look like, how they operate, and how they might be cultivated and supported. Thus, my account is institutionally thin in terms of formal proscriptions but interactionally thick in that it takes seriously contexts and contents of face-to-face interaction.

In what follows, I work through a cluster of concepts that assist in linking the most mundane practices and experiences of everyday urban life amongst strangers to the abstract philosophical formulations of recognition as a key dimension of social existence. In so doing, we can begin to distil the interactional mechanisms that produce, maintain, and dissolve solidarity under conditions of strangership. In the next section, I tease out three interrelated sociological concepts that anchor the next move in my argument: the urban interaction order, mutual indifference, and anonymity. Then, I will introduce the concept of non-mutual indifference as the *absence* or *denial* of recognition before outlining the principle of minimal mutual recognition through which vernacular forms of solidarity—and thus also justice—are enacted daily. Let us now turn to theorizing some basic interactional processes.

Micro-Foundations: Anonymity, Mutual Indifference, and the Urban Interaction Order

This section examines how the *urban interaction order* is upheld through a symbiotic relationship of sorts between *mutual indifference* and *anonymity*. These terms are very much interconnected, so I distinguish them for heuristic purposes to the extent that doing so provides us with some useful ways to think anew about the fertile interactional space of the city. I will first deal briefly with anonymity and the urban interaction order, before moving to a more detailed discussion of mutual indifference.

I define *anonymity* as the condition or state of being unknown to others. While anonymity is an individual state, its genesis is wholly social and its sustenance is wholly situational. Being unknown is the condition of being unknown *to* or *by* someone: anonymity is always already social. Of particular interest here is the work that anonymity does in everyday urban life, especially as it relates to the most ubiquitous form of association we find in cities, that between strangers.

The *urban interaction order* refers to the order produced by and through the everyday copresence of strangers in cities. I call this an order for the simple reason that it is organized in ways that make ordinary urban life possible in the first place and because it is structured by specifiable principles and regularities of functioning. This order exists independently of sociological analysis.[15] In line with the Durkheimian conception of the *sui generis* character of social reality and with ethnomethodological convention (Garfinkel 1967), I treat this order as an emergent feature of everyday social interactions between strangers and the generalized (but always tentative) stabilization of collective expectations around coordination and cooperation. This order is, of course, rule governed, even if its rules are implicit and are not necessarily formally articulated by ordinary members, except when these rules are breached. If breached, sanctions emerge from within that order rather than being imposed from without.[16] With this concept, I draw on the later Goffman's famous iteration of the 'interaction order,' whereby he foregrounds the centrality of social interaction and posits the 'face-to-face domain as an analytically viable one—a domain which might be titled, for want of any happy name, the

interaction order.' This, he says, can be treated 'as a substantive domain in its own right' (1983: 2). It is worth quoting Goffman at length here:

> It is a fact of our human condition that, for most of us, our daily life is spent in the immediate presence of others; in other words, that whatever they are, our doings are likely to be, in the narrow sense, socially situated […] the fact of social situatedness can be expected to have some consequence, albeit sometimes apparently very minor. These consequences have traditionally been treated as "effects," that is, as indicators, expressions or symptoms of social structures such as relationships, informal groups, age grades, gender, ethnic minorities, social classes and the like, with no great concern to treat these effects as data in their own terms (Idem).

Goffman continues:

> Once individuals—for whatever reason—come into one another's immediate presence, a fundamental condition of social life becomes enormously pronounced, namely, its promissory, evidential character. It is not only that our appearance and manner provide evidence of our statuses and relationships. It is also that the line of our visual regard, the intensity of our involvement, and the shape of our initial actions, allow others to glean our immediate intent and purpose, and all this whether or not we are engaged in talk with them at the time (Idem).

The interaction order is the situated social space within which we encounter one another in every part of our lives when we are copresent with others; it is a fact of collective life. Like Goffman, I afford primacy to the interactions *between* copresent individuals rather than individual-level characteristics. Whereas Goffman speaks of the interaction order in general, under analysis here is the *urban* interaction order.[17] My addition of the modifier *urban* serves to specify a particular spatial and experiential domain that draws from those who populate and sustain it a range of personal adjustments and orientations, not necessarily generalizable to Goffman's more all-encompassing interaction order. The urban interaction order is a more specific subset, involving the assortment of unceasing yet very ordinary and taken-for-granted encounters between anonymous individuals who are strangers to one another in cities. A focus on the

urban trains attention on the ostensibly weaker, or at least more abstract, bases for solidarity that we find in cities—what Durkheim (1964) calls conditions of organic solidarity. I attend to interaction to see if we might discover how solidarity between strangers inhabits everyday urban life. More broadly, the study of interaction orders provides us with 'a means and a reason to examine diverse societies comparatively, and our own historically' (Goffman 1983: 2).

Anonymity and the urban interaction order are, of course, inextricably linked—the former is more or less essential for the sustenance of the latter. The question then remains as to what interactional mechanisms and processes maintain anonymity. The answer here lies in the specific form of orientation to others that characterizes and sustains the urban interaction order, what both Durkheim (1964: 298) and Simmel (1971: 334) call *mutual indifference*. This term has two elements: first, indifference, which is to be uninterested in, unconcerned with, or unmoved by the presence of other persons and, second, mutuality, which implies a shared orientation or a kind of reciprocity. These two different—but not opposed—terms significantly modify one another, so that mutual indifference is an attribute of social relationships in which both parties recognize one another but only in a vague or generalized (non-specific) way.

If anonymity is a socially sustained individual state diffused throughout the urban interaction order, then I take mutual indifference to be the core characteristic of social relationships between anonymous individuals that sustains that order. More than this, mutual indifference is the relational mechanism by which both anonymity and the urban interaction order are maintained. In sum, then, anonymity is individually experienced but socially and situationally sustained. The urban interaction order is supra-individual but dependent on individuals in general for its sustenance. And mutual indifference is an entirely intersubjective achievement; that is, it exists *only* in and through interaction.

In mutual indifference, we find a social relationship (Weber 1968: 27–28), albeit a somewhat confounding one. In cities, strangers are complicit in agreeing to only interact in an aloof, disattentive way (Lofland 1973: 155). Indeed, part of learning to become comfortable in a city involves learning how to negotiate the unspoken agreement that, for the most part, spatial proximity will not lead to overt social contact. What

Goffman famously called 'civil inattention' (1963: 83–88) is the individual orientation required to secure the specifically urban relationships of mutual indifference—what I call strangership.

As an implicit pact between individuals to not engage one another as specific individuals, mutual indifference then establishes a social relationship that demonstrates to us that even amongst anonymous individuals, some modicum of social solidarity can be discerned. This is not to imply that cities are perfect social forms whose interaction order should be taken as a guide for all but rather that the collective maintenance of the urban interaction order suggests to us that even the most apparently alienating or isolating places do harbour some kind of social solidarity. Such solidarity is based on the complicity of urban dwellers in working to make it apparent that they are indifferent to one another, a 'minimal courtesy' (Goffman 1963: 84) that is jointly offered and mutually honoured.[18] This both sustains their anonymity and upholds the urban interaction order. Mutual indifference, then, is a necessary but insufficient basis for solidarity in a society of strangers.

Mutuality is, of course, key to social solidarity in more intimate settings, but for a moment I want to delve a little deeper into the work that indifference does by specifying some of its operations in urban settings. Mutual indifference works at two levels, at least: that of the individual and that of the collective. At an individual level, indifference is borne in large part out of the dominance of instrumental rationality as a response to the experiential and interactional density of city space. It is in this sense functional, since:

> [t]he greater the extension and the greater the density of a group, the greater the dispersion of collective attention over a wide area. Thus, it [the group] is incapable of following the movements of each individual […] The watch is less piercing because there are too many people and too many things to watch. (Durkheim 1964: 298)

Similarly, for Simmel, indifference is a necessary individual attitude given the potentially overwhelming nature of urban experience, what he calls 'the intensification of nervous stimulation' (1950: 410). As found in Durkheim and Simmel, indifference is one part—an important part, but

still only *one* part—of the repertoire of dispositions best suited to the intensity of urban life. In this respect, relations with anonymous individuals *must* mostly be characterized by indifference.

At the level of the collective, as I have suggested, mutual indifference gives us the basis for urban social order. Rather than bringing us towards disintegration and disorder, the ability of individuals to live and persist among strangers makes city life possible in the first place. The capacity for copresence amongst strangers is foundational to the modern city's existence and persistence as a social form. It is the generalized distribution and diffusion of this capacity across the social space of the city that gives social solidarity in the city its peculiar character. Individual action and social interaction within the urban interaction order are organized by an implicitly shared commitment to the maintenance of that order.[19] As an interactional mechanism, then, mutual indifference is essential to the generic social process by which the urban interaction order is collectively produced.

What, on the face of it, appears as individual inaction addresses not only other social actors but also expresses a shared commitment to the collective production and protection of individuality and anonymity through mutual indifference. As I have suggested, the abundance of copresent strangers in urban environments makes for a particular kind of interaction order. Simmel (1971: 143) states that the stranger is physically close but socially distant. She is one who is both far and near, a generalized part of the city's social landscape whose particularity is irrelevant and/or ignored. Similarly, drawing on Goffman, Lofland notes that strangers are 'categorically identifiable' (1973: 29); they are, by definition, not oriented to in their particularity. In thinking about mutual indifference, then, we are oriented in the most general way to the stranger, for the stranger is one to whom we are indifferent. Thus, the urban interaction order is constituted by the cluster of orientations of indifference that strangers both organize around and organize amongst themselves.

However, where mutuality presupposes a principle of symmetry—if not structural, at least interactional—not all urban social relations can be said to be organized around this principle. Thus, we need to consider the phenomenon of asymmetrical recognition.

Asymmetrical Recognition: From Mutual to Non-mutual Indifference

As I have demonstrated above, mutual indifference and anonymity are very much intertwined. Anonymity protects individual freedom by making possible a wider range of personal expression, but it simultaneously creates the means by which individuality is glossed over. While anonymity may seem to negate what we usually think of as social solidarity, it is in fact an important element in sustaining urban social solidarity. Anonymity simultaneously is the condition of being in the midst of the many and being alone; it permits greater individual freedom yet because we are treated categorically rather than individually (Goffman 1983; Lofland 1973), it is also the near total erasure of our individuality.

At the danger of making ordinary interaction disappear in the mists of abstraction, let us backtrack a little to distil some key elements of the relationship between mutual indifference and anonymity. First, anonymity is a state or a condition, whereas mutual indifference is a shared orientation. If anonymity is the condition of urban life, mutual indifference is its mechanism. Second, our mutual indifference to one another makes anonymity possible, so for anonymity to be maintained, mutual indifference must also be maintained. It follows from this that anonymity and mutual indifference make one another possible, that neither is prior to the other. This being the case, they must also be in some way mutually conditioning. If each is a prerequisite for the existence of the other, then it follows that the presence of one impacts the other.

Treating mutual indifference as the basis for ordinary everyday life in the city is both compelling and plausible. We can hardly disagree with the claim that anonymity is diffused throughout the social space of the city or that mutual indifference is significant in upholding the urban interaction order. After all, we are dealing with interaction of a kind that we unceasingly encounter in cities; it both draws us to the latter as sites for the expansion of individuality and brings us to seek refuge from them as sites that appear indifferent to individual difference.

Couched in Simmelian sociology, these observations may be persuasive, but they speak only to an idealized kind of interaction, as the object

of an abstract and somewhat dissociated formal sociology of the urban interaction order—merely the aestheticization of social forms, where the analyst seeks to abstract form from myriad contents, attending only to perfecting the theoretical articulation of the form and shying away from the variety of its instantiations.[20] Forms only have autonomy as analytic objects in the social world. Their contents make things a bit messier. And so, while interesting as an exercise in theoretical development, formal examination of the means by which the urban interaction order is maintained leaves too much unquestioned. While mutual indifference may characterize mundane everyday urban life, the city is also a site for the intensification of structural inequality, particularly because, as discussed above, sharp structural differences frequently dwell together in close physical proximity in cities. The urban interaction order also depends upon constant bracketing of the range of disparities that the city exposes. What can be said of mutual indifference here? Needless to say, indifference is not always mutual, and I want to posit that the intensification of structural inequality in contemporary cities around the globe mitigates against the kind of mutuality that is favourable to the production and maintenance of solidarity. More pointedly, the need to explore the role of indifference, mutual or otherwise, in sustaining, justifying, and advancing injustice cannot be ignored.

Non-mutual indifference is also characteristic of the city. It is evident in situations where structural inequalities become pronounced. Returning to the interviews quoted at the outset of this chapter, one can recall that middle-class homeowners expressed some affection for and affinity with their neighbours but clearly used this term—neighbours—to refer to others like them and not to rooming house residents. Consider the kind of interactional life commensurate with the disappearance of rooming house residents from the narratives of new property owners. With this in mind, we might then posit that urban social relations between strangers operate on a continuum between mutual and non-mutual indifference, where the degree of mutuality corresponds to the extent to which each party both benefits from and is complicit in sustaining indifference. Indifference is mutual if it permits each to go about their everyday lives unencumbered by the other; it is non-mutual, or asymmetrical, if one party is negatively impacted in the course of the other's indifference. Structural forces exoge-

nous to an interaction do, of course, influence its course and its contents, but they alone do not determine whether or not any specific relation is to be characterized by mutual or non-mutual indifference.

Across all of the interviews that I conducted, when gentrifiers talked about their *neighbours*, they used the term almost exclusively for other residents who own property. This was the case regardless of duration of residency, ethnicity, sexuality, or marital status. For gentrifiers, neighbours form an elective community of like-minded people with similar structural positioning, living in spatial proximity, who share some sort of friendly relations with one another. But as the interview quotations show, spatial proximity alone does not mean that residents become neighbours. While gentrifiers and the marginally housed remain, for now at least, copresent in the neighbourhood, relations between them appear to be characterized by non-mutual indifference. Structural differences trump spatial proximity in maintaining the boundaries that are created and sustained through non-mutual indifference. The 'interactional landscape' (Horgan 2013: 189–190) of this neighbourhood may be said to be threaded through with non-mutual indifference. It may be that this is a unique case, though this is unlikely, and we can expect that urban contexts characterized by structural inequalities are also sites of non-mutual indifference.[21]

My assertion, then, is that relationships between roomers and gentrifiers in the above example are characterized by non-mutual indifference; while roomers are physically close, gentrifiers are largely indifferent to them, even though the actions of these gentrifiers have profound effects on their lives. In this case, indifference can only operate in one direction. Generally, indifference is productive in two respects: on the one hand, mutual indifference is a necessary condition for the urban interaction order, and on the other, indifference, when characterized by asymmetry, (re)produces the city as an exclusionary social form. Non-mutual indifference, then, operates as an interactional form of structural injustice, which is not to say that the former unidirectionally causes the latter but rather that non-mutual indifference is symptomatic of existing structural injustice and partially constitutive of persistent injustice. In short, non-mutual indifference bolsters and extends existing injustices, both structural and situational.

Embedded in mutual indifference is a kind of mutual recognition, albeit low intensity and weak or what I will call minimal. The mutual

indifference upon which the urban interaction order rests is generally unproblematic, in the sense that the goals of a mutually indifferent relation are reached when problems do not arise, when nothing intervenes to alter that relation, when this mutual indifference benefits, is desired by, or is necessary to both parties. If indifference is mutual, then the generic social processes and interactional mechanisms that uphold the urban interaction order are in operation. Conversely, if indifference is non-mutual, one individual or group is disproportionately impacted by the indifference of the other individual or group. In this sense, non-mutual indifference produces a situational inequality that propagates and reinforces structural inequality. In the example of the gentrifying neighbourhood, while there are obvious differences in the formal-legal rights that accrue to owners versus renters, there is also a 'softer'—in the sense of more subtle but nonetheless powerful—kind of inequality that plays out in the relations between them. An existing inequality is not just supplemented but extended through non-mutual indifference. Non-mutual indifference, then, can operate as a 'sensitizing concept' (Blumer 1954) that opens up some ways for sociologists to think through and elaborate the connections between ordinary interaction, recognition, and injustice.

Soft Solidarity and Minimal Mutual Recognition

Mutual indifference is held together at its core by a fundamental equality between city dwellers; those who are mutually indifferent to one another are complicit, with their relationships, if not structurally symmetrical, being at least interactionally so. But this is the case only so long as their indifference is mutual. I began with the simple assertion that mutual indifference is a necessary condition of urban life, and out of this I want to conclude with two more pointed assertions. First, *indifference is only just when it is mutual*. When indifference ceases to be mutual, its potential for the development of individuality and expanding social solidarity is diminished. Non-mutual indifference reproduces and sustains existing inequalities and produces new ones. It depends on fundamentally asymmetrical orientations which severely undermine and even sever those

bonds, however weak or abstract, upon which social solidarity depends. Solidarity is absent where an asymmetry of structural positions overrides and/or mitigates against the mutuality of orientations that necessarily characterize the urban interaction order. When indifference ceases to be mutual—when it is non-mutual or asymmetrical—then the principle of mutual recognition key to urban social solidarity in particular, and to social solidarity more broadly, is lost.

Connecting this first assertion to the earlier claim that justice depends on solidarity, I make a second assertion: *the principle of minimal mutual recognition is essential* not only to the urban interaction order, but more pointedly *to any conception of just social relations amongst copresent strangers*. As the relational mechanism upholding the urban interaction order, mutual indifference can be considered to be a kind of mutual recognition. Mutual indifference enacts a social bond, which, although minimal, nonetheless rests upon a base level of reciprocated recognition. However vague this recognition appears to be, those who are mutually indifferent implicitly collaborate in demonstrating their solidarity and thus also in creating and upholding a social relationship that is just—even if this is a thin project or sense of justice.

Mutual indifference is the active interactional negotiation, achievement, and sustenance of recognition under conditions of strangership. It animates social relationships characterized by a minimal recognition that is reciprocated; thus, we can say that mutual indifference relies upon this principle of *minimal mutual recognition*. A degree of collusion—in the sense of a secret and implicit collaboration—is necessary between those who are mutually indifferent to one another, whereby they implicitly agree to provide one another with minimal recognition: strangers conspire—*con-spire*, literally, breathe together—to be mutually indifferent and consequently, to collectively produce an ordinary, street-level, soft solidarity.

Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to show how close sociological attention to some basic elements of urban interaction between strangers can both ground and give greater social weight to the abstract philosophical

formulations of recognition as a key dimension of social justice. Centring my analysis on mutuality in relations between strangers, the sociocentric account offered here treats the intersections of normative and analytic concerns as conceptually generative. In line with the commitment to theoretical pluralism found in the CNCS's version of critical sociology, my argument involved working across two seemingly unrelated literatures—recognition scholarship and microsociology—to see where and how emerging complementarities could move our understanding of mundane enactments of solidarity and justice forward. On the one hand, I fleshed out the ethical and political implications of a microsociology that is too often insensitive to structural stratification and on the other, I elaborated the actualities of recognition as it is offered and honoured, or distorted and denied, across the shared and variegated experiences of everyday urban life. More specifically, I analysed the functioning of mutual indifference in everyday urban life to show how it forms a key element of social solidarity between strangers.

All too often, analyses of recognition at the intersubjective level treat it as a kind of empathic identification that is seen as central to the social bond, for example, in the strongest kind of recognition that we find in intimate relations and love. While I do not oppose this formulation as it provides a deeply meaningful foundation for friendship, I do find it to be somewhat blinkered in assuming that this kind of intersubjective recognition is or ought to be a model for social relations more generally. If friendship is characterized by love, strangership is characterized by indifference. If strangership is the characteristic social relation of an increasingly urban planet, then it is clear that we need to understand and take seriously the social life of indifference. In this spirit, I treated indifference as a kind of social distanciation that depends on the capacity to give another just enough recognition, a minimal engagement, but without deeper interference.

How, then, might we recover a place for indifference within an analytic orientation centred on solidarity and a normative one centred on justice? Foregrounding intersubjectivity and focusing on indifference in particular does not mean that we cast aside formal-institutional channels for achieving justice. Rather, it means recognizing that formal-institutional means alone cannot guarantee justice and solidarity at the level of

everyday life. Achieving formal justice is essential, but this is not possible if more mundane forms of solidarity are not advanced. The achievement of the former will be barren unless the kind of soft solidarity developed and advocated for here also flourishes. Indifference undoubtedly characterizes everyday urban life, but rather than reject or abhor indifference as inherently unethical, I have argued for the development of a deeper analytic understanding of the way that indifference shapes and directs social action and social relationships and, counter-intuitively, how mutual indifference exhibits and sustains solidarity between persons unknown to one another.

The normative theory outlined here opens up a number of possible conceptual and substantive research projects. For example, tracking the uneven distribution of non-mutual indifference across the social space of the city would give a new lens on the differential unfolding of discriminatory and/or exploitative practices. Similarly, scrutinizing sites where non-mutual indifference prevails, and amongst whom it prevails, will advance our understanding of how local contexts mediate the everyday production and experience of inequality. Clearly, further inquiry into the production and dissolution of mundane forms of solidarity between strangers will help us to strategize in order to tackle the persistence of urban injustice—an indispensible aspect of any form of sociological inquiry identifying as critical.

Notes

1. An exhaustive list of such works would be impossible, but various traditions in urban studies are best exemplified by the following: Castells (1973), Duneier (1999), Harvey (1972), Lefebvre (2003), Park et al. (1967), and Wacquant (2008), among others. Urban studies scholarship in Canada is notable for its focus on socio-spatial inequality (Ley 1996; Dear and Wolch 1987).
2. While some recent work appears to be partially addressed to the apparent gulf separating these literatures (Collins 2008; Thévenot 2006; Latour 2004), these works do not take solidarity *per se* as their object.
3. Hypothetically, human groups of any scale—from the dyad to the global—could be characterized by both hard and soft solidarity simultaneously. This chapter's focus is necessarily narrower, concerned only with

discerning the presence and absence of soft solidarity among copresent strangers in cities.

4. In their work on Goffman as a recognition theorist, Jacobsen (2009) and Jacobsen and Kristiansen (2009) also bring these two literatures into conversation. While most elements of their arguments complement mine, I differ in that I seek to explore the normative implications that emerge out of this conversation, whereas they use it to elaborate a "micro-functionalist" (Jacobsen and Kristiansen 2009: 47) account of social life.
5. Between 1996 and 2001, the mean household income in South Parkdale rose from $30,101 to $36,229, a rise of over 20 % attributable in part to the almost 50 % increase in households with incomes greater than $100,000. Nonetheless, wealthy households remained very much in the minority, with only 1 in 25 South Parkdale households in 2001 reporting incomes above $100,000, compared to two-thirds of households with incomes below $39,999, and over 1 in 8 households with income below $10,000. By 2006, the proportion of households reporting income in excess of $100,000 had increased by one-fifth and about 1 in 8 lived on less than $10,000 per annum, a dollar amount just over half the low-income cut-off for Toronto (City of Toronto 2003; 2007). While these figures do not point to an overnight transformation, they do suggest increased income polarization in the South Parkdale area. Of course, this is not to say that this neighbourhood is unique. Walks and Maaranen (2008) have demonstrated increased income polarization over the period 1971–2001 across the southernmost parts of the city of Toronto and in Montreal and Vancouver.
6. The Qualitative Analysis Conference is the main institutional base for microsociological work in Canada (see qualitatives.ca).
7. It is worth pointing out that strands of feminist thought have long drawn on everyday life as both a source of data to be theorized *and* as ground from which to build solidarity (Milan Women's Bookstore Collective 1990 (see especially 81–107); Smith 1987).
8. Indigenous scholars in Canada have problematized the proceduralist focus of Canadian political philosophy by calling the entire politics of recognition into question (Coulthard 2007).
9. For exemplary surveys of the multiple directions that recent recognition scholarship has taken and the lively debates that it has provoked in philosophy, see Deranty et al. (2007), Petherbridge (2011, 2013), and Schmidt am Busch and Zurn (2010).

10. Given that he is better known for his work on the public sphere and communicative action, Habermas is not generally considered a recognition scholar *per se*, but in the works cited above, he deals explicitly with theoretical questions raised by debates around recognition. Similarly, one might argue that Kymlicka does not qualify as a recognition theorist, but here I follow Fraser's (2003: 104n) classification.
11. Phenomenological sociologists draw a conceptual distinction between *consociates*—those with whom we are physically copresent—and *contemporaries*—those who are alive at the same time as us—that may be instructive here (see Schutz 1967, especially 139–214). In my view, Honneth's conception of interpersonal recognition does not adequately account for recognition between consociates who are strangers.
12. Think, for example, of Bourdieu et al.'s dazzling (and devastatingly) comprehensive *Weight of the World* (1999), Wacquant's (2008) comparative study of 'advanced marginality' in the hyperghettos of Chicago and the *banlieux* of Paris, Goffman's (2014) work on the everyday lives of fugitives, Bourgois' (1996) fine-grained analyses of the everyday lives of drug users and dealers in urban America (see also Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), and Scheper-Hughes' (1998) meditations on continued social suffering in post-apartheid South Africa.
13. See, for example, Wacquant (2008: 30–37).
14. It is worth noting that Rawls (2009: 508) views studies of the interaction order as an opportunity for philosophers and sociologists to engage in dialogue around shared theoretical concerns.
15. As Dorothy Smith notes, '[t]he order, coherence, rationality, and sense of social situations and relations are an active work done prior to the presence and observational work of the sociologist' (1987: 90).
16. To be clear, these breaches do not refer to criminal acts that have the potential to draw external sanctions.
17. Rawls (2009, 2012) has demonstrated how the interaction order might be more properly termed the 'constitutive order.' While Rawls' work is not urban based, it does attend to the normative dimensions of everyday life. Conversely, Lofland's (1973, 1998) work is explicitly urban but attends in only the most general way to the normative dimensions of everyday life. The problem, as I see it, is that existing analyses of the interaction order—urban or otherwise—tend to begin and end by describing and analysing its mechanics, whereas I wish to understand the normative dimensions that found and, however tentatively, stabilize it.

18. Goffman distinguishes the mutuality inherent in this kind of civil inattention from the kinds of '"nonperson" treatment' (1963: 84) where interpersonal asymmetries are most pronounced.
19. Those who do not share this commitment are, of course, subject to sanctions for acting in ways that demonstrate a lack of such commitment. While criminal acts may draw legal sanction, many acts are not criminal but still draw sanction of a different kind. This latter kind of sanction is produced in situ, by those involved in or witness to the sanctionable act. I am currently investigating how non-criminal offenses to the urban interaction order make moral discourses available to everyday actors.
20. There is a well-developed literature on formal sociology as the aestheticization of the social world, much of it concerned with Simmel's work. See, for example, Button (2012), Davis (1973), Frisby (1991), and Pels (1999).
21. In her last work, before her premature death, Young analysed this kind of displacement as an implicit legitimation and normalization of structural injustice (2013: 43–52).

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Towards a Sociological Account of Political Agon: (Re)considering the Social Dimensions of Agonal Democracy

Philip Alexander Steiner

Introduction: Antagonistic and Agonal Accounts of Democracy

While the mainstream of democratic theory remains dominated by notions of deliberation, compromise, and consensus (Habermas 1998, 1999; Rawls 1996, 1999; Giddens 2000; Beck 1997), challenges have emerged as part of an alternative paradigm—one that conceptually re-prioritized the political ideal of *agon*. As a small but prominent subset of Western social and political thought, agonal democratic theory contends that it is neither possible nor desirable to eliminate genuine conflict from the realm of politics (Connolly 1991, 1995; Honig 1993, 2009; Tully 1995; Tully and Brett 2006; Hatab 2002; Mouffe 1993, 1998, 2005). Rejecting

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the mainstream of democratic theories which posit one or another form of social consensus or balance of interests among rational agents as the central ideal of the political, proponents of agonal democracy contend that such visions not only misunderstand the core character of 'the political' in both its present and historical forms, but 'put in jeopardy the [very] future of democratic politics' (Mouffe 2005: 7). Instead, drawing on the ancient Greek conception of *agon*—productive conflict between mutually respecting adversaries—agonal democratic theorists advocate an alternative vision of democracy constituted by and through perpetually open contest, and legitimate, though irresolvable, struggle. Yet, while considerable attention has been paid to this interest in agonal democracy (Deveaux 1999; Schaap 2009), existing scholarship has predominantly focused on the ethical, philosophical, and broadly 'political' dimensions of such work. Notwithstanding the importance that concepts such as *ethos, demos, pluralism*, and even *society* have occupied in these emergent perspectives, the role of *the social*—a central preoccupation of critical sociology—has largely been ignored, and where it has been considered, the social dimensions of agonal democracy are generally relegated to a sort of sedentary by-product of the political.

Belonging to the broad genre of critical theory, agonal democratic theory shares some of the core conceptual principles underpinning a critical sociological approach. Central among these is the normative aim of overturning existing systems of inequality and domination. At the heart of a call for agonal democracy is a normative commitment to concurrently defend core democratic principles and to expand notions of inclusivity to new, at times quite radical, heights. From a critical sociological perspective, the potential expansion of a democratic imaginary also resonates with the imperative to pursue reflexive scholarship that advances both academic knowledge and matters of public importance. Despite the problematic treatment of the social, the exploration of agonal democracy in political theory also embodies a significant analytic commitment to the study of democracy and provides a number of insights worth exploring. Understood in the broad context of the ongoing expansion of a neoliberal economic logic into the political sphere, engaging with the undertheorized social dimensions of agonal democratic theory offers a unique opportunity to consider an alternative orientation to the neoliberal

conception of competition and conflict that dominates contemporary socio-political discourse. By challenging the logic of determination in political theory's consideration of agonal democracy, according to which the social is essentially determined by the political, and ultimately rethinking the social by expanding the nascent conceptualizations implicitly underpinning this proposed agonal (re)turn, we are able to begin to ask a distinctive, hitherto ignored, and deeply important sociological question, namely what are the underlying social conditions of possibility for a radically emancipatory democratic order premised on the ideal of political *agon*?

As discussed in the introduction to this collection, the content and character of a critical sociological approach is both multifaceted and subject to debate. For members of the Canadian Network for Critical Sociology, critical sociology today is, in part, characterized by an attempt to question the assumed antithetical nature of conceptual oppositions and productive tensions (between idiographic and nomothetic perspectives, or hermeneutical and structuralist ones, amongst others). This chapter aims to apply this sensibility to another binary, that between the political and the social, in order to simultaneously engage with, challenge, and 'open up' a compelling set of questions about the nature and potential of modern democracy—pointing out, and offering alternatives to, certain exclusions and silences enabled by agonal democratic theorists' dismissal of the social in their normative vision of a new radically inclusive political ethos.

That said, before one can address the question of underlying social conditions of possibility for an agonal democratic ideal, one must consider the theoretical understanding of the social in such perspectives. This task offers its own set of challenges. Despite an overarching orientation towards a democratic ethos that privileges productive contest over antagonistic conflict, and, less productively, a shared tendency to neglect the implicit social dimensions of their work, agonal democratic theorists offer a diverse range of perspectives—an exhaustive summary of which would be impractical. Instead, I propose to engage with this important sub-field through a more detailed consideration of the work of one of its best-known contributors. Specifically, this chapter considers, interrogates, and expands upon the concept of the social as presented in the writings of

Chantal Mouffe, an exemplar of this contemporary agonal (re)turn. Like much of the contemporary scholarship about agonal democracy, Mouffe's work oscillates between conspicuous silence and problematic reductionism in relation to 'the social.' Marking a considerable shift from the elusive and complex conception of the social in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*[1] (Laclau and Mouffe 2001), her work on agonal democracy describes the social as a collection of sedimentary '[…]practices that conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution and which are taken for granted[…]' (Mouffe 2005: 17). The social here is reduced to little more than its most doxic qualities, its multitudes, and complexity summed up in terms of the wool that has been pulled over our collective eyes. Though perhaps more explicit than many of her fellow agonal democratic theorists, Mouffe's anaemic conceptualization of the social remains representative of a broader tendency to neglect any meaningful consideration of the social when exploring agonal democratic possibilities. At its core, this neglect constitutes both an ideological and methodological gap. For Mouffe, the social is the 'naturalized' by-product of the political—of interest only in so far as a potential symptom of a purely political question. Since, according to this view, the social is not a ground of contestation, but the unreflexive result of one, any normative commitments to strong critical theory condemn it to near irrelevance. A critical sociological perspective explicitly rejects these assumptions, asserting instead that not only can the social be a sight of important contestation, challenge, and change, but that it is a conceptual precondition of the political.

With the aim of exploring the social conditions of possibility underpinning a theory of agonal democracy, this chapter offers to rethink the implicit and explicit social dimensions of these overtly political perspectives from a critical sociological perspective—contending that a robust conceptualization of the social is both implied and required for any functional theory of agonal democracy. Conceding that political theory may not offer the ideal tools to articulate, much less elaborate, a more robust conception of the social, this chapter proposes to rethink the social in the context of radical agonistic democracy through the creative adaptation of the classical sociological perspectives of Ferdinand Tönnies and Georg Simmel. Drawing on Tönnies's seminal, though somewhat neglected, analysis of social solidarity under conditions of both

community (*Gemeinschaft*) and society (*Gesellschaft*), as well as Simmel's conceptualization of the ambiguous figure of the stranger, the chapter explores these two classical insights on tension within the social body. I thereby propose a new conceptual vocabulary through which to articulate and explore the critical potential of agonal democratic theory: the transfiguration of antagonistic conflict to agonistic contest, in both its political *and* social dimensions.

To these ends, the chapter is organized in terms of three interrelated tasks. First, it begins by considering the philosophic and ratiocinative context in which Mouffe outlines her ontological account of 'the political,' its significance for a symmetrical account of 'the social,' as well as the implications of such an account given contemporary sociological debates on the analytic validity and practical usefulness of the notion of 'society' itself. Subsequently, the chapter explores the conceptualization of social in the work of Chantal Mouffe. Here, Mouffe's work and the manner in which the social is constituted therein are considered both on their own and as emblematic of a broader under-conceptualization of the social across agonal democratic theory writ large. Finally, arguing for the creative adaptability of classical sociological thinking, the chapter draws on selected insights from Simmel and Tönnies to reconsider the social through an alternative conceptual vocabulary, ultimately attempting to deploy a more robust conceptualization in order to expose the social conditions of possibility implied and required in a radical and agonal democratic project that could be one of the normative foundations of critical sociology.

Contingent Ontologies

At the outset of *On the Political*, Mouffe begins by distinguishing between 'politics' (the empirical field of political activity) and 'the political' (the core essence or primary conceptualization of that field). Specifically, Mouffe suggests that '[p]olitics refers to the "ontic" level while "the political" has to do with the "ontological" one. This means that the ontics has to do with the manifold practices of conventional politics, while the ontological concerns the very way in which [political] society is instituted' (Mouffe 2005: 8).

This distinction, borrowed from Heidegger,[2] is central to Mouffe's overall project and important for agonal democratic theory writ large. The basic argument is that in order to understand and critically engage with the manifold practices of day-to-day politics (the ontic), one must first correctly understand what the political is at its essence (the ontological). According to Mouffe and other theorists of agonal democracy, the problem with much of mainstream contemporary democratic theory is that it fundamentally misunderstands and misrepresents the 'true' ontological character of the political.

Of course, the language of 'ontics' and 'ontologies' can be problematic. Following Heidegger, 'ontological' implies the essence or essential character of a thing in objective terms. The ontological character of something is its 'true' essence, implying a conception that appears both acultural and ahistorical. However, Mouffe's discussion of the ontological character of 'the political' is less about asserting an objectively true 'essence' than about illuminating an essential character as it has been instituted, practiced, and replicated in specific cultural contexts—a sort of contingent ontology. Implying more than a broad generalization, but less than an immutable essence, the notion of a contingent ontology suggests a reference to a core character, which, though historically and culturally produced, nonetheless represents a constituting element of a thing as it has been instituted and practiced. Though Mouffe does not herself use the language of contingency, her account of the ontological character of the political suggests neither the eternal nor the immutable character of a truly ontological claim. Indeed, the critical normative bent of Mouffe's work hinges on the potential mutability of the political by initially identifying the essential character of the political, and then immediately suggesting the need for its transfiguration.

Building on this notion of contingent ontology, I contend that a critical sociological perspective can similarly distinguish between the multiplicity of interactions, practices, and institutions that constitute any given society and the core—though historically contingent, culturally variable, and politically contestable—'essence' of *the social*. Just as Mouffe claims that '[…]the origin of our current incapacity to think in a political way[…]' (2005: 9) is our misunderstanding of the ontological dimension of the political, I argue that the failure to critically consider the myriad social

underpinnings of an agonal conception of democracy fatally impoverishes the inherent critical capacities of such perspectives and obscures the fact that any ontological account of the political relies on a similar, and *a priori*, account of the social.

That said, it is important to distinguish a historically and culturally contingent ontological account of the social from the call for a consolidated corpus of sociological theory—a normalizing collection of research procedures, conceptualizations, and acknowledged meanings 'unifying' the discipline as a whole, which could include a single standardized account of the social (Caillé 2007: 179). Nor should it be confused with what Anne Sophie Krossa describes as the attempt to overcome the complexities of contemporary concepts of society by normative means (Krossa 2009: 256), leveraging a particular theoretical understanding of the essence of the social to constrain or modify sociological study. The goal here is not to provide a unifying account of society, but rather to provide a theoretical lens through which to render visible the obscured social dimensions of the political ideal of *agon*. It is a theoretically pluralistic account that seeks to reintroduce a notion of the social and society (from a sociocentric and social constructivist perspective) into a discussion heretofore exclusively focused on its political dimensions, while actively refusing to assert any sort of paradigmatic dominion over the social (or the political, for that matter), or professing to offer any form of perfect explanation of either the ontic or ontological dimensions of society. It is precisely because sociology is constantly navigating its own theoretical pluralism with regard to its object of inquiry, what Laurent Thévenot described as the result of the founding discordance between *the social* and *the science* of social sciences (Thévenot 2007: 242), that it is uniquely qualified to contribute to such a perspective.

