

RE:

Reflections & Explorations



Reflections & Explorations

Vol. 3

EDITED BY

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RE: Reflections and Explorations: Volume 3

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CBEAN2021; MAX STEPHENSON JR.; AND LYUSYENA
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We have now collaborated as editors across three volumes that have drawn on *RE: Reflections and Explorations* essays and for each we have been struck consistently by the engagement of the graduate students who wrote for that series. As we have noted previously, the Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance (VTIPG) developed *Re: Reflections and Explorations* as an experiment to provide motivated graduate students with interests in policy or governance concerns an opportunity to develop a publishable manuscript with the mentorship, guidance and support of a seasoned writer and editor. The thoughtfulness of the efforts highlighted in this collection suggests the seriousness with which those participating took the opportunity. As acknowledgments go, therefore, we must first thank our authors for making the project a success across its more than eight-year history. It self-evidently could not have occurred without their involvement.

We are also indebted to Lara Nagle, Research Associate at VTIPG, for her enthusiastic and creative efforts to develop cover art for this book. We thank her for this assistance and, more broadly, for her consistently thoughtful collegiality and support as we worked on this effort. We also would be remiss not to thank Peter Potter, Director of Virginia Tech Publishing (VTP), and Caitlin Bean, an editor for VTP, for their always excellent support. We are, as ever, in their debt for their kindness and diligent professionalism, a delightful mix that has surely made this project a far more pleasant one than it might otherwise have been.

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It also strikes us that we should recognize the privilege that being able to produce this series represents. We are each involved with a research institute at a first-rank university that attracts graduate students from across the globe. As such, it should be said that the very possibility of this volume inheres in that fact and the potential that it represents for fertile intellectual inquiry. We are pleased and humbled to acknowledge that reality.

Finally, as is customary to note, while we are grateful for the support and assistance of all those we have named, we alone are responsible for any errors or omissions that may remain in these pages.

MOS and LK
Blacksburg, VA
August 30, 2022

INTRODUCTION: REFLECTIONS ON AN EXPERIMENT IN HELPING GRADUATE STUDENTS WRITE

Max Stephenson Jr.

This is the third and final volume in the Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance's *Re: Reflections and Explorations* essay series, which first launched in January 2013 and ended in May 2021. Lyusyena Kirakosyan and I have selected 26 essays for this book, gleaned from the corpus published since our last compilation of essays in 2017. These articles reflect the diverse perspectives and interests of their graduate student authors and we have sought to organize those we have chosen into broad thematic categories. As this text marks the last featuring articles from this series of 177 published essays, it seems a propitious moment to revisit the rationale and aims for *Reflections* as those relate to the art of writing.

I draw here on insights on writing from the great essayists and authors George Orwell and Robert Louis Stevenson, the first a scion of Scottish heritage and the second a proud son of that nation. Each of these gifted individuals not only wrote thoughtfully, indeed luminously, on the craft of writing, but each is credited with pushing their chosen artistic fora into new realms. Stevenson is widely viewed as the father of modern fiction, for example, and as being one of the finest essayists ever to have written in the English language. Orwell, meanwhile, created new forms of political fiction and crafted unsparing and searching essays on politics and democratic life.

Both authors published work that reflected on the paradoxical and passionate adventure that writing must be, and each offered insights into the artistry of sharing one's ideas with precision, wit, and grace. As *Reflections* was launched as an opportunity for would-be scholars to work with an editor who took their work seriously and who aimed to help each deepen and develop their writing capabilities by modeling thoughtful authorship, I believe turning to the insights of these literary giants is appropriate. The work of each of these great writers has deeply influenced me personally and has shaped how I approached my role as the editor of *Reflections*. While I share their musings on writing as seems apt to illuminate my own efforts as editor of this series, I hope I also share their humility. I do not pretend here to have approximated either their standing or mastery of their chosen craft.

Finally, I should also say by way of introduction that I benefitted personally tremendously from working with fine writers and editors early in my

career. I was especially fortunate as a graduate student to benefit from the tutelage of a leading scholar in my field, Frederick C. Mosher, who not only oversaw my work with thoughtfulness and sensitivity, but also invited me into the writing process for several books on which he worked while I was pursuing my Ph.D. I helped conduct research into salient topics, wrote draft copy, edited other copy, helped review proofs and otherwise learned a tremendous amount about writing due to his willingness to trust and mentor me in a capacity for which he was already extremely well known. I likewise benefitted from frequent thoughtful comments on my writing from James Sterling Young, a former provost of Columbia University and the director of the research program on the presidency with which I was affiliated as a graduate student. Like Mosher, Young was internationally known for his scholarship and his elegance of written presentation, and he kindly took an interest in my work and development and shared generously of his time and talents. As I reflect, it would be difficult to overstate what these two scholars meant to me personally and professionally, then, and now. I only hope I have been able to pay forward their gift of love of inquiry and of the written word in a small way as I have had the opportunity to help others develop their writing capabilities.

George Orwell on writing

Orwell reflected on writing in *Why I Write*, a trenchant essay published in 1946, just a little more than three years before his death in January of 1950 (Orwell, 1946). I sought to be mindful of the four-fold schema he outlined in this essay as I edited *Reflections* across the life of the series. The motivations of those whose work I edited for writing surely included those Orwell suggested as enduring rationales. While I highlight all four motivations for authorship that Orwell identified, I pay particular attention to three that always seemed especially apposite to me personally and for graduate students with interests in democratic policy, politics, and governance, irrespective of their disciplinary orientation.