A 'Purely Political' Account of Agonal Democracy

The only viable aim for contemporary politics, according to Mouffe, is to move beyond universalistic notions of Western liberal democracy towards a radical pluralism—to transform and transcend hegemony itself. For

Mouffe and other theorists of agonal democracy, the crisis in contemporary Western politics is not about a failure to establish new consensus-based national or international orders with which to contest and replace the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, but rather the pressing need to establish the conditions for a continuing interplay with, and productive conflict between, a multiplicity of new *partial hegemonies*. Far from being detached from empirical considerations, most theorists of agonal democracy pursue a deeply critical normative commitment to the transformation of the manifold practices of conventional politics in various, predominantly Western, social and cultural contexts. While the elimination of conflict in politics is, for such theorists, both impossible and dangerous, they offer a critical alternative through the proposed (re)turn to an ideal of political *agon*. This (re)turn is articulated as an imagined transfiguration of the constitutive conflict in the political from an antagonistic to an agonistic logic—a reconstitution of the foundational category of the enemy (who must be vanquished/killed) into the adversary (who can be defeated, but remains legitimate) to channel destructive antagonistic conflicts into productive agonistic contests. These critical perspectives offer timely alternative critiques in the context of growing social unease with increasingly antagonistic political discourse and bring to the fore the question of what is or is not part of a 'healthy' socio-political democratic order. Like most theorists of agonal democracy, Mouffe has, at the core of her work, a very specific understanding of the political, one that must be explored carefully in order to access and potentially contribute to a broader critical project.

The true ontological character of 'the political,'[3] according to Mouffe, is best understood through the work of political theorist Carl Schmitt. A strong critic of liberal democracy and infamous supporter of Nazi fascism, Schmitt wrote extensively on the nation-state, democratic politics, and the nature of the political. Though Mouffe rejects the overarching trajectory of Schmitt's work, she critically appropriates his core understanding of the political. Schmitt contends that just as the aesthetic rests upon the antithesis of beautiful and ugly, the economic upon that of profitable and unprofitable, and the moral upon that of good and evil, the concept of the political rests on the fundamental distinction between the friend/enemy antithesis (Schmitt 1996: 33). As Schmitt explains,

> The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions[…][in fact] the inherently objective nature and autonomy of the political becomes evident by virtue of its being able to treat, distinguish, and comprehend the friend-enemy antithesis independently of other antitheses. (Schmitt 1996: 27)

For Schmitt, then, the 'ontological' character of the political is antagonistic in nature. The political is defined by and through the sustained conflict between friend and enemy, culminating in the possibility of open war, understood as the ultimate negation of the enemy (Schmitt 1996: 33). Though few other agonal theorists so explicitly tie their work to that of Schmitt, Mouffe uses his positing of this binary opposition at the core of the political in a manner that remains influential within political theory.

Mouffe is careful to note that she does not take on Schmitt's work without reservation. Indeed, Mouffe's selective repurposing of Schmitt's critique of liberal democracy resonates well with critical sociology's commitments to practices of creative adaptation. Yet despite or perhaps because of her explicitly selective appropriation of Schmitt, Mouffe inherits certain core implications alongside this binary conceptualization of the ontology of the political. Firstly, Schmitt's conceptualization clearly implies a distinction between the ontological category of 'the political' and that of 'the social.' This point is made clear in his clarification of the categories of 'friend' and 'enemy.' Specifically, following a distinction emphasized in *The Republic*, he notes that

> An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. The enemy is *hostis*, not *inimicus* in the broader sense[…]. (Schmitt 1996: 28)

That the public enemy must be distinguished from any other private antagonisms makes clear the fact that: (a) there is a distinction between

political and social relations and (b) antagonistic relations are possible in both spheres.

Secondly, Schmitt's understanding of the political emphasizes its international character. For Schmitt, politics occurs firstly between nations, or, more broadly, between 'fighting collectivities.' 'The political entity presupposes the real existence of an enemy and therefore coexistence with another political entity. As long as a state exists, there will thus always be in the world more than just one state' (Schmitt 1996: 53). This international character of politics, which is tied to Schmitt's understanding of the friend/enemy dichotomy, is also reinforced through his understanding of war. While Schmitt clearly states that '[w]ar is neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics' (Schmitt 1996: 32), he also contends that the political—specifically understood in terms of the friend/enemy distinction—depends on the ever-present possibility of war. Schmitt goes as far as to contend that '[a] world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics' (Schmitt 1996: 35). Since the political is only to be understood in terms of oppositional collectivities, the practice of politics, according to Schmitt, occurs almost entirely between states.[4]

Finally, the third implication that Mouffe inherits from Schmitt, and the only one that she explicitly addresses, is the assumption that any stable political order depends on a homogeneous 'people' as *demos*. For Schmitt, while the external category of the 'enemy' is constituted through political will, the 'friend' category is only possible in the context of a homogeneous *demos*. For Schmitt, then, liberal pluralism represents nothing less than a fundamental attack on the stability of political collectivities (Mouffe 1998: 51). Mouffe both acknowledges and explicitly rejects this third implication, choosing to

> […]refuse Schmitt's dilemma, while acknowledging his argument for the need of some form of 'homogeneity' in a democracy. The problem we have to face becomes, then, how to imagine in a different way what Schmitt refers to as 'homogeneity' but that – in order to stress the differences with his conception – I propose to call, rather, 'commonality'; how to envisage

> a form of commonality strong enough to institute a 'demos' but nevertheless compatible with certain forms of pluralism: religious, moral and cultural pluralism, as well as a pluralism of political parties. (Mouffe 1998: 55)

This move allows Mouffe to propose a direction for radical democracy that follows Schmitt's core conceptualization of the political while rejecting its third implication—that a demos must be homogeneous. However, her work remains subject to the two prior implications: that politics occurs between collectivities (nations or 'peoples' for Schmitt), and that 'the political' is ontologically distinct from 'the social.'

By contrast to her Schmitt-inspired account of the political, Mouffe does not attempt to formulate a similar conception of the social. Instead of doing so in terms of some core antithetical distinction upon which it would rely, Mouffe describes the social in terms of sedimented practices that conceal taken-for-granted originary acts of its own political constitution (Mouffe 2005: 17). Whereas the political (in a hegemonic sense) involves 'the visibility of acts of social institution' (Mouffe 2005: 17), the social is presented as: (a) the inert consequences of past political struggles and (b) a process through which the outcomes of such struggles are obscured into *doxa*. This, I contend, is a problematically shallow conception of the social. Agree as one might that every society 'is the product of a series of practices attempting to establish order in a context of contingency' (Mouffe 2005: 17) or that the hegemonic character of every social order needs be recognized, it does not necessarily follow that the social is a purely dependent variable simultaneously determined by and obscuring past political struggles.

It is with these conceptions of the political and the social that Mouffe theorizes radical democracy beyond hegemony. Just as the appropriation of Schmitt's concept of the political lies at the heart of Mouffe's critique of the mainstream of democratic theory, her call for its transfiguration rests at the centre of her own normative project. In order to move beyond contemporary neoliberal democracy, towards what she describes as a radically pluralistic politics of partial hegemonies, the core antagonistic character of the political must be changed. The enemy of antagonistic politics must be transformed into the adversary of agonistic politics. This proposed transfiguration of the core antithetical distinction rendered by, and

constitutive of, the political represents simultaneously one of the most interesting and ambitious elements of Mouffe's political theory.

Despite the problematic weight that Mouffe grants to the political vis-à-vis the social, I want to argue that both agonal democratic theory broadly and Mouffe's contributions specifically can make substantial contributions to a critical sociology interested in democracy, inclusivity, and justice. Indeed, perspectives that call into question the character and quality of conflict in democratic political orders can be considered particularly fruitful at a time when 'in style, as well as substance, the whole idea of political debate in North America is getting polarized—a forum with no middle ground' (Delacourt 2012). That said, the limitations of a purely political articulation of agonal democracy are considerable. Having reduced the social to a mere sediment reflecting and obscuring past political struggles, Mouffe is left to articulate the notion of an ethos of productive contest in purely political terms. Couched in this way, the pivotal transformation from the enemy to the adversary appears to rest solely on a relatively thin concept of legitimacy. Whereas the challenges stemming from the enemy are considered inherently destructive and dangerous, those from the adversary are seen as legitimate and necessary. The implied shift is from the goal of annihilation to that of overcoming. The enemy, outside of, and dangerous to, the unity of the demos, must be destroyed; the adversary, understood as part of a heterogeneous demos, need only be contested and potentially overcome. To put this another way, while the enemy is a homogenous representation of opposition to the demos, the adversary is more of a liminal figure. The adversary is simultaneously a genuine opponent and a legitimate participant—a notion we shall revisit below.

This simultaneous call to think beyond conventional pluralism and reimagine the very nature of the political in terms of productive and legitimated contest lies at the heart of all critically oriented agonal democratic theory. That said, in purely political terms, the transformative potential of the ideal of political agon appears problematically shallow. While the normative aspirations supporting such a shift in political ethos are clear enough, the processes by which this transfiguration might be possible are not well explored. Certainly, the aim of a more inclusive democratic order presents a degree of incentive in and of itself, but the underlying

conditions of possibility remain systematically under-theorized in both Mouffe's work specifically and agonal theory more broadly.

It is, I contend, in the realm of the social that one can explore these underlying conditions of possibility, and consequently, it is the failure to take the social seriously that hinders the contemporary field of agonal democratic theory. That said, the latter does provide a range of interesting insights into the nature of antagonistic and agonistic tensions within the social body, even if it theorizes them as purely political constructs. The foundational distinctions between productive and destructive conflict, enemies and adversaries, and legitimated opposition as opposed to required 'consensus' that agonal theorists draw upon simultaneously offer fresh perspectives on, and resonate with, some of the core questions of critical sociology. A more fulsome account of agonal democracy, one that considers both its explicit political expression and its implicit social foundations, has much to offer critically oriented sociological and political theorists alike.

Rethinking the Social: The Value of Classical Perspectives

Attempting to contribute to just such a more fulsome account, this chapter proceeds by offering a more robust conception of the social vis-à-vis Mouffe's purely political account of agonal democracy in order to render more visible its hitherto under-theorized social foundations. To do this, I turn to classical sociology, specifically the insights of Ferdinand Tönnies and George Simmel. However, before proceeding along this path, I briefly consider why and how classical sociology offers some of the strongest tools for such an endeavour.

In a report commemorating the tenth anniversary of the *Journal of Classical Sociology*, Simon Susen and Bryan Turner offer three primary reasons according to which the study of classical sociological theory should remain a priority for contemporary sociologists (Susen and Turner 2011: 6). According to them, classical sociology offers: (1) much of the original *conceptual vocabulary* upon which contemporary sociological scholarship depends, (2) systematic analyses of many of the same *social issues*

and *processes* which we confront today, and (3) methodological models and normative commitments to hybrid sociological inquiry *combining empirical research and theoretical analysis* from which current sociologists can still benefit (Susen and Turner 2011: 7). This list is particularly useful for those interested in pursuing a contemporary critical sociology. The conceptual, methodological, and normative insights of the 'classical' sociological tradition offer contemporary sociologists unique and important tools through which to question, critically engage with, and challenge the oft taken-for-granted foundations underlying seemingly 'contemporary' social and political thought.

The insights of classical sociological thinkers, through the creative adaptation of their various methodological and theoretical contributions, are invaluable resources for a robust and intellectually pluralistic contemporary critical sociology. This is particularly the case with regard to the conception of *the social*, which informs and underpins our understandings of actual societies and the empirical social phenomena we explore within them. Interrogating the constitution of the social both within and outside of the disciplinary bounds of sociology is, as Kurasawa notes in the introduction to this collection, one of the central elements of critical sociology's current research agenda. As I have argued with regard to agonal democratic theory, the under-theorization of the social and society is a pervasive problem across the human sciences, such as in much contemporary political theory, where the social is more often than not left as a taken-for-granted backdrop for theorization rather than a potential object of analysis in itself. In seeking to *rethink the social*, we are interested in exploring the constitution(s) of the social as one of sociology's primary objects of inquiry, as well as its various constitutions, or absences thereof, across the social sciences, humanities, and beyond.

Returning to the underlying conditions of possibility for an agonal democratic order, the next section engages with the work of Tönnies and Simmel, respectively, exploring how these very different classical sociological perspectives offer contemporary theorists a range of conceptual tools with which to articulate both a more robust account of the social and, subsequently, the implicit social foundations underlying a political ethos of *agon*.

Between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*

The first set of classical insights I would like to apply to the question of the social and the conditions of possibility for agonal democracy are drawn from the work of Ferdinand Tönnies. A German social thinker of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tönnies is an interesting figure in classical sociology who occupies a somewhat ambiguous position in the contemporary sociological imagination, generally represented at the periphery of what one might call the 'second tier' of the pantheon of classics. Even granting the contingent, often historically revisionist, and deeply contestable character of the so-called canonical designation (Baehr 2002), Tönnies is—with a few notable exceptions (Deflem 1999; Wilding 2005; Inglis 2009)—surprisingly under-explored in English-speaking scholarship, given the relative consensus about his status within the canon.

A socialist and somewhat nostalgic champion of rural life, Tönnies offers an interesting and nuanced consideration of society and social solidarity under early German industrialization. Specifically, Tönnies posits a range of conceptualizations of the social that focus on the juxtaposition of real and artificial forms of social cohesion. Also of interest is Tönnies's connection to Schmitt. Though Schmitt's and Tönnies's primary works were separated by a few decades, with Schmitt's career starting to take off as Tönnies's began to wind down, the two did interact professionally. Quite disparate both analytically and politically, Tönnies openly challenged Schmitt's work, criticizing him at length in a 1922 publication, *Kritik der öffentlichen Meinung* (*On Public Opinion*), to which Schmitt is said to have responded in public lectures (Tönnies et al. 2000).

That said, I am by no means suggesting a wholesale adoption of Tönnies's view of society of social life. Indeed, while Tönnies offers many fascinating insights into social organization and the relationships that underpin social solidarity, his privileging of smaller rural communities as the sights of genuine social solidarity are neither accepted nor relevant in the present context. Instead, drawing on Tönnies to begin to re-think the social as articulated in contemporary agonal democratic theory, I propose to adapt ideas from three central themes in his analysis of the social: sociation, conflict, and solidarity.

Critical of the ways in which industrialization, urbanization, and advancing capitalism were transforming rural German communities, Tönnies studied social organization and the preconditions for different forms of social solidarity. As the title of his seminal work *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society) suggests, Tönnies explored human association in terms of a contrast between its real or organic forms (*Gemeinschaft*, or community) and its imaginary and mechanical counterparts (*Gesellschaft*, or society) (Tönnies 2002: 33). While Tönnies also considered a vast array of particulars within each form of association not relevant to the analysis at hand, a summary of the essential differences between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is a necessary starting point.

Gemeinschaft, according to Tönnies, is characterized by a genuine sympathy and understanding, which binds together human beings as members of a totality (Tönnies 2002: 47). It is characteristic of smaller rural lifestyles, and to some degree is predicated on these smaller collectivities organized around kinship ties. As he notes:

> The real foundation of unity, and consequently the possibility of Gemeinschaft, in first place is closeness of blood relationships and mixture of blood; secondly, physical proximity; and, finally, for human beings, intellectual proximity. In this gradation, therefore, are to be found the sources of all kinds of understanding. (Tönnies 2002: 48)

To this notion of understanding and genuine sympathy, Tönnies adds a particular orientation to and understanding of property. According to Tönnies, '[l]ife of the Gemeinschaft is mutual possession and enjoyment and possession of enjoyment of common goods' (Tönnies 2002: 50). Here the rules of barter and exchange are foundational, and life is organized around necessary, as opposed to dispensable, goods. *Gemeinschaft* is thus characterized as the natural and ideal form of sociation, one founded on a unity of members through true bonds of social solidarity.

In contradistinction to the natural, genuine, and implicitly socialist association of *Gemeinschaft*, Tönnies posits the association of *Gesellschaft*. While these two forms of association may superficially appear similar, Tönnies suggests that they are different to the point of being nearly antithetical. Specifically, he contends that *Gesellschaft* '[…]superficially

resembles the Gemeinschaft in so far as the individuals live and dwell together peacefully. However, in the Gemeinschaft they remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in the Gesellschaft they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors' (Tönnies 2002: 65).

Whereas the totality of the *Gemeinschaft* is built on understanding, genuine sympathy, and the mutual enjoyment of properties, *Gesellschaft* is focused on what Tönnies describes as the fiction of objective value. Tönnies argues that one of the greatest challenges that faces the *Gesellschaft* is how to create the objective quality of 'value' in the infinite diversity of property. Worth, as the measure of property in *Gemeinschaft*, is a 'quality which is perceived by the real individual' (Tönnies 2002: 67). Worth is therefore subjective and thus cannot be generalized into an objective standard. Instead, Tönnies argues, the collectivity of the *Gesellschaft* creates a fictional being, a generalized individual, whose task it becomes to represent a generalizable and objective worth. As worth cannot be objective, Tönnies describes this generalized quality as value.

In order for the concept of a generalized objective value to function, the hypothetical being's analysis of worth must be accepted by all in the collectivity. This, for Tönnies, is the acceptance of a single artificial will by the totality of the *Gesellschaft*. As he describes it:

> In order that the judgment may even with this qualification become objective and universally valid, it must appear as a judgment passed by 'each and every one.' Hence, each and every one must have this single will; in other words, the will of exchange becomes universal, i.e., each and every one becomes a participant in the single act and he confirms it; thus it becomes an absolute public act. (Tönnies 2002: 67)

It is in this way that the individuals who make up the membership of the *Gesellschaft* subjugate themselves to the latter's artificial will, initially to affirm a conception of objective value necessary for an exchange economy, then later to recognize it as the originator of a postulated set of natural laws and conventions. According to Tönnies, the more individuals accept this will of the *Gesellschaft*, the more the famous contention of Adam

Smith, that every man becomes in some measure a merchant, becomes a reality (Tönnies 2002: 76). As Tönnies notes:

> In Gesellschaft every person strives for that which is to his advantage and he affirms the actions of others only in so far as and as long as they can further his interest. Before and outside of convention and also before and outside of each special contract, the relation of all to all may therefore be conceived as potential hostility or latent war. (Tönnies 2002: 77)

Thus, with the generalized 'will of exchange,' each individual in the *Gesellschaft* becomes more and more instrumental and self-interested and therefore fundamentally disconnected from and adversarial towards those around them.

What is most relevant here from Tönnies's discussion of community and society are the important ways in which underlying social structure and core organization shape and precondition the forms of sociation and ultimately social solidarity possible within them. For Tönnies, it is not merely that relations degrade under *Gesellschaft* but rather that the conditions of possibility presented by *Gesellschaft* only allow for certain types of sociation to flourish. Just as life under *Gemeinschaft* necessitates close bonds, trust, and genuine sympathy, *Gesellschaft* necessitates social relations predicated on a degree distancing and competition. The possible forms social relations can take are inherently tied to broader questions of social organization and the types of solidarity under which they are formed.

While Tönnies's insights on the relationship between social solidarity and forms of sociation are clearly relevant to our contemporary question with regard to the social conditions of possibility for an agonal democratic order, so too are his thoughts on contest and conflict within the social body. For Tönnies, social conflict is by and large a negative, destructive, force; he explicitly rejects the idea that there could be any room for true conflict within a healthy social body. Indeed, he conceives of social conflict as the antithesis of association and therefore of successful human society; conflict within the social is understood as an 'unnatural and diseased state' (Tönnies 2002: 48). All conflict, however, is not created as equal. Tönnies distinguishes between social conflict based on 'hostile passions,' which spring from the loosening or rupture of natural ties, and

social conflict '[…]which is based upon strangeness, misunderstanding, and distrust' (Tönnies 2002: 48). The former, argues Tönnies, tends to be intense but brief, while the latter is typically chronic. For Tönnies, a healthy social body must be organized in a way that mitigates, and ideally completely avoids, acute conflict—notably of the chronic kind.

Taken together, these two concepts enable us to adapt from Tönnies a core conception of the social in which the range of possible social relations and types of solidarity are predicated, to some degree, on its core organization. Without fully embracing Tönnies's description of urban life under early capitalism, we can concede that contemporary Western society is organized in a manner more akin to *Gesellschaft* than *Gemeinschaft*, and that, as such, predisposes itself to certain patterns of social solidarity, conflict, and, most importantly, core social relations. In the final section of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tönnies considers what he suggests is a key distinction 'dealing with one's relation to one's fellow beings' (Tönnies 2002: 237). Tönnies contends that modern human sociation is premised in an important way on relations of familiarity and strangeness, a point implied throughout his comparison of community and association. While the distinction between *we* and *they* might be relatively stable under the tight-knit conditions of *Gemeinschaft*, the lines between ally, competitor, and opponent are not always as clear under those of *Gesellschaft*. Though Tönnies makes no move to define the social through an opposition between the familiar and the strange, the implied spectrum between strangeness and familiarity represents an interesting perspective through which to consider the core distinction rendered within the social. Given the importance that the distinctions between friend, enemy, and adversary play in Mouffe's account of an agonal democratic order, the social distinction between familiar and strange, and the spectrum of social relations which might flow from such, seem worthy of further consideration.

On Conflict, Strangers, and Strangership

Continuing to challenge the characterization of the social as a normalized artifice of congealed political decisions, the creative adaptation of some of Tönnies's insights considerably broadens the conceptual space

within which to consider the underlying social conditions of possibility of agonal democracy. Taking up the ideal of political *agon* not only in its explicit political dimensions, but also in terms of the necessary social foundations upon which such an ethos might depend, offers a significantly more substantive account of the social than has thus far been possible in agonal theory. Whereas Mouffe can offer relatively little about the transfiguration of the enemy into the adversary within the political, a critical sociological approach, equipped with a more robust understanding of the social, offers a far more interesting and productive avenue of analysis. Instead of the abstracted question of how to re-conceive the enemy as the adversary, a critical sociological perspective can consider the ways in which implicit distinctions between familiarity and strangeness under certain modes of social organization might underpin more explicit political distinctions between friends, enemies, and adversaries.

Though Tönnies's insights on sociation, solidarity, and conflict can be adapted to begin to form the foundation of a more robust look at the social, further consideration of an implied spectrum of relations surrounding a core dichotomy between the familiar and the strange stretches the useful limits of Tönnies's analyses. It is here that Georg Simmel's short but comprehensive consideration of social conflict and the stranger, in the context of modern urban sociation, becomes invaluable. Like Tönnies, though to a lesser degree, Simmel's work has occupied a relatively ambiguous space with regard to the classics (Deflem 2003: 68). Despite being much better represented in recent sociological scholarship,[5] Simmel, like Tönnies, remains a perennial not-quite-canonical figure. That said, he offers a wealth of insights uniquely suited to the questions at hand.

The conceptual distance between Tönnies's and Simmel's understandings of conflict and the familiar/strange divide is difficult to overstate. Taking a nearly antithetical position to that postulated by Tönnies, Simmel contends that conflict, in its various forms, represents a crucial element of all social relations. Indeed, in a view bearing certain similarities to the above-noted claim of agonal political theorists that politics is defined through conflict, Simmel argues that, rather than being an obstacle to, or negation of, social unity, conflict must be understood as both proceeding and being operative within every moment of such a unity (Simmel 1955: 15). In what remains one of the most insightful

sociological studies of conflict to date, Simmel challenges the dominant view of social unity as 'the consensus and concord of interacting individuals, as against their discords, separations, and disharmonies' (Simmel 1955: 17). In what can be described as quite an agonistic understanding of society, Simmel explores an array of supposedly antisocial relations, contending that many, in fact, actually produce, support, presuppose, or depend upon a preexisting unity or social order. Though Simmel does not employ the terminological distinction between agonistic and antagonistic conflict or contest, he does implicitly differentiate between different types of tension within a social body. Simmel, like the contemporary political theorists of agonal democracy who see conflict as the core of the political, understands social conflict as one of the necessary components of any viable conception of the social.

Similarly, Simmel's now seminal ruminations on the social form of the stranger is a marked contrast to the conventional meaning that Tönnies ascribes to the term. Whereas the latter's somewhat casual use of the word presents the quality of strangeness as contrary to familiarity, Simmel contends that the stranger is actually defined by and through liminality and hybridity. For Simmel, the stranger represents a position between the familiar and the alien. As he notes: 'The unity of nearness and remoteness involved in every human relation is organized, in the phenomenon of the stranger, in a way which may be most briefly formulated by saying that in the relationship to him, distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who also is far, is actually near' (Simmel 1950: 402). Far from being the opposite of familiarity, the stranger represents the hybrid social form through which sameness and difference coexist. The social form of the stranger, for Simmel, represents the inorganic appending of an organic member of the group (Simmel 1950: 408). The stranger is the historical form required for sociation beyond familiarity.

There is an interesting parallel between Simmel's account of the stranger within the social and Mouffe's conception of the political adversary. As noted above, the adversary is implied as a figure that is constituted through the ambiguous mixture of both friend and enemy. The adversary, as much as Mouffe describes it, appears to simultaneously embody the genuine opponent to be overcome and the legitimated participant whose challenge must be accepted; the stranger concurrently occupies a space

of the familiar and alien. Beyond this dialectical parallel, I would suggest that the stranger and adversary bear in common what Simmel described as a simultaneous position of proximity and distance.

How, then, might we consider this proposed parallel between the stranger and the adversary in terms of proximity/distance, and what are the implications of this for considering the social conditions of possibility for a political ideal of *agon*? Here it is of use to move beyond the social form of the stranger, to the idea of *strangership* (Horgan 2012). Strangership, a contemporary conception building upon the creative adaptation of Simmel's original work on the stranger, shifts focus from social form to social relation. 'Where the study of strangers focuses on specific traits of individuals and groups, the concept of strangership focuses instead on the characteristics of relationships between strangers' (Horgan 2012: 607). Not only are the social relations of strangership understood as pervasive in a contemporary context they are posited as at least 'partially constitutive of social order—especially in cities' (Horgan 2012: 613).

From this perspective, the proposed parallel between the adversary and the stranger can be considered in terms of the conditions of possibility necessary for the social relations of strangership and the degree to which they may prove relevant as conditions of possibility for the political relations implied by the adversary. Drawing together insights from several contemporary considerations of the stranger (e.g., Collins 2004; Alexander 2004; Fine 2010), Horgan proposes three core conditions of possibility necessary for the emergence and/or presence of the social relation of strangership: *copresence, mutual agreement about social distance*, and *mobility* (Horgan 2012: 614–615). The first and most basic requirement for strangership is copresence. Understood as both spatial and temporal, copresence is set out as encountering and approaching in the context of proximity in time and space, '[…]it involves at least two persons in the same place at the same time' (Horgan 2012: 614). The second condition of possibility for strangership is a mutual agreement about the relevant social distance. This second requirement speaks to the inherent mutuality of all social relations—in the classical sense. For a relation of strangership to emerge or remain present, '[…] those in relations of strangership have an implied mutual understanding of the nature and degree of social distance by which the relationship ought to

be characterized' (Horgan 2012: 616). Though not necessarily symmetrical, the second basic requirement for strangership is basic shared understanding of terms of the relation. The third basic condition of possibility for strangership is mobility. One of the core characteristics of Simmel's original account of the stranger, physical mobility—the movement of peoples across borders and through communities—has remained a central theme in discussions of the stranger. Expanding this idea, Horgan argues that the social relation of strangership needs to be considered not only as constituted through traditional notions of mobility but also via the possibilities of *social* and *symbolic* mobility. Social mobility speaks to the (relatively) modern fluidity and interaction between various social positions (e.g., economic, ethnic, or professional), bringing individuals and groups previously strongly segregated into previously improbable proximity. Symbolic mobility relates to notions of recognition and status, suggesting that access to symbolic resources or radical transformations can contribute to relations of strangership, even in the context of an otherwise stable understanding of the local (Horgan 2012: 617).

Whereas Tönnies offers a core conception of the social according to which social relations and types of solidarity are predicated, to some degree, on its core organization, Simmel offers a careful consideration of the role of socially productive conflict and a conceptualization of the stranger as a social position constituted through the tension between proximity and distance. Further, Horgan's posited conditions of possibility for the social relations of strangership offer a framework which not only helps to imagine the social foundations of a political ideal of *agon* but also helps to (re)consider the notion of the adversary beyond that of a political position, towards that of a mutually constituted relation among political participants.

Sociation and Political *Agon*—An Alternative View

As noted at the start of this chapter, a critical sociological perspective on agonal democracy not only challenges the prevalent logic of determination in political theory, under which the social is ostensibly determined

by the political, but also proposes a more robust conceptualization of the social premised on a partial reversal of that logic. It suggests that in order to fully consider something within the political, one must explore its underlying social conditions of possibility. Through the creative adaptation of certain classic sociological insights, this proposed account begins to take shape.

First, drawing on Tönnies, we can say that the types of social relations and social solidarity possible in a given context are preconditioned by broader forms of social organization and structures. While not necessarily embracing Tönnies's perspective on rural versus urban sociation, we can also characterize the contemporary Western social context as resembling more closely conditions of *Gesellschaft* than *Gemeinschaft*. Again, without completely accepting Tönnies's account of the latter, we can also concede that those conditions do not inherently privilege close-knit relations between all members in the same way that smaller, less industrialized, forms of community might do. Framed by a characterization of the core dichotomy within the social as being between the familiar and the strange (which, for Tönnies, means *unfamiliar*), such an account can position us to consider the ways in which implicit distinctions between familiarity and unfamiliarity under certain modes of social organization might underpin more explicit political distinctions between friends, enemies, and adversaries.

Turning to the work done by Simmel, we can augment this account of the social with a space for the possibility and importance of productive conflict within a functioning social whole. Whereas Tönnies views social conflict as antithetical to sociation, Simmel provides a conceptualization of the social that views many forms of conflict as not only pervasive in a functional society but as constructive and necessary. Furthermore, Simmel's notion of the stranger—concurrently familiar and unfamiliar—occupies a position in the social potentially parallel to that of Mouffe's proposed adversary within the political. As explored earlier, the stranger and the adversary share certain similarities in both form and content—characterized in terms of a dialectic tension between various forms of proximity and distance. In this way, one can posit that the political distinctions between friends, enemies, and adversaries might very well rest

on the underlying societal orientation to relations between the familiar, the unfamiliar, and the strange.

Taking up this idea and deploying the contemporary reimagining of the stranger in terms of social relations of strangership, the political relations posited in accounts of agonal democracy and their underlying social conditions of possibility can be considered in terms that parallel the basic elements necessary for strangership: copresence, mutual agreement on relative distance, as well as social and symbolic mobility. Approaching Mouffe's proposed category of the political adversary—who is concurrently legitimate, and an object of genuine opposition—from this perspective, we can consider what forms of the social relation of strangership might support, or render possible, the political relations ascribed between adversaries and which might obstruct or prevent such relations from existing. Much in the way that Horgan suggests that the social relations of strangership can be 'tethered to' encounters with social inequality (Horgan 2012: 618) to further explore the ways in which strangership and inequality might intersect, I would contend that relations of strangership can be tethered to the political conception of the adversary in order to explore the underlying social dimensions of this explicitly political relation.

Conclusion

Optimistic about the potential of both the reemergence of political agonism as an alternative ideal for radical democracy generally, and more specifically about some of the critical potential of Chantal Mouffe's project, I have proposed in this chapter a contingent ontological account of the social as a necessary addition to any viable critical perspective based on an ideal of political *agon*. I contend that any fulsome account of agonal democracy requires a consideration of its implicit and explicit social dimensions, and that it is only through the exploration of such social dimensions that the full potential of these perspectives to critically engage with existing socio-political structures can be reached.

Through the creative adaptation of certain key insights in classical sociological theory, I have proposed such a contingently ontological account of the social that is centred on the core distinction between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Armed with a more robust conception of the social, interesting parallels emerged between ambiguous social and political categories—like those pointed out between the social relations of strangership and the politically agonistic relations implied in Mouffe's notion of the adversary. Not only does such an account open new avenues of inquiry with regard to pivotal debates about ethos, demos, pluralism, and even society—which are at the heart of agonal theory and critical sociology—but it additionally refutes the normal logic of determination in political theory according to which the social is a by-product of the political. Not simply inverting this problematic logic of determination, the addition of a more robust conceptualization of the social, rather than collapsing questions about the political into mere sediment of social struggle, opens a critical path concurrently allowing for the underlying social conditions of possibility and hitherto unconsidered socio-political intersectionalities to be brought to the fore.

As critical sociologists, we are particularly well positioned to contribute to a more robust accounting of such social considerations. Far from abandoning an empirically grounded sociology, such contributions can be understood within a broader framework of transdisciplinary work and a necessary starting point from which to launch a wide array of sociological and political research into the manifold practices that constitute contemporary societies and their political systems.

Notes

1. Laclau and Mouffe draw on the likes of Althusser, Wittgenstein, and Foucault to present a view of society understood as wholly the product of 'discursive articulation.' Society is not described via discourse, which would imply a primary plane of existence prior to such a mediated presentation, but rather exists only through and by the process of articulation. Unfortunately, this leads them to abandon the social as a viable terrain of analysis.

2. Though not identical, Mouffe's ontic/ontological differentiation is drawn from Heidegger's distinction between *dasein*-ontological (essence of being) and *dasein*-ontical (existence of being) (Heidegger 1962: 32).
3. While Mouffe's commitment to a pluralist universe without definite 'truth' would seem to negate an appeal to a universal truth claim, she does, at the very least, contend that this represents the most factually accurate understanding of the essence of 'the political.'
4. While Schmitt certainly envisioned politics as occurring between nation-states (Schmitt 1985, 1996), in theory his conceptualization of 'the political' necessitates only war between collectivities or between different *demos*. It is certainly plausible, as with the Nazi treatment of Jews and other minorities, to construct an enemy people within the state, yet such a construction, for Schmitt, would ultimately rest on the understanding of those collectivities as other 'peoples' illegitimately present within a sovereign state.
5. Unlike Tönnies, Simmel's work has experienced somewhat of a contemporary renaissance. Still not considered on par with what became the canonical figures of his time (Durkheim and Weber, chiefly), his varied insights into modern society—on topics ranging from fashion to religion, from the mechanics of monetary economies to the ambiguous nature of distance and proximity in social relations—nevertheless have garnered wide consideration (Frisby 1985, 1992a, b, 2002; Witz 2001; Deflem 2003; Dodd 2008; Kemple 2009; Cooper 2010; Vandenberghe 2010; Horgan 2012).

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Part II

Configuring Power

The Business Cycle and Capitalist Social Regulation: The Origins of Economic Government

Matthew F. Hayes

Introduction

The orthodoxy of economic austerity has become one of the greatest challenges facing contemporary society. A series of crises—the refugee crisis, the demographic crisis, the climate crisis, and the growing political crisis caused by entrenched inequality at different geographic scales—contribute to a collective, subjective sense that a foreboding and uncertain future must necessarily be quite different from the past. Yet our representations of this future seem coloured mostly by post-apocalyptic scenarios, or even the end of civilization, rather than more hopeful projects for social change. Our collective inability to imagine alternative ways of organizing the economy and achieving higher levels of employment in a more egalitarian society premised on cosmopolitan values of openness and transborder social solidarity owes much to the lack of intellectual tools that would enable us to think about managing the economy differently.

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This chapter serves as a contribution to a substantive rationalization of economic government, by historicizing and contextualizing the configuration of knowledge about the economy, underscoring the foundational principles of sociocentrism and social constructivism, which are core to this volume's vision of critical sociology.

Macroeconomics presents itself as a true representation of the economy, and one which makes fiscal austerity appear the more rational course, despite significant costs that it pushes off into the future. Beyond being a mere representation of the economy, macroeconomics serves as a technical device that directs management of the economy in a specific way. As Kurasawa points out in his chapter "An Invitation to Critical Sociology" in this volume, the configuration of knowledge of the social world is also foundational to the configuration of power. A critical sociology that might contest this power must also attend to the socio-historical construction of bodies of knowledge that represent social life in ways that make particular types of action appear self-evident and natural. In this respect, I also attend to the tension between a normative critique of the economy and an analysis that grounds normativity in the scientific literature about economic representations, on the one hand, and critiques the adequacy of historical resolution of normative tensions between individual economic freedom and the collective interests of society as a whole, on the other.

This chapter proposes a critical sociology of macroeconomics that extends the post-structural turn in the social sciences to key objects and concepts in economics. While there has been much work in the history of economics that helps to clarify the historical emergence of quantification (Desrosières 2003a, b), there has been decidedly less work that shows how economics constructs the economy as an autopoetic device, intended to temper the class divisions of an emerging capitalist society in the early twentieth century (but see Alchon 1985). Whether macroeconomics actually represents the economy—a key concern of many sociological and anthropological critiques in the twentieth century—is perhaps less important than how it performs real economies as a device or assemblage that orients economic action, particularly at an administrative level. Thus, as Kurasawa indicates, structural analyses of economic government also warrant attention to how economic experts and policymakers interpret their actions with the aid of technical devices, such

as macroeconomic indicators. Moreover, understanding how economics performs that which it portends to represent is also cardinal to understanding how we might perform it differently, in ways that incorporate normative perspectives that have been marginalized by the discipline's bias in favour of the interests of private capital.

I argue that the formulation of an economy of cycles that could be quantified through diverse measurements rendered economic life visible in a way that made it amenable to new types of administrative action. These economic cycles—which we now know as business cycles—were the key analytical object in the construction of a historically specific economy, one that reflected empiricist biases and the reified interests of private property owners, free to make decisions about their capital in the context of market competition. The social formation that business cycle theory brought into being was one that suited the liberal ideal of action at a distance and of non-intervention in the decisions of private property owners.

The argument is divided into four sections. The first section places the present study within the existing literature in economic sociology. As we shall see, there are currents in some of this literature which enable the development of a critical sociology as laid out in this collection. Economic sociology has a long history of de-naturalizing and de-centring economistic interpretations and categories of the economy. The study aims to further the work of economic sociologists along critical lines by de-naturalizing and historicizing the cognitive categories of macroeconomic analysis, which themselves naturalize the economy. The second section begins the empirical work of the chapter, demonstrating how business cycles emerged as a new object in economics in the early twentieth century. With this in hand, the third section outlines the social backdrop against which business cycle theory was developed, most notably the perceived social and moral costs of economic "depressions". The fourth section outlines the moral liberalism that underscored this particular technical approach to the economy, which gave rise to a new terrain of visibility and administrative action. Here, I argue that cycle theory provided economists with a way to act indirectly on the social problems of the early twentieth century, without having to address liberal social relations, or hallowed property rights. I conclude by drawing attention to

two important structural effects that resulted from the contingent context in which macroeconomic management arose.

Performativity and Critique

Critique of economics has often focused on its lack of empirical rigour. Critical approaches to the economy within sociology and anthropology have long sought to demonstrate that key premises of economics are incorrect and lack empirical evidence to support a rigorous description of reality, which other disciplines instead can better provide (Graeber 2011: 21–28; Polanyi 1944; Sahlins 1972). However, more recently, sociologists have turned their attention to how economic knowledge orients social action in relation to economic decisions. Michel Callon has argued that it is time for sociologists to stop trying to prove economists wrong, but instead focus on how the latter framed economic action, performing the types of economic outcomes that their models predicted (Callon 1998). He has also suggested that a turn in this direction could generate new types of economic performances in which new models indicate ways market action could be recast or framed differently. As Donald Mackenzie also has pointed out, the concept of performativity—central to the idea that economics be treated by sociologists not merely as a false ideology but rather as a practical device—"prompts a question: what sort of world do we want to see performed?" (Mackenzie 2004: 328).

This concept of performativity, however, prompts an additional, critical question: how are practical devices like macroeconomic concepts and assessment tools historically and socially constructed? Thus, rather than focusing merely on a description of how policy actors use specific tools, a critical sociological approach would also ask how these tools emerged and to what practical and normative problems they were addressed. While performativity in economic sociology has contributed to critical analyses that recognize economics and economic ideas are more than mere representations of the economy, it still has not fully explored how economic ideas shape practices, and especially how particular ideas, rather than others, finally emerge. This is not merely the result of institutional pragmatism but also of the power of dominant interests. Better addressing this

gap would enable economic sociologists to understand how current practices of economic government emerged, and thus more clearly articulate how the economy could be governed differently, in a way that is both more democratic and enhances the autonomy of all individuals.

The standpoint developed in this chapter works off a growing body of literature in economic sociology on the "performativity of economics" (Arminen 2010; Preda 2009; Mackenzie et al. 2007; Fourcade 2007; Mackenzie 2006; Mackenzie and Millo 2003; Mitchell 2002; Miller 1998; Callon 1998; Meuret 1988), while underscoring some of its limitations. This chapter argues that economic knowledge—financial models, primarily, but also macroeconomic models of business cycles, econometrics, national income accounting, and so on—is a material force embodied in economic practices. Knowledge, in this respect, forms part of an *agencement*, or assemblage of human bodies, technical tools, theories, and objects, which perform and enact, rather than merely represent, economies and economic activity. This literature, however, has yet to convincingly deal with struggles over which among a myriad of performative *agencements* succeed in constructing market practices (see Mirowski and Nik-Khah 2008; Arminen 2010: 174). While *agencement* can be a useful concept for describing how economic structures are instituted with the aid of ideas and practical devices, its explanatory power is weaker with respect to understanding the social and historical composition of the devices that actors assume to be self-evident and taken for granted in their commonsensical enactment of economic life. What is interesting in performative theories of the economy (e.g., theories that focus on the importance of knowledge for the construction of economic practices and structures) is that conceptual devices that are inherent to each performance are the products of social struggle and contingent socio-historical developments. Critical sociology can contribute to the task of social critique and transformation by opening up the field of possible alternatives through a deeper appreciation of this contingency of taken-for-granted objects, tools, and devices that help structure economic life.

Existing critiques have often focused on the performativity approach's apparent proximity to neoclassical economics and its assumptions of market individualism (Arminen 2010; Mirowski and Nik-Khah 2007; Fine 2003). However, this critique is too dismissive of what has come to be

known as the performative turn. Performative approaches appear closer to neoclassicism only because they focus on the mechanisms of market calculations, which are generally made by individuals with the help of "prosthetic" tools or devices for determining the future fluctuations of prices. While these approaches too often under-theorize the structural contours of these choices, they have the merit of demonstrating how economic ideas and theories are performed by actors in their actual decision-making process or how the assumptions of economic models come to be embedded in economic practices, particularly through material assemblages that include technical objects like computers. I propose to build on the theoretical contributions of this approach by extending some of their insights towards the formation of the tools and technical devices of macroeconomic calculation by state-led agencies, thereby providing a more fruitful pathway to a critique of performativity. Additionally, I intend to better ground the contributions of performativity theory in economic sociology by focusing on the social relations behind the construction of new intellectual objects and technical devices, thus providing an important link between the actor-network-inspired approach that has recently become significant in economic sociology and more conventional stratification approaches to the subfield. This task is essential to the project of de-naturalizing and historicizing current social relations—a core task of critical sociology as we conceive it. Performativity approaches need not ignore how social relations, and particularly unequal relations of social class, helped construct certain types of *agencement*. Knowledge of the economy, thus, not only performs tools and enhances certain forms of agency but also reflects the material interests and concerns of dominant social actors.

Despite the promise of being able to perform the economy differently, critical political economists and other social scientists, who recognize the environmental unviability of continuous economic growth, continue to be hampered by ideas, concepts, and problems framed from the perspective of twentieth-century macroeconomics. Moreover, the economic crisis and the ongoing stagnation that has characterized its recovery, especially in the austerity-obsessed eurozone, led by the monetarist ideology of dominant economic interests, have imposed significant social costs on working people who may once have considered themselves "middle class". The failure of traditional macroeconomic management to resolve

the increasingly pressing social problems associated with rising levels of inequality signals a crisis of traditional policy tools. Many now recognize the need to move beyond this frame, but with no clear sociological tools that would enable us to unpack the construction of key macroeconomic concepts and ideas, it can be difficult to escape seeing them as natural representations of an overall aggregate economy.

Instead, the critical sociology developed in this volume calls on economic sociologists to see macroeconomic concepts as a series of devices that emerged in specific and contingent contexts in response to problems now past, even as we continue to live with their ongoing influence. As Timothy Mitchell (2006) suggests, macroeconomic ideas have "structural effects", that is, they are devices that help enact institutional and economic structures along the lines that macroeconomics suggests. They are practical tools that shape reality and our understanding of it and not merely representations of a pre-existing reality. A critical sociology, thus, must both demonstrate this principle, separating the mode of representation from its actual object, and, I argue, demonstrate the social and historical conditions in which these representations and devices emerged. This latter point is important as a supplement to the performative turn in economic sociology, since what is most interesting about performative theories of the economy is not merely a description of performativity itself but, more importantly, its answers to key questions: How did particular types of performative practices or tools emerge? For what purpose and against what moral claims did they have to contend? These questions bring performativity theories of the economy into closer dialogue with sociological literature that has attempted to historicize forms of governmental intervention.

Representing Economic Fluctuations

Through the 1920s, and especially after the market crash of October 1929, a new type of society entered the consciousness of Western nation-states and their publics: a society whose industrial activity appeared to naturally cycle between economic booms, crises, and depressions. The analysis of economic fluctuations, or business cycles, arose in the industrialized

countries at the beginning of the twentieth century amongst expert scholars and statisticians. It promised a new terrain of policy administration aimed at optimizing the outcomes of private economic calculations with the deliberate intent of stabilizing the social relations of advanced industrial capitalism, which were increasingly contested in the cauldron of the interwar period in Western Europe and North America. While previous studies have pinpointed the economy as a new field of governmental practice in the twentieth century (Procacci 1991; Walters 2000; Castel 2003; Donzelot 1984; Mitchell 2002, 2006), this literature continues to focus primarily on state management of "the social" and therefore neglects political technologies aimed at optimizing the social by acting directly on the economy.[1]

This literature in "governmentality" often points out the way in which the state intervened in the market in order to ensure the welfare of workers and citizens, through devices such as social insurance, the regulation of product standards, and workplace safety. As industrial modernization in Western Europe and North America accelerated towards the end of the nineteenth century, a growing number of people became dependent upon the industrial system and access to wage labour for their well-being, thus also making them more vulnerable to sudden contractions of industrial activity. This state intervention broke with the liberal orthodoxy of laissez-faire that had prevailed through much of the nineteenth century. Howard Brick (2006) points out that in the United States and Germany, it was commonly accepted at the beginning of the twentieth century that these changes were ushering in a new type of society, different from the free-market capitalism of the nineteenth century. In Europe, the promotion of social insurance (Donzelot 1988), the regulation of poverty (Procacci 1991), and unemployment (Walters 2000), among other measures, attested to the growing dependence of a population's health, safety, and productivity on the smooth operation of trade and business. Writing about the situation in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Donzelot (1988) and Castel (2003) underscore the extent to which the conflicting interests of different social classes propelled actors located within French statist institutions to innovate new practices of government upon new fields of intelligibility, composed by new concepts such as solidarity, the social, and the unemployed. In each country of

Western Europe and North America, the elaboration of new state practices oriented towards the regulation of economic activity—with the aim of improving the "life of the population"—took different but similar forms.

Yet comparatively less has been written within this literature about one of the key objects that made modern economic government possible: the development of a concept of business cycles, or trade fluctuations as they were often called. While there has been work to historicize statistics in economics (cf. Desrosières 2003a, 2003b), the post-structural turn in the social sciences which has done so much to destabilize some of the key objects and concepts of other disciplines has yet to fully penetrate economics. Business cycles marked a new problematization of the economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which created new ways of visualizing economic activity and elaborated new governable spaces between the state and the market.[2] Many of the statistical quantifications central to both the visibility and actionability of what we refer to today as "the economy" emerged from early business cycle theory.

While recurrent economic depressions were studied in the nineteenth century,[3] for the sake of brevity, I focus on the emergence, during the first decade of the twentieth century, of this new object, the business cycle, which lent itself to so many and varied governmental programmes throughout the last century. This starting point can be justified in two ways. Firstly, the literature from this period reflexively marks itself off from earlier theories and approaches to crises and depressions for its use of quantitative data, its emphasis on fluctuations as a natural part of modern business, and its concentration on the trade or business *cycle* rather than merely on crises or depressions as stand-alone events. Secondly, the earlier approaches rarely sought to manage or govern the problem of business cycles, while business cycle theory, particularly in the United States, consciously sought to remediate the ebb and flow of the market. Marx, for instance, sought not to alleviate or mitigate business cycles through acts of economic engineering. Rather, he sought to eliminate them by changing the organizing principles of the labour process itself (e.g., by producing for socially determined ends rather than under conditions of capitalist competition). W.S. Jeavons, by contrast, saw business cycles resulting from sunspots and thus beyond the control of human

intervention. Many of these earlier approaches persisted, notably Marxist ones, but here I mainly wish to focus on those that developed into business cycle theory, which had the greatest impact on practices of economic management.

From the 1890s onwards, it appears that recurring crises were presented as a new object and new problem for economists, ones quite removed from the classical attention to supply and demand (Jones 1900). Furthermore, many economists writing about recurring crises and depressions ceased to view them as they had in the nineteenth century, namely, as the result of exogenous factors, such as war, crop failure, or sunspots. The twentieth-century business cycle literature distinguished itself from earlier literature on crises and depressions, with many economists seeing such business cycles not as exogenous disruptions to a stable equilibrium state but instead as a normal and regular part of business in an industrial society (cf. Morgan 1990; Klein 2001). As Thorstein Veblen argued, "[t]he true, or what may be called the normal, crises, depressions, and exaltations in the business world are not the result of accidents, such as the failure of a crop. They come in the regular course of business. The depression and the exaltation are in a measure bound together" (Veblen 1965 [1904]: 183). W.C. Mitchell made the same point in his then seminal *Business Cycles*: "[c]rises are no longer treated as sudden catastrophes which interrupt the "normal" course of business, as episodes which can be understood without investigation of the intervening years. On the contrary, the crisis is regarded as but the most dramatic and the briefest of the three phases of a business cycle—prosperity, crisis, and depression" (W.C. Mitchell 1913: 5). This "modern" approach to the cycle was echoed in the work of George H. Hull, whose *Industrial Depressions* argued that earlier theories of crisis and depression failed to recognize the "disease" as a product of the industrial system itself (Hull 1911).

Thus, rather than being seen as merely a spasmodic process, the progression of economic development came to be seen as a flow from prosperity to crisis, and through depression back to prosperity again. These fluctuations were as haphazard, it seemed, as the weather—bad weather always eventually giving way to good if one waited long enough. Indeed, the nineteenth-century language of business cycles largely reflected this comparability with meteorology, with its focus on "business weather".[4]

The idea of regular, endogenous fluctuations enabled economic thinkers to conceptualize an economy of cycles whose causes, often opaque, could be understood, measured, and increasingly controlled. In this way, the theoretical attention to trade or business cycles became an empirical and political project to construct what I call an economy of quantities. Through the use of "business barometers" (cf. Mitchell 1913), it was increasingly possible to "forecast" the "economic weather" (cf. Jones 1900) and, by so doing, minimize the effects of fluctuations of trade. The metaphors used to describe economic movements are important. Economics conceived its object as a product of natural forces, and, while business cycle theory in the early twentieth century set itself off from the view that natural forces such as sunspots or weather patterns could affect the economy, it nonetheless retained the notion that economic fluctuations were themselves a natural part of the new industrial economy (e.g., Hull 1911). The description of these movements as "cyclical" is itself a sort of naturalization of economic forces, implying a natural, regular character.

This shift in the study of business cycles owed much to statistical studies of economic fluctuations, which initially were intended to discover the causes of crises and which eventually attempted to uncover repeating patterns in recurring cycles (Klein 2001; Morgan 2001). As Beveridge had pointed out, the fluctuations of the economy could be "seen" in the bank rate, foreign trade, marriage rate, consumption of beer, numbers regarding crime and pauperism, railway receipts, bankers' clearances, wages, and prices (Beveridge 1910: 38). This mysterious force was a sort of total social fact influencing all other facets of life. One could see the movement of the economy over time by observing the shifting values of time-series data. For Morgan (1990), this marked a move beyond merely observing the characteristics and causes of individual crises. Focus on recurring crises attempted to find similarities in the causes of depressions in order to aggregate and systematize them.

In this way, a social scientific explanation of the causes of crises became less important than predicting and moderating the flow of the cycle. In the first decade of the 1900s, barometers designed to capture economic movements were rudimentary, often referring only to one or a few variables arranged in time-series. In the 1920s, various statistical agencies

had begun actively reporting time-series measurements to clients, and the US Department of Commerce, under the leadership of Herbert Hoover, actively sought to collect and disseminate data about the business cycle. Such work obviously became even more urgent after the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s. During the 1930s, new statistical devices were brought to bear in Europe and the United States in a bid to provide rational tools to act in ways that might mitigate the length and severity of downturns.[5] Macroeconomics was not a descriptive science, but a practical tool intended to help resolve the problem of cyclical economic fluctuations. Thus, the accuracy of the discipline's assumptions, for example, whether cyclical fluctuations actually exist as autopoetic economic forces, are less important than the role this same discipline has played as a mediator of capitalist class relations that have always been aggravated by recurring economic crises.

This new problematization of crises and depressions can be seen as an extension of the growth of management sciences and engineering within private enterprises in the United States. The "managerial revolution" in American business in the 1880s and 1890s sought to construct systems that took advantage of the economies of speed and scale that new techniques of production and distribution permitted (Chandler 1977). The combinations and mergers that sought to rationalize economic production and limit competition were, in part, a response to the economic depression of the mid-1870s, and recurring depressions in the mid-1880s and mid-1890s accelerated this process. Moreover, these were attempts to apply the "visible hand" of active planning and scientific management to coordinate the flow of materials and products through the process of production. In this way, even before the flow of money and demand became a problem of economic government for the state, it had already emerged as a problem within the modern business enterprise. The configuration of a national economic space as a sort of engineering problem of economic government can be seen as a development of the scientific management elaborated within private corporations, and it is not coincidental that some of the most important contributions to business cycle theory (notably in the United States and France) came from economic application of engineering techniques. This new approach to economic fluctuations emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century, just as

economic demands on the state shifted from nineteenth-century clientelist politics of distribution to the early modern politics of regulation (McCormick 1979).

Much of the early cycle theory added statistical quantification to theoretical explanations of the periodic recurrence of crises and depressions, which gave the economy a new type of visibility and, therefore, actionability.[6] A significant amount of attention has been paid to the history of quantification and statistical measurement in economics and economic management (Desrosières 2003a, b; Klein 2001; Morgan 1990, 2001, 2003; Porter 2001), which were evidently important to the objectification of economic phenomena, and their bundling into technologies of government, which sought to act on the numerical representations of "the economy" (Desrosières 2008). These new data were deliberately constructed to enhance the rationality of business decisions and constitute a kind of assemblage, or *agencement*, that made new types of action possible.

The Life of the Working Population in the Age of Depressions

This new way of representing and reflecting on economic activity, in terms of the cyclical fluctuation of business activity, was not merely an academic pursuit. It emerged as a pressing policy issue against the backdrop of the social problems provoked by economic crises and depressions, especially unemployment. The concern about business cycles, thus, was directly related to their impact on the welfare and cohesion of society under the relatively new conditions of mature industrial production. In this section, I draw out in greater detail how the aforementioned attention to the new problem of business cycles was an economistic response, or a response framed in economic terms, to the social problems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The spurt of industrialization and urbanization at the end of the nineteenth century had created new conditions for many wage workers in the United States and Western Europe, such that an ever-growing proportion of the population had become dependent on money wages earned in the

productive economy rather than the fruits of their own subsistence labour, which still succoured many rural and working-class families late into the nineteenth century. This growing dependence on the formal, capitalist economy for survival created a new moral panic around the problem of crises and business fluctuations, which impoverished working people by depriving them of outlets to sell their labour power. In the United States, for instance, the inaugural report of the first Commissioner of Labor, Carroll D. Wright, investigated the causes and extent of the economic depression of 1882–1886, during which, he estimated, a million men were unemployed (Wright 1886: 65).

The social costs of depressions were explicit in many early twentieth-century works on business cycles. As Beveridge pointed out, "[c]yclical fluctuation means discontinuity in the growth of the demand for labour" (Beveridge 1910: 65). Thus, from early on, unemployment is frequently mentioned as a central element of the cycle (Wright 1886; May 1902; Hobson 1969 [1910]; Hull 1911; Pigou 1967 [1927]). As Pigou pointed out as late as 1927, periods of unemployment led to the moral decay of workers, making him conclude that industrial fluctuations were a social evil (Pigou 1967: 246). Citing Alden, Pigou notes that "[d]uring the long spell of idleness any one of these men invariably deteriorates […]. The man becomes less proficient and less capable […]. [N]othing worse has a worse effect upon the calibre of such men" (cited in Pigou 1967: 242). Despite these costs, as Alchon (1985) points out, this did not yet lead to a programme of state-directed economic management. Indeed, the programme to render business cycles visible as an object of administrative action was, in the United States at least, conceived as an alternative to planning. Certainly, resolving the problem of business cycles had practical economic advantages for business owners and large corporate shareholders, since the social problems caused by business cycles were never far from the surface. For instance, in Veblen's work, these were secondary but nonetheless important: "while it is true that depression is primarily a business difficulty and rests on emotional grounds, that does not hinder its having grave consequences for industry and for the material welfare of the community outside the range of business interests" (Veblen 1965: 238). "Hard Times", as Veblen put it, were a new consequence of machine production in an industrial society. More systematic and

statistical studies of business cycles drew attention to the same problem, and drew even greater inspiration from the social problems provoked by depressions. As W.C. Mitchell's study of business cycles pointed out,

> […] business cycles get their economic interest from the changes which they produce in the material well-being of the community. This well-being depends upon the production and distribution of useful goods. But the industrial and commercial processes by which goods are furnished are conducted by business men in quest of profits. Thus the changes which affect the community's well-being come not from the processes which directly minister to it but from the process of making money. (Mitchell 1913: 26)

The appearance of a new problem of business cycles and depressions at the end of the nineteenth century, and particularly in the first decades of the twentieth century, marks a new economistic discourse, one which conceives of economic flows detached from the social relations that produced them and which is aimed at problematizing and marking out fields of action which could be changed or optimized in order to alleviate or mitigate the impact of business on the life of the population. As Patterson pointed out in his review of contemporary business cycle theories, these issues were a result of new relations of dependence: "[t]he employee participates in the risks of modern industry and suffers from a business derangement far more severely than his employer" (Patterson 1915: 135). W.C. Mitchell's later work with the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), under the direction of Republican US Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover (see W.C. Mitchell 1923), centred on the same problem: business cycles were an important line of research because of their connection to unemployment and, therefore, to the well-being of the working population.

Economic depressions stimulated not only relief efforts but also the creation of new categories of subjectivity (the unemployed) and new objects of government (unemployment) between the 1880s and the 1930s, which have already been the focus of genealogical study (Salais 1985; Topalov 1994; Walters 2000). As Walters (2000) pointed out, these new attempts to account for and measure the number of unemployed led to new administrative practices, many of which were aimed

at mitigating the causes of unemployment, even as these attempts led to new claims by working people and the unemployed to state protection from loss of work. The state's responsibility towards economic or industrial depressions stemmed from their effect on the workforce. The losses to the material well-being of "the community" or of workers provoked by business cycles were consistently mentioned in the literature on cycles and industrial crises in the early twentieth century (Beveridge 1910; Hobson 1969 [1910]; Jones 1900; Tugan-Baranowsky 1913 [1894]; Veblen 1965: 177–267).

Unemployment was not the only problem that business cycle theorists had in mind when they began discussing this new problem warranting new administrative measures. Social strife and class struggle were just as present and important. Thus—as in Oliver and Tasson's discussion in this volume of administrative measures adopted against the spread of HIV/AIDS in Uganda, or as in Christensen's argument about the US domestic precursors to democracy promotion—competing social groups play a significant role in the formation of new management techniques, which are not merely positivistic representations of reality as such, but rather a particularistic configuration of a socially constructed objectivity. The emergence of business cycle theory was almost simultaneous with the growth of managerialism in the private economy, pioneered by professional engineers in the United States (Alchon 1985; Chandler 1977). The social problems of organizing and disciplining this work force—of prime importance to the managers and engineers—were also oriented to social pacification, especially in the context of the first Red Scare period during and immediately after World War I. A managerial orientation to social problems contributed to the formation of several research institutes in the United States (the NBER, in New York City, and the Cowles Commission, housed at the University of Chicago) which sought to both uncover the causes of cyclical fluctuations and make their movements increasingly visible to economic actors (Barnett 1998: 5; Alchon 1985, Morgan 1990: 64–68).

Crises and depressions became an important political problem to the extent that new social and moral problems were identified in the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America—particularly around the category of involuntary unemployment—and workers had begun to

make new claims on the state and the factory system (Beveridge 1909; Castel 2003; Walters 2000). They were also increasingly demanding social planning to ensure adequate levels of employment. Working people were capable of exerting pressure on the state for reforms—and sometimes even threatened revolutionary action—when faced with destitution. Indeed, one early theorist of industrial crises (Tugan-Baranowsky 1913 [1894]) attempted in part of his study to correlate the revolutionary activities of the working classes with the outbreak of depression. Moore also mentions the "friction and strife" that result from the struggle to maintain a declining share of production, which disrupts industry (Moore 1914: 1). Business cycles were a threat to the cohesion of industrial society and threatened to augment class struggle.

The problematization of business cycles, however, was not intended to disrupt the social relations of industrial society, but instead aimed to create devices and techniques that might render the fluctuations of the market actionable, so as to reduce their negative effects. Indeed, this was the very point of the "modern" approach to the business cycle. By admitting that the cyclical recurrence of crises was normal, economists such as W.C. Mitchell also sought to alleviate, "palliate", and diminish their intensity and impact on the welfare and cohesiveness of the community. This was a marked departure from Marxist attempts to rectify the cycle by direct state planning of the economy, thus eliminating capitalist competition. In the United States, in particular, business cycle theories sought to make economic fluctuations visible to business actors so that they might avoid over-speculation and investment in projects that would not ultimately provide returns. As the economist T.N. Carver argued, the periodicity of depressions could "only be removed by such a complete knowledge and understanding of the situation as would enable the business world to foresee the tendencies and take measures to overcome them" (Carver 1903: 499). Price indices, business barometers, and time-series measurements all constituted a new domain of visibility of the economy, where the subjective experiences of unemployment and "hard times" could be objectified by statistical devices intended to show business actors where the economy was moving (Morgan 1990, 2001, 2003; Klein 2001).

The composition of economic life as an intelligible field (Rose 1999: 33), through which certain statistical inscription devices (Latour 1986)

sought to order the business calculations of market actors, was a key preoccupation, but it was always directed towards the problem of economic fluctuations and their social consequences. Statistical time-series that attempted to visualize economic fluctuations are consistent with the predominant biopolitics theorized by Foucault (2008), that is, that business cycles posed a danger to the welfare, health, and moral standards of the population and therefore invited special modes of regulation. As Timothy Mitchell (2006) has theorized, the early twentieth century saw a shift in the mode of governmentality, away from a focus on the life of the population and towards the optimization of the economy. Yet, if an analysis of early business cycle theory is indicative, this shift had not yet occurred by the 1920s, as business cycle theory was beginning to solidify its hold over the American economic imagination, and where the contradictions between the life of the population, on the one hand, and private ownership and control of the means of production, on the other, were most clearly visible. Mitchell is surely right to point out that the economy, and not the population, is now the predominant mode of governmentality, perhaps globally, but certainly in Western Europe and North America. However, action on the economy was initially intended as a way to reduce social tensions and address social problems so as to limit claims against private economic calculations. These latter, without being restrained by state intervention, could, it was hoped, nonetheless be optimized and controlled in the interests of society.

Business Cycles and Liberal Morality

Thus, there is an important moral backdrop to the emergence of the economy as a terrain of administrative action. Business cycle theory came out of a discipline—economics—which had traditionally taken the right to private property for granted and assumed that a privately run economic system was superior to any other. Free market competition would lead to the best social outcomes for all, namely, through increases in the productivity and wealth of the nation. While the concentration of capital in large corporations from the late nineteenth century onwards certainly challenged some of the central principles of classical liberalism

(Brick 2006), business cycle theory sought to maintain the centrality of the calculations of individualistically oriented private property owners. No other agent, least of all the state, could be relied upon to make decisions in the best interest of maximizing productive wealth. Thus, even as cycle theorists like W.C. Mitchell and G.H. Hull pointed out the social harm caused by over-exuberant speculation, they did not seek to revise key tenets of the liberal social order.

Indeed, this new analysis also offered reassurance that such a revision was precisely not its intent and that the economy could be improved without directly intervening in the decision-making of private economic actors. As W.C. Mitchell pointed out in his famous work of 1913, "it is those who desire to see the present form of economic organization perfected rather than fundamentally changed who are most concerned with pressing the demand for better governmental reporting of business conditions" (Mitchell 1913: 596). Despite his deep concern for the fate of the unemployed, Beveridge also did not see any final solution to the problem of business cycles, noting that there can be "no cure for industrial fluctuations within the range of practical politics" (Beveridge 1910: 67). While this also suggests that there were solutions outside of this range (e.g., socialist planning), most early theorists of the business cycle suggested "palliatives" to the cycle rather than an outright fix. This theme would remain in effect through the end of the 1920s. The British economist A.C. Pigou, for instance, firmly retained his commitment to free enterprise, despite the importance he had begun to place on economic fluctuations. As he noted, "to show that industrial fluctuations are a social evil is not to show that government should attempt to remedy them" (Pigou 1967 [1927]: 246). As in the immediate pre-World War I period, when business cycles were just beginning to gain a new degree of interest, there was no attempt to cure the malady through a radical re-organization of the economy. Instead, as the American businessman G.H. Hull suggested in his 1911 book, it was a malady that humanity would have to learn to deal with in the industrial phase of history, just as livestock diseases, he reasoned, had challenged humanity in an earlier epoch. Business cycles were a natural part of the industrial landscape, an inconvenience to be certain, but not a dangerous challenge to the liberal moral values of individualism, private property, laissez-faire, and market

competition. Business cycles provided economists with a set of concepts that held out an alternative to state economic planning.

In the American context after World War I, a deep cultural commitment to economic liberalism and a political consensus behind entrepreneurial voluntarism restricted any experimenting with direct intervention by the state to plan productive investment or even to regulate or limit socially harmful types of speculation and malproduction. It would remain so until the cauldron of the 1930s. Yet at the same time, Progressive Era social movements of the interwar period were determined to solve social problems—including those related to class struggle, unemployment, and poverty—by applying social scientific knowledge. Thus, it was in the United States that some of the more prescient examples of economic government at a distance can be gleaned. As Alchon pointed out (1985), a counter-cyclical machinery was brought together in the United States during the depression of 1921, centred on informing the decision-making of business actors. Much of this effort was the result of the aforementioned collaboration between the Republican US Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, a progressive and engineer, and W.C. Mitchell, an economist and statistician, who became the Director of the NBER (founded in 1920). While much of the early efforts of the NBER consisted in compiling national income accounts, which could be used to rationally plan aspects of the economy, Alchon notes that Mitchell quickly returned to his interest in business cycles in the 1920s, seeing in them opportunities for statistical development and prescriptive policy solutions to the problems of unemployment and depression.

Hoover, for his part, felt that through enlightened self-interest, the economic system could be modernized in such a way as to reduce inefficiencies, speculation, and the likelihood of economic collapse. Under Hoover's leadership, President Harding's administration sponsored a national conference on unemployment, with the intent of finding market solutions to the social problems of industrial capitalism. This programme received significant media attention beginning in 1923.[7] In this way, the Republican administrations of the 1920s sought to avoid greater state activism while nonetheless contributing to economic rationalization and the welfare of the working classes. As W.C. Mitchell noted in the NBER's report on business cycles and unemployment produced by the conference, "recognition of the importance of economic research and

the interpretation of economic facts would be the beginning of better control of business conditions by business men" (Mitchell 1923: xxiii). The agenda of Hoover and the NBER was to provide technical devices for a liberal, anti-statist counter-cyclical form of private economic planning that might suffice to reduce the social evils of depression and unemployment. These problems continued throughout to be the backdrop for investigations of business cycles in the 1920s and 1930s.

As the suggestion of better governmental reporting of business conditions implies, business cycle theorists sought to provide more information about business cycles to the public, and thereby influence economic actors' calculations and decisions. The representation of business cycles through statistical time-series in the 1910s and 1920s was intended to provide business actors with greater information against which to rationalize and optimize their calculations. As W.C. Mitchell argued, "progress lies in the direction of bettering our forecasts of business conditions. For when coming troubles are foreseen they may be mitigated often, and sometimes averted" (W.C. Mitchell 1913: 588). Likewise, G.H. Hull argued for better reporting by government of statistics related to construction in order to provide the public with better information about cyclical movements of the economy. Similar demands were made in Britain, notably by D.H. Robertson (1915). Economic forecasts, and "business barometers" would work much like weather forecasts, providing information that would enable calculating economic actors to make informed decisions about investment and production (see also Morgan 2001: 246). But this was the extent of the state's responsibility, which was, initially, very minimal in its being restricted to the improvement of collection and reporting of data (Alchon 1985).

As Herbert Hoover pointed out in his preface to the first NBER report on business cycles in 1923, the downward side of the cycle was attributed to the "evils" of speculation, over-expansion, and inefficiency brought about by boom times (in Mitchell 1923: vi). For Hoover, the social challenges of economic crises and depressions could be met through the perfection of the self-regulating mechanism of the economy.[8] Cycle theory, thus, sought to indicate a steady state of economic activity against which rational calculation could take place through enlightened self-interest. In this respect, American business cycle approaches (and British approaches to a lesser extent) were the perfect administrative devices of a society

firmly entrenched in the liberal sanctity of private property, and also of private control over business decisions.

It was not until the latter part of the 1930s, when the stagnationist and under-consumptionist arguments of economists such as Alvin Hansen (1938, 1939) and John Maynard Keynes (1936) combined with the more statist and interventionist Democratic presidency of Franklyn Roosevelt, that the fluctuations of the economy themselves became the object of new administrative techniques to optimize their overall performance and boost employment in the United States and elsewhere. Government was called to play a new role, intervening not merely to regulate, control, and restrain particular abuses of market actors but to supply "motive force itself where motive force is lacking" (Clark 1936: 430). Here, too, the business cycle was the object of new techniques of government and statistical quantification, techniques that were built on the earlier, liberal understanding of economic fluctuations, and ones that, as Keynes stipulated, would optimize the backdrop against which private economic calculations were made. It was around this new problematization that national income accounting eventually emerged as a key device for active state planning of the economy in the postwar period. Yet, this intervention was, at least initially, oriented towards a technical resolution of what were otherwise social problems, particularly those related to lack of employment, and the new category of involuntary unemployed, which had so shaken the moral foundations of early twentieth-century liberal society (Walters 2000; Topalov 1994). These social problems would be addressed indirectly, whether by state management of aggregate demand or private calculation against the backdrop of business knowledge. The transformation of these social problems into a technical problem of the business cycle left the social relations of mature capitalism untouched and unquestioned.

Conclusion

Today's macroeconomic management owes a great deal to the emergence of business cycles as a new object of economic analysis and, thereafter, as a terrain of economic government. And, indeed, our focus remains one

that sets the calculations of private economic actors as sacrosanct, against a set of conditions that can only be optimized by the state. To use the language of macroeconomics is also, in many ways, to submit to these normative questions, rather than to develop new normative claims that might underscore global movements for equality and solidarity. Through statistical accounting devices, the fluctuations of national production and demand eventually could be made scrutable and visible via quantitative representation by state officials and optimized for the social aims of full employment, particularly in the immediate postwar period. Yet, as I have sought to show above, there is nothing particularly natural about our current fixation on quarterly GDP growth or attempts to regulate the fluctuations of overall effective demand through the manipulation of interest rates or quantitative easing. These are technical measures that are made possible by the context in which the analysis of business fluctuations emerged as an administrative concern in the early twentieth century.

From this contingent emergence, a few initial conclusions can be drawn. I would like to draw particular attention to what I think are two important "structural effects" (Mitchell 2006) of modern macroeconomics that are the descendants of the problematic of business cycles. Firstly, economic government in the twentieth century came to focus on manipulating specific economic fluctuations, including inflation (Hayes 2011), rather than addressing social relations or allowing alternative claims to control and organization of industrial means of production. Modern macroeconomic policy limits reform of social structures (including class relations) to the optimization of conditions of private economic calculation—thereby upholding liberal claims to private property rights against collectivist claims that may seek to balance the demands for socio-economic equality. There is nothing natural, however, about the ontological reality of fluctuations described by macroeconomics nor the data that measure such fluctuations. They are the result of conventions that emerged in a particular context and thus that can be changed—and will have to change as the neoliberal consensus devolves further into crisis. Nor is there anything inevitable about the relation between these fluctuations and the lives of the working population. While economic fluctuations were initially inscribed within administrative management techniques aimed at supporting the lives of workers, it is equally possible

to provide alternative forms of institutional support such as guaranteed minimum incomes or a similar de-coupling of income from labour and a redistribution of the benefits derived from "socially useful labour" (Gorz 1989; Castel 2003). The focus on fluctuations in modern macroeconomics leaves the social relations of industrial capitalist economies unquestioned, much as the moral foundations of liberalism were seen as sacred by early twentieth-century economists working on business cycles. The modern edifice of economic government is built around often impractical attempts to manage these fluctuations. We might well question why, rather than merely attempting to influence these fluctuations, we do not act directly to transform some of their causes, which also produce massive inefficiencies (and inequalities) in economic, environmental, and social terms.

Secondly, the early twentieth-century emergence of business cycles and their management—first through enlightened self-interest and later by direct state intervention to buttress effective demand—initiated a technopolitics of economic management. In other words, the organization of the economy—fundamentally a political question for many at the beginning of the twentieth century—was de-politicized through the elaboration of technical, administrative apparatuses that attempted to optimize economic fluctuations through specific forms of intervention. This extension of managerialism and economic engineering has had the effect of enhancing the power of experts and reducing the scope of democratic decision-making. Decisions about optimizing economic life are made on the basis of technical expertise; they are often the result of econometric calculations about the effects of certain types of interventions (e.g., raising interest rates or government-spending programmes). The politics of socio-economic regulation have been subsumed by the expert discourse of the macroeconomist, which dominates state institutions. Today, in part, because macroeconomics has been consolidated as a kind of "normal science", the politics behind the current policy consensus appears invisible, and even in the face of colossal policy failures in Europe, notably in the UK, Greece, Ireland, and Spain, it is still unthinkable to revisit the politics of such knowledge because of its apparent positivist representation of economic reality.

Alternatives to this technopolitics are certainly possible, yet they might require a different set of social and economic institutions than those that currently exist. Given the institutional importance of bodies of experts devoted to the measurement and management of economic fluctuations, it is difficult, at the present time, to imagine how a substantive democratization of the economic sphere might take place, or what it might look like. Nevertheless, a better understanding of the conditions of emergence of macroeconomics shows that it remains possible to disrupt the hegemonic hold that key economics objects and concepts have over our imagination. By developing a mode of historicizing the knowledge and tools that are so important to economic government, it is possible to de-naturalize the current forms such government takes and thereby contribute to the type of critical sociology advanced in this volume. Against a backdrop of ongoing stagnation and rising populist racism, it is increasingly important not to be trapped by the conventions of macroeconomic representations and to imagine the economy in radically different ways, ones that respond to the social problems of the present and the desire for a more just society.

Notes

1. Timothy Mitchell's work is a partial exception to this (Mitchell 1998, 2002). Mitchell argues that "the" economy emerged as a new object of administration in the middle of the twentieth century, replacing population as the main object of state action (see also Mitchell 2006). Much of his work focuses on the importance of state practices of representation of the economy, particularly through national income accounts. My research extends Mitchell's argument to focus more specifically on conceptual representations of the economy that pre-existed national income accounts and which made new modes of administering the social possible by acting on the economic causes of social problems such as unemployment. Current forms of economic government continue to grapple with the relation between economic cycles and the social problems that they produce.
2. On a similar theme, see Desrosières (2003b).

3. Karl Marx, J.S. Mill, and W.S. Jeavons each formulated theories about cyclical fluctuations of economic activity. For an overview of the history of business cycles as an object of analysis, see also Benkemoune (2009), Backhouse (2005), Morgan (1990: 18–44), and Schumpeter (1954: 738–750).
4. The expression is from Jones (1900). Indeed, business cycle theories have a long association with weather phenomena and meteorology. Jevons's sunspot theory of the cycle constituted an early attempt to account for the periodicity of economic crises, which attempted to correlate cycles with sunspots. Similar approaches attempting to match weather and the business cycle persisted into the early part of the twentieth century (Moore 1914, 1923).
5. The most notable statistical tool for these purposes was the application of regression analysis to concepts from business cycle theory, founding the subfield of econometrics. For early works in this area, see Schumpeter (1933) and Frisch (1933) and on national income accounting, see Kuznets (1937) and Clark (1932, 1937).
6. For example, see Aftalion (1913) and Hull (1911).
7. A Boolean search of the *New York Times* finds that reference to "business cycle" or "business cycles" was sporadic before 1923 when reference to it (particularly in light of the Presidential conference of that year) suddenly and dramatically increased. Reference to business cycles never substantially decreased after that.
8. This was also true of his response to the Great Depression after October 1929.

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Civil Society Reconfigured: Manag(erializ)ing AIDS in Uganda

Marcia Oliver and Stephen Tasson

Introduction

Once hailed as part of a 'new breed' of African leaders, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has received much international praise and financial assistance for his early nation building and reform efforts in the aftermath of decades of misrule and political violence in the country. He has been praised for institutionalizing democratic reforms, initiating an effective national HIV/AIDS response, and implementing more 'inclusive' liberal reforms emphasizing, in part, 'good governance', institution-building, and participatory development initiatives (Craig and Porter 2006). However, recent evidence suggests a significant reversal of the nation's

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previous successes combating the spread of HIV/AIDS (Ministry of Health 2006; Masaba 2012) and a growing discontent among international donors, with many Ugandans facing persistent problems of poverty, exclusion, and the consequences of the illiberal and authoritarian state practices of Museveni's regime (such as economic mismanagement, high-level corruption, and the repression of civil society activity by legal and military means) (Oloka-Onyango 2004; Tripp 2010).

This chapter addresses some of the seemingly contradictory results of Uganda's development in the last few decades by focusing on the country's response to HIV/AIDS. In line with the critical sociology elaborated by Kurasawa in the introduction to this volume, we purposefully shift our emphasis from the effects of idiosyncratic political leadership and examine more proximate shifts in structural architecture of development, as such shifts manifest themselves in Uganda's response to HIV/AIDS today. Specifically, we address the institutionalization of new governance structures and strategies—based on the logics of New Public Management (NPM) and aid effectiveness, as well as their implications for civil society participation, autonomy, and accountability in responding to HIV/AIDS in Uganda. Both NPM and aid effectiveness are discourses and sets of practices with a global reach and are at the core of development's 'good governance' agenda. Where NPM was designed to transform the public sector through a set of market-based managerial reforms, the principles of aid effectiveness were designed to reflect more 'inclusive' discourses of development, such as country 'ownership', 'participation', and 'donor harmonization' with recipient priorities and institutions. The widespread embrace of the 'good governance agenda' in development has been accompanied by a range of governing strategies—what we identify as market-based managerialism and ownership strategies—that are used by international donors and national governments to disburse and manage HIV/AIDS financing to civil society 'partners'. The increasing use of these strategies by donor and recipient countries over the last two decades has posed particular challenges for civil society groups—something that contributors to critical development literature have noted in other settings (Kirby 2004; Cornish et al. 2012; Ebrahim 2003; Follér et al. 2013). Using the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and Uganda's Civil Society Fund (CSF) as case studies, we

explore how these governing strategies manifest themselves and practically reconfigure local contexts, give rise to new ways of managing and regulating civil society actors and relations, and potentially produce new challenges for civil society organizations—especially for those 'lacking' the technical and professional competences required by today's donors and for those engaged in HIV/AIDS advocacy work for stigmatized and marginalized populations in the country.

As noted above, like other chapters in this book, our analysis is part of a critical sociology that seeks to provide an analytical-minded critique of established social orders. To this end, our chapter sets out to denaturalize and problematize taken-for-granted truths about development today, specifically by exploring how relations of power operate through regimes of governance, professionalized modes of knowledge, and processes that often impede collective action, participatory self-management, and autonomy in various and diverse ways. Following Kurasawa (this volume), our analysis works within critical sociology's animating tensions to underscore the generative value of a more reflexive methodology and analysis. Specifically, our approach navigates between a more deterministic structuralism, on the one hand, and a voluntaristic 'agentic determinism', on the other, while simultaneously providing an account of contemporary HIV/AIDS governance in Uganda grounded in both analytical rigor and normative critique informed by structuralist and interpretivist frameworks.

Our analysis is, in part, based on historical and secondary research of Uganda's AIDS response and a textual analysis of the following international and Ugandan government policy documents: the United States' global AIDS policy, known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); Uganda's national strategy frameworks for addressing HIV/AIDS; Uganda's legal frameworks concerning HIV/AIDS, sexual minorities, and civil society; and Uganda's CSF (established 2007). We focus on PEPFAR's initial authorization under US President George W. Bush, since it occupies a central structural position with the field, significantly shaping the development of HIV/AIDS policies, civil society projects, and governance strategies in the Global South (including in Uganda). Our interest in Uganda's CSF stems from the emerging global value consensus on 'aid effectiveness' and the re-formulation of international

funding modalities to disperse and reflexively manage aid to development 'partners'. 'Harmonizing' and 'aligning' donor resources and civil society projects *with* national plans and policies were crucial justifications for establishing the Fund and crucial to its legitimacy as an effective, country-owned development initiative. The CSF exemplifies a global consensus on 'good governance', bringing together NPM's emphasis on efficiency, competitive contractualism, and measurable results with emerging principles of aid effectiveness that stress—aside from results—country ownership, civil society participation, and donor alignment and harmonization with national development plans and priorities (see OECD 2005).

While more structurally informed approaches to 'formal' policy and legislation lend insight into the dominant discourses and forms of expertise that shape knowledge and concrete plans for development, they fall short of accounting for the diverse ways that abstract policy texts are translated into development practices and given meaning by development actors. Thus, our analysis is also informed by fieldwork that Oliver conducted in Uganda over an 11-week period between April 2008 and May 2011, which entailed a total of 43 semi-structured interviews with international development partners, government officials, and staff from international, national, and local civil society organizations working in the fields of HIV/AIDS and poverty-related programming. The aim of these interviews was to explore the complex ways in which situated actors, in the context of a constantly changing development architecture, interpret, negotiate, employ, and thus potentially stabilize new development imperatives, justifications, and goals. In what follows, we provide a historical and explanatory account of Uganda's response to HIV/AIDS, while simultaneously questioning the emergence of new systems of exclusion and mechanisms of power comprising HIV/AIDS governance in Uganda today.

AIDS in Uganda: An Overview

When Ugandan President Museveni took power in 1986, the country had just emerged from a long period of state violence and repression, and a near total collapse of the economic, political, and social infrastructures

of the country. Under the regimes of Milton Obote (1962–1971 and 1979–1985) and Idi Amin (1971–1979), widespread violence and rape, massive displacements of people, and increased economic and political disparities contributed to the loss of over one million lives, heightened insecurity in civil life, and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS throughout the country (UAC 2004). By the time Museveni claimed power, AIDS constituted a public health crisis that threatened the economic and political security of the country (Ostergard and Barcelo 2005). An analysis of data collected by the Ministry of Health reveals that Uganda's HIV epidemic has followed three distinct phases since the early 1980s. The first phase was marked by rapidly rising HIV prevalence rates, which peaked in the early 1990s with a national prevalence rate of 18 %, which rose as high as 30 % in some urban areas (UAC 2001). The second phase was a period of rapid decline in prevalence rates between 1992 and 2002 (dropping to 6.1 % in 2002). The third and final phase was one of stabilization between 2002 and 2005, reflecting a 'mature and generalized epidemic' with a prevalence rate between 6 and 7% (UAC 2007). However, starting in 2004–2005 (and confirmed via data from 2011), evidence showed that Uganda experienced an increase in prevalence rates among specific populations and an alarming reversal of some of the more 'successful' trends of the 1990s (Ministry of Health 2006; Kron 2012). This increase is most often attributed to changing behavioral indicators (such as an increase in multiple concurrent sexual partnerships), greater accessibility to treatment for people living with HIV, and inadequate attention to prevention in terms of both funding and developing effective interventions that address the structural determinants of sexual behavior (personal interviews, 2008; Indevelop 2014). This chapter contributes to this understanding by highlighting the emergence of new global governance structures and strategies for financing and managing HIV/AIDS, which we argue must be taken into account in making sense of the recent reversal of Uganda's HIV/AIDS success, specifically in terms of entrenching donor and state power as well as undermining the potential of civil society groups engaged in HIV/AIDS programming and/or advocacy.

Although there remains considerable debate among scholars and policymakers about what exactly led to the initial decline in HIV prevalence in Uganda throughout the 1990s (Green et al. 2006), the Ugandan

government clearly invested political resources into the country's early response (Grebe 2009). For instance, it is widely acknowledged that President Museveni expressed unprecedented political will in institutionalizing a national AIDS committee and control program (within the Ministry of Health), mobilizing international resources, and calling on all segments of Ugandan society to get involved in the nationwide response to HIV/AIDS. The President's openness and willingness to prioritize HIV/AIDS stood in sharp contrast to the policies of most African governments at the time.

In addition to the Ugandan government's apparent willingness to champion the cause of HIV/AIDS prevention, the improving economic and social conditions and political stability that followed 20 years of civil unrest (1966–1986) provide the broader context for understanding Uganda's success in this respect. Beginning in the late 1980s, the government began implementing a number of reforms that ostensibly aimed to rebuild the nation and reverse the divisive practices of earlier colonial and post-colonial regimes. These efforts included improving the country's health and education sectors, providing space for the emergence of independent media and freedom of press, and implementing policy and legal reforms to address gender inequality (Craig and Porter 2006; Tripp 2010; Tamale 1999). Museveni also institutionalized a decentralized local government system (known as Resistance Councils) that was premised on grassroots participation, citizen empowerment, and political accountability (Munyonyo 1999). These improving structural conditions not only served to legitimize Museveni's regime to the international community and national citizenry (Grebe 2014), but as Parikh notes, 'helped create an environment that allowed many people greater control over their sexual lives' (2007, 1199).

These significant structural reconfigurations also underpin a third essential feature of Uganda's early response to HIV/AIDS: the mobilization of civil society to respond to the epidemic. Although civil society existed during Uganda's colonial period through informal community associations and missionary-based NGOs, the repressive regime of Idi Amin (1971–1979) outlawed civil society political activities, restricting most associations to the traditional fields of charity, service delivery, and development initiatives (CIVICUS 2006; Kew and Oshikoya 2013),

including HIV/AIDS education and care and support. The relative peace and stability of Uganda during Museveni's regime enabled civil society to flourish, which was further supported by the shifting priorities and funding commitments of international donors and development organizations that, throughout the 1990s, preferred to channel aid to civil society organizations rather than an 'over-bloated' state.

From the beginning, civil society groups were at the forefront not only of providing care for and support to people affected by HIV/AIDS, but also shaping public discourse around HIV/AIDS and advocating for social change, notably concerning collective sexual norms that fuelled the spread of HIV/AIDS, gender inequality and women's lack of human rights, and stigma and discrimination toward people living with HIV/AIDS (Rau 2006). As the director of a women's organization for people living with HIV/AIDS explained:

> When HIV/AIDS became a real issue in the early 80's, I would say it took the government by surprise. But one of the things that I think played a key role was coordination and networking […]. And there was a political wave that created an environment [so that] many people could be free to really parade freely on HIV/AIDS, which I think has played quite a significant role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. (personal interview, 2008)

Much of the work done by civil society actors exemplifies the critical role of social solidarity in Uganda's early fight against HIV/AIDS, or what Helen Epstein describes as '"collective efficacy"; the tendency of people to come together and solve common problems that no one person can solve on his [or her] own' (Epstein 2001, 3). Hundreds of tiny community-based groups emerged throughout Uganda in the late 1980s and 1990s to care for the sick, educate communities about HIV/AIDS, challenge existing sexual norms, and address AIDS-related stigma. For instance, The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) was started in 1987 by a small group of 16 men and women, many of who were living with HIV. The founders based their work on the core values of inclusion, equality, human dignity and integrity, duties of care, and compassion for others (Ssebanja 2007) and relied 'heavily on pre-existing interpersonal networks to build the movement' (Grebe 2014, 8). Moreover, under President Museveni's

early regime, the women's movement flourished, giving rise to a new generation of female AIDS activists to fight for women's rights and better care and support for people living with AIDS.

Unlike other countries in East and Southern Africa, Uganda did not follow a set of donor-led or internationally approved HIV prevention strategies, but rather mobilized civil society networks to work together, designing and translating HIV prevention activities into communities' own socio-cultural contexts of understanding and experience (Epstein 2007). Prevention messages with local resonance, such as 'Love Carefully' and 'Zero Grazing', circulated widely throughout the country to encourage people to reduce casual sexual encounters with multiple partners. Information about AIDS was spread by word of mouth through political speeches and personal networks, including health educators, friends and family, local resistance committees, musicians, women's groups, religious leaders, theatre groups, and village meetings (Low-Beer and Stoneburner 2003), as well as through posters, pamphlets, billboards, newspapers, and radio broadcasts (personal interviews, 2008). By the early 1990s, nationwide conversations about HIV/AIDS and sex-related topics were under way, reinforcing the indiscriminate nature of AIDS and the collective experience of risk: everyone was at risk, regardless of socio-economic status, age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, or political power.[1]

The point we wish to emphasize here is that while the Ugandan government was certainly a leading actor in responding to HIV/AIDS, its response was shaped by, and supportive of, the relatively autonomous grassroots networks of civil society groups (see Stoneburner and Low-Beer 2004) or, as Helen Epstein describes it, 'a very African process of community mobilization, collective action and mutual aid' (2007, 3). As an official from US Agency for International Development (USAID) explained in an interview: 'Uganda's early success with HIV/AIDS was the result of local grass-roots movements that made AIDS into an issue because they were seeing people dying in such large volumes that they had to do something in terms of care and support but also in the area of prevention' (personal interview, 2008). Thus, Uganda's civil society response emerged locally from the shared realities and consequences of AIDS and the extreme hardships produced by war. It relied on personal and social networks to communicate information about AIDS (Stoneburner and

Low-Beer 2004; Allen and Heald 2004) and encouraged all Ugandans to talk frankly and openly about the epidemic and its far-reaching consequences for everyone (not just those deemed 'high-risk'); it provided clear and culturally grounded prevention messages that prioritized reducing multiple concurrent sexual partnerships; and it advocated for collective obligations and practices of care and support for people living with and affected by AIDS.

As we argue below, significant political and institutional changes have taken place both globally and nationally in the last two decades, changes that fundamentally reconfigure the position of civil society groups engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS, especially those small, under-resourced civil society organizations regarded as 'lacking' the technical or professional capacities required today by international donors, or human rights advocacy groups that seek to challenge dominant donor or government agendas.

Managing AIDS: The Rise of 'Good Governance' and New Governance Strategies

The early response by civil society, and the structural conditions in which it operated, predated a significant shift in the field of development over the past two decades. This shift is broadly characterized by a move away from the conditionality and structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and early 1990s toward a more 'inclusive' neoliberal development regime, also referred to as the post-Washington Consensus (see Craig and Porter 2006). By the late 1990s, key principles of 'good governance'—such as institutional strengthening, ownership and alignment, development partnerships, civil society participation, and results-oriented development—were becoming the dominant language within development policy circles and are shaping the practices of most (if not all) development organizations operating today. While the specific policies and practices adopted by international development organizations are often quite diverse, there has been 'significant convergence towards a relatively coherent set of governance strategies' over the last two decades that entail core elements of NPM and aid effectiveness. These strategies

are described by Best as 'ownership, standardization, risk and vulnerability management, and results measurement' (2014, 87) and by Follér et al. as 'marketization, managerialisation, scientisation, and standardization' (2013, 11). As we will illustrate below, these governing strategies have significantly shaped efforts at all levels to respond to HIV/AIDS over the last 15 years, with AIDS donors utilizing new and more subtle 'strategies of control' with more proximate civil society 'partners' (Thörn 2011), such as competitive tendering, auditing and evaluation requirements, results and performance-based financing, capacity-building, and harmonization with national and donor priorities.

Alongside this broad shift in development practice, we also have witnessed the emergence of new actors with a global reach and capacity dedicated solely to addressing the global AIDS pandemic. Of particular interest here is the fact that, in 2003, then-US President George W. Bush launched the PEPFAR—the largest commitment made by any single nation for an international health project.[2] By the end of 2008, PEPFAR had distributed roughly $18 billion for AIDS activities around the world (OGAC 2009) and significantly shaped the AIDS responses of national governments and civil society actors in the global South. While PEPFAR has undoubtedly contributed to better access to treatment for people living with AIDS in the global South and has reflexively incorporated more 'inclusive' development ideas of civil society partnership and participation into its governance structures and aid policies, PEPFAR has also been widely criticized for its lack of reflexivity, including exporting a set of morally conservative policies, firmly grounded in an Evangelical Christian worldview, to the global South. While scholars, human rights activists, and civil society groups were quick to condemn the cultural and moral imperialism of PEPFAR's policies and their consequences for local HIV/AIDS programming (see Siegal 2006; Health GAP 2006; Sonke Gender Justice Network 2007; Evertz 2010), less attention has focused on PEPFAR's alignment with broader shifts in development practice toward 'good governance' and the institutionalization of 'new managerialism' to dispense and manage aid to development 'partners' (cf. see Oliver 2012; Thörn 2011; Sonke Gender Justice Network 2007). As we illustrate in more detail below, interviews with

government officials and civil society actors in Uganda reveal strong concerns about the more practical aspects of PEPFAR's funding practices, such as the use of short-term project-based funding, the emphasis on measurable results, and onerous reporting and auditing requirements for grant recipients.

These new strategies and financing modalities not only govern aid relations with PEPFAR grant recipients (thereby ensuring compliance with US determined priorities and policies) but also underpin Uganda's CSF—a national financing mechanism for HIV/AIDS that 'pools' and disburses multiple donor funds to local projects that can demonstrate an alignment with national HIV/AIDS plans and policies (CSF Manual 2008, 2). Donors' role in establishing and designing the Fund has meant that the dominant practices of 'good governance' are embedded within a nationally centralized granting mechanism for HIV/AIDS and, consequently, the organizational structures and on-the-ground projects of Ugandan civil society.

Both PEPFAR and the CSF employ similar governing strategies in disbursing and managing their HIV/AIDS funds to civil society 'partners'. These strategies reflect the aforementioned spread of NPM and principles of aid effectiveness as expressed by the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and 2008 Accra Agenda on Action. For our purposes, we understand 'market-based managerialism' as emerging from the institutionalization of NPM in global governance structures (characterized by the use of market-like mechanisms and management practices characteristic of private business) (Vabø 2009), whereas 'ownership strategies' stress the value of participation (especially of civil society actors), building strong domestic institutions and political support for development programs, and donor harmonization with recipient country priorities and policies (Best 2014). It is evident from our empirical findings that these strategies intersect, negotiate, and overlap in the on-the-ground practices of AIDS governance and project implementation. The question then becomes how these governing strategies consolidate the power of donor and state actors, give rise to new ways of managing and regulating civil society, and produce new challenges for many grassroots civil society groups.

Global AIDS Governance: Strategies, Implications, and Challenges

Managerial strategies have come to infuse and structure a wide array of institutions and social spheres beyond the corporate or business sector in the global North, such as international development institutions, governments, and civil society organizations around the world (Mueller-Hirth 2012). In these last instances, this has led to what some have called the 'marketization' of the non-profit sector (Salamon 1997). Market-based managerialism privileges an emphasis on efficiency and financial accountability to resource providers, competitive tendering, measurable results, and performance-based funding. In the context of global AIDS governance, these values are reflected in the policy documents and implementing practices of PEPFAR and, more recently, Uganda's CSF—both of which emphasize cultures of competition and accountability that are tied to performativity and measurable results. For instance, described by the US Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) as a 'new way of doing business' (OGAC 2006, 147), PEPFAR is guided by a leading strategic value of 'establish[ing] measurable goals for which we will hold ourselves and our partners accountable' (OGAC 2004, 8). This is achieved, in part, through PEPFAR's overarching governance structure, comprising the OGAC and a number of specialized organizational units that distribute grants to 'prime' partners, monitor focus country compliance with PEPFAR policies and strategies, and evaluate progress in achieving PEPFAR goals (OGAC 2004). Funding and continuation of PEPFAR 'partnerships' depend on the performance of aid recipients in meeting the targets that are set out in the country's overarching Operational Plan (OGAC 2006, 147), which are produced each year by PEPFAR field staff and detail how PEPFAR-supported activities will be implemented, including funding levels for implementing partners and their programmatic targets.

Reflecting what Dean (1999) calls 'technologies of performance' and what Shore (2008) identifies as 'audit culture', PEPFAR embraces the values and calculative practices of financial accountancy. For instance, at the organizational level, PEPFAR monitors country progress in achieving

pre-defined targets through a set of standardized core indicators. Although PEPFAR frames its policies in terms of supporting 'true partnerships' and mutual accountability (OGAC 2007, 9), the performance criteria against which recipient organizations are held to account are determined 'externally' by the US government. This vertical model of accountability signals an obvious lack of reflexivity and a mistrust in the activities and credentials of civil society groups and state actors, a model that is implemented through 'impersonal', technical claims to evidence-based policy, rigorous competitive tendering processes, and other audit systems that monitor performance and results. As other scholars have also argued, these strategies serve primarily to legitimize specific forms of knowledge, associated actors, and practices of aid, while appearing to support and encourage politically neutral, evidence-based, rational decision-making structures (Thörn 2011). But, as Howell and Pearce caution, 'the appearance of neutrality [often] serves inadvertently, or indeed, intentionally, as a powerful political tool for furthering particular agendas' (2002, 116) and limiting participation and political contestation over development priorities and action.

The heavy emphasis on evaluation, audit, performance, and measurable results in global governance has created a demand for certain forms of seemingly 'neutral' expertise to provide various services related to consulting, evaluation, and audit (Thörn 2011; Shore and Wright 2015). Interviews with PEPFAR and CSF officials exemplify the role that international consulting firms and NGOs have come to play in transmitting and institutionalizing technical and managerial development expertise in the global South, positioning these actors as intermediary nodes that link the agendas and values of international donors to the organizational and, indeed, the everyday practices of recipient governments and civil society organizations. As Jacqueline Best points out, even though donors and international financial institutions have reduced formal funding conditions, 'they have also been increasing their technical assistance, upping the role of consultants and other sources of policy advice', producing what she describes as the 'informalization of conditionality techniques' and 'informalization of power relations' (2014, 113). In Uganda, such power relations can be identified as located in the technical, financial, and monitoring and evaluation operations of the CSF, which (at the time of this research) are executed

by two large, USAID-funded, international consulting firms—Deloitte and Touche and Chemonics International. These management agents are responsible for an ever-expanding portfolio of activities, including the following: financial monitoring and evaluation of all CSF-grantee recipients; providing technical support and 'capacity building' to grantees; monitoring contracts and the performance of grantees; and advising the design of the CSF's governance and management structure.

PEPFAR also relies directly on its 'prime partners' (which are mostly international NGOs that have a direct contractual relationship with the US government) to distribute funding and provide technical and managerial oversight to local civil society organizations, otherwise known as 'sub-partners'. One example is the CORE Initiative in Uganda: a 'primary partner' of PEPFAR that was awarded a five-year contract (2004–2009) to support Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD) in leading, managing, and coordinating the national response to HIV/AIDS prevention among youth, including orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC). Implemented under the leadership of CARE USA—one of the largest humanitarian and development NGOs in the world—the CORE Initiative served as the 'technical arm' of the Ministry and was responsible for providing market-based, technical, and operational expertise in the areas of coordination, results measurement and data collection, grants review and disbursement, and financial management and administration (CORE Initiative 2005, 3–4). The use of intermediary organizations with specific types of quantitative and managerial expertise in global AIDS governance strategies establishes a 'control hierarchy' that produces a new class of strategic managers (Shore and Wright 2015) very adept at accounting for itself to those 'above' (donors) and translating donor conditions and goals to those 'below' (civil society partners), most often through their newly found roles in 'monitoring and evaluation' and 'capacity-building' of local organizations (personal interview, 2008). One of the most significant consequence of this development is the stabilization and institutionalization of new governance structures that reify the position of dominant donors and state actors via various 'distancing mechanisms' that ensure civil society actors are held externally accountable 'upwards' to these donors and actors rather than to local beneficiaries or organizational missions and values.

Many of the lessons learned from CORE's work with the Ministry were built into the design and operating procedures of Uganda's CSF. The CSF emerged from donor frustrations with the multiple granting mechanisms that accompanied global AIDS financing (e.g., the Global Fund, World Bank, Euro-American donors), poor fund management, and what was perceived as a 'fragmented' and 'poorly coordinated' civil society AIDS response. In describing the Fund's creation, a senior project manager from the CORE Initiative (a PEPFAR grantee) explained that '[t]his whole thing is about introducing some rigour around the granting process because Uganda has just tortured itself for years around nobody knows who got money for what purposes and why. It's all a handshake or a bribe' (personal interview, 2008). As indicated above, the CSF's granting mechanism employs a range of market-based managerial strategies that link funding disbursements to a competitive tendering process, contractual arrangements, performativity, and measurable results. Once the CSF Steering Committee issues a Request for Applications (RFA), the first step in the CSF's granting process entails an Administrative Compliance Review, which involves:

> [E]valuating each proposal against all the requirements set out in the RFA [like an audit report, last annual report, a letter of recommendation from the district government]. We're ruthless about it, which we get critiqued for but you know if the solicitation says the CV of your executive director is required, then don't forget to send it. The proposal comes in and if the CVs not there, we don't even read it […], we're not accepting this. (personal interview, 2008)

An official from Deloitte Uganda—the Financial Management Agent of the CSF—elaborates on the CSF's granting process with the following:

> Generally, 15% of applications are thrown out at this Administrative Compliance Review stage because they missed something. The next step is a Technical Review: we review the content of the proposal to see how good it is, whether it responded to the posting, we review the budgets, we see how reasonable they are, we conduct a cost/benefit analysis and all that. We score each organization and based on the funding we have available from donors, we select the best organizations for the Pre-Award Assessment. This

> is when [CSF officials] visit the organization [to] verify what the organization claimed in its proposal and to assess the systems that are in place to manage the finances. After the Pre-Award Assessment, we have a final list of civil society organizations and, if funding permits, we can move on to the Contract Stage, which entails fine-tuning and finalizing [the grantees] work plans, budgets and [monitoring and evaluation] frameworks, assessing any technical and capacity building needs, and introducing them to the terms of the award and the tools that we use to monitor and evaluate their performance—and reporting requirements. (personal interview, 2011; see also CSF 2008)

All CSF sub-grantees are required to submit quarterly semi-annual and annual reports that provide 'information on achievements in the quarter, challenges, innovations, success stories, photographs, and statistics of people reached' through their interventions. The CSF's lengthy (20-page) quarterly report template reminds its grantees to 'quantify achievements wherever possible', to include 'any outcome data available' and concludes with the injunction 'REMEMBER: RESULTS, RESULTS, AND RESULTS!!!!!!' (CSF 2013, 3). Significantly, the information that CSF requires from civil society grantees to demonstrate performance and 'results' aligns with many of the standardized indicators and reporting formats also required by international donors, most notably PEPFAR (ibid).

Reflecting Dean's technologies of performance, results-based indicators can be seen as 'utilized from above as an indirect means of regulating agencies, of transforming professionals into 'calculating individuals' within calculative spheres' (Dean 1999, 169). Such market-based managerial practices are transferable to multiple contexts and 'provide a new metric for international development organizations to define success and failure and a new justification for development efforts based on sound methodological grounds' (Best 2014, 165). By legitimizing aid policies, and aid donors more generally, managerialism recasts international development organizations as providers of value-free, non-political, and technical solutions to what are perceived to be 'inefficiencies' in program implementation and outputs (Craig and Porter 2006), with civil society 'as simply another private firm […] filling gaps opened by inadequate state capacity'

(Bebbington et al. 2008, 22). Crucially, however, as Thomas (2008) also cautions, donors' emphasis on civil society 'impact' and direct measurable results marginalizes other fundamental, value-based aspects of civil society work in development, such as solidarity, cooperation, quality of personal relationships, reciprocity, and public advocacy—aspects that, as we stressed above, were so central to Uganda's successful early response to HIV/AIDS.

In competitive and 'marketized' development contexts, the existing links within and between civil society groups and networks—the strong sense of collaboration that allowed early AIDS interventions in Uganda to be so effective—are increasingly undermined. A number of interviewees describe how these new processes prompted high levels of professional stress, frustration, disengagement, and feelings of helplessness, such as wanting to 'run away' (personal interview, 2008). One interview respondent describes a situation in which a group offered 'assistance' to another group competing for the same pool of funds, only to undermine them:

> So I come to you, and at the end of the day, you take advantage. I mean, you use my proposal. You take it there, and you send it, and when the money comes, it's channelled to you. And then you're like 'oh, sorry, didn't I send [your proposal]? I don't know what happened. Really, I can't tell you.' This is what has happened, and is happening, in Uganda. So this has been the issue: even when you are struggling to do it…you just give up. (personal interview, 2011)

In addition to potentially undermining existing collaborative networks, concerns were also frequently voiced about the paternalism of foreign donor-led AIDS programming that reinforce 'donor images of Self and partners—which portray a superior, active, and reliable Self in contrast to an inferior, passive, unreliable partner' (Baaz 2005, 9). So while new mechanisms claimed to be focused on building local partnerships, there was little sense of equity between 'partners'. As the director of a national NGO for women living with HIV/AIDS explains:

> I've taken many courses. Technically, I have enough knowledge and so do many people here who are also very knowledgeable […] With the donor

> community, the misconception that I think they have is that they seem not to trust the national organization. They think their international people are really very careful. (personal interview, 2008)

Criticisms of donor paternalism also underpinned many of the assertions made by civil society actors about the need for local discretion and culturally appropriate solutions to the country's development problems (by contrast to the externally prescribed solutions provided by foreign development actors) and a deep-seated desire to 'do so much more if PEPFAR allowed [them]', especially in AIDS programming for commercial sex workers as well as condom promotion and distribution for youth (personal interviews, 2008).

The often onerous and bureaucratic demands of donor-led financing have led some civil society actors to express their desire—and for some to deliberately decide—to disengage from donor-led AIDS financing mechanisms, with some opting for more entrepreneurial and informal strategies to diversify their funding, such as soliciting individual donations or 'small charities and foundations that are interested in the work we are doing' (personal interviews, 2008). This is especially the case for civil society actors engaged in social and political advocacy as well as building movements for social change, who often describe the nature of their work as largely incompatible with the technocratic and 'results-oriented' mindset and reporting requirements of many donors. As one interviewee noted:

> With the nature of our work here […] we are all activists. So if there's a gender violence week that means none of us are going to be in the office. We are all going to be in the field […] So, with all the programs that we do here—you find that you do not have any time to write the proposal. Or if you've written the proposal you have no time to report on it. Because if someone calls and they have been arrested I'm going to drop everything […] My head is not thinking about reporting because I've got to do another million things at work. When I come back home at 1 or 2 in the night, I don't know where the receipt is or where to get the receipt from. That is the nature of my work [laughing]. (personal interview, 2011)

These narratives illustrate some of the most visible symptoms of these new funding modalities on the everyday practices and subjectivities of civil society actors while pointing to deep-seated tensions that often exist between donors and aid recipients over the meaning and relevance of values such as participation, measurement and evaluation, and accountability.

For instance, significant differences often exist over what 'participatory' approaches to development actually mean, with some actors viewing participation in terms of building partnerships to implement pre-defined policy directives, while others require the actual transfer of decision-making power to those directly affected by policies. For instance, in an interview with the director of a national network of civil society organizations, 'participation means that civil society is contributing and complementing government engagement in the response' (personal interview, 2011). This understanding stands in stark contrast to the one provided by a parliamentary policy advisor, who questioned development's elitist and professionalized approach to participation:

> I can tell you that the kind of participation I have in mind is not what our civil society organizations are bringing to the table […] I'm talking about authentic community-based organizations […] These groups are very informal: they are not regulated or governed by formal constitutions or memorandum of understandings […] There is serious dialogue within these organizations, if you like first-class accountability […] But unfortunately these are not the organizations when you talk of civil society participation in development discourse that are brought to the table […] Instead we invite people who speak good English, who have had jobs in the public sector, and who went to NGOs and have had some funding—these are the people we interact with and we call that participation.

Ebrahim (2003) identifies a further tension that often exists between donors and aid recipients over whether program evaluations should be assessing 'processes' (such as participation or empowerment) or 'products' (such as the numbers of schools built or youth reached with prevention messages). This tension is reflected in an interview with a director of a national organization for women living with HIV/AIDS:

> I will share with you one of the reports—they announced that they were going to do an assessment of all those organizations that received CSF money. Then they gave us this report. What kind of report is this? You are not showing us the real issues but you are showing us numbers of who reported when. But is that the basis that they assess an organization's capacities? I mean, what is their definition of building capacity—it's so donor driven and so political. (personal interview, 2011)

As others also have argued, the tendency of donors to favor products that emphasize short-term and easily measurable results 'over more ambiguous and less tangible change in social and political processes' (Ebrahim 2003, 817) distorts accountability and reinforces 'hierarchical management structures—a tendency toward "accountancy" rather than '"accountability"' (Edwards and Hulme 1996, 968; Thörn 2011; Mueller-Hirth 2012; Best 2014). In other words, the 'good governance criteria' favored by donors threaten to skew accountability upward, away from local beneficiaries toward donor-defined targets and performance or results-based indicators.

Concerns over accountability become even more apparent in considering that the very design of the CSF was shaped by donors' concerns over poor fund management: Deloitte was contracted 'to handle the risk element […] to assess the risk that donors are taking on, identify which areas need to be addressed, and to try and reduce the risk that we have taken on with that organization' (interview 2011). To maximize donors' investments in 'effective' AIDS programming, the CSF ensures 'enough flexibility to address the needs and requirements of multiple donors' (CSF 2008, 6). Donors can contribute resources to either a joint funding account (or basket account) or a donor-specific account that allows resources to be earmarked for specific purposes or priorities (e.g., PEPFAR prevention earmarks) (personal interview, 2008). However, the flexibility granted to donors is not extended to the much less powerful and predominantly under-resourced civil society actors and organizations that must align their work with donor and state priorities, and provide specific criteria just to be eligible for the granting competition (e.g., proof of legal registration of the organization, support from district authorities,

evidence of HIV prevention program experience, and competence in project management and financial accountancy).

Although civil society grant recipients frequently expressed concerns about the many challenges they face due to donor-led technocratic and market-driven modalities of aid, it must be stressed that these challenges are experienced and negotiated in myriad ways by civil society actors. Well-established and well-financed international and national NGOs—those with significant 'capacities' in terms of both expertise and other resources—exercise greater power in negotiating, interpreting, and sometimes simply side-stepping donor policies and stringent funding requirements (see Kelly and Birdsall 2010). For example, interviews at a large, national Ugandan NGO revealed that, in addition to outrightly rejecting some 'abstinence-only' funding from PEPFAR, staff had successfully challenged the US government's political and moral preference during the mid-2000s for abstinence-only education for some youth living in war-torn northern Uganda on the grounds that 'because it was a warring situation, there is no way you can preach abstinence-only especially in a context where kids are being abducted' (personal interview, 2008). One of the reasons that this NGO and other similarly positioned organizations are better able to effectively challenge donor policies and more ideologically driven funding criteria is because they demonstrate the 'right' managerial and organizational governance capacities required by donors and, in turn, have access to multiple funding sources. However, in discussing PEPFAR, an official from this same NGO explained:

> It is a problem for many organizations. I know a number of organizations that had to really modify, change their work after being put under pressure by PEPFAR to change their messaging, change their approaches and everything. It's because for us with Straight Talk, we have been a lucky organization because it has funding from many donors, so even without PEPFAR money we are able to operate. But then there are many organizations that are absolutely dependent on PEPFAR funding and many of them have to make do with whatever conditions are set for them. (personal interview, 2008)

As this excerpt reveals, the situation is very different for less-established civil society organizations that are much more likely to be dependent on a single financial donor, for they thereby possess less power in the donor-recipient 'partnership' to critically challenge donor policy and funding conditions.

The multiple eligibility and reporting requirements of both PEPFAR and the CSF were also identified by numerous civil society interviewees as particularly onerous and challenging for small civil society organizations that often 'lack' the technical and managerial skills so central to development's 'good governance' agenda. A project implementer working for a USAID-funded social marketing and programming project makes this point:

> […] the smaller civil society organizations, way down in the rural districts, can't compete with those PEPFAR funded organizations. So when you read these documents, it's not that there are certain conditions. Any group could meet them. But it is the level, the language, the requirements that it wants. (personal interview, 2008)

Similar concerns were raised by the director of an umbrella network for HIV/AIDS service organizations about the exclusionary effects of donor-driven funding mechanisms:

> The process for applying for grants from the CSF is designed by donors and yes, there are some challenges. Because, again, we have to base this process of accessing funds on the principles of competition and the capacity of institutions. But we find that some of the civil society organizations don't have enough capacity to access the money, because some of the conditions require that they have had a financial audit, audit requirements, to demonstrate accountability […] Some of their capacity issues have to do with what the requirements are to be eligible (personal interview, 2011).

These excerpts point not only to the heavy burdens that civil society actors face in navigating and meeting donor expectations in such a competitive aid environment but also to the internalization of 'good governance' norms and practices by civil society and government actors. The problem, then, is not with the often-uncompromising standards of 'good

governance', but with the organization's 'lack of capacities' in meeting these standards and thus the need for 'deliberate efforts to build their capacity' (personal interview, 2011).

'Capacity-building' is central to both PEPFAR and the CSF's mandate, which, in its current formulation, refers primarily to the ability of 'partner' organizations to account for themselves and their work according to donor-defined funding criteria, reporting guidelines, and results-based evaluation regimes. Again, donors' commitments to capacity-building initiatives are part of the broader shift in development thinking toward aid effectiveness that embrace the notion of country ownership as a key determinant of policy success and aid effectiveness. As noted in a PEPFAR policy document, 'capacity building, […] is an essential component of strengthening country ownership of HIV/AIDS services and programs […] by providing the skills needed for local partners to take on more leadership and direct program implementation roles over time, while international partners continue to provide capacity strengthening and technical assistance' (OGAC 2012, 5–6). As Best (2014) argues, 'ownership' as a governance strategy is a less direct form of governance, but one that entails strategies to foster strong domestic institutions and support of development policies. Such strategies include international financial and development organizations embracing partnership-based approaches to development, moving away from formal aid conditions toward selectivity (that is, donors providing aid to select countries and recipient organizations that align with donor priorities and reform agendas), and harmonizing and aligning international financial institutions' and donors' policies with the priorities, systems, and processes of national recipient governments (OECD 2005). In the Ugandan context, these ownership strategies are reflected within the CSF's guiding principles, expressed primarily through the language of capacity building, partnership and civil society participation, donor harmonization, and alignment with national plans and priorities (CSF 2008). As our interviews reveal, tensions often exist between donors and 'grantees' over the meaning and purpose of such 'inclusive' development discourses and practices, with many civil society (and some government) actors expressing considerable concerns about the effectiveness of donors' good governance strategies and the prevailing power inequalities that continue to structure relations

between donors and recipients of development aid, resulting in some cases in the exclusion of some local actors from accessing and benefiting from global AIDS funding and programs.

Our research also suggests that harmonization may effectively create another layer of complexity that local actors must negotiate in their efforts to secure donor funding. In this way, smaller civil society organizations—and especially those with limited time, managerial expertise, and financial resources—struggle to articulate their projects in ways that satisfy the technical and managerial requirements required by international donors and funders and *also* align with the constantly shifting priority areas of district and national governments. As highlighted by one CSF official:

> [Civil society organizations] must address those areas that are the priority of the district-level government in the HIV plan. So, we do not accept any proposal here unless the district endorses it. And for the district endorsement, the intervention must be in line with the interests of the district's strategic plan. In fact before civil society organizations even write a proposal, they must go to the district and ask them 'What are the priorities in the district planning area'? Because CSO's are supposed to supplement government efforts—they're not supposed to come up with their own thing. Here we have worked hard to harmonize our activities. (personal interview, 2011)

What our interviews indicate, however, is that requiring civil society organizations to conform to national and district government policies, on the one hand, and to global governance management, evaluation, and accountancy standards, on the other, reconfigures such groups and their actors in ways that clearly risk undermining the very localism, grassroots autonomy and advocacy, and collaboration that characterized Uganda's early response to HIV/AIDS.

Finally, it is worth stressing that the practical affinity of these pressures is particularly alarming in Uganda's current political context, given that the Museveni government has increasingly shown intolerance toward political opposition and has implemented a number of repressive laws to intimidate and constrain the work of civil society actors engaging in pub-

lic criticism and advocating for social change in certain sectors, including HIV/AIDS (see Human Rights Watch 2012; Muhumuza 2009). This has translated into new draconian laws to restrict freedom of the press, criminalize the transmission of HIV and enforce mandatory HIV testing, violate the human rights of LGBT communities, and impose stringent regulations on civil society that restrict the space for civic engagement and public dissent.[3]

In January 2016, the Ugandan government passed the Non-Governmental Organizations Act, 2016, to formally replace the existing legislative framework authorizing and governing NGOs in the country. Unsurprisingly, the new act maintained the trajectory signaled by a 2006 Amendment, drastically restricting the operative space for civil society activities and making advocacy-driven organizations much more vulnerable to government surveillance, intervention, and even retribution. According to one Ugandan parliamentary policy advisor, speaking about the 2006 precursor to the new legislation:

> The focus of this legislation is to tame these civil society organizations from being a security threat, not conditioning them to advocate or represent the views and voices of their communities to which they pretend to be representing […] The law does not condition or directly encourage accountability to the communities but rather stops them from disturbing state security […] The whole governance structure, the whole accountability mechanism that addresses civil society organizations really requires a radical examination: they account not to the people for whom they claim to work but to the state. (personal interview, 2011)

In Uganda, public advocacy that directly challenges state power has enormous consequences for civil society actors, 'ranging from exclusion from consultative forums, being cut off from sources of funding, […] personal harassment and intimidation (Grebe 2009, 15), arbitrary arrests and detention, and state-sanctioned violence by police and security forces. For instance, homosexuality remains a criminal offence in Uganda. In addition to facing tremendous risks of criminalization and state-sanctioned violence, LGBT activists and service providers are legally prohibited from registering their organizations with the National NGO

Board (a legal requirement for civil society organizations to operate in the country) and, it follows, are ineligible for donor AIDS funding via the Civil Society Fund: "They don't fund people who do work on LGBT. It is illegal here so we are not a registered NGO and we are not in any of the national policies"' (personal interview, 2011). Within this increasingly hostile political context, ownership strategies—like donor harmonization and alignment with national priorities—may in fact serve to further entrench authoritarian state power and restrictions on civil society activities, resulting in the formal exclusion and penalization of 'subversive' civil society organizations that engage in political advocacy or activities deemed to be 'prejudicial to the interests of Uganda and the dignity of the people of Uganda' (NGO Act 2016, §44).

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the widespread embrace and institutional stabilization of new governance values, structures, and strategies in global AIDS governance in Uganda. We argue that this situated analysis is crucial to make sense of the reversal and erosion of the country's previous successes in reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Our analysis raises the rather obvious critical question: would the much-lauded early success of Uganda in stemming the HIV/AIDS crisis have been possible within the country's current development context? While, as noted at the outset of this chapter, multiple, complex factors have affected the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Uganda, there are at least three reasons to suggest that we should answer this query negatively. First, in the last two decades, donors' widespread embrace of 'good governance' managerial strategies (such as competitive tendering, short-term financing, and performance indicators and 'measurable results') reinforces, at least in this case, a top-down and donor-centric approach to development aid that gives donors and government officials greater flexibility and control over development projects—which, in turn, places greater responsibility on recipients of funding to 'achieve results' and thus provide the *managerial inputs* necessary for organizations to ultimately account for themselves. These new aid modalities practically reconfigure and often undermine existing civil

society autonomy and local decision-making, strain the existing capacities of organizations to meet the needs of local communities, and skew relations of accountability upward toward donors and donor-led targets. This managerial approach to development is fundamentally different from, and evidently at odds with, Uganda's early approach to managing the HIV/AIDS crisis. As we highlighted above, these early successes were largely the result of spontaneous and relatively autonomous grassroots movements focused on building 'collective efficacy' and designing interventions that reflected distinct local and cultural realities, as well as collective arrangements and practices of care and support (as opposed to donor-led 'solutions').

Second, current global AIDS financing mechanisms have significantly altered the shape of civil society in Uganda in two ways: by reducing civil society actors to service-delivery agents of reconfigured centers of power that, through the pressures and practical requirements of 'ownership' and 'harmonization', exist somewhere between traditional 'state power' and the demands of international donors; and by requiring civil society organizations to uncritically adopt formalized and professionalized, seemingly value-free, management structures to gain access to official funding. The key problem with this technocratic, managerialist approach to development is evident in its depoliticizing effects: the potential of grassroots organizing and community-driven AIDS programming in bringing about social change is undermined as civil society actors are professionalized and their energies directed 'upward' toward meeting the 'good governance' criteria of donors and government officials (e.g., providing results-based management and adhering to complicated reporting systems). Development decisions are increasingly taken on a register to which grassroots civil society organizers and organizations have limited access and capital.

The third reason suggesting a negative answer to the question of whether Uganda's early successes would be possible in today's reconfigured aid environment concerns the impact of Uganda's current political climate, which has been marked by a significant departure from 'the all-inclusive and broad-based politics of national unity to a politics of exclusion and manipulation' (Muhumuza 2009, 28). While more critically informed research is needed on the local manifestations and practical

effects of global governance values and strategies within authoritarian state regimes, our research suggests that fostering country ownership through donor harmonization with national priorities and agendas may in fact centralize state power, exaggerate existing forms of exclusion, and support wider state efforts to restrict and weaken the critical capacities of civil society—specifically for those actors that directly challenge reified state power or represent those who are most marginalized and stigmatized in the country.

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Notes

1. It is important to note, however, that solidaristic values like the responsibility to care for and protect others can be interpreted in diverse ways by civil society actors, with some promoting the human rights and dignity of vulnerable populations while others opt for more coercive means to bring about desired changes in sexual behavior (see Allen and Heald 2004).
2. Under the leadership of US President George W. Bush, US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was a US$15 billion package dedicated solely to combating the global spread of HIV/AIDS. In 2008, the US Congress reauthorized PEPFAR for an additional 5 years for $39 billion as part of President Obama's $48 billion Global Health Initiative.
3. See, for example, Uganda's HIV Prevention and Control Act, 2014; Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014 (which was nullified in August 2014); the Prohibition of Promotion of Unnatural Sexual Practices Bill, 2015; Non-Governmental Organizations Amendment Act, 2006; Public Order Management Act, 2013; Non-Governmental Organizations Act, 2016.

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A Critical Sociology of International Expertise: The Case of International Democracy Assistance

Michael Christensen

Introduction

If the so-called Arab Spring taught scholars of democracy anything, it was that the dynamic processes of democratization are difficult to explain and even more difficult to predict. At the end of 2009, very few Western commentators and foreign policy "experts" publicly suggested that the authoritarian governments of Tunisia, Libya, or Egypt were in danger of being ousted by democratic revolutions, and just as the West was celebrating the "Arab Spring", many were equally surprised by the rapid deterioration of democratic conditions in these same countries. This gap between expert knowledge and political events was not only present among academic or media experts but also among professional policy experts working in international organizations specifically committed to assisting democratic movements, including the movements in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. Of course, a few years earlier, some of these same

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democracy assistance organizations hailed democratic elections in Iraq, Ukraine, and Georgia, only to see democracy falter in these countries shortly thereafter. Considering these apparent miscalculations, as well as the long tradition of Western governments' ambivalence or even resistance to democratic movements in the global South, democratic activists around the world would be justified in asking whether democracy "experts" from Western countries such as the United States are, in fact, committed to a vision of democracy that best reflects the interests and perspectives of large international organizations.

This chapter examines international organizations engaged in professional democracy assistance, and the production of expert knowledge about democracy, by utilizing the tools of critical sociology that Kurasawa outlines in the opening chapter of this volume. Specifically, and in a similar vein as the chapters by Oliver and Tasson as well as Hayes, this chapter looks to denaturalize and critique symbolic mechanisms that support configurations of power in global social spaces. This critical approach focuses on knowledge production as an important source of symbolic capital, but it also understands expert knowledge itself in relational terms as a capacity to act or intervene in public (e.g. Stehr and Grundmann 2011; Eyal and Buchholz 2010). In this sense, expert knowledge is meaningful insofar as it is useful in practice. In the case of international democracy assistance, this is reflected in both the official public pronouncements of organizations that reject overly "theoretical" or "ideological" approaches to democracy, as well as the field-wide emphasis on program evaluation and other reflexive auditing practices. Such pronouncements and practices are important because they facilitate and legitimize the communication of expertise as a form of actionable knowledge and thereby function to consolidate the symbolic capital of these organizations.

The following therefore examines forms of international expertise as a type of social relationship that is situated by institutional rules, but also by cultural grammars. The term "international expertise" refers to forms of knowledge about international aid, global capital flows, intergovernmental political relations, and even world cultural norms that are institutionalized or formalized by international NGOs, inter-governmental organizations, scholars, and private sector knowledge workers (e.g. consultants, economists, bankers, etc.). International expertise can take many

forms, but it always has a sociocentric ontology insofar as any mode of international expertise is always a product of collectively enacted symbolic systems. In this way, the critical sociological approach taken here avoids treating any single entity, be it a political leader or a nation-state, as an atomistic rational actor that relates to the other rational actors on an "anarchical" world stage. Instead, I assume knowledge about development or global finance or democracy is always already imbued with norms and rules that reflect global configurations of power. This is certainly the case for knowledge about processes of democratization, and by examining such knowledge as a collectively enacted form of expertise, the following also aims to denaturalize and situate the epistemic communities driving the discourse of international democracy assistance.

In basic terms, I treat Western democracy assistance organizations as unique cultural settings with no inherent relationship to the "natural facts" of democracy. Such organizations are important objects of scholarly analysis, not because they are right or wrong about how democracy works, but because they mobilize existing discourses of democracy to do things that have important effects for political actors in the countries where they work. Resisting the appeal of a simplified, pre-determined analytical framework is particularly important for democracy assistance because of the field's proximity to sources of Western, and specifically American, power. However, the appeal of democratic ideals and the willingness of political actors to work with Western organizations toward those ideals is not simply a product of that power. The "critical" element of the sociological framework employed here therefore encourages a reflexive openness to theoretical and methodological tools that offer a wide range of explanatory options, but also locates the objects of research in a specific historical and cultural context. For international democracy assistance organizations, the everyday cultural practices that produce expert interventions "for democracy" in any given country or region is directly related to their histories and their structural positions within the broader aid industry. The following proceeds to locate international expertise (about democracy) within such contexts, first by providing a brief history of the field itself and then by describing how it relates to the much larger field of international development that Oliver and Tasson treat in the preceding chapter of this book. The field of democracy assis-

tance provides an especially useful illustration of how cultural narratives, norms, and practices produce legitimate forms of knowledge that translate political ideals into programs of technical assistance.

What Is Democracy Assistance?

In June of 1982, then-US President Ronald Reagan delivered a speech entitled "Promoting Democracy and Peace" before the British Parliament. Widely remembered as one of the first statements of Reagan's pro-democracy (and anti-communist) foreign policy, it was also the symbolic start of contemporary democracy promotion in the United States. The speech called for the establishment of assistance organizations similar to German foundations (Stiftungen) linked with their political parties and funded by the West German state. Two years after the President's speech, the American Political Foundation brought forward a plan to create a National Endowment for Democracy (NED) that would fund democracy promotion organizations affiliated with both major American political parties, as well as an organization affiliated with US business interests and another affiliated with the national labor organization, the AFL-CIO. The NED was eventually established, and its affiliate organizations[1] would later begin developing democracy promotion projects. By receiving public funding through donor organizations such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the NED and its affiliate organizations operated as quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations.[2]

The rationale behind this quasi-autonomous structure was to support political activities abroad aligned with "American interests" in a way that was less politically inflammatory than previous covert activities organized by the CIA. The "arms-length" positioning of the field's foundational organizations, from the latter's inception, aimed to carve out a professionalized social space that made them less vulnerable to domestic partisan attacks as well as international questions about their strategic relationship to the US government. In this sense, the new "democracy promotion" organizations affiliated with the NED were more like the growing number of "think tanks" that were becoming prominent in the

Washington, DC, landscape during this period (Medvetz 2012) because they primarily engaged in semi-autonomous research and information distribution rather than the type of development programs they would later embrace. The activities of these democracy promotion organizations at the time were described by US Secretary of State George Shultz in terms of five general "areas": leadership and training, education, strengthening the institutions of democracy, conveying ideas and information, and developing personal and institutional ties (Shultz 1983). Thus, democracy promotion emerged as a set of practices that, ideally, pursued the realization of the "universal values" of democracy from an American perspective. At the end of the 1980s, however, the number of organizations devoted solely to democracy promotion was relatively small, and their focus on information generation and distribution made them appear, to many critics, as ideologically driven entities and, therefore, informal organs of the government.

In the 1990s, democracy assistance experienced an expansion period driven by a shift in priorities from the "promotion" of democratic ideals to an aid-centered approach focused on technical assistance for the development of democratic institutions. This expansion was gradual for organizations such as the NED and its affiliates, in part because the "democracy promotion" mandate of the 1980s continued to be a target of both political opposition and public skepticism. In fact, in 1993, funding for the NED was nearly cut off by the US House of Representatives, despite the wave of Soviet Bloc countries undergoing democratic transitions in the early 1990s (Carothers 1994). Challenges to the NED came from both sides of the aisle as well as from a range of media outlets.[3] Symbolically, democracy promotion represented either an unsavory legacy of Cold War propaganda to critics on the left[4] or an expensive and increasingly redundant project to critics on the right. This lack of support may have also reflected a general atmosphere of isolationism in the United States, as democracy promotion and the defense of human rights abroad was a low priority for most respondents to foreign policy opinion polls (Holsti 2000: 159–163).

Despite public criticism, democracy promotion gradually expanded as Western governments and NGOs working on international development came to see "good governance" as a crucial element of any development

project. According to a 1994 World Bank report on the importance of "governance", in order for developing countries to prosper, governments needed to be "strengthened" to the point that they could limit corruption and other abuses of power. The implication, of course, was that this "strengthening" process should be a part of future development projects (Williams and Young 1994).[5] As a development goal, good governance was thought to be "[…]epitomized by predictable, open, and enlightened policymaking, that is, transparent processes; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions, and *a strong civil society participating in public affairs*; and all behaving under the rule of law" (World Bank 1994: vii; emphasis mine).[6]

Following this logic, democracy promotion organizations began targeting local social movements and other civil society organizations for development aid, which aligned them with governmental agencies such as USAID assisting civil society groups in an effort to institutionalize "democratic decentralization" or "democratic local governance" (Blair 2000). For these organizations, which started framing their mandates in terms of democracy "assistance" to emphasize their aid-focused projects, expanding their work with local political parties to local media, human rights, and social justice organizations became a useful way to embrace the broader shift toward framing development as a technical process of "fixing" existing institutions. Symbolically, the rise of governance as a techno-scientific discourse allowed democracy promotion organizations to expand the scope of their expertise by engaging with local leaders connected to an increasingly wide range of "civil society" organizations. While the degree to which these local organizations actually represented the interests of disenfranchised groups was sometimes questionable (Ottaway and Chung 1999: 107), democracy assistance organizations in the United States were able to expand their networks of partners beyond just parliamentarians and political parties. In other words, the rise of governance and civil society as development priorities allowed democracy assistance organizations to define their own expertise beyond democratic elections to include the *social processes* of democracy.

The gradual move democracy assistance organizations made from information-oriented to aid-oriented mandates[7] might suggest that they would also naturally adopt the rules, conventions, and normative

frameworks common to the rest of the development community. However, although there was a degree of "institutional isomorphism" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) that brought these organizations closer to the professional structures of development organizations, they were able to distinguish themselves in the field based on the *type* of expert knowledge that they produced. Examining the field of democracy assistance using a critical sociology of expert knowledge offers a number of advantages, but the ability to better describe the autonomous position cultivated by these organizations despite their move toward aid-focused activities is especially important because it locates democracy assistance within a field of symbolic power. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) definition of the latter concept,[8] it is clear that the process of expert knowledge making in this field facilitates a *belief* in the necessity of democracy assistance as a techno-scientific field of knowledge. These important symbolic mechanisms are at the core of such organizations' ability to position themselves in a competitive global field populated by many other aid organizations vying for resources and the power to influence or guide democratization processes.

Democracy Assistance in a Global Field of Power

A strategy document published by the NED in 2007 stated that:

> NED's work rests upon a number of fundamental principles: [1] that democracy grows from within societies and cannot be exported; [2] that it includes, in addition to free and fair elections, a strong civil society and accountable institutions that can provide effective governance and protect fundamental rights; [3] that democratization is a long-term process; [4] that democracy assistance is not an exercise in top-down social engineering but a way to assist people fighting for increased human rights and democratic participation; [5] that nongovernmental institutions such as the Endowment are best placed to aid grassroots groups; [6] and that while promoting democracy is not exclusively an American enterprise, NED's work advances America's national interest.[9]

The fundamental principles outlined in this statement are interesting for two reasons. First, they represent a *symbolic* consolidation within the field that, at the time, saw assistance organizations move to more clearly delineate the scope of their expert interventions. Second, these same principles lay out a set of *practical* positions that refer to both the object and performance of democracy assistance.

The symbolic consolidation represented by these principles refers to an important debate within the field about what Carothers (2006) called the "backlash" against democracy assistance or promotion. While the field of democracy assistance experienced an expansion period during the 1990s, this work faced increasing resistance in the mid- to late 2000s primarily as a result of democracy assistance organizations participating in some notably contentious political events during the early parts of that decade. For example, the "color revolutions" in post-Soviet Europe, and especially the 2004 "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine, produced highly visible media events that linked US government agencies and NED-affiliated organizations to explicitly pro-Western electoral candidates who challenged and defeated candidates backed by seemingly more authoritarian parties (Beissinger 2006; Wilson 2006).

To many international observers, these links appeared to be an example of political interference by the US government and Western NGOs, a charge that carried extra weight because some of these "revolutions" came on the heels of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Combined with the political rhetoric of the Bush Administration's "Freedom Agenda", the electoral interventions conducted by democracy assistance organizations in Eastern Europe-led governments in countries such as Russia and China, as well as authoritarian governments in the global South to either restrict the freedoms of pro-democracy NGOs or actively resist democratization movements (Carothers 2006: 56). The "backlash" faced by organizations in this field therefore necessitated a degree of symbolic repositioning. As Burnell (2010) suggests, most practitioners in the field during this time felt that democracy assistance work needed "a new image" (2010: 2). In this way, the principles outlined by the NED above appeared as part of a field-wide effort to consolidate the political scope of democracy assistance by emphasizing grassroots movements, civil society,

and organic political processes rather than top-down processes, universalistic templates, and other formulas "exported" from the West.

The discursive shift from the ideologically driven language of the early years of democracy promotion to the more recent emphasis on expertise supporting grassroots-led assistance may seem to address critiques from both defiant governments and intellectuals who interpreted democracy promotion as a by-product of Western or capitalist hegemony. However, by engaging in a form of critical sociology that looks to denaturalize the symbolic mechanisms that help to reproduce asymmetric configurations of power, I would also frame these principles as indicators of democracy assistance organizations simply repositioning themselves in a field of power. At the core of this repositioning is not a rejection of Western power or a challenge to the legitimacy of Western organizations operating in the global South as such, but a practical redefinition of development expertise *as a relationally and collectively produced resource*.

To explain this redefinition, it is important to place democracy assistance organizations within the broader field of development organizations. In doing so, it becomes apparent that the emphasis on grassroots institution-building is also a product of changes within this larger field. One of the obvious differences between the types of expertise produced by organizations in the field of development aid and knowledge produced by intellectuals in academic settings is the degree of autonomy the academic knowledge production process has from organizational rules or managerial procedure. The social space occupied by international aid organizations, including those working on democracy assistance, is not completely heteronomous, but the knowledge produced by experts in this field is shaped by a litany of formal rules and organizationally sanctioned "best practices". These rules and conventions are historically situated and subject to changes based on trends or events that challenge existing modes of practice. The field-wide embrace of "governance" is especially important in this case, and it is useful to look at some of the concurrent structural effects that this discourse has had on the rules and conventions in the field.

Theoretically, the concept of "governance" came to dominate liberal political theory by integrating its traditional emphasis on pluralism

(Lipset 1960; Rawls 1971) with an updated conception of civil society that allowed space for economic and political actors to oppose the power of a government (Williams and Young 1994). In addition, a new focus on civil society and non-governmental organizations as important counterweights to state power gave the aid industry an alternative symbolic framework for development projects. This alternative framework was necessary and useful because the history of development projects modeled on narrow free-market idealism had produced clear examples of inequality and poverty. Such ineffectiveness fuelled a growing academic critique of development, first formulated in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Frank 1967, 1975; Wallerstein 1976), that outlined how Western countries and corporations historically benefited from exploiting the resources of "underdeveloped" or "periphery" countries, and questioned the motives and justifications of development organizations focused exclusively on economic goals.[10] The success of this critique, in fact, forced Western governments and NGOs to at least enter into debates about the need for new goals and strategies reflecting the interests of both donor and recipient countries. Sen's work (1999a, b) represented an influential attempt to reformulate these goals, for he argued that meeting basic human needs is essential for promoting "freedom" and thus integrally connected to the "political" aspects of development. This type of argument, crafted as an alternative to economically oriented approaches to development as echoed by other academics and practitioners, proved popular enough that the United Nations formalized similar goals via its Millennium Development process.

The Millennium Development Goals represent an interesting point of analysis for critical sociology because the explicit objectives outlined in the *United Nations Millennium Declaration* (2000) seem to reflect a new or changed posture toward the current state of global poverty and development. Attempts to implement these goals, however, have produced mixed results, suggesting that the adoption of a human development discourse, or Sen's (1999a) "development as freedom" thesis, has been primarily a symbolic shift. One key effect of this shift, however, has been a discursive reconfiguration that, within the development community, re-appropriates evidence of escalating global poverty (e.g. Pogge 2004) or slow progress on human rights and social justice (Nelson 2007), and

shifts the focus of these critiques to more "practical" problems such as corruption and the ineffectiveness of governments in the global South. As a result, the language associated with "critiques" of traditional development theory is now ubiquitous, even though the structural relations supported by these traditional theories have not drastically changed. Thus, along the lines of the development goals outlined in the Millennium Development process, another set of "global agreements"—starting with the 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*[11]—put in motion a collective initiative among development organizations and governments to address the "practical problems" implied by the symbolic shift away from traditional development theory.

The Paris Declaration was a global initiative to encourage aid organizations and national governments to take a more integrated approach to development, one that avoided past mistakes stemming from the over-emphasis on aid directed at economic development and instead focused on a more transparent and well-managed approach. Recipient governments largely embraced these principles as a way toward more self-control of development strategies but, in practice, the adoption of the Paris Declaration vision has often resulted in the consolidation of decision-making power by organizations that co-ordinate "harmonized" aid programs, such as the World Bank (Winther-Schmidt 2011). The important practical effect of the Paris Declaration for development organizations themselves is that it incorporated management techniques from the private sector to orient organizational goals toward collaborating with recipient governments and producing better and more measurable "results". It is in this context that development organizations have redefined their expertise as a collectively produced resource. This "new" approach to development, which simultaneously encourages more collaboration and demands more effective forms of management, is exactly the type of symbolic mechanism that critical sociology can unpack and explain. Particularly for democracy assistance organizations, the increased participation and input from the recipients of development aid seems like a natural step away from traditional development practices, but it is important to examine how such organizations made this step.

Expert Knowledge, Building Democratic Institutions, and "Capacity"

Social scientists have recently conducted critical research on how new development goals and practices have changed the actual work done by actors in the field of international aid. Anthropologists and sociologists of development have been at the forefront of this research, often using ethnography to study communities of development aid "experts" or "professionals" (Edelman and Haugerud 2005; Lewis and Mosse 2006; Lewis 2007; Mosse 2011; Riles 2011; Merry 2016). Although much of this work is critical of the governance discourse, which has become ubiquitous in large aid organizations of all kinds, a central element of this critique is that the "rationalities" implicit in this discourse reduce a wide range of failed development policies to a narrow set of institution-building strategies (Craig and Porter 2006: 120; Mosse 2011: 4).[12] This research is particularly effective at identifying ways in which organizations adapt and evolve over time to "learn" from past failures, yet resist any radical or structural changes. For example, as Craig and Porter (2006) point out, most of the largest development organizations have rejected the narrowly economic version of development that shaped the widely criticized "structural adjustment programs" of international financial institutions (e.g. the World Band and the IMF) in the 1980s and 1990s. Instead, development organizations now embrace a form of "neoliberal institutionalism" defined as an imperative to get the institutional dimensions "right" by focusing on the formal rules and practices that define good institutions. These dimensions include technical solutions for reforming wasteful or inefficient government institutions, improving the delivery of services offered by governments, and reducing the scope of governmental programs that may otherwise slow down the development of "legal frameworks, governance, market mechanisms and participatory democracy" (Craig and Porter 2006: 14). Essentially, "neoliberal institutionalism" assumes that the underlying goals of traditional economic development were valid and justifiable, but that they did not fully grasp the extent to which institutions *in developing countries* were and are "problematic".

As a new form of development, which aims to fix broken, corrupt, or otherwise dysfunctional ways of doing things (in the global South),

"neoliberal institutionalism" has overtaken much of the aid industry in the form of revised mandates that emphasize "service delivery" with measurable outcomes and timelines. In this way, organizations translate goals such as poverty reduction, enfranchisement, and empowerment into practical problems of "institutional capacity". From a critical perspective aiming to denaturalize and re-examine basic power relations between actors working for change in the global South and Western governments or NGOs, the so-called problem of Southern countries' institutional capacity appears as a construct that displays many of the same colonial assumptions as previous iterations of development theory and practice.

Such a critical perspective also suggests, on the surface, that democracy assistance organizations in the United States appear to be structurally and culturally very similar to other development organizations in this regard. They receive their primary funding from the same government agencies, operate in a similar social space, centered in Washington, DC, and are part of a professional community in which a unique set of cultural norms prevail. Foregrounded by the critical sociology of expert knowledge, the important difference is that the practical application of expert knowledge of democracy requires a different network of supporting actors to produce legitimate interventions. This difference is *sociologically* meaningful for two main reasons. First, framing democracy as a problem or object of expertise carries more symbolic legitimacy than problems of "economic development" that are now widely treated with skepticism.[13] Second, professionals in the field of democracy assistance are able to engage in a social performance of expertise that both affirms their status as experts and has a sectorially defined "critical edge" that differentiates them from "others" in the development community who may appear more interested in economic goals.

Regarding the first reason, in the field of democracy assistance, it can hardly be overstated how important the symbolic weight of democracy is for the assistance projects. Based on data from the World Values Survey, Norris (2011) suggests that respondents from the global South overwhelmingly chose democracy as a preferred form of government, yet most of these respondents also judge their own governments to be insufficiently democratic (Norris 2011). While this data may not represent any one political context exactly, it is reasonable to suppose that people in most

countries are less than satisfied with the performance of their governments and that many people might express this dissatisfaction through the symbolic flexibility of the concept of "democracy". This general sentiment, however, is not enough to construct the object of democracy expertise. Following Mitchell's (1998, 2002) research on the historical deployment of expertise in the global South, I argue that the expert interventions engaged by democracy assistance require a type of "techno-politics" that simultaneously defines a problem and implies a solution. This view of democracy assistance is similar to the discussion Hayes (this volume) presents about the technical models and measures that produce economic interventions, in that it foregrounds the production of knowledge about the "broken" object to intervene upon—for economists, economic crises, and for democracy assistance, insufficiently democratic institutions—while simultaneously prescribing the mechanisms that organizations or actors can use to build legitimacy for an intervention. In this sense, aid organizations add to the existing symbolic power of democracy as a set of values that describes a "better" government by framing it, also, as an object that can be "fixed" through technical expertise. The question then becomes: how does this framing happen in practice?

As I state in the introduction above, expertise is not simply an ascribed role given to a social actor who possesses a specialized form of knowledge, but instead is a complex social relationship. If the first main component of an expert intervention involves producing an object upon which to intervene, the second component is a social performance of expertise that is meaningful to multiple parties. In the field of democracy assistance, expertise is performed as a series of meetings, conferences, seminars, and training exercises meant to transmit technical and financial resources from an assistance organization to a local NGO, movement, party, or group of electoral officials working to make things "more democratic" in their own political community. Some organizations, like the NED, primarily offer grants for projects set up by other organizations, including but not limited to their affiliate organizations (NDI, IRI, CIPE and the Solidarity Center), but most democracy assistance organizations work to develop their own projects that are funded internally, by government agencies or through international pools of funding such as the United Nations Development Programme. In this way, the resources that repre-

sent "assistance" flow through organizations and agencies to make up a network of donors, implementers, and recipients. To perform expertise, then, is to build and maintain an assistance network. In such a network, however, the distribution of funds or the transfer of technical knowledge is not the only mechanism that links donors, implementers, and recipients. Aid projects in this field also require a process of network maintenance, whereby assistance organizations draw up terms of reference for particular projects in which they build some form of collective evaluation mechanisms to provide feedback on the success or failure of a given project. Performance of these evaluations has become *the* essential and defining element of expertise that facilitates democracy assistance interventions, notably in the case of projects seeking to develop the "capacity" of democratic institutions. As such, the problem of evaluation has also been one of the most important topics of debate within the field.

Process and Outcome in Democracy Evaluations

In his book on democracy, Charles Tilly (2007) argued that "if we want insight into causes and effects of democratization or de-democratization, we have no choice but to recognize them as continuous processes rather than simple steps across a threshold in one direction or the other" (2007: 10). In this statement, Tilly identifies two approaches to the study of democracy. In the first one, democracy is a unitary system that exists in a certain (measurable) degree of completeness. Based on this approach, democracies are "full" or "partial" according to identifiable thresholds that often imply a teleological element in the definition of democracy itself. Tilly's alternative, on the other hand, finds the measurement of threshold variables to be an insufficient means of representing the complex social processes of democratization and de-democratization. He argues that the mechanisms and processes of democracy have infinite (or at least very long-term) time horizons, and that these processes have not historically been consistent or predictable. Thus, for him, any attempt to construe democracy as a series of finite "outcomes" that develop in a

linear way are not built on historical evidence and will likely lead to gross oversimplification.

The processual approach to democracy has come to represent something of a theoretical consensus in the social sciences,[14] but for professionals working in democracy assistance organizations, such an approach has challenged the importance of what originally was the most tangible form of expertise associated with these organizations: election support and monitoring. While democracy promotion activities in the 1980s largely consisted of information-based work supporting and monitoring democratic elections, the field-wide focus on longer-term processes during the shift to assistance-based activities in the 1990s was a difficult transition for some organizations. As Carothers (1999) pointed out, "it [was] hard for organizations involved in election observing to avoid the allure of high-profile short-term observer missions as opposed to the slow, often unexciting work of covering an electoral process from start to finish" (1999: 131; see also Carothers 2004). Essentially, building institutional capacity and focusing on long-term processes of democratization required changes to the way organizations constructed their own expertise.

As the discourse of governance and the discursive posture of neoliberal institutionalism became more prevalent during the 2000s, the evaluation mechanisms that organizations used to represent the results or outcomes of their projects became more complex, and the subject of evaluation came to dominate debates within the field. For example, practitioners increasingly were compelled to balance different types of performance indicators based on both "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" forms of evaluation (Burnell 2007: 22).[15] Here, the extrinsic value of a project could be evaluated on the basis of a comparative measurement of global democratic performance, while the intrinsic value might be gauged according to the expectations and goals of participants in the project. For practitioners, incorporating mechanisms for both extrinsic and intrinsic evaluation during the development or planning stage of a project often led to difficulties when the extrinsic goals favored by donors were incommensurable with the intrinsic goals desired by recipient parties working "on the ground" (Burnell 2007).

Part of the difficulty presented by these two forms of evaluation stems from the fact that intrinsic goals are necessarily context dependent and

therefore somewhat better at identifying important intermediate steps in long-term democratization processes. Extrinsic evaluations, on the other hand, generally refer to standards that experts establish in the broader field of development to provide comparative measurements of democracy in a global context. Such evaluations are much more likely to favor outcomes, benchmarks, or other "threshold" measures that imply a teleological approach to democracy. In fact, the United Nations Development Programme has published two editions (in 2003 and 2007) of *Governance Indicators: A User's Guide* meant to introduce and summarize these various indices for practitioners. While the guide covers most possible extrinsic measurements that might influence democracy assistance program evaluation, the key insight of this guide is that there is no universal approach or consensus on how to measure concepts such as democracy or governance.

This ambiguity speaks to a central problem that has motivated debates about evaluation within the field. On the one hand, following the logic of neoliberal institutionalism—which assumes institutions in recipient countries are "broken" and potentially corrupt—donors often are inclined to demand accountability and transparency regarding the use of funds. The largest donor organizations fund projects in many different regions of the world and therefore favor evaluation mechanisms allowing them to regularly track the outcomes of each project in a way that facilitates comparison between projects—that is, tracking which are most "successful"—and speaks to their specific "organizational objectives" (Burnell 2007). On the other hand, this same logic dictates that social problems such as inequality or disenfranchisement are merely symptoms of faulty institutions and that solving these problems requires long-term processes aimed at building up the capacity of governing institutions. It is no wonder, then, that the problem of evaluation is so difficult for actors in the field of democracy assistance, who must produce universally comparable results for projects that are inherently situational, contingent, and processual.

Government agencies and other donor organizations have attempted to deal with this problem in the same way that many other fields have worked to improve evaluation mechanisms, by "improving" the quality and quantity of the data gathered through evaluations.[16] In 2008, USAID commissioned a National Research Council (NRC) study designed to assess and improve upon existing methods of evaluation of

the effectiveness and impact of democracy assistance work. Of the goals outlined, one of the more important issues for the industry was developing "an operational definition of democracy and governance that disaggregates the concept into clearly defined and measurable components" (National Research Council 2008: 29). The methodologies of evaluation and knowledge production recommended by the NRC used language that was an interesting mix of scientific empiricism—calling for "hard empirical evidence" derived from "rigorous impact evaluation methods" based on scientific practices such as "randomized trials" and comparison with "control groups"—and management ideals borrowed from the private sector, such as "strong leadership" and "strategic visions" (2008: 219–220). The key concept that unites these ideals is the call for better "results" that carry both the legitimacy of science and the practical usefulness of common measurements. In addition to further emphasizing the importance of extrinsic measurements for donor organizations such as USAID, the formula offered by these evaluation mechanisms represent a broader confluence of scientific norms and managerial logics that is increasingly common in other large public organizations.

The historical and cultural shift toward neoliberal institutionalism in the field of development has followed a concurrent shift in the organizational practices of public institutions, a shift that critical scholars have labeled "new public management". In his provocatively entitled book *In Praise of Bureaucracy*, Paul du Gay (2000) argues that management "reformers" in both the UK and the USA used the near-universal opposition to bureaucracy's frustrating characteristics (waste, inertia, excessive red tape, etc.) to excitedly embrace business-inspired principles of economic efficiency as the highest values within government institutions. This support for "new public management" followed a management revolution that swept the corporate world in the 1970s and 1980s (Osborne 1992), aiming to make companies more "flexible" and less rigidly fixed in what were perceived to be inefficient ways of doing business. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello (2005) went so far as to characterize this revolution as a "new spirit of capitalism", which embraced flexibility and autonomy as foundational normative principles of contemporary capitalism. In the field of international development, organizations funded directly or indirectly by public agencies have similarly embraced the ideals of new public management.

As a result, organizations such as USAID have placed much more emphasis on ideals of economic efficiency and reduced waste.

Conclusion

Symbolically, the ideals at the core of the aid industry's embrace of new public management—which are very similar to the ideals of profit maximization and capitalist productivism—support the legitimacy of techno-scientific experts while also providing a template for what are claimed to be successful, efficient, and effective public institutions in the global South. In this context, modern management practices appear as both the means and the ends of development. By identifying the central role of management practices in efforts to reform state institutions, critical researchers such as Craig and Porter (2006) have been able to frame the recent restructuring of aid organizations in terms of practical changes in the everyday work of development professionals. For example, the management language of "strategic visions" and "strong leadership" often pushes the delegation of decision-making upwards to international "elite" organizations (see also Winther-Schmidt 2011). At the same time, donor organizations delegate risk and responsibility downwards to recipient organizations or governments by linking funding to the production of "measurable results" (see Oliver and Tasson, this volume).

For democracy assistance organizations, then, performing expertise rests in their ability to adopt the logics and practices of institutionalism and new public management in order to secure funding from donor agencies, but to also distance themselves from the more obviously economistic or capitalist elements of this discourse in order to build a working relationship with local democracy activists. This complex balancing act situates democracy assistance organizations within a global field of power that has little to do with any form of universalistic knowledge about how democracy works.

This insight is consistent with a form of critical sociology that looks to examine the symbolic power of concepts like democracy by looking at the mobilization of these concepts by social actors in practice. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the gradual rise of the governance discourse as a symbolic replacement for economistic theories of development in the

international aid industry has brought the problem of democratic institutions to the fore. Partially as a consequence, organizations that had once specialized in information-based and ideological forms of democracy promotion began to expand the range of their activities to include "assistance" for groups working to democratize their own governments. A critical sociology of these activities can provide the tools to analyze how this new form of expertise was developed and also, crucially, provide an account of why democracy assistance organizations have thus far failed to challenge the asymmetric configurations of power that continue to facilitate Western interventions in the global South in the name of developmentalist logic.

Notes

1. The current names of these organizations are the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the AFL-CIO-affiliated "Solidarity Center," and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). An extended history of the NED and its affiliate organizations can be found on the NED website (Retrieved April 22, 2013: http://www.ned.org/about/history)
2. For a broader discussion of democracy promotion in US foreign policy during this period, see Gills et al. (1993).
3. In a review of the NED's first ten years, Thomas Carothers outlined the wide range of opposition that had nearly ended funding for the organization: "Opponents of the endowment […] pilloried the endowment as a dangerous "loose cannon" meddling in the internal affairs of other countries and a "Cold War relic" that wastes US taxpayers' money on pork-barrel projects and political junkets abroad" (Carothers 1994: 123).
4. This case partially related to the fact that "Project Democracy" was also the code name of the operation led by Oliver North to arm the Nicaraguan Contras by secretly flying supplies into Honduras. Although it was unclear that this was directly linked to any formal democracy promotion organizations, it nonetheless influenced the debate (Carothers 1991: 205).
5. See also *Governance and Development* (The World Bank 1992).
6. The turn of phrase that seems to subsume each of these items under a more general condition defined by the "rule of law" was not an accident. As Carothers (2004) points out, "rule of law" assistance was a core con-

cern of democracy aid in the early 1990s. This was one of a handful of "fads" that has swept the field of democracy assistance over the years.

7. This transition was structural as well as symbolic, since the primary source of funding for this organization shifted from what was, until 1999, called the United States Information Agency (USIA) to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
8. Bourdieu defines symbolic power in the following way: "Symbolic power—as a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization—is a power that can be exercised only if it is *recognized*, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary. This means that symbolic power…is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it, i.e. in the very structure of the field in which *belief* is produced and reproduced" (Bourdieu 1991: 170).
9. This statement comes from the introduction to the 2007 Strategy Document (retrieved April 15, 2013 at http://www.ned.org/docs/strategy/strategy2007.pdf). This is the fourth "Strategy Document" published by the NED, which has published such documents at regular 5=five-year intervals, starting in 1987 with a founding "Statement of Principles and Objectives."
10. Examples of this critique articulated during the 1990s more explicitly began to challenge "development discourse" as a mechanism for justifying these configurations of power (e.g. Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990).
11. The *Paris Declaration* is often paired with the 2008 *Accra Agenda for Action* which aimed to "deepen" and "accelerate" the adoption of aid effectiveness by adopting five principles: (1) ownership of the development agenda by the recipient government; (2) alignment of donor activities with this development agenda; (3) harmonization of donor efforts to avoid overlap and waste; (4) managing for results; and (5) mutual accountability.
12. Theoretically, this is similar to what neo-institutional sociology would refer to as "institutional isomorphism" (see DiMaggio and Powell 1983).
13. The concept of "economic development" has all but disappeared from development discourse. For example, in the latest version of "The Millennium Development Goals Report" (2012), the phrase "economic development" does not appear once throughout the entire document

(report retrieved April 19, 2013 at http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202012.pdf).

14. Even the pre-eminent scholar of democracy in American political science, Robert Dahl, has come to accept a processual definition of democracy (see Dahl 1998, 2006).
15. When USAID embraced results-based management practices, it referred to this division in terms of "strategic objectives" that expressed organizational goals, and "intermediate results" that could be measured (Blair 2000: 231).
16. See Lamont (2012) on the rising ubiquity of evaluation mechanisms in all facets of social life.

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Part III

Practicing Culture

The Fun and Games of Creative Citizenship: Urban Cultural Policy and Participatory Public Art

Saara Liinamaa

Introduction: The City-as-Playground

The creative city model of culture-led urban development and economic growth has deeply influenced urban cultural policy in the contemporary moment. In addition to a steady stream of scholarship that has unpacked the political economy of the creative city (e.g. Peck 2005; Pratt 2008; Ponzini and Rossi 2010; Scott 2006, 2010), broadly speaking, criticisms of the creative city as urban cultural policy have questioned the employment of creativity as a resource for social cohesion and citizenship (e.g. Barnes et al. 2006; Bayliss 2007; Catungal and Leslie 2009; Grundy and Boudreau 2008; Mould 2015) and challenged the reduction of culture to forms of urban branding, leisure, and consumption (e.g. Evans 2009; Miles 2005a, b; Vicari Haddock 2010; Zimmerman 2008). This chapter contributes to these debates by pulling out an underlying theme within creative city platforms. By strategically drawing on the varied but powerful associations that the term creativity carries in popular culture (Pope 2005),

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the creative city promises not only a more economically viable city but also, by association, a city that is both freer and more fun. Creativity promises innovation as well as liberation from the staid conventions of urban policy; the creative city embraces the concept of a more playful city. To this end, creative city-inspired cultural policy and programming, by prioritizing the social as well economic benefits of culture, also asserts the values and virtues of play, where the arts are presented as a means of playing together that connects urban populations and neighbourhoods. For example, consider the case of the arrival of the international phenomenon Nuit Blanche in Toronto in 2006, a key event of the city's "Live with Culture, 2005–2006" initiative that developed out of Toronto's clear commitment to implementing a strong cultural plan based on creative city principles.[1] This all-night arty party is less about contemporary art than the experience of the event itself. As the organization writes of the first Toronto instalment, "[a]s remarkable and distinctive as the art was, the magic came from the audience response and interaction". Importantly, Nuit Blanche makes art "fun, engaging and accessible" (Nuit Blanche Toronto 2010).[2]

The playful character of the city, and its ties to leisure, consumption, and innovation, has always been a key feature of modernity (Benjamin 2002; Lefebvre 1996; Sennett 1978; Stevens 2007). As Baudelaire (1972) astutely recognized, with modernity, everyday life becomes more playful on the whole. The creative city model illustrates in the contemporary moment how different values and virtues of play become embedded as urban principles, and this chapter maintains that the current turn to celebrate the arts as urban fun and games requires more critical scrutiny. Given the popularity of the creative city mandate, this is a timely moment to reconsider a past and current history of alliances amongst art, play, and the city.

We are well reminded of a history of artistic engagements with urban life that draws on play as a critical strategy, one capable of subverting the rigidity of the city and the rules of order. It is easy for cities to champion the promise of urban play and entertainment that the creative city presents but harder to reckon with the more disruptive character of play, particularly when we are keen to cast play as the glue for social cohesion. Creative city cultural policy proposes to cultivate a playful citizenry, and a strand of contemporary urban practices craves to do the same. But if

we take together different threads of contemporary public art's forms of playful participation, we can discern a number of insights about the process of producing creative urban citizens. Participatory public art demonstrates the potential of play as a form of critical urban action and analysis, one that accentuates the *work* and play of urban citizenship through participatory cultural practices. The arduousness and ambivalence of creative citizenship is something that the rhetoric of creativity in urban cultural policy and management clearly misses.

This argument unfolds in three main sections. Firstly, the chapter turns to histories of artistic play and the city (Dada, Surrealism, and the Situationist International [SI]) that intersect with the sociology of play (Caillois, Huizinga). I use these histories to dramatize the contemporary stakes of playing together in the city. Secondly, in light of this context for thinking about the aesthetics of urban play, the chapter outlines the assumptions guiding the creative city model of urban community building and social participation. I argue that the emphasis placed on building creative citizenship delineates a new model of urban responsibility, one that seeks to embrace the benefits of creativity-based experimentation and sociability, while eschewing the conflict and contradictions that these practices engender. Thirdly, the chapter provides an analysis of various urban-based contemporary art practices that use play principles to cultivate diverse forms of public participation, both similar to and distant from creative city interests. In this section, I also identify key issues that emerge within contemporary art's efforts to remake the city-as-playground. The conclusion argues for the relevance of contemporary art's urban play experiments as a way of framing the work and play of creative citizenship and urban participation in the contemporary moment.

This chapter contributes to debates and dialogues central to practising critical sociology through cultural analysis in a number of respects. First, as Kurasawa states in the introduction to this volume, one of the key challenges of our methodology is to blend "structuralist cartography" with an "interpretivist taxonomy" (5). The chapter charts a strategy for moving between structural and interpretative frames by treating the city as a foremost interdisciplinary object of social research. Second, this concern for the city and the conditions and consequences of contemporary urbanization responds to the publicly minded orientations of critical

sociology. This city becomes representative of critical sociology's ongoing concern for the vibrancy and accessibility of urban public spaces and, by extension, a notion of the public sphere that is inseparable from urban public life. However, rather than position participatory public art as a necessarily critical antidote to the assumptions that ground popular narratives around urban life and change—as is often the case—the following pages demonstrate how the critical analysis of cultural practices must contend not only with the rifts between mainstream and oppositional culture but also with their often-telling intersections. While the chapter draws on a sociological analysis of play that is largely micro-sociological in orientation, the critical heart of this analysis stems from the recognition of how local and situated practices fold into structural concerns over the concentration of economic and cultural capital and power in cities. This chapter advocates for scholarship that acknowledges the complexity of the cultural field (Bourdieu 1984), which means bringing together the study of a specific activity—in this case, participatory art practices—with different, at times conflicting, models for interpreting the socio-cultural meaning of these activities, from policy to theory. Cultural practices as objects of academic inquiry may productively call into question assumptions about the social world, despite not offering a straightforward analysis of, or resolution to, these larger concerns. The participatory projects discussed here illustrate the dilemmas posed when we recognize the "creative and reiterative features of contemporary cultural production" (Kurasawa 30). I underscore a history of thinking about the social dimensions of play that stresses the multi-fold stakes of artistic play as an urban practice in the present that illuminates and complicates the symbolic resonance of public space and cultural citizenship.

Urban Avant-Gardes, Sociology, and Aesthetics at Play

Within the history of art, play has often surfaced as a challenge to urban values and organization, such that the current turn to playful urban experimentation finds a measure of historical correlation with staple movements such as Dada, early Surrealism, and the Situationist International. While

this is well-trodden territory in many respects, what is less recognized is how these movements represent an intersection between play as a key urban principle, necessary to rethinking the city, and play as a sociological method of generating social knowledge through attention to the dynamics of sociability and experimentation.

There are a series of associations that can be made between art and play as a mode of social participation and analysis. First, we can link play practices of Surrealism and the SI to key theorists of play, Roger Caillois and Johan Huizinga, respectively. Surrealism is an example of how aesthetic practices influenced a distinctive sociological theory of play. The SI represents how a novel appeal for the significance of play to culture influenced radical urban practices. The theory of play advanced in each example presents fundamental principles and characteristics, as well as dilemmas, which stem from play as a form that is both inside and outside of everyday life, one that challenges and reproduces social norms. These different perspectives point to a history of thought that appeals to play as a mode of analysis and social form, and in this sense, they help to make sense of urban experimentation in contemporary art by accentuating the contradictory dimensions of play as creativity-based urban participation.

Surrealism and the Sociology of Play

The Dada urban fieldtrip to the small church of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre in 1921 was an exercise in creating unusual conditions for collective engagement; as such, it serves as an instructive precursor to contemporary art's urban play experiments. Breton vigorously asserts Dada as a form of applied experimentation. He claims that "[b]y conjoining thought with gesture, Dada has left the realm of shadows to venture onto solid ground. It is absurd that poetic or philosophical ideas should not be amenable to immediate application like scientific ideas" (2003, 139). And in this regard, "immediate application" and "solid ground" become synonymous with new urban practices. Breton explains the excursion as follows: "[w]e imagined guiding our public to places in which we could hold their attention better than in a theatre, because the very fact of going there entails a certain goodwill on their part" (140). Audience members could experience

the force of the Dada event in an even more immediate way by virtue of their increased participation and enhanced connection to the activity. Further, art could access and benefit from the creation of an artistic space that produces "goodwill", which is to say sociability and attentiveness, where experimenting with the conditions of experiencing the city changes the experience of the city itself. The new ground for aesthetic disruption is no longer inside but outside; it is not the theatre but the city itself. As Breton implores in his address at the church, " '[s]imply turn your heads. We are in the middle of Paris. […] [Y]ou are in the world' " (140).

This urban exercise is inseparable from the urban practices of early Surrealism, where the city becomes an important site for experimentation with both action and the unconscious. Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* (1970) and Breton's *Nadja* (1960) are distinctly urban, rooted in the exploration and the apprehension of the city through unlikely activities, methods, and images. Susan Laxton's (2003, 2004) analysis of Surrealism's play practices over the course of the movement's history positions "Paris as gameboard" (2004). However, as Laxton argues, and as the image of a game board imposed on the city implies, Surrealism's play shifted from aimlessness and unpredictability to a focussed concentration on objective chance. Later, games such as *cadavre exquis* switched the spontaneous for the art object so, while still looking to the subversions of chance, the role and process of performance were minimized. Thus, what becomes lost in later activities such as *cadavre exquis* is the experiential, performative, and urban aspect of Surrealist play. That is, early Surrealism provides a glimpse of the urban play experiment as a creative practice but ultimately withdraws from the city. And yet, Surrealism is one origin point for a sociology derived from play that Caillois—a former Surrealist member—later develops in *Man, Play, and Games* (1958). Caillois' sociology of play, in turn, becomes a way to reframe contemporary art's play experiments in the present.

Caillois' text argues in favour of play's relevance to sociological study, but his association with the Surrealists (from 1932 to 1934)[3] was severed because of their differing interpretations of play and his disappointment with the Surrealist game's inability to study the mechanisms of the imagination.[4] He claimed that this intellectual division was, "the real cause of my break with Surrealism" (2003, 62). In this sense, his later

work strives to study play more systematically but with a resistance to the more subversive dimensions of play that Surrealism valorised. Caillois defines play as free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules as well as make-believe (1958, 9–10). His typology organizes activities according to characteristics such as *agôn* (competition), mimicry (simulation), *alea* (chance), and *ilinx* (vertigo), citing the latter two as most destructive to social custom. From these distinctions, Caillois discerns a play continuum in society that spans from *paidia* (spontaneity) to *ludus* (regulation) (36).[5]

In order to dismantle the tautological formation whereby life structures play and play structures life, Caillois argues that these two realms are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary (64). The "marginal and abstract world of play" (65) productively contrasts the "unprotected realm of social life". Importantly, play "occupies a unique domain the content of which is variable and sometimes even interchangeable with that of modern life" (67). Although he relies on a fairly rigid sense of how games attest to "the character, pattern, and values of every society" (66), and he argues for the need to isolate its more risky and destructive components, play as an intense social site worthy of scrutiny moves towards the tentative foundations of "a sociology *derived* from games" (67). Distinct from the sociology of games, of categorizing types and forms, he points to a shift in method that play opens up. A sociology derived from games requires methodological innovation because it refuses a clear division between life and play and instead stresses on reciprocity. For Caillois, play is deeply contradictory; play's potential for spontaneity and free expression is met by its recourse to restraint and regulation. Appropriately, whether or not play is open-ended for Caillois (Frank 2003), or ultimately a reinforcement of ideology and conventions (Laxton 2003, 2004), remains ambiguous.

Caillois' play continuum is useful for classifying the different characteristics of art's play-based urban experimentations, and it accounts for how the latter can be more or less free, more or less disruptive, in addition to stressing the reciprocity between the world of play and that of the every day. Furthermore, we are reminded that play can be used to provocatively reframe methodological approaches and attend to the blurring of boundaries and rules that play activates. Despite this, Caillois is

more inclined to emphasize play's potential to disrupt the social order, rather than rethink it, and whether or not its ability to irritate the balance of urban life is a virtue remains an ongoing question. While Surrealism influenced Huizinga's approach to understanding play's capacity for sociological insight, it represents a somewhat stunted seed of urban experimentation. If we turn to the SI, we are able to make another connection between art and play as an urban social form. And, in the following example, Huizinga's theory of the significance of play to culture connects to radical urban artistic practices.

Play Aesthetics and Ethics: SI and Huizinga

Placing experimental reconfigurations of everyday life within a revolutionary framework yet-to-be imagined, the Situationists are the most well-cited historical examples of art as urban experimentation and participation. Their experiments into urban space and behaviour were attuned to the social, spatial, and psychic dynamism of the city. The most succinct definition of the *dérive* states that it is a "mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances" (Situationist International, 1958). Importantly, the SI employed play forms, such as the *dérive* and *détournement*, as urban strategies set towards a radical refounding of urban life, but Debord's commitment to play aesthetics and ethics foreshadows the SI's urban experiments.

In "Architecture and Play", Debord (1955) argues in support of the need to cultivate conditions amenable to an unfettered and full development of play. A few years later, in "Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play",—which appears in the first issue of the SI journal—he positions play alongside questions of meaning and everyday life:

> [P]lay—the permanent experimentation with ludic novelties—appears to be not at all separate from ethics, from the question of the meaning of life […]. [I]ts goal must be at the very least to provoke conditions favorable to direct living. In this sense it is another struggle and representation: the struggle for a life in step with desire, and the concrete representation of such a life. (Debord 1958)

By targeting the realm of representation, the radical potential of play is placed under the charge of aesthetic experimentation.[6] Play is set in contrast to production; comprehending the misinterpretations and devaluations of play requires attention to historical shifts. Debord's essay argues for a contemporary affirmation of play that divorces itself from competition, thereby enabling "a more authentically collective concept of play: the common creation of selected ludic ambiences". Play, if removed from ordinary life, is isolated. The task is to challenge this isolation such that play spills into life, where "play, radically broken from a confined ludic time and space, must invade the whole of life". Play must invade the city, and play, as a way to challenge the shackles of urban convention and order, stems from its capacity to realign values and target social and political ethics.

Debord was clearly influenced by cultural historian Johan Huizinga's classic text, *Homo Ludens* (1950);[7] as such, *Homo Ludens*'s significance in locating art as a form of play analysis deserves attention. Huizinga argues for the necessity of considering play as a foundational cultural element and communicative form.[8] Although his approach tends towards the formal and universal, the text presents play as an alternative to rigidity in thought. Play holds an appeal for us to use our minds differently; "[p]lay only becomes possible, thinkable and understandable when an influx of *mind* breaks down the absolute determinism of the cosmos" (Huizinga 1950, 3). And this appeal to thought relies on play's aesthetic practices.

As an aesthetic and social practice, play orients to the world according to a basic set of principles. Huizinga's attentive overview of the characteristics of play establishes it as free, separate, imaginative, aesthetic, ordered, and collective, with unique recourse to temporal and spatial experience (Huizinga 1950, 8–13). His first set of observations highlight play's unique qualities. Firstly, play is a voluntary and free action; play "is in fact freedom" (8). Play is characterized by a flexible temporality. It may start and stop at any time; it is unique in that it may be "deferred or suspended" (8) without repercussion. Within its unique time, play promises an exit from everyday ordinary life. It often involves a consent to "only pretending" that is real, nonetheless, and often coincides with utmost seriousness in the maintenance of its distinct forms so removed from demands of the day to day. Thus, play as it is defined is both discrete and

fluid. As a locality, it occupies a unique sphere, an isolated world, yet one that is notably dynamic through the motions of proximity and distance enacted during its own time and place, where meaning unfolds according to specific parameters. With play, "all is movement, change, alternation, succession, association, separation" (9). Because the vivid world of play is endless *and* clearly limited by time and space, all play materially or figuratively has a "playground", a space of "forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain" (10). By carving out different conceptual spaces, play provides potent relief, whereby "[i]nto an imperfect world and into the confusion of life it brings a temporary, limited perfection" (10).

While play is cast as free and separate, Huizinga's second set of observations identify the order and patterns of play. To provide its fleeting perfection, play also is an exemplar of order and ordering, with rules being necessary for the maintenance of the play world—without them, the illusion of the temporary world cannot stand. However, what makes rigidity also flexible is the infinite possibilities of order according to play's alternative world. Yet, what Huizinga most emphasizes is that play's alignment with order is a key aspect of its aesthetic impact and its ability to captivate. Order establishes tension, and tension invites chance and uncertainty (drama), while repetition allows for alternation and the power of contrast.

Finally, Huizinga identifies the collective nature of play as a third set of key concerns. Play establishes a play community, where the group's separation from the world creates a remarkable feeling of being "apart together" (1950, 12), often through elements such as secrecy, segregation, and disguise. It is an outlet for becoming unrecognizable in day-to-day life; it is a way of "sharing something important, or mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms" (12). Huizinga accounts for the distinctively aesthetic characteristics of play. He identifies the pleasures of play's capacity to be outside of the every day, with an unlimited potential for invention. Play has much to offer as an ideal form that produces a free, collective, aesthetic, and alternative realm, and this serves as a rich counterpoint to the every day. In this respect, we have an ideal version of play analysis that is able to create and experiment with time and space, to carve out a distinct realm,

and establish different conditions for interaction—all in a manner that, however temporary, poses alternative values, thoughts, and experiences. But, at the same time, Huizinga establishes how play can be arbitrarily ordered, rule-bound, secretive, and isolated; in this regard, the risks of play as a method thereby become clearer.

A central tension may be drawn out of the above approaches. Play is still a product of other governing social forces even as it may challenge or reject the overarching logic of the everyday social world; as a microcosm of the social world, it dramatizes in different measures the characteristics of the larger order. This is why Caillois emphasizes play's maintenance and generation of rules, where, at its best, it is an accepted and regulated disruption. But, drawing on Huizinga, we are reminded how play brings out features of collectivism, positioning togetherness as something that we *play* at, yet with an important grounding in day-to-day acts of social negotiation. Play can, at times, help perceive the world differently and offer an aesthetic realm that asserts a temporary suspension of inequality, which is one of its most important contributions. In this respect, by drawing on the relevance of different histories of sociology and cultural practices, critical sociology is able to illuminate this key contradiction: does the temporary suspension of the rules of urban order offer an equally temporary escape that simply makes the everyday social order easier to accept? By bringing this question to current dialogue within creative city cultural policy as well as well experimental contemporary urban art, the stakes of addressing this contradiction as part of narratives surrounding urban change are clearer in the following sections.

The Creative City, Social Cohesion, and Urban Community Building

The language of creative city policy promotes the values of experimentation and innovation, presenting an appealing buffet of urban strategies linked to possibility and change. Creativity is offered as a survival commodity for cities, a necessary component of future innovations and adaptations that can respond to new urban challenges. A key dimension of the staple texts on the creative city is their emphasis on cultural

activities as important features of urban community building (Florida 2002; Landry 2000). The production of sociability through the collective focus on cultural works or the production of culture becomes a clear virtue, and creativity is offered as a way to play together in the city. As part of this framework, culture and creativity are valued not only for the ability to fuel creative industries but also for producing opportunities for entertainment, education, leisure, and fun to urban publics. So, as Florida explains, "creativity also requires a social and economic environment that can nurture its many forms" (5), which brings a new focus to the social environment of cities as a creative stimulant. In this regard, the role of the social is to facilitate creativity and the role of the cultural is to express creativity, and this dynamic of expression and facilitation directs urban rehabilitation. As Landry argues, cultural resources are "the raw material of the city" and "creativity is the method of exploiting these resources" (7), since creativity can counter the severe economic and social challenges facing contemporary cities. To this end, Landry identifies the importance of developing social capital as a way to "strengthen social cohesion, increase personal confidence, and improve life skills, improve people's mental and physical well-being, people's ability to act as democratic citizens and develop new training and employment routines" (9). Or, as the policy report entitled, "Imagine a Toronto…Strategies for a Creative City" asserts, "[c]reative and cultural activity is also a powerful vehicle for community development and engagement, providing opportunities for economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and social groups" (Gertler et al. 2006: 7).

This celebration of the social virtues of creativity has been challenged on a number of points in academic literature, such as how the hierarchy of the creative class underscores the uneven distribution of social capital (McCann 2007; Markusen 2006; Mould 2015; Peck 2005) or how urban redevelopment strategies produced in the name of the creative city tend to heighten urban marginalization and displacement through gentrification (Barnes et al. 2006; Catungal et al. 2009; Miles 2005a, b). Creativity becomes a rubric promising widespread accessibility that is, in fact, difficult both to define and to access. Social marginalization becomes reproduced in cities, just in different ways and with a new supporting logic seeking to minimize this recognition. Further, this model provides a two-

tiered system of cities, with small cities lacking the resources and population necessary to achieve the creative city status (Lewis and Donald 2010). Thus, while creative city policy maintains the benefits of creativity for the purpose of building social cohesion and capital, it also relies on a definition of culture that eschews notions of contradiction, restriction, challenge, and resistance—perhaps rightly so, as this framework is designed to manage and appropriate urban culture, not to open up sites of urban contestation.

As Grundy and Boudreau demonstrate (2008), the creative city as a form of social and cultural management translates into a model of creative citizenship through participatory arts programming and arts-based community development that seeks both to embrace and to minimize risk. To this end, creativity and cultural participation emerge as "citizenship virtues that are shaped and optimized, and thereby governed, toward a variety of ends" (348). Creative risk and experimentation, as forms of *play*, are invited into the city through these efforts, but at the same time, they must be managed and governed through programming and policy. The model of creative citizenship that Grundy and Boudreau trace also underscores how the creative ethos of our moment has influenced everyday practices and performances of citizenship. And by doing so, it reminds us of the play and performance of urban togetherness that creativity-driven urban policy and programming solicits. On the one hand, we are witness to the instrumentalization of experimentation and play as urban belonging through the logic of cultural policy and management, yet at the same time, we know that social performance and identity are far more varied, ambiguous, and often incompatible with official discourse and modes of governmentality. And this is where turning to contemporary art and its strategies of urban play and experimentation becomes instructive. Contemporary art's urban play practices rely heavily on components of social participation and performance, where social play is directed to different goals and ends that stress the negotiation of sociability and togetherness in the city. While the creative city may urge urban citizens to innovate, experiment, and play together, an analysis of key directions within contemporary urban-based art stresses the risks and possibilities that accompany acts of coming together through play based experimentation.

Contemporary Art's Urban Interventions

A playground is a clearly delineated space for playful activity. While the activities possible within a playground are infinite—tools and equipment may be used in innumerable ways—the play space is also confined to a designated area. Many fleeting and interaction-driven works of art in urban spaces by contemporary artists create their own version of a playground, demarcating a limited play space that is activated through the work of art, with the latter as a way of soliciting playful engagements and activities. Art as a form of playful, urban experimentation stems from a number of shifts, which speak not only to the changing practices of audiences for art but also to the intensity and influence of locality and urbanization. Certainly, the "social turn" and the intensified focus on social and participatory methods (Bourriaud 2002; Bishop 2004, 2006; Billing et al. 2007; Papastergiadis 2009) have influenced art as a form of social experimentation that targets social behaviour, patterns, and interactions in the city. Play often productively blurs boundaries between inside and outside, creativity and constraint, and for the purposes of this chapter, between art and the city. Play is cast as a way to liberate urban life by attending to urban characteristics and expressions such as creativity, spontaneity, sociability, and subversion, which are too often written out of the city of rules, order, and convention. Art's play experiments take "what happens if" to the activities, patterns, and contexts of the city, often acting as an antidote to the rigidity and hierarchy of urban life.

However, contemporary art's play impulse does not rely on a singular definition or understanding of play. Instead, what we have are conflicting versions of what play forms as aesthetic and urban forms establish. Sharing some features with creative city discourses, many artists and curators are quick to locate play as a way to counteract exclusion and injustice in the city. As the London-based curatorial collective B+B maintains, "taking play seriously" is a way to shift power dynamics in the city and celebrate playfulness and diversity in public space (2007, 115). Or, for example, the international urban art network City Mine(d) has developed a number of play objects or "tools", such as kites, balls, and a portable playground, for intervening into urban public spaces and cultivating social interactions. These approaches emphasize the benefits of

play as a social form and the importance of claiming urban spaces as collective spaces but too often without acknowledging how contestation or even aggression are also part of the work of play (e.g. Klein 1984; Freud 1991). Through a discussion of various examples below, I will identify a more nuanced definition of play as a social form that interrogates urban structures and relations. These examples make clearer how contemporary art's urban playgrounds dramatize a tension between conflict and sociability, freedom and limitation, with these tensions largely being excised from the version of culture that animates creative city policy. This omission, in turn, has repercussions for understanding practices of creative citizenship in the contemporary moment.

Whether working within the confines of a structured event or a haphazard intervention, art's urban experiments might draw on a number of different play strategies, with play as performance, participation, confrontation, subversion, humour, or pranksterism. Thus, contemporary art's urban play experiments range from the generally pleasurable to the tense and antagonistic, a point clearly made through a consideration of two different projects, both attached to high-profile international events: Jeremy Deller's *A Social Parade* (2004) for Manifesta 5 in Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain and Santiago Sierra's *Persons paid to have their hair dyed blonde*, 2001, for the 49th Venice Biennale. These works rely on different play impulses, with Deller's work emphasizing the richness of playing together, while Sierra's project stresses play's capacity for subversion and discomfort.

Deller's *A Social Parade* (2004) was a spirited celebration of collective recognition, "an arbitrary day of celebration" (Manifesta 5 2004) of everyday activities. For the work, Deller placed advertisements in local newspapers calling for participation by different social clubs and associations, forms of organization often trivialized and overlooked (such as the fencing club, the gardening club, and other dedicated hobbyists' organizations). Deller coordinated the willing volunteers and organized a large parade on Donostia-San Sebastián's central boulevard. Appropriately, a youth video club documented the event. This celebratory and participatory moment of social organizing cut across the biennale as an exclusive art event and animated the streets with "the city's hidden social groups and associations"—those likely to be excluded from the contemporary

art world, despite their often unique and particular aesthetic practices. As Manifesta director Hedwig Fjen (2007) notes, it was the more marginal groups that were most interested and likely to attend, and in this sort of project, the "utopian" dimension of Manifesta's mandate becomes clear. In this respect, the play experiment concerns whether or not such organization can be fruitfully realized, in however temporary a manner; the promise of collective social experimentation remains replete with possibility, as a forum both for organizing and for recognizing cultural practices that are more marginalized within networks of social and symbolic capital.

In contrast to Deller's work, Spanish artist Santiago Sierra's cutting and cheeky work for 49th Venice Biennale touches on the more sinister implications of social dynamics, foregrounding the arbitrariness of organization while exposing and experimenting with urban hierarchies. The piece, *Persons paid to have their hair dyed blonde* (2001), involved paying undocumented street vendors—as the title of the work indicates—to dye their hair blonde. This action shifted the art audience's response to the vendors and the behaviour of the sales people themselves, since the visibility of the vendors—otherwise meant to be unnoticed (given that they largely were undocumented workers circulating through underground networks in cities to find work)—became part of the artistic event (Bishop 2004, 73). This project subverts racialized appearances and stereotypes and acts as an uncomfortable reminder of the rules of urban order that structure the visibility and invisibility of urban populations and movements, but, furthermore, it raises troubling questions regarding the ethics of aesthetic practices of social participation. For example, who participated in this project? Disadvantaged workers. Why? For the money. For what? For an international elite event in order to become objects within the exhibition. In this case, playful experimentation charts an uncomfortable line and highlights more sinister urban realities that the experiment itself in part draws upon and reproduces.

The two examples indicate some of the potential risks associated with how creative urban experimentation functions, where art's play-based experiments might seem to rely on the creation of mere social fun or provide, as Foster quips, "remedial work in socialization" (Foster 2006, 194). On the other hand, they might act as a pernicious type of social

engineering, where play involves rules that can challenge concepts of fairness and make unacceptable demands on already vulnerable subjects in the interest of elite cultural experimentation. In order to make clearer the different qualities of these urban play experiments, I have established an outline of key types to indicate the different characteristics and focus of many of these actions. These examples are all from Toronto, an oft-cited model of creative city planning.

1. *Spontaneous interventions*
   These interventions create circumstances for socialization, enjoyment, and togetherness in cities. This type establishes an alternate urban realm through the creation of diverse scenarios that reinforce too-often underappreciated social values, such as creativity, spontaneity, and togetherness. For example, one could mention Newmindspace's (Lori Kufner and Kevin Bracken) series of pillow fights, capture the flag, 5000-egg Easter egg hunts, and bubble battles. The Toronto and New York duo define their activities as "interactive public art, creative cultural interventions and urban bliss dissemination" (Newmindspace 2007). Formed by two undergraduate students at the University of Toronto, the group focuses exclusively on creating free urban play experiences. They organize regular events and largely rely on social media to generate participation. Newmindspace considers their activities as a means of "inventing new ways of having fun", reclaiming public space and creating community. Foremost, they present urban play and collective action as an important and undervalued experience in contemporary life.[9] This type of social participation testifies to the possibility of temporary, playful eruptions. People attend: they will gather and, to varying degrees, act and socialize in a manner outside their everyday activities. So while this format offers a model through which one can study the dynamics of social interaction, temporary collective participation is often both the process and outcome of such projects.
2. *Subversive play*
   This vein of play experimentation explores and exposes urban structures and practices, targeting the urban order and its role in moulding social and spatial dynamics. As a form of intervention, it works to

locate and often contest accepted boundaries, exclusions, and conventions, and it is often more confrontational and politically oriented than the former type. For example, *Free Parking Space* (2005) is an initiative organized by a loose, temporary collective called "The Pedestrian Mob". First, the group designs and builds car frames out of cardboard rolls scavenged from recycling bins that could be worn either by cyclists or by pedestrians. Then, individuals walk or ride with these frames on the streets of Toronto, occupying the same amount of physical space generally allotted to cars, humorously inverting the urban spatial order.[10] This so-called auto-intervention advocates "creatively freeing parking spaces—for performance, for play, and for engagement with the politics of pedestrianism and public space" (2005, 49). By taking up parking spaces or slowing lane traffic, *Free Parking Space* highlights the privileging of cars in urban space, inspiring a host of vehement reactions as well as support and participation by intrigued passers-by. During one excursion, individuals were ticketed for careless (or rather "carless") driving; thus, the intervention also makes clear what the legal limit point of intervention and experimentation is. This example coincides with other urban activist strategies for reclaiming public space (like critical mass), and it lodges its critique of the organization of urban life by interrogating boundaries, priorities, and prohibitions. The project engages a rather haphazard urban community—one that includes support and resistance, from kids in the park interested in the group's assembly process, to eager participants who happen to be around at the same time, to disgruntled drivers who want the parking spot being occupied by cardboard, and to law enforcement officials who must decide if an infraction has been committed. This sort of experiment produces various levels of interactions that direct its insights into the city; it also blends the work of generating knowledge about the organization of urban life with using this knowledge as a platform for action.

3. *Alternative play*

Like the previous types, this direction within playful experimentation creates opportunities through which one can explore urban relations and collective bonds, but at the same time, these actions model alternative forms of civic engagement. Toronto playwright and artist Darren O'Donnell's Mammalian Diving Reflex (MDR), a "research-

art atelier dedicated to investigating the social sphere" (MDR 2010), orchestrates unfamiliar situations that twist expectations and roles. He strives to reconfigure social relationships through unexpected encounters—ones that draw on elements of collaboration, enjoyment, risk, and confrontation—to create new contexts for collective engagement. For example, he has organized a number of projects that all involve interactions with strangers in a variety of contexts, from the street to the home to the classroom, each of which presents various challenges and discomforts.[11] He refers to his work as a type of "social acupuncture"—a pointed remedy for the city directed towards social realignments and through his actions, calls for an "aesthetic that can work directly with the institutions of civil society—an aesthetic of civic engagement" (O'Donnell 2006, 24). However, this is not a mode of civic engagement without friction or just conviviality and exchange (30). In *Haircuts by Children* (2006), O'Donnell dares adults to let children cut their hair.[12] Through the provocative and absurd scenario of children cutting adults' hair, O'Donnell argues that granting children a space of respect and the ability to express good judgement is essential to encouraging future political participation (85). It is also a moment during which adults must trust children to exercise careful decision-making, and this rather comical scene actually demands mutual respect and trust. The play experiment, in this instance, is charged with realizing an alternative to patterns of social exchange, where adults and children together must (temporarily) renegotiate their place in the social order.

These above-mentioned examples indicate some of the general features of urban play experiments and their exploration of the process and characteristics of urban social relations, making quite different demands on urban subjects in terms of the character and requirements of participation through forms of spontaneous play, subversive play, or alternate play. The play character comes out in different ways, from the exuberance of collective games to the pointed humour of "carless" driving to the absurd scenario of children cutting hair. In keeping with the previous discussion that stressed contemporary art's employment of play as a key urban principle, we can better position the implications of these actions in the final section.

Conclusion: The Fun and Game of Creative Citizenship

This chapter has interrogated the draw of re-imagining the city as a playful city, precisely because of the promise that play holds for cultivating an alternative urban order, a different city. As Walter Benjamin (2005) argued, play can temper the weight of an "unbearable life" (100)—an unbearable city, if you will. The first section outlined important precursors to contemporary art's urban play forms in order to better establish the implications of urban experimentation as an urban play-driven method of participation and social exchange. I turned to the work of Caillois and Huizinga because of their emphasis on play's aesthetic and social character, its collective significance, and its usefulness as a tool for analysis.[13] But what each thinker confronts is the paradox of play: play produces a contradiction between the play world and everyday order or, in terms of our discussion more specifically, between creative experimentation and the city. Play is both inside and outside of the every day, and each theorist places more or less emphasis on play's recourse to the world of order and its tempering of freedom and creativity; play can offer an important, creative renegotiation of everyday life or be a potentially disruptive, undesirable force. In terms of artistic practices, both of these points can be drawn on as a virtue, a way to challenge urban habits and expectations, but there is still the question of play as outside (an alternative city) and play as inside (a microcosm of the city). The play experiment does not resolve this tension between escape and reproduction. As a method, play practices can reproduce the social world, dramatize its tensions, and/or posit a (temporary) alternative. For example, Sierra's work moves between reproduction and critique—I doubt anyone would argue that his approach glimpses a radical alternative to urban exclusion. And this is the dilemma of play as a means of generating urban participation and citizenship. While play may be a tenet of critical urban action, it is not divorced from the contradictions of urbanization itself. But this history of play in art and social theory helps to demonstrate how play is particularly well equipped to highlight the conflicts and pleasures of collectivism in the city, as well as its movements between belonging and

exclusion, flexibility and restriction. It is a rich way to frame an understanding of the creative citizen as an emerging construction within urban policy and practices.

This analysis of contemporary art's urban play experiments offers an instructive counter-narrative to the lure of the creative city as erupting with creative experience, pleasure, and fun, instead putting forth a view of the city-as-playground that reminds us of the collective stakes of playing together and the precarious work of coming together required of urban citizens. Creative citizenship values creative expression and arts-driven practices for their contributions to place-based attachment and engagement. Creative citizenship, in this regard, adds another dimension to urban citizenship and its contemporary centrality to solidarity and belonging (Holston and Appadurai 1996). By bringing these threads together—urban play practices and trends in policy and management—there is an opportunity to further our understanding of how creativity can structure urban participation and, in turn, features of urban citizenship. In this regard, I have argued that art's play-based urban investigations allow for a diverse understanding of urban togetherness either through spontaneous play, subversive play, or alternative play. In this regard, the spontaneity and sociability in Newmindspace's urban gaming reminds us of the importance of spontaneity and collective interactions in public spaces, but not everyone is included in the "game", and the takeover of public space may be as fun as it is disruptive. *Free Parking Space* is an activist-minded excursion that rejects a dominant feature of city organization but in a manner that generates hostility and conflict, despite its humorous style of intervention. *Haircuts by Children* takes a serious question, the status of youth, and makes a case for the importance of trust and alternative possibilities for cultivating respect for all members of the city, but this alternative is fleeting and still largely unimaginable to most. Play actions have limits; they can be legal (a driving infraction), social (who participates), structural (what social capital is required to access the event), and even emotional (fear would be a common response to a child with scissors), and these are important dimensions to the construction of a vibrant notion of a creative citizen. As David Beech (2008) argues of art's participatory strategies, "technical questions about how

to participate must always be preceded by questions about what sort of activity and subjectivity, people are being invited to participate in" (4). This chapter makes clear that this work of creative citizenship requires often tense acts of negotiation. Playing together is not always fun and games, but participatory art does demonstrate the potential of play as a form of critical urban action and analysis, one that accentuates the ambivalence that shadows urban cultural practices as forms of citizenship building. Unsurprisingly, contemporary urban cultural policy works to minimize the role of confrontation and critique through an unquestioned validation of culture as amusement and sociability.

As a demonstration of critical sociology's approach to studying cultural practices, this chapter insists on bringing together a range of narratives around urban life. While conducting an analysis of either urban artistic practices or shifts in urban cultural policy would be a logical focus, this chapter's contribution stems from bringing these two realms together. This approach recognizes the dynamic interplay between levels of urban organization and practice, where the dream of the better city translates into cultural practices that can be both provocative and reiterative. Furthermore, this chapter returns to some classic texts from the sociology of play but not in a manner that stubbornly holds onto sociological traditions for their own sake. Instead, this return is used to ground how urban art interventions contribute to the realization of a critical sociology of play in the present, one that illuminates the complexity of processes of civic engagement and participation in public spaces.

Notes

1. The "Live with Culture" platform (September 2005–December 2006), a celebration of creativity and culture in Toronto, grew out of a recommendation by Toronto's 2003 "Culture Plan for the Creative City".
2. Although not necessarily under the Nuit Blanche "brand", similar events are already in place or currently in development in other Canadian cities, such as Halifax, Vancouver, and Victoria. The first Nuit Blanche was held in Paris in 2002 and the first Canadian edition in Montreal in 2003.
3. With George Bataille, Caillois was also the co-director of the Collège de sociologie from 1937 to 1939.

4. Caillois left the group after a disagreement with Breton over how to investigate a pair of jumping beans. During this period, however, he wrote *The Necessity of the Mind* (1990), which demonstrates his interest in establishing an imaginative science; however, he was ultimately disappointed that the Surrealists were not as "scientific" as he would have liked (2003, 62–63).
5. Caillois offers a direct response to Huizinga—to be discussed below—drawing on his definitions and insights while also challenging the centrality of the sacred in his analysis.
6. Debord also developed a game board (see *The Game of War*, 1977) that pursues a very different element of play, where the unleashing of creative energies is akin to both war and play, following a Nietzschean tradition of vitalism and violence.
7. For example, in his essay "Architecture and Play" (1955), Debord argues that Huizinga's "latent idealism and his narrowly sociological understanding of the higher forms of play do not diminish his work's basic worth." Andreotti argues that Debord and Constant Nieuwenhuys drew on Huizinga's theory of play, turning it into a revolutionary theory that abolished the distinction between play and seriousness (2000, 38). He starts with the premise that the influence of Huizinga on the SI has been often noted but remains relatively unexplored. I am making a case for Huizinga's relevance to contemporary art's urban play experiments.
8. Originally written in 1938 and first published in 1944, the interdisciplinary nature of the text means that it is considered a staple reading for those interested in play, be it from the perspective of the sociology of sport, anthropology, or history. As such, it is currently regarded as relevant and innovative, as well as conservative and over-cited. It is, of course, both. Huizinga does not develop what could be the radical implications of his analysis in terms of culture or politics; instead, he turns to play as the basis for the ritual and the sacred (Huizinga 1950, 15–27).
9. With this specific example, these good-humoured interventions intersect with youth culture, where participants tend towards a younger demographic. Newmindspace points to the at-times muddy line between the play character of social media and interactive mass culture (fuelled by recent social and economic validations of creative expression) and contemporary art practices.
10. For video clips of the project, see the link below from the Visible City Project + Archive: <http://www.visiblecity.ca/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=73&Itemid=66>.

11. For example, for *Home Tours*, O'Donnell organized groups of people to tour various neighbourhoods, knock on people's doors, and ask if they could have a quick tour of the inside. This action proved to be quite difficult for many to accept, which resulted in complaints to the project's sponsor.
12. This event was part of the 2006 Milk International Children's Festival of the Arts. There were four participating salons in the city, and the children were from a Grade 5–6 class at Parkdale Public School in Toronto. The children were provided with haircutting lessons by MDR beforehand. Other versions of the project have since been held in different cities.
13. I have chosen the above theorists for their relevance to thinking about the specific characteristics of contemporary art's playful urban investigations. Certainly, there are more examples of how we might think of play as a critical theory and practice. Bakhtin's (1984) theory of the *carnivalesque* makes a case for literature's capacity to enable playful reversals and re-orderings of the social world. Alternatively, Lyotard and Thébaud's *Just Gaming* (1985) looks to language games, the legitimating of knowledge, and concepts of justice. Following a different vein of contributions, Simmel (1971) and Goffman (1959, 1961) also illustrate play's distinct social and aesthetic features.

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Body Worlds and the Social Life of the Plastinated Body: Considerations on the Biotechnology of Plastination

Elisabeth Rondinelli

Introduction

Since it was launched in Japan in the mid-1990s, *Body Worlds: An Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies*[1] has attracted 35 million people worldwide (IfP 2012), making it the most popular travelling exhibition in history and the most significant modern event to bring human anatomy to public view. In Canada, *Body Worlds* was attended by approximately 500,000 people in Toronto in 2006, over 250,000 in Montreal in 2007, over 270,000 in Edmonton in 2008, and over 200,000 in Calgary in 2010.[2] With its introduction of the scientific "art" of plastination—a preservation technique whereby cadavers are injected with plastic and which renders the body malleable, odourless, and invulnerable to decomposition—*Body Worlds* has set out to "democratize anatomy" and, in so doing, proclaims to minimize the gap between the privileges of scientific

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knowledge and people's everyday understanding of their biological and existential selves (Global Health Nexus 2004).

In this chapter, I use the framework of critical sociology to examine competing definitions of plastinates that arose in the years following the popular reception of *Body Worlds*. The commitment within critical sociology to denaturalize and reveal the socio-cultural construction of established institutions allows us to turn our attention to the long-standing dichotomy between the natural world and the social world and, in particular, to identify a variety of positions that demonstrate the tension between the autonomy of the scientific imperatives of *Body Worlds* and the socio-cultural meanings that are ascribed to plastinates in the public debates. Two controversies are particularly illustrative of this tension. The first concerns the simultaneous objectification and subjectification of plastinates, a controversy over defining the plastinates either as anonymous, instructional specimens or as embodiments of a personal identity and life lived. As is shown, despite the organizers' attempts to frame *Body Worlds* as a scientific event that offers the lay public an opportunity to encounter the dead body with some level of anatomical detachment, the aesthetic display of plastinates creates the conditions for the public to imbue them with subjectivity and personhood. The second, and related, controversy involves the juxtaposition between the plastinates as authentic and pedagogical forays into the human body and the plastinates as overly aestheticized displays of the dead whose value extends no further than entertainment and spectacle. In this case, the debates are concerned with the extent to which the art of plastinates impedes their scientific value and undermines their ethical worth.

Though the popularity of the exhibition itself has waned over recent years, I want to examine the continuing significance of plastination as a socio-cultural and technological phenomenon that offers a new corporeality and experiential perception of the human body, one that is capable of acquiring a post-mortem identity through biotechnological practices that allow the body to "live on" in plastinated form. I therefore argue that plastination need not be understood as a strictly scientific or ethical question. Rather, in a move that attests to the significance of the critical sociological project of maintaining—rather than artificially separating—the analytical tensions between objectivity and subjectivity, on one hand, and

science and art, on the other, I suggest that plastination reflects broader biotechnological developments that promise immortality and herald a new phase in the evolution of death. A critical sociology of the biotechnology of plastination, then, interrogates the limits of the natural *and* the social in order to reflect on the ways in which the ascent of biotechnology necessitates the blurring of the boundaries between them. As we reflect, in this section of the book, on the notion of "practicing culture", critical sociology offers a framework for understanding how we collectively make sense of the future of the human body given the new possibilities on offer with the advancement of biotechnology. That is, while plastination is constructed as a forum in which the public may discover the intricacies of their own bodies without the gruesome aspects of illness or death, it may also be regarded as a cultural commentary that has death at its centre, a demonstration of the biotechnological manipulability of the body's form, and, by extension, the changing nature of how we intervene on death and achieve post-mortem "health".

The Social Life of Plastinates

Gunther von Hagens, a German anatomist, inventor of plastination, and creator of *Body Worlds*, suggests that plastinates warrant being understood alongside the history of anatomical art because like the work of his anatomist-artist predecessors, particularly those of the Renaissance, plastinates represent a medium through which "death is brought closer to life" (von Hagens 2005, 262).[3] The foremost purpose of using "creative anatomy" in *Body Worlds*, von Hagens states, is to educate the living on the corporeal conditions which simultaneously enable and restrict their everyday physiological existence. Such instructiveness is achieved by doing away with traditional anatomical methods that rely on artificial models of the body or on wet, formaldehyde-laden cadavers that lay "lifeless" and "gruesome" (to the eyes of the lay public, at least) on dissection tables (von Hagens 2005). Plastination is best known for the aesthetic poses that animate cadavers into lifelike forms. Each unique human condition—to think, to reproduce, to be agile and resilient, and to be vulnerable and diseased—is revealed through a series of intricate exposures of

the organs, musculature, bones, and tissues (and even prosthetic devices, to which I will return later) that make possible the movements and biological processes that are rarely visible first-hand to the lay public.

In attempting to place plastinates "back into the living world from which they came", Von Hagens' aesthetic sensitivity is enabled by the plastination technique itself (von Hagens 2005, 266). Plastination involves a chemical process by which a cadaver (largely belonging to people who have donated their bodies to the Institute for Plastination[4] [IfP]) undergoes a sometimes week-long treatment whereby bodily fluids are replaced by a series of reactive plastics like epoxy resin, polyester resin, and silicone rubber (von Hagens 2005). The body is then cured in large chambers in order to allow the plastics to infuse the body tissue and to prevent decomposition and facilitate malleability, which, prior to plastination, was only made possible by the use of formaldehyde. The novelty is that, unlike cadavers preserved with formaldehyde, plastination maintains the colour and integrity of muscles and organs and, most importantly, produces specimens that stand upright and are both dry and odourless. It is through von Hagens' capacities as an artist that *Body Worlds* offers plastinates like *The Chess Player*, which, with chessboard in hand and brain exposed, is meant to elicit wonder at human contemplation, *The Exploded Body*, which employs longitudinal "expansion techniques" that enable the viewer to see the complex and compact layering of organs, muscles, and bones that interconnect in the body, or the *Reclining Pregnant Woman*—one of the most controversial plastinates in the exhibition—which exhibits a foetus in the exposed womb of a woman, effectively juxtaposing birth and death while sparking questions among observers about how she and her child may have died.

For von Hagens and his colleagues at the IfP, donating one's body for plastination is represented as an altruistic gift to scientific advancement and to the education of the public regarding human anatomy (IfP 2006). The fact that the exhibition deals with something so contentious—quite literally, the public display of bodies flayed with internal structures laid bare—requires a special attention to the change in meaning that bodies undergo once they become matters of plastination. Von Hagens takes it as one of his objectives to demystify the death of the body, to replace the subjective

and cultural associations of grief and taboo that accompany death with something that he believes to be more pedagogically productive:

> Gestalt plastinates are not objects of mourning; they are instructional specimens. Mourning would interfere with learning; our thoughts would digress. Consequently, I have attempted to make gestalt plastinates appear as lifelike as possible. Freed from the stigma of revulsion, such vital, holistic anatomy thus becomes feasible, with which viewers can be fascinated by its authenticity [sic]. (von Hagens 2005, 262)

As might be expected, von Hagens' understanding of the ontological significance of the plastinates takes on a characteristically scientific form and, in this way, articulates a desire to make the plastinates thinkable as biological objects of instruction rather than symbols of individual personhood and death. When donors will their bodies to the IfP and particularly to *Body Worlds*, they do so with the understanding that the exhibition will reveal nothing of their identities, personal history, or cause of death (except in the less frequent and less contentious cases of plastinates with diseased organs, whereby visitors may deduce that, for example, the cancerous lung contributed to the donor's death, as is explained below).

The intent behind donor anonymity is to foster an environment in which visitors may see themselves reflected in the image of the plastinate; we are not to mourn the end of a life lest we neglect to celebrate the vitality of the human form and, more importantly, to receive an implicitly moralistic message about the need to take care of our own bodies through our encounter with plastinates. For von Hagens, this seems achievable only by employing anonymization techniques, such as surgically modifying the mouth and face and changing eye colour using glass eyes, that are meant to sever any remaining ties between the individual donor and the plastinate:

> Ensuring anonymity is important for distancing the body from its plastinated counterpart, as it is the only way of ending the sense of reverence surrounding that body, i.e., the sense of personal and emotional attachment to the deceased. (von Hagens 2005, 31)

Visitors to *Body Worlds* are thus confronted, not unproblematically (Burns 2007; Jones and Whitaker 2007), with plastinates that bear von Hagens' own signature cards while the backdrop features a series of famous quotations by philosophers, scientists, and anatomists about the nature of life and death and the merits of anatomical investigation, effectively placing von Hagens in a lineage of anatomist-artists like da Vinci and Vesalius.[5] While the figure of von Hagens the scientist is foregrounded, visitors are prompted to remember the role of the donors only at the exit of the exhibition, where previous donors are thanked for their contribution to the development of plastination and where prospective donors may consider their own post-mortem fates by signing donation cards that legally will their bodies to the IfP.

Contrary to von Hagens' intentions that plastinates be observed with emotional detachment, visitors continually sought to personalize the subject in the figure of the plastinate, producing one of the most prevalent controversies about the exhibition: that between the objectification and subjectification of plastinates. Those who wished to put a "face" to the plastinate did so not only to satisfy their curiosity about the donor's cause of death (a pressing question for many, given that *Body Worlds* primarily exhibits normal rather than diseased anatomy and thus obscures the cause of death) but also to know more about the personal identity of individual donors. As one observer remarked, "I was always aware that they were someone's father, grandfather, brother, husband…" (in Walter 2004, 473). And another:

> It is very fascinating how the human body works. But where did these people come from? What kinds of lives did they lead? What did they look like before plastination? It would be interesting to know more about them individually. (in Moore and Brown 2007, 242)

Though von Hagens sees mourning as antithetical to his pedagogical project, some felt a reverent attachment to particular plastinates:

> As I looked into this cadaver's face (*The Yoga Lady*) I suddenly imagined the woman who once inhabited this body and felt a strong connection to her. I wondered about her life and felt sad that she had died so young. I have

> the same sense of connectedness when I look into *The Ponderer*'s face, with the contemplative expression. (in Moore and Brown 2007, 242)

Plastinates thus confront visitors as much more ambiguous figures than von Hagens permits—neither clearly subject nor object, neither clearly artistic work nor anatomical specimen, and neither purely organic nor machine-made—a phenomenon that demonstrates the divergent meanings that arise from anatomical specimens that are both aesthetic and anonymous. One observer sees no disjuncture between creative anatomy and offering some level of personalization:

> A fascinating merger of science and art! Why not some photos of the people portrayed? Maybe this will humanize the exhibit for those who find it distasteful. Or maybe not. For me photos would add a nice element to the exhibit in providing a glimpse of the personality along with the body. (in Walter 2004, 476)

Evidently, von Hagens' objective of maintaining the anonymity of donors is betrayed by his equally resolute aesthetic sensibilities involved in creating the plastinates, a technique that, as the above comments suggest, highlights, rather than de-emphasizes, the person within the plastinate. It is these very techniques that incite the viewer's sense of reverence, mourning, and curiosity.

Beyond the feelings of sadness for the dead body that stood before the viewer, some visitors wondered why the plastinate's personal identity was—technically, at least—erased, while an imagined identity was imposed upon the body's plastinated form. As one observer states, "I found it strange that von Hagens' signature would be there and [sic] little reference to the "person" behind his work. Was the "yoga lady" or the "skateboarder" really a practitioner of these skills?" (in Moore and Brown 2007, 243). Some feminist critics of *Body Worlds* discuss the particular damage aestheticization does to female plastinates, which are assigned strangely contorted fates. For instance, the *Yoga Lady* lays with arms raised above her head, propped up only by her hands, while the muscles of her chest and abdomen extend upward towards the viewer and the *Reclining Pregnant Woman* lays on her side with her head tilted and eyes

closed, one hand placed behind her head, while the exposed foetus meets the viewer's gaze. For these writers, even in death, women's subjectivity is subsumed under a scientific gaze that both objectifies and typifies women as mere specimens for voyeurism or vehicles for biological reproduction (Stern 2003; Schulte-Sasse 2006).

Von Hagens relates the object/subject controversy to the public's inability (or perhaps more accurately, unwillingness) to achieve the scientifically prescribed detachment of person and body:

> Apparently the design potential of our bodies is limited—beyond the given anatomical structure—by deeply rooted constraints about ourselves. Although I can create interspaces to facilitate viewing at will, nevertheless my imagination is subject to very limited tolerances *should the body be regarded as a whole*.[6] (von Hagens 2005, 268)

Yet, even in bioethical debates about *Body Worlds*, in which objectivity and emotional detachment are taken as necessary standards to which all scientific inquiry must be held, we see another prevalent controversy: that which aligns art with spectacle and science with education. Bioethical debates largely concern themselves with the proper place of such an exhibition, asking whether it is legitimate, ethical, and pedagogically sound to aesthetically display human corpses under the auspices of educating the lay public (Burns 2007; Wassersug 2007; Barilan 2006). For those who critique the exhibition, questions of legitimacy revolve around whether *Body Worlds* proves itself as a properly scientific endeavour and, in this way, legitimacy is conferred according to the extent to which art is subordinated to science. A characteristic response comes from Lawrence Burns (2007),[7] who suggests that the dignity of donors and, by extension, the legitimacy of the exhibition is jeopardized as long as the latter's goals remain unclear. Burns argues that the ethical concerns caused by aestheticization could be addressed by seeking "less morally contentious alternatives"—like the use of partial-body plastinates rather than whole-body plastinates as though dignity can be recovered by displaying parts of bodies which, presumably, facilitates anatomical detachment—so that the "educational goal unambiguously predominates over the competing artistic, entertainment, and commercial goals" (Burns 2007, 12). Others

ask what becomes of human dignity when those who donate their bodies for plastination are agreeing to undergo such extensive biochemical treatment for the sake of spectacle and to remain anonymous throughout the process, a kind of conduct which is seen as a grotesque departure from more traditional practices related to the dead (Allen 2007; Hibbs 2007). Allen, for instance, wonders how certain events, such as urban development on forgotten cemeteries and the displacement of the dead after Hurricane Katrina, are seen by the public as violations of the dead, but in the case of *Body Worlds*, questions of dignity and defilement are subsumed by art and entertainment in what she calls "moral madness" (Allen 2005). In this formulation, plastination is a platform for aesthetic prowess, not a technique that may serve a scientific, and therefore educational, purpose.

Though they take different positions on the scientific and artistic merit of plastinates, von Hagens and the bioethicists share some similarities. Both effectively reinforce the representation of science, especially anatomical science, as necessarily impervious to the social world with which it engages and thus appraise plastinates according to the extent that they act as tools of anatomical investigation and knowledge transmission. For Burns, the use of partial-body plastinates limits the plastinator's artistic ambitions and thus positions plastinates as educational specimens, and for Allen, the use of aesthetic techniques in plastination discounts them altogether as educational. These positions evaluate the ethical worth of plastinates according to precepts of clinical detachment that, although meant to address the alleged indignities of the exhibition, ultimately cannot be sustained considering the controversies over the meaning of plastinates in the public sphere. We saw that von Hagens' use of aesthetic and biochemical techniques to achieve this goal emphasizes the hybridity of the plastinates, thus reproducing the tension between subjectivity and objectivity that characterizes the visitor's response to plastinates. As we can see from the viewers' comments, the public cannot limit their perception of plastinates to mere anatomical specimens and, for this reason, the attachment of person and plastinate is revealed as a relationship that cannot simply be technically severed (Hirschauer 2006). Although visitors are asked to respect the anonymity of donors, they wonder about the life that specific donors lived and whether the latter practised the acts

that they are forever captured performing; although visitors are meant to approach plastinates as universal anatomical models, they largely do not reconcile donor anonymity with the knowledge that what they have before them is a dead body that has, through the plastination process, evaded the normal biological course of, and cultural practices associated with, death.[8]

The controversies rooted in the object/subject and science/art dichotomies are not new but fall in line with those that have characterized the anatomical sciences since the Enlightenment. Because they have posited the human body as a source of unlimited knowledge about physiology and pathology, the anatomical sciences have long employed rhetorical and cultural strategies, like those of von Hagens, that objectify the body from the person who once inhabited it; in this way, anatomy takes up the scientific imperative of clinical detachment *par excellence*. Yet, the experimental nature of anatomical investigation has meant that its practitioners have sought to suppress the loathsome work of dissecting human flesh by making their discoveries palatable and pedagogical through artistic visual representations of their findings, a tradition which dates back to da Vinci's anatomical drawings of the fifteenth century (Berkowitz 2011). We see the complexities associated with this endeavour in studies that demonstrate how, for instance, the lines between subject and object are blurred when medical students—just like the lay public—contemplate the identity of their anatomical specimen, a phenomenon that has led to the incorporation within medical classrooms of educational material that allows students to reflect on the humanistic status of the cadaver and its relationship to patient care (Lella and Pawluch 1988; Robbins et al. 2008–2009). The lines separating the scientific and the artistic are also blurred when wax anatomical models meant for pedagogical purposes are bought up by private collectors in art auctions (van Dijck 2001).

Therefore, anatomy exists in a liminal space between the taboos and anxieties that accompany the dissection of the human body, on one hand, and the promise of self-knowledge through scientific inquiry into the body, on the other. It subjugates flesh to the pursuit of scientific knowledge but also aestheticizes that flesh in an attempt to negotiate the potentially disturbing encounter one has with a dead human body. The difference is that *Body Worlds* aesthetically displays *real* human bodies,

with unique physical features and post-mortem identities, to the public and to experts alike, and thus plastinates cannot be entirely explained as contemporary extensions of anatomical drawings and wax models. It is precisely because plastinates are defined by their physical, social, cultural, and aesthetic qualities that we can see the necessity of a critical sociological project of interrogating the limits of the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity, and the binary oppositions that align science with education and art with spectacle. Both strands of thought presuppose the necessity of dichotomous thinking—whether it be in the interests of preserving human dignity or ensuring pedagogical primacy—without asking what may be created out of a newly formed juncture between them and how such a juncture may be more telling for us analytically than the unreflexive reproduction of the myth of scientific autonomy.

Critical sociology's commitment to the denaturalization of binary oppositions shows that plastinates actually disrupt the lines between subject and object, science and art, and life and death by animating and making visible that which should, in death, be inanimate and invisible. Despite the fact that von Hagens seeks to legitimate his practices by grounding them in scientific presuppositions about what is ethically permissible and pedagogically sound, the experience of encountering such aestheticized organic-technological hybrids points towards the need to reconfigure the categories through which the significance of plastination is defined (Haraway 1991). The division between subject and object seems especially unsustainable in *Body Worlds* precisely because the (whole body) plastinate meets the public as no other anatomical model has—upright, colourful, vitalized, and whole, yet always in uneasy relation to its flayed and chemically treated corporeality, that is, to the certainty that the person within the plastinate experienced death and that this body was "revived" in its plastinated form. It is therefore insufficient to interpret *Body Worlds* purely on the basis of its scientific or artistic merit, or to disaggregate the body from the person in order to legitimate the instrumentalization and manipulation of the human body, or even to rest on the assumption that the meaning of plastinates remains ambiguous. Rather, in a move that attests to the significance of a critical sociology of biotechnology and the capacity to question the boundaries between the natural and the social, we may see the plastinates as effectively re-socialized—literally brought

"back into the living world from which they came"—in a setting that conceives a union of anatomical innovation and socio-cultural life. The plastinate, like biotechnology more generally, is social to the extent that it traverses the spheres of organic material, cultural norms, and technological capacities and, for this reason, is imbued with conflicting meanings by its very groundedness in both scientific and socio-cultural milieu.

Members of the public did see themselves in the image of the plastinate but not necessarily in the way that von Hagens had hoped. It may be said, instead, that members of the public were often curious about the subject within the plastinate because they read onto the plastinated body a narrative about the technological possibilities of their own post-mortem fates—a narrative that eschews the marks of death (and as we see, the injuries of life) and permits the dead body to remain, immortal, in the animate world.

In the following section, I explore the idea of a critical sociology of biotechnology further to delve into the nature of the biotechnologies used in creating the plastinates and how these techniques inform their techno-cultural significance: that plastinates are simultaneously a reminder of what we are capable of biotechnologically (enhancement and perfection) and a cultural representation of how we may re-envision the mortality of the human body, particularly through a technological means of transcendence.

Plastination as Biotechnological Immortality and Enhancement

As we saw in the previous section, von Hagens claims that plastination makes accessible the complexity of the body's interior without the gruesome aspects of death, thus emancipating anatomy from otherwise repulsive responses that the lay public may have towards the sight (smell and feel) of a dead body. Plastination is meant to reveal an unmediated physiological reality, one borne of chemical and aesthetic techniques that combine real, authentic, and intact human bodies with the work of creative anatomy. Yet, we cannot understand the nature of von Hagens'

democratizing project—and more than this, we cannot interrogate von Hagens' claims to revealing an objective truth about ourselves—without considering the ways in which new biotechnologies exist in close relation to socio-cultural attitudes towards death and health, particularly in the West. Indeed, this is the basis for grasping the sociality of plastinates. If part of the controversy of *Body Worlds* is that plastination makes the dead body into an ambiguously defined object of both aesthetic and scientific techniques, we may move beyond the dualities and ask, alternatively, how these techniques compel a reconceptualization of death in light of the corporeal possibilities offered through plastination. Plastination does not reveal some biological truth about us, not the truth of death, nor the objective knowledge of an authentic body that was previously exclusive to anatomists. To recall, observers are not meant to think of the death of the person at all. Plastination does, however, sustain a medico-cultural discourse of enhancement and perfectibility that has increasingly been identified as the ultimate end of biotechnological advancements involving the human body (Caplan 2006; Baylis and Robert 2004; Lock 2002).

While biotechnology is a scientific and technical field of research into the technological innovations, modifications, and products derived from and applied to human, animal, and plant tissue (Harris 1992), locating it within a critical sociological framework reveals the ways in which biotechnological advancements are changing the nature of human beings and thus the social and cultural worlds that we occupy. A critical sociology of biotechnology refuses the strict inscription of scientific imperatives—specifically, those that define what is natural, organic, and therefore free from the vagaries of the social world—onto advances involving the human body. By altering the body's limits and capacities, biotechnologies represent what Brodwin (2000) suggests are "material changes in the objects once deemed outside of human control" (8). As medico-cultural entities, biotechnologies subvert the hermetic domain of the natural, opening up for interpretation, judgement, and technical skill what was formerly inaccessible to the scientific imagination. Merging human with non-human and non-organic material disrupts the distinctions that science upholds and exposes them as contradictions needing to be questioned. Such an understanding requires that we extend our questioning beyond the binary thinking that neglects the crucial intersections

between what is natural and what is social, towards a recognition that the plastinates themselves—as objects that reflect a biotechnological capacity to suspend the natural marks of biological death and, by extension, to alter the status of the dead body—possess "social lives" that cannot to be reduced to mere extensions of von Hagens' scientific imagination (Lock 2002, 315). Thus, plastination effectively intervenes on the finitude of death by presenting the death of the body, too, as a potentially biotechnological event.

Within a critical sociological frame, plastination represents a new corporeality and experiential perception of the human body: the post-mortem possibility that we may be immortalized as a plastinate. If, indeed, socio-cultural norms shape and are shaped by biotechnological advancements, we can see that this new corporeality is rooted in contemporary medical and cultural discourses that increasingly view death as a deficiency in the corpus of scientific knowledge and that death, like life, is part of an evolutionary process (Shostak 2006). Von Hagens himself is not immune to attributing such medico-cultural meanings to plastination. For him, with plastination:

> Death takes on a new dimension. It gains a certain proximity to reality, which imbues the image of death with a particular reconciliation […] [Plastination satisfies the notion that] we will not someday disappear into thin air, but instead will achieve a certain immortality through plastination […] This narcissistic satisfaction acts in a way that grants the body every imaginable form of attention and implies the thought of aesthetically designing the body according to our own values. The body is not just a 'container of disgusting fluids', not the devil's playground for sins of the flesh, as propagated by Christianity, but a 'stylized cultural happening'. (von Hagens 2005, 272)

Plastinates become social and cultural happenings to the extent that they traverse the spheres of technological innovation and socio-cultural life and thus alter our perception of the human body beyond the biological fact of death. Contrary to his intent to maintain the objectification of the plastinates, von Hagens encourages potential donors to imagine their own "face within", that unique interior self that is revealed and forever

preserved after death (von Hagens 2005, 34). Some observers claim to experience the plastinates as authentic and corporeal embodiments of what is possible after the death of the body, a kind of experience that touches upon the deeply personal, cultural, and religious sentiments that encountering plastinates evoke (see Walter 2004; Hirschauer 2006; vom Lehn 2006; Moore and Brown 2007). There are, for example, donors who welcomed the thought that their plastinated body would grant them a post-mortem identity, a chance to continue to "take part" in the animate world (Charlton et al. in Hirschauer 2006, 35). Others saw in the plastinated body the prospect of being "reincarnated with plastination", of seeing our bodies in "our truest form" (Moore and Brown 2007). Others still viewed plastination as a means by which they could be "kept company" by the living world after death. Some saw in plastination a gross violation of the human body, a kind of Frankensteinian science that, though it grants immortality, is of a monstrous kind (Moore and Brown 2004). Some saw a moment of discovering "the soul"; others, by contrast, realized that "we truly are just walking and talking meat parcels" (Moore and Brown 2007, 245).

Plastination offers immortality in a way much more familiar—and appealing, as indicated by the fact that the IfP is no longer accepting donations as of the time of this writing—than other forms of biotechnological immortality, such as those offered through human cell culture, like HeLa cells, which provide a post-mortem existence only outside of the physical context of the body (Landecker 2007). Living on as plastinates, we keep our form, our "face within". Even our genetic individuality is preserved, as the donor brochure promises. But by what means does plastination offer an alternative kind of post-mortem fate? In addressing this question, we need to take seriously von Hagens' assertion that in plastination, "what we do with a real human body today will show what we can achieve in the future using genetic engineering" (von Hagens in McGovern 2002, 46). Like genetic engineering, plastination intervenes in the impermanence of the body. The crucial difference, however, is that unlike such therapeutic biotechnologies, which are oriented towards the fragilities of *living* bodies by seeking cures for disease and the roots of genetic disorders, plastination begins its work only at the moment of death. This is what designates plastination as a new corporeality. Plastination does not

seek to cure or alleviate symptoms. It does not investigate the origins of human disorders. Rather, it provides the post-mortem possibility for a technological means to transcend the loathsome aspects of death. It thus fits more closely alongside enhancement biotechnologies, which serve to improve and, many argue, perfect human capacities as well as surpass the body's physiological and cognitive limits (Buchanan 2011; Sandel 2007). In short, it may be said that plastination enhances, even perfects, the human capacity to die.

More than the desire for immortality or for the memorialization of the body in its plastinated form, plastination grants an *enhanced* corporeality—more than a mere "lifelike" quality—and, in this way, exemplifies the technological possibilities available for the human body, both dead and alive (Rothman and Rothman 2003). In the longitudinally *Exploded Body*, for example, the joints of the elbows and knees are equipped with hinges to facilitate the observer's ability to return the (almost three-yard-long) body to its original form. The coupling of implantation with plastination is intensified in the *Orthopaedic Body*, a plastinate almost completely recreated with internal and external prostheses: the body has an artificial shoulder, elbow, hip, and metal knee, while the outside of the body is furnished with braces for broken bones, a pacemaker, and a prosthetic replacement for a broken jaw. With such an extreme display of the body's manipulability, we need not wonder why some of the plastinates garnered so much criticism.

Yet, the sociological importance of plastinates like the *Exploded Body* and the *Orthopaedic Body* is that they epitomize the meaning of a "stylized cultural happening", of bodies designed "according to our own values". With the modern emphasis on scientific progress, values about and perceptions of corporeality have become more and more mediated through the ideals of prolonging life and, to this end, of gearing biotechnological advancements towards the socio-cultural values associated with health (Lock 2002). Health not only becomes an ideal achieved by biotechnological means but also a notion completely transformed given the coupling of the body and biotechnologies. The values by which the plastinate is created make health a moral imperative. This is perhaps nowhere better exemplified than the *Autopsy Body*, a plastinate of a 77-year-old man who died of heart failure. After performing a public autopsy on the body,[9] von

Hagens went on to show that beyond the tragedy of death brought on by the actions of a man who smoked, ate, and drank alcohol in excess, the body could still be remade to look "like a splendid Renaissance sculpture" (IfP). After plastination, the family of the man was invited to view the body and, according to the IfP, "they were deeply moved, for in death their father seemed to embody the vitality and health that eluded him all his life" (IfP). While the *Autopsy Body* demonstrates how the plastinated post-mortem body can erase the deadly habits that led a man to suffer heart failure, other plastinated body parts are meant specifically to convey a moral message about the pursuit of health. The juxtaposition of a set of diseased lungs alongside healthy lungs is intended to persuade visitors to throw out their cigarettes in the bucket placed beside them; a stillborn baby with foetal alcohol syndrome is placed beside the organs damaged by alcoholism. It is interesting that, only in this context, von Hagens sets aside the anonymity of donors in order to convey to the public what may become of their health and given the *Autopsy Body*, what science can achieve despite their bad habits.

One visitor's comment touches upon how the social life of plastinates is wrought by the intersection of socio-cultural understandings of health, biotechnology, and the body: '[…] on the philosophical side, this is *laughing at Death*, as saying: "nevertheless, despite your cruel grasp, we humans defeated you by being of some good use to others by looking alive and teaching'" (in Moore and Brown 2007, 245). This death-defying sentiment culminates most remarkably in von Hagens' plans to fashion a post-mortem "superhuman" (IfP n.d), a project meant to "identify and correct the significant design flaws in human anatomy" (IfP 2012). Seemingly inspired by the art of juxtaposition, von Hagens appealed for a terminally ill patient to donate his or her body for plastination and to agree to be remade a "landmark human" in death, with the help of von Hagens and a team of biologists, surgeons, and mechanical engineers. The proposal calls for an almost complete transformation of the patient's body, including a plan to rearrange the trachea and oesophagus to limit windpipe obstructions, to install a "double heart" or a "backup heart" to accompany the reconstruction of the coronary arteries, to increase the number of ribs to protect internal organs, to create backward-bending knees to lessen joint strain, and even to create a retractable penis. The plan is to "pave the way

for a more healthy, capable and longer-living body" (IfP 2012), a project less about a democratizing display of an authentic biological self than a commentary on what may become of the human body given a few more years of biotechnological intervention on the body's weaknesses.

Conclusion

Body Worlds is controversial not only because of its incapacity to fit into dichotomous ways of thinking but also because plastination represents a new corporeality and perception of the human body beyond the biological fact of death. Some might contend that this new corporeality emerges exclusively from the realm of science, an argument that would demonstrate the powers of medicalization and the scientific imperatives that often go unquestioned in contemporary life. Yet, this approach cannot account for the ways in which biotechnologies transgress fixed boundaries between science and socio-cultural ideals and, for this reason, such a unidimensional understanding of scientific developments is untenable. Critical sociology, on the other hand, exposes this untenability by encouraging us to reframe biotechnological developments like plastination within socio-cultural frameworks that critically reflect on the boundaries between the natural and the social. Plastination appeals to the project that critical sociology of scientific knowledge deems necessary: seeking to understand the ways that science is influenced by the social and, further, challenging the myth that scientific knowledge is merely accumulated, self-referential, and disinterested in relation to the social and cultural world with which it engages. The hybrid condition of the plastinated body—the liveliness and plasticity of the body even in death, the question of its subjectivity and its objectivity, and the convergence of human tissue with biochemical, aesthetic, and technological invention—cannot be understood without contesting the artificial divide between the natural world and socio-cultural world. Further, critical sociology of biotechnology compels us to reflect on the ways in which biotechnology relies on principles of enhancement and perfection that reveal its inextricable link to socio-cultural ideals of intervening in death and prolonging health and longevity. The post-mortem possibilities of immortalization

and human enhancement are not just ideals of plastination—they constitute the foremost medico-cultural undertones of biotechnological advancements in contemporary life.

Notes

1. *Body Worlds: An Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies* is the original incarnation of the exhibition. Since the original tour, there have been additional *Body Worlds* exhibitions, including exhibitions devoted to the brain (*Body Worlds 2 and the Brain—Our Three Pound Gem*), the heart (*Body Worlds 3 and the Story of the Heart*), to human development and aging (*Body Worlds and the Mirror of Time*), and to plastinated animals (*Body Worlds of Animals*).
2. See http://www.bodyworlds.com/en/exhibitions/past_exhibitions.html; http://www.ontariosciencecentre.ca/media/details/278/; http://www.newswire.ca/fr/story/16573/at-the-montreal-science-center-body-worlds-2-extends-its-opening-hours-and-stays-open-day-and-night-for-60-hours-non-stop; http://www.telusworldofscienceedmonton.com/about-us/our-history; http://www.sparkscience.ca/assets/Uploads/mediakitfiles/TELUS-Spark-Media-Kit20120518.pdf.
3. Von Hagens pays particular attention to, and sees his own work as closely influenced by, Renaissance art. He writes that "at precisely that moment in history when the sculptures and paintings of the Renaissance elevated the beauty of the human body to an aesthetic ideal, and natural beauty stood at the heart of our understanding of art, artists also discovered the beauty of the body's interior" and, as such, contributed to "society's acceptance of studying the human body". In cultivating this interest in the body's interior, the artists themselves began by observing the dissection work of anatomists, but, as von Hagens states, "it was not long before they took the scalpel into their own hands" (von Hagens 2005, 12–13). It is in response to such discussions that von Hagens has come under fire for espousing aesthetic principles that run the risk of leaving ethical and moral questions unaddressed.
4. Von Hagens is one of the directors of the IfP in Heidelberg, Germany. Those who will their bodies for plastination to *Body Worlds* do so through the Institute.

5. Some of the plastinates are posed in ways that mimic iconic anatomical drawings by famous anatomists like William Cheseldon (see Moore and Brown, 2007: 236).
6. Emphasis is mine.
7. In 2007, *The American Journal of Bioethics* invited various bioethicists to engage with Burns' assessment of the value of *Body Worlds*. While some agree with Burns' claim that *Body Worlds*' educational goals could easily be achieved by using plastic models rather than stylized human cadavers (Allen 2007), others argue that Burns is too strict in his definition of education, as well as unclear about how "legitimate" educational goals may be defined and what constitutes a legitimately educational forum (Jones and Whitaker 2007).
8. See Moore and Brown (2007) and Schulte-Sasse (2006), who conduct cross-cultural analyses of how plastinates and *Body Worlds* more generally have been received in Japan and the United States (Moore and Brown) and in various parts of Europe and North America (Schulte-Sasse). Moore and Brown, in particular, speak about how plastination has been received negatively in places where plastination is seen as a radical departure from traditional understandings of death and cultural practices with the dead (burial, cremation, etc.) or religious understandings of death.
9. This event alone was controversial, as von Hagens has performed several public autopsies in London, to much criticism.

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Faith in Progress: Evolutionism and the New Atheism

Stephen LeDrew

Introduction

The New Atheism is an intellectual current and cultural movement led by the writings of Richard Dawkins (2006), Sam Harris (2004), Daniel Dennett (2006), and Christopher Hitchens (2007). It is concerned with an aggressive and bombastic criticism of all religions (but primarily monotheism) as anti-scientific and outdated belief systems that limit the potential of social progress and threaten the very survival of Western civilization. They argue instead in favor of a scientific worldview, the only protection against the violence wrought by religious conflicts. Books by these authors were phenomenal bestsellers and instigated a wave of public debate about religion and its place in the modern world. While the term "New Atheism" is sometimes considered synonymous with a group of four main thinkers, it is also used to describe a large and diffuse network of organizations and informal associations that together constitute

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a nascent social movement (e.g. Guenther et al. 2013). In this chapter, I treat the New Atheism as an intellectual movement for which the works of these authors serve as a canon, while there are many other thinkers and organizations that espouse the same basic beliefs. These include University of Minnesota biologist PZ Myers (author of the science blog *Pharyngula*), physicist Victor Stenger (2008, 2009), and A.C. Grayling, a British philosopher and public intellectual.

Scholarly interest in the New Atheism began with critical analysis of the beliefs it promotes (e.g. Amarasingam 2010; Eagleton 2009; LeDrew 2012; Plantinga 2011). It has become a focal point of discussion on such issues as secularization and the rise of the religious "nones", the growing group of people in the West who claim no religious affiliation (e.g. Baker and Smith 2009a, b; Bullivant and Lee 2012; Lim et al. 2010; Vargas 2012). Though the New Atheism has now been around for some time and the initial explosion of activity has settled somewhat, it continues to influence public discourse on religion and politics. It is particularly significant in terms of its influence on an associated social movement, which is drawing the attention of scholars interested in the dynamics and politics of identity construction (e.g. Cimino and Smith 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014; Guenther 2014; Guenther et al. 2013; LeDrew 2013, 2015; Smith 2011, 2013; Zuckerman 2008, 2011).

While research on the 'nones' and the atheist movement is moving in new directions, it is important to continue to develop our understanding of the New Atheism and its cultural significance, as it has surely played an important role in shaping and reflecting the beliefs of many members of these groups. The chapter therefore fits within this book's theme of "Practicing Culture", though it also addresses that of "Configuring Power", since the beliefs in question pertain to the legitimation of scientific authority and the social structure of Western late capitalism. Taking a critical approach, I want to argue that the New Atheism, ostensibly a rejection of forms of belief and practice typically understood as "religion", in fact mirrors some of religion's substantive and functional characteristics in its defense of its own belief system, which includes a politicized vision of social progress driven by science. Specifically, I will discuss two major concepts: "cosmization" and "sacralisation", drawing on Berger (1967) and Durkheim (1995), respectively. While normally

applied in research on religion, these concepts are important analytical tools in understanding some "secular" forms of belief and practice—in this case, scientism, and more specifically, evolutionism, which are the major tenets of New Atheist thought. I thus argue that while scholarship in this field has predominantly adopted an approach derived from literature on social movements, our understanding is enriched by introducing theoretical perspectives from the sociology of religion.

This framing is a smaller-scale version of the theoretical pluralism cited in Kurasawa's introduction to this volume as a foundational principle of critical sociology. For the purposes of the arguments advanced below, theoretical pluralism refers to bringing theories and concepts from different fields together in ways that may not be obvious, but nonetheless are necessary to arrive at a more sophisticated understanding of the subject matter. Most importantly, my approach to the New Atheism is grounded in critical sociology's normative critique of structures of inequality. In my case, this involves cultural structures of meaning and authority that are constructed and maintained through public discourse as well as community engagement and activism. The New Atheism, I argue, is in essence an ideological defense of the Western liberal-capitalist social order and its characteristic structural inequalities. My project is to illustrate how this ideology is not only advanced through the structure of social movement organizations but gains considerable traction from explicitly and implicitly drawing on the sacralizing processes of religion.

Religion, Science, and the Sacred

While the New Atheism claims to reject religion, it can actually be understood as an attempt to replace religion's critical functions, as these thinkers understand them. There is a tradition within the sociology of religion that theorizes religion in terms similar to the New Atheists' approach. As a contemporary example, the influential sociologist Rodney Stark offers this definition: "Religion consists of *explanations of existence* (*or ultimate meaning*) based on *supernatural assumptions* and including statements about the *nature of the supernatural*, which may specify *methods* or *procedures* for *exchanging* with the supernatural" (2007, 46). Note here the

emphasis on religion as "explanation" involving recourse to "supernatural assumptions", which is precisely the same definition employed by the New Atheists. Daniel Dennett, for instance, defines religions as "social systems whose participants avow belief in a supernatural agent or agents whose approval is to be sought" (2006, 9), and Richard Dawkins (2006) views religion as a pre-scientific explanation of nature (i.e. the "God Hypothesis"). Not coincidentally given their shared commitment to evolutionism, these authors articulate the same idea expressed by Herbert Spencer, who said that "[r]eligions that are diametrically opposite in their dogmas agree in tacitly recognizing that the world, with all it contains and all that surrounds it, is a mystery seeking an explanation" (quoted in Durkheim 1995, 22).

Other thinkers have described religion as a "cultural system" that produces meaning and order. This tradition was pioneered by Max Weber, who saw religion as "a repository of fundamental cultural meanings through which both individuals and collectivities are able to interpret their conditions of existence, to construct identity for themselves and to attempt to impose order on their environment" (Beckford 1989, 6). Weber was a primary influence on Peter Berger's theory of religion, as established in his classic work, *The Sacred Canopy* (1967). Berger's theory is particularly useful because it allows us to understand ostensibly secular forms of belief that bear "religious" characteristics. Berger conceived of religion in terms of "nomos" and "cosmization", and begins with the assumption that humans are possessed of an instinctual craving for meaning and are "congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality" (1967, 22). This craving is satisfied through the social construction of a meaningful order, or "nomos", which is imposed upon the experiences of individuals. This "nomization" is, in fact, the most important function of society. At the point where the established nomos achieves a taken-for-granted status, its meanings converge with the fundamental meanings of the universe, and "nomos" comes to appear to be coextensive with "cosmos" (Berger 1967, 24). In other words, the socially constructed ordering of human experience appears to reflect a natural and universal order, though it is actually a projection of the human order or "nomos" to all of reality. Religion is simply what we call this process of "cosmization" of the "nomos" of the socially constructed world, and

it "implies that human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently, religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant" (1967, 28). A crucial addition to complete this definition is the notion of the sacred, which lends this process of cosmization an ultimate authority. Bringing in the sacred, we arrive at this definition: "Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode. By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience" (Berger 1967, 25).

Berger's conception of religion does not make reference to the supernatural, only to a distinction between sacred and secular forms of cosmization. What we call religions are sacred forms of cosmization, but there are secular versions, the most important of which, Berger argues, is modern science (1967, 27). While traditional religious cosmization of the social world refers to the sacred characteristics of the universe, in contemporary society "this archaic cosmization of the social world is likely to take the form of 'scientific' propositions about the nature of men rather than the nature of the universe" (Berger 1967, 25). That is, scientific cosmization deals with human nature, not metaphysics. An example of secular cosmization as described by Berger is social Darwinism, which posits a vision of human nature and a natural social order modeled after the universal law that regulates the operations of life, evolution by natural selection. But evolutionism and science more broadly, with its naturalistic view of the origins of life and the place of humans in the cosmos, is a secular form of cosmization according to Berger's definition.[1]

The "secular"—rather than "sacred"—designation is a common dividing line between religion and non-religion. It constituted the foundation of Emile Durkheim's definition of religion, which is as follows: "[a] religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them" (1995, 44). Durkheim makes no mention of gods or even of the supernatural in his definition. Durkheim's view of religion as an "eminently social thing" (1995, 9) suggests that what is really essential to it is not specific kinds of beliefs, which vary widely, but rather rituals

that foster an experience of transcendence through collective acts that in a very real sense make the individual part of something greater than himself: society. The things that are sacred—that is, "set apart and forbidden"—are not important in themselves, but simply the objects through which the collective is represented. What is important is the social process by which certain objects or symbols are sacralized through collective action (i.e. rites), with their sacred character being derived only from the fact that such character is granted by a collective imbued with powers that the individual does not possess.

Durkheim predicted that religion would gradually give way to science: "As soon as the authority of science is established, science must be reckoned with […]. From then on, faith no longer holds the same sway as in the past over the system of representations that can continue to be called religious" (Durkheim 1995, 433). He was careful to note, however, that while science might erode the system of representations that constitute religious beliefs, the moral foundations of social life are essentially religious and must remain so. That is, while science has clearly taken precedence as a source of knowledge of the physical world, "moral life still remains forbidden"—that is, sacred, and thus the province of religion—though he seems somewhat uncertain on this point, suggesting that it is "foreseeable that this last barrier will give way in the end, and that science will establish itself as mistress, even in this preserve" (Durkheim 1995, 432). Indeed, a major project of the atheist movement is precisely to break down this last barrier by challenging the notion that one cannot be good without divine moral guidance (e.g. Epstein 2009), and further, using evolutionary psychology and cognitive neuroscience to challenge the notion that morality is derived from religion at all (Harris 2010). Durkheim, on the contrary, insists on one domain where science cannot assume religion's role: "insofar as religion is action and insofar as it is a means of making men live, science cannot possibly take its place" (1995, 432).

This view was challenged by Durkheim's sociological antecedent, Auguste Comte, who considered religion to be a slowly disappearing relic of a prior stage of social development, while recognizing that people needed an alternative to "fill their need for commitment to something larger than themselves" (Olson 2008, 52). Like Durkheim, he recognized

the power of the collective effervescence experienced through religious practice and sought to translate it into secular and scientific terms. He did this by establishing nothing less than a new religion based on his positivist philosophy and Enlightenment humanism. He called it the Religion of Humanity, and it serves as a useful example of a process of sacralizing a science-based "nomos" grounded in an eschatological narrative of human progress—the same process found at work in the New Atheism.

Comte's Law of Three Stages posits that human progress proceeds from a theological stage to a metaphysical one, finally culminating in a "positive" or science-based society. This is a process of transitioning from a self-understanding based on supernatural beings and forces to one based on empirical observation and natural causes (Olson 2008). While Comte viewed the dawn of the positive period of history (which is also the final period, as determined by secular scientific eschatology) as a welcome end to theological and supernatural understandings of the world, he also recognized, like Durkheim, that scientific knowledge alone could not secure the foundations of morality and social order. Like Hume before him, and *unlike* Dawkins, Harris, and Dennett, Comte did not believe that science could define the good; rather, it was an instrument to be wielded in the service of the good. In a fashion similar to Stephen Jay Gould's (1999) view of religion and science as "non-overlapping magisteria", Comte considered science to be the source of knowledge, while religion governed the province of morality, and he "regarded much of the content of religious ideas and sentiments as outdated and obstructive to progress, whereas the social functions of religious institutions were considered essential for the more or less harmonious integration of societies" (Beckford 1989, 4). Here the relationship between Comte and Durkheim is clear, with both believing that science had replaced religion as a way of understanding the world, and yet "the socially and culturally integrative functions of religion, myth, and ritual still had to be fulfilled if social stability were to be preserved" (Beckford 1989, 6). Given that science was an instrument with no intrinsic moral compass or integrative function, Comte (like Durkheim) believed that the positive period of history presented a danger, that of moral and social decay. He thus founded the Religion of Humanity to guard against social disintegration

and satisfy people's needs for emotional experience without sacrificing their rationality (Olson 2008, 79).

While "secular" in the sense that there was no reference to the supernatural, Comte's Religion of Humanity reflected many aspects of traditional religions, particularly in its hierarchical structure, with a "priesthood" modeled after the Catholic Church and Comte himself functioning as "High Priest" (Collins 2007, 19). This hierarchical authority structure reflected Comte's belief that religion must eliminate uncertainty by emphasizing subordination to an external higher power that is beyond questioning. The specific higher power that members of Comte's religion would be expected to recognize was "nothing but the entire physical and social universe, the character of which is known through the positive sciences", and he thus "brought the objects of religious veneration out of the supernatural and metaphysical domains and into the domain of nature" (Olson 2008, 82). In other words, Nature was the sacred object of the Religion of Humanity. Science, by extension, was itself placed within the realm of the sacred, since it is the means by which we understand and act on this sacred object. Comte also made rituals an important feature of his religion; they included daily prayer, commemoration, and idealization of the dead, 81 annual festivals to be celebrated, nine personal "sacraments" and, as a symbolic gesture, he insisted that all churches should face Paris, the source of their doctrines (Olson 2008, 84). These were all intended to cement the social bonds at risk of erosion in the positive society, fostering a sense of belonging and transcendence without betraying the scientific rationalism propelling us toward the positive society.

The New Atheism: Evolutionism as Cosmization

The Religion of Humanity's vision of the progressive development and improvement of human society, and its sacralization of Nature and positivist methods of understanding, established a secular nomos and framework for cosmization of the human experience. It thus explicitly made a religion out of science and its relationship to humanity. The New Atheism is essentially an updated version of the belief system underpinning

Comte's religion that is bolder in its position on issues like the relationship between scientific and moral progress, and more interested in celebrating the irresistible, natural force of evolution than humanity itself. That is, Dawkins and his peers speak about how religion devalues human life, but rather than celebrating humanity and its achievements on their own terms, these are reduced to manifestations of the much more majestic process of evolution, and they assume (unlike Comte) that the pursuit of scientific truth is an inherent good that will naturally lead to social progress—thus the sacralization of science and particularly the theory of evolution by natural selection.

To understand these processes, we must understand these thinkers' basic goals. The New Atheism is generally understood as a reaction to religious fundamentalism and a defense of modernity and its constitutive epistemologies and socio-political structure (Eagleton 2009; Stahl 2010; McAnulla 2012). It asserts that religion is a lingering feature of the premodern world and that "Moderns, who by definition possess science, must therefore reject religion and magic" (Segal 2004, 135). The first and most important aspect of their critique is the notion of religion—more specifically, monotheism, their central target—as an ancient attempt at explanation of the natural world. It is thus a pre- or pseudo-scientific theory of the origin and nature of material reality, or what Dawkins (2006) refers to as the "God Hypothesis". The origins of this hypothesis, he suggests, may be discovered in our evolutionary history. While Dawkins does mention some more sociological explanations of religion (such as "consolation" and the importance of socialization in early childhood), he takes care to note that these are "proximate" explanations. For "ultimate" explanations, we are instructed to look to the concept of natural selection, from which he derives an "evolutionary by-product" theory of religious beliefs.

Dennett (2006) explains this theory as the idea that belief in deities is rooted in an evolutionarily adaptive proclivity to attribute agency to inanimate objects and natural phenomena, that is, the "intentional stance". Harris similarly argues that "because our minds have evolved to detect patterns in the world, we often detect patterns that aren't actually there—ranging from faces in the clouds to a divine hand in the workings of Nature" (2010, 151). The New Atheists thus treat religion as

a "natural phenomenon" (Dennett 2006) or product of natural processes that ultimately can be understood only by recourse to the theories and methodologies of the natural sciences (primarily under the paradigm of evolutionary psychology, which is presented as a superior form of social science). For all these writers, religion is produced by, and exists within, the individual mind. These cognitive tendencies, determined by biology and shaped by natural selection, are allowed full expression when alternative explanations are lacking. Hence, religion is a result of ignorance of scientific truth combined with a genetically programmed tendency to see agency in natural processes.

This narrow understanding of religion is a natural consequence of the general ideology shared by these authors. This ideology, in short, is defined by *scientism*. By this, I mean a belief in the epistemic authority of the natural sciences over and above all other forms of understanding, which in practice also amounts to the political authority of the natural sciences. This commitment to the authority of the natural sciences is an extension of the basic epistemological position common to the New Atheists: scientific materialism or the view that "everything that exists (life, mind, morality, religion, etc.) can be completely explained in terms of matter or physical nature" (Stenmark 1997, 24). The social sciences are thus reduced to an undeveloped branch of evolutionary biology, subsumed to what Dawkins (2006) considers to be the "ultimate" theory of natural selection, which is itself equipped to explain the presence, and persistence, of religion.

This critique of religion is part of a larger belief system that is grounded in a Darwinian vision of progress. While Darwin was clear that evolution is not a process of progressive improvement, but rather differentiation in response to environmental conditions, evolutionary theory was, in its political formulation, ideological fodder for those inclined to a teleological view of social evolution that situated European modernity at the summit of a universal process of civilization, a position it occupies by virtue of its assumed defining characteristic: the hegemonic triumph of scientific rationalism. Atheism, accordingly, was viewed as the natural culmination of intellectual progress from superstition to Enlightenment (Buckley 2004). This is a politicized understanding of evolution as a social process, with all cultures located at various stages of evolution and moving toward a singular civilization driven and defined by scientific ratio-

nality. We can see these views on the nature of modernity and civilization most clearly in the New Atheist discourse on Islam. Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens repeatedly tell us that Islamic civilizations are "backward" and "uncivilized" and that the presence of Muslims in the West threatens "our" progress. The Muslim world, reduced in all of its complexity to a homogeneous mass, is represented as a "civilization with an arrested history" (Harris 2004, 107), which is to say that the socio-cultural evolution of the Islamic world has been obstructed by its religion.

Islamic societies serve as the "other" of enlightened modernity, a notion employed in portraying the advanced status of Western secular-liberal society, and in the construction of a binary that pits religiosity against civilization. This view posits that modernity—which in the discourse of New Atheism is equivalent to scientific rationalism—is the final stage of our social evolution. While there is some similarity to Comte's notion of "positive" society, this view is fuelled more precisely by an ideological deployment of the theory of evolution that is closer to that of Herbert Spencer, whose highly influential sociological theory constituted the basis of social Darwinism. While the four major New Atheist thinkers vary in their points of emphasis (Hitchens is notably less interested in science than politics and less inclined to collapse the latter into the former), the one thing they all share is a teleological vision of the progressive advancement of civilization, which they believe is inevitable, given the free reign of science and reason without impediment from religion (Eagleton 2009; LeDrew 2012; Stahl 2010). None of the New Atheists explicitly support Spencerian socio-economic views, and indeed, they generally avoid direct engagement with the subject of economics. On the conspicuous absence of any mention of economics in their work, Eagleton notes that they "have much less to say about the evils of global capitalism as opposed to the evils of radical Islam. Indeed, most of them hardly mention the word 'capitalism' at all" (2009, 100). In Eagleton's view, the New Atheists treat religion at least in part as a scapegoat for the inequities of capitalism, ironically deploying science and Darwinism as substitutes for religion's ideological function of legitimating the modern Western social structure. They also thereby perpetuate unalloyed faith the idea of progress, circumventing critique of the present by contextualizing it within an ongoing process of social evolution.

Because the New Atheism considers religion to be a false explanation of nature, or in Berger's terms, a false mode of cosmization, it counters with its own preferred explanatory mode: one based on scientific rationalism and outlined within a framework of evolutionism. This discourse is not new, and Mary Midgley's (1992, 2002) description of scientism and evolutionism as secular religions is pertinent to the case of the New Atheism. She describes a worldview centered on the concept of evolution that includes "a surprising number of the elements which used to belong to traditional religion" (Midgley 2002, 34). The most important among these elements is "purpose", or a sense of meaning that will bring some coherence and perspective to life's conflicts and clashes (Midgley 1992, 63), which could be alternatively expressed as Berger's concept of "nomos". Increasingly, Midgley argues, science is seeking to provide just this sense of purpose, noting that, in recent decades, scientists have developed a proclivity for claiming that science can answer the "big" questions, like "why are we here?" and "what is man?". We see this particularly in popular science books by figures such as Richard Dawkins, who claims that science is the only alternative to superstition in the search for an explanation of purpose, as well as Stephen Hawking, who famously concluded *A Brief History of Time* by saying that through science we can "know the mind of God" (1988, 185). This statement led some to assume that Hawking was a theist or at least a deist, until he finally felt compelled to clear up the confusion over his views in his more recent publication, *The Grand Design*, where he rejects the notion of an anthropomorphic God with whom humans can have a personal relationship, explaining that "God" can only be understood as the embodiment of the laws of nature (Hawking and Mlodinow 2011).

Albert Einstein similarly instigated a great deal of debate about his own religious beliefs, with believers and unbelievers claiming him for their side, often battling over the correct interpretation of his equally famous and misunderstood statement that "God does not play dice with the universe". In fact, his position on religion was clear and he belonged to neither side, though he did reject the "naive religion" of those who believe in a personal God who responds to their prayers, which he understands as a sublimation of the relationship with the father (Einstein 2010, 37). Rather, Einstein declared that he believed in Spinoza's conception of

God—which was essentially Nature, or everything that exists materially and in thought—and experienced what he called a "cosmic religious feeling", which he describes in this passage:

> The individual feels the futility of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. Individual existence impresses him as a sort of prison and he wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole. (Einstein 2010, 35)

We should be reminded here of Berger's "nomos" and "cosmization", as both are addressed in Einstein's "cosmic" religion. His use of the word "order" is intended to refer to the cosmos rather than to the human experience of the world, but this is not far from a statement on nomos. Likewise, "significant" applies to the universe, though humans, being a part of the universe, could easily be included here and, as such, we would have an instance of cosmization.[2] Einstein's religion also includes a desire for transcendence. Whereas Durkheim believed this was to be found in society, Einstein expands the scope to find it in the individual's experience of the entire universe as a "single significant whole" of which the individual is a part.

Despite some ambiguity, the major distinction that sets Einstein apart from evolutionists like Richard Dawkins is simply the use of the term "religious" to describe his view. Otherwise, they are quite similar, though evolutionism makes more direct connections between humanity and the rest of nature. Both look to science rather than traditional religion for an answer to the mysteries of nature, and both use science for purposes of nomization and cosmization, that is, to make some sense of the world, the human experience of it, and the significance of humans in it. One thing that might be missing from the Einsteinian view is *purpose*. Cosmization must involve some kind of statement of purpose, but it may be very vague and distant.

These examples of secular cosmization take a general and expansive approach, looking for order in the harmony of nature. Evolutionism, on the other hand, can be much more specific—as in the case of the New Atheism. Its quest to provide and explain purpose is an example of

science "invading" religion, though Victorian scientists saw it quite the other way around, where it was religion that was accused of invading the province of science in seeking to explain natural phenomena and the origin of human life. There is actually a fine line between these two positions, as Midgley notes when she explains that "[t]he reason why science and religion seemed to come into competition was that they were seen as rival attempts to do the same work" (1992, 52), though in the Victorian period science did not invade religion in quite the same way it does today, when it preoccupies itself with "the business of providing the faith by which people live" (1992, 57). Midgley describes scientific knowledge as a kind of "closed faith system" that rejects certain knowledge claims as a matter of principle (1992, 59). This is a clear overstatement if applied to all scientific practice, but in certain forms of discourse that are guided by *scientism*—the misapplication and over-extension of scientific knowledge—the charge is valid. The New Atheism, which extends the principle of evolution as an explanation of human history, including society and culture, is one such discourse.

Scientism in this form offers not only purpose (nomos), Midgley argues, but also *salvation*, the promise of "glory and immortality reminiscent of the strongest offers available from religion" (Midgley 1992, 164), as well as a guarantee of "a secure and glorious future for the human race, a human heaven on earth as the inevitable end of the whole natural process" (Midgley 2002, 256). This pseudo-religious promise comes from scientists and technocrats who "are taking flight from the world, pointing us away from the earth, the flesh, the familiar—'offering salvation by technical fix,' in Mary Midgley's apt description—all the while making the world over to conform to their vision of perfection" (Noble 1997, 207). The New Atheism offers the utopian promise that worldly salvation can be achieved through science, the engine of social progress, and the foundation of "civilization", which is opposed to the "barbarism" produced by religion.

Enlightenment philosophers had similar goals and encountered similar issues, realizing that if they wanted to supplant Christianity, "they could do so only if they were able to satisfy the hopes it had implanted. As a result they could not admit what pre-Christian thinkers took for granted—that human history has no overall meaning" (Gray 2007, 24). That is, in order to get rid of religion entirely, science must be able to

carry out these crucial functions of religion: it must provide people with a sense of purpose and connection to the eternal and transcendent, and must offer a substitute for the Christian promise of salvation and a progression toward paradise.[3] Midgley offers an account of how evolutionism accomplishes this:

> What, then, are these alarming quasi-scientific dreams and prophecies? They are, as we have seen, predictions of the indefinitely increasing future glory of the human race and perhaps its immortality…Evolution, in these prophecies, figures as a single, continuous linear process of improvement. In the more modest form in which some biologists have used it, this process was confined to the development of life-forms on this planet. But it is now increasingly often extended to do something much vaster – to cover the whole development of the universe from the Big Bang onward to the end of time – a change of scale that would be quite unthinkable if serious biological notions of evolution were operating. (1992, 147)

Evolution, then, breaks free of the confines of a scientific theory that explains a particular set of facts regarding the variation of living things and becomes a universal principle that can be applied to any field of inquiry, including culture, ethics, and the fate of human history. Steve Fuller notes that, in general, "'evolution by natural selection' has been somehow promoted to a universal law of nature—well beyond Darwin's original, and still controversial, principle for explaining life on Earth" (2008, 191). Daniel Dennett, for example, uses natural selection as an umbrella theory for how scientific knowledge develops; it is "a 'universal acid' eating through every aspect of material and intellectual life, in which less fit theories or artefacts are replaced by their fitter descendents" (Rose and Rose 2010, 91). Further, natural selection is not just the process by which 'unfit' theories are eliminated, but itself rises above rival explanations in all fields, "promising to unite and explain just about everything in one magnificent vision" (Dennett 1995, 82).

Richard Dawkins is equally bold in his use of the concept, not only arguing that natural selection is the principle responsible for the progressive development of knowledge, but that it can be applied directly, as a theoretical framework, to everything from the development of the cosmos to human culture, and can be used to predict (and determine) where

human civilization is (and should be) headed. He assigns evolutionary biology a particularly vast and sweeping explanatory power, and in his hands it becomes "universal Darwinism" (Rose and Rose 2010, 92). An ironic by-product of this commitment to the scientistic worldview is that it becomes ideology and thus betrays its very foundations. In his enchantment with Darwinism, he is "obsessed by a picture so colourful and striking that it numbs thought about the evidence required to support it" (Midgley 2002, 6). He has *faith* in the *nomos* provided by what Mikael Stenmark (2010) calls the "evolutionary epic". Indeed, Midgley claims that this attitude is somewhat inescapable, arguing that evolution is "the creation myth of our age" (2002, 33) and that it "is not just an inert piece of theoretical science. It is, and cannot help being, also a powerful folk-take about human origins" (2002, 1). This is not necessarily so, since evolution by natural selection in its proper scientific context is simply an explanation of the development of life. But taken out of this context, it does adopt a mythic character, such as when Dawkins tells us that "Darwinism is too big a theory to be confined to the narrow context of the gene" (Dawkins 1989, 191) in arguing for the application of the theory of natural selection to the study of culture and social evolution.

In the New Atheism, then, science is a source of cosmization and evolution is a sacred process. In its capacity to explain and provide meaning, it possesses a "mysterious and awesome power" (Berger 1967, 25). Like the sacred objects of other religious faiths, it is "set apart and forbidden" (Durkheim 1995, 44) and constitutes the key element of an unquestionable "closed faith system" (Midgley 1992, 59). It is an "impersonal process" (Bruce 2011) outside of our control, an "immensely powerful reality" (Berger 1967, 26) that is "other" with respect to us and yet locates us in an ultimately meaningful order. Alternatively, we might say that Nature itself is the sacred object of the New Atheists' religion. Dennett explicitly takes this view:

> The Tree of Life is neither perfect nor infinite in space or time, but it is actual, and if it is not Anselm's 'Being greater than which nothing can be conceived,' it is surely a being that is greater than anything any of us will ever conceive of in detail worthy of its detail. Is something sacred? Yes, say I with Nietzsche. I could not pray to it, but I can stand in affirmation of its magnificence. This world is sacred. (1995, 520)

The "Tree of Life" metaphor refers to the origin and interconnected nature of all living things, including us. While Nature may be the sacred here, its laws govern us all and themselves take on a sacred character in their capacity to determine how we should organize social life. These laws are understood through science and, in the case of life in particular, the concept of evolution. Because science and evolutionary theory are expressions of the sacred, they themselves take on sacred character, become unquestionable and exalted, and are assumed to have relevance for the social world—with evolution becoming a kind of universal law.

Dennett declares as much when he tells us that natural selection is actually "substrate neutral" (2006, 341) and occurs wherever the conditions of replication, variation, and differential fitness are present, leading Dawkins and him to presume that natural selection works on culture and ideas as much as on organisms and genes—a belief that gives rise to the sociobiological theory of memes. Dawkins claims that human culture "evolves" progressively in precisely the same way that biological entities evolve, that is, by natural selection: "Fashions in dress and diet, ceremonies and customs, art and architecture, engineering and technology, all evolve in historical time in a way that looks like highly speeded up genetic evolution, but has really nothing to do with genetic evolution. As in genetic evolution though, the change may be progressive" (1989, 190). The difference is the unit of transmission: in biological evolution it is the gene, while in cultural evolution the "meme" (roughly analogous to "idea") is the unit that is negatively or positively selected and transmitted. Memes are the "new replicators", performing the job of cultural transmission and evolution just as genes perform the job of biological evolution (Dawkins 1989). Dawkins' theory of religion, bearing these guiding principles in mind, proceeds in two steps: biological predisposition, followed by memetic transmission. The basis of religious belief, then, is a by-product of evolutionary adaptations: "The religious behaviour may be a misfiring, an unfortunate by-product of an underlying psychological propensity which in other circumstances is, or once was, useful" (2006, 174). The salient point in this discussion of Dawkins' theory of religion is that it is not based on evidence, but, rather, is simply an element of an evolutionistic narrative that encompasses everything. Through this universal application, the evolution narrative becomes

something more than explanation of nature: a sacred principle that provides meaning, situating the present within the context of a narrative of social and moral progress.

Conclusion

Science and evolution can be sacred precisely because there is in fact no necessary connection between the sacred and the supernatural or a transcendent reality, as Karen Fields points out in her introduction to Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*: "The same process can make a man or woman, a piece of cloth, a lizard, a tree, an idea or principle[…]into a sacred thing and the mandatory recipient of elaborated deference" (Fields 1995, xlvi). The process to which she refers here is action by religious communities on the sacred object or idea to establish it as "set apart and forbidden". In the New Atheism, evolution is positioned as the ultimate explanation and provider of meaning, and represented as an idea so potent that it becomes something more than dogma, taking on the "mysterious and awesome power" that Berger identifies with the sacred (1967, 25).

Given that naturalistic ideas and objects can be made into sacred symbols, we may ask whether the New Atheism and its doctrine of evolutionism can constitute the basis of a "secular religion". This was the explicitly the case for the Religion of Humanity, which included not just a belief system but also forms of ritual and community that are essential characteristics of religions (certainly in Durkheim's view). While this discussion has focused on the beliefs advanced by the New Atheists, it should be noted that there is much more to this movement than a handful of bestselling books and public intellectuals. In the past decade, there has been an explosion of growth in the number of both atheist organizations and their members, particularly in the United States, but also in Canada and the UK. While data on these numbers is still lacking, an expanding literature on this topic recognizes that this growth is significant and unprecedented—though this literature approaches the topic primarily from a social movements perspective (Bullivant and Lee 2012; Cimino and Smith 2010; Guenther et al. 2013; LeDrew 2013; Smith 2013). The

loose network of organizations that comprise this movement[4] hold regular meetings where the scientific worldview is discussed, and sponsors annual events such as Darwin Day, celebrating the life and achievements of Charles Darwin, and Blasphemy Rights Day, when works of art that are critical of religion are displayed and discussed both in physical meeting spaces and online. The ritual aspects of these and other collective practices in the atheist movement should attract the attention of scholars seeking to understand the New Atheism and the atheist movement, particularly with respect to its "religious" qualities—hence, the sociology of religion brings a crucial perspective to this movement, which, conceivably, might itself be understood as a kind of religion. More research and analysis on this question is required.

The construction of meaning through a secular process of cosmization has been the focus of this chapter, but the New Atheism is much more than a belief system characterized by a general evolutionistic narrative of progress and a defense of the epistemic authority of the natural sciences. It is also a defense of a particular socio-political configuration, namely Western late capitalism. This is most clear in the New Atheism's critique of Islam, which is represented as the "other" of a Western world portrayed as more advanced and "civilized" (Eagleton 2009). In its hostility toward what it perceives as anti-modern religious forces, the New Atheism tacitly signals its approval of the "modern" (that is, western) world, in effect arguing that there is no inherent problem within the Western socio-political structure but rather that threats to human flourishing come from outside Euro-American modernity's social and cultural borders. While atheism's roots are found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revolutions and social justice movements (Buckley 2004), then, the New Atheism takes a very different turn toward a legitimation of the status quo, assigning blame for modern social ills to irrationalism and religious superstition, while never questioning the broadening social inequality and environmental impacts of capitalism. Its evolutionistic narrative of progress and science-driven civilization might be read as ideological support for neoliberalism and, in its more extreme incarnations, social Darwinism, all in the name of a vision of social progress guided by an evolutionary process that mirrors that of organic evolution.

We therefore need a critical perspective on the New Atheism—and the latent social movement that has coalesced around their writings in recent years—that examines its ideological strategies and effects and the political implications of the mutation of ideas related to evolutionism into sacred values. In advocating this approach, I favour the theoretical pluralism that is one of the cornerstones of the version of critical sociology outlined in this volume. Scholarship on this topic to date has tended to focus on atheist discourse and activism from the perspective of social movements theory (e.g. Cimino and Smith 2014; Guenther 2014; LeDrew 2015). While this is appropriate, it produces an incomplete picture. Significant insights on the subject can and should emerge from the introduction of different theoretical and conceptual perspectives. It is possible to understand the New Atheism as both a secular religion and a social movement, but doing so will require significant work to bridge the divide between these literatures.

Notes

1. Whether and to what extent any religious or secular form of cosmization is "true" is irrelevant to its function to the believer.
2. Of course, the very term "cosmic religious feeling" could be read as inherently implying a sort of cosmization.
3. This is specific to the Western Enlightenment context, where critique of religion was focused on Christianity.
4. Major examples of such organizations include the Center for Inquiry, Atheist Alliance International, Freedom From Religion Foundation, and Secular Student Society.

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