First, Orwell suggested in *Why I Write* that all authors write out of “sheer egoism” or a “desire to seem clever, to be remembered after death ... it is humbug to pretend this is not a motive, and a strong one.” (Orwell, 1946) I always imagined this series’ authors as motivated by some combination of these factors as they chose their professional field and, in many cases, scholarship as their vocation. All human beings would like to be remembered and the written word can surely result in such a possibility. Most writers, as Orwell opined, have healthy egos when understood in these broad terms and I would argue this was generally true of those who participated in the *Reflections* series as well.

Orwell also maintained that writers are motivated by what he dubbed

“Aesthetic enthusiasm. Perception of beauty in the external world, or, on the other hand, in words in their right arrangement. Pleasure in the impact of one sound on another, in the firmness of good prose or the rhythm of a good story.” (Orwell, 1946) I have never seen a more felicitous or concise description of what all serious authors aim to achieve than what Orwell called a “right arrangement” of their thoughts. In truth, that aspiration is both a lodestone and an ideal that writers must work to attain. Meanwhile, editors seek to encourage those whom they desire to assist to understand this goal’s abiding significance as well as the difficulty of its achievement. Clear and concise writing arises from disciplined thought and precise deliberation and articulation. It is earned and developed, the product constant and attentive care and is not, as often popularly conceived, the acquisition or assertion of a personal “style.” Indeed, Orwell warned that such a purpose was a chimera since, “In any case I find that by the time you have perfected any style of writing, you have always outgrown it.” (Orwell, 1946)

Instead, the “firmness of good prose” in his terms, is the result of passionate devotion to working assiduously to attain and sustain that precision across one’s lifetime. I sought with *Reflections* to make authors mindful of just such requirements and of the elemental claim that writing makes of scholars and professionals in today’s world. Effective writing is not simply a technique or kit bag of tricks to be deployed, nor even a workshop in which authors share their writing for critique, as helpful as such sessions may be. To envision authorship as such is to trivialize both its difficulty and significance. I aimed to present writing in the broader frame to which Orwell pointed and to model that view for contributors to *Reflections*.

Third, Orwell contended that authors are also interested in “Historical impulse. Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity.” (Orwell, 1946) This was surely an animating aim for the *Reflections* series as well. I sought to help its authors illumine what they wished to maintain concerning the topics they had selected and why their argument was essential for their readers and fields. In pedagogical terms, it was always more important to me that series authors were able to grasp the significance and gravity of this ambition as well as the moral and factual purport of pursuing it than whether they all attained it at a profound or even similar level. As a practical matter, moreover, essays appeared weekly during university terms and there was only so much time for revision, so my hopes had to be modest in such terms, as I worked with writers on their essays.

Orwell’s final contention concerning why one writes was to observe that authorship always arises from “Political purpose. — Using the word ‘political’ in the widest possible sense. Desire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peoples’ idea of the kind of society that they should strive after.” (Orwell, 1946) By this he did not mean service to a specific party stric-

ture or view, but instead that all writing is innately political when understood rightly and his starting point in such terms, “was always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. ... Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written directly or indirectly, *against* totalitarianism and *for* democratic socialism, as I understand it.” (Orwell, 1946) For me, as I edited *Reflections*, this contention was a constant reminder that democratic governance is ultimately about values and that freedom and equality constitute a profound political project in Orwell’s terms and should be understood as such. To approach self-governance otherwise is to trivialize it. I always hoped *Reflections* contributors could be made at least aware of this vital insight through their involvement with the series.

Robert Louis Stevenson on writing

Robert Louis Stevenson’s reflections on writing were published in a book entitled *Essays in the Art of Writing* in 1905, some 11 years after his sudden death in December of 1894 (Stevenson, 1905). While I have found the entire book deeply insightful, I draw three central points on writing that have influenced my own view as author and editor, from two of the essays published in this posthumous volume: “On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature” and “The Morality of the Profession of Letters.”

The first concerns what Stevenson, very similar to Orwell, described as apt word selection and careful articulation of arguments as an essential prerequisite of successful writing:

Now the first merit which attracts in the pages of a good writer, or the talk of a brilliant conversationalist, is the apt choice and contrast of the words employed. ... Style is synthetic; and the artist, seeking, so to speak, a peg to plait about, takes up at once two or more elements or two or more views of the subject in hand; combines, implicates, and contrasts them; and while, in one sense, he was merely seeking an occasion for the necessary knot, he will be found, in the other, to have greatly enriched the meaning, or to have transacted the work of two sentences in the space of one. In the change from the successive shallow statements of the old chronicler to the dense and luminous flow of highly synthetic narrative, there is implied a vast amount of both philosophy and wit. (Stevenson, 1905)

Like Orwell, Stevenson saw the facility and the art-filled discipline of efforts to create such prose as capacities to be nurtured and refined across one’s lifetime. He also believed that innate talent was unevenly distributed across human beings. Importantly, however, a major share of the difference between such individuals in Stevenson’s view was not only whatever raw talent they each possessed, but also their self-awareness and willingness to work doggedly to develop their native ability to produce concise and carefully crafted prose in support of their specific literary form. Stevenson had

impressed upon me the same lesson as Orwell as I embarked on my eight-year editorial journey with *Reflections*; each author, each individual, could be expected to develop their capacities as a writer through sustained attention and effort, but that perseverance, even when plied, would be mediated by their past life experience, their training in the craft, and their native ability. In this, of course, editing is much like teaching. A caring and dedicated teacher may devoutly do all they can to open learning possibilities for their students, but those will always and inevitably be mediated both by the desire and capacity of those people to learn, and that possibility in turn will be mediated by who they have become via their life experience and their natural abilities at the point in life that they encounter the teacher.

Stevenson, like Orwell, highlighted the vital role in writing of truth seeking and emphasized, too, that authors should seek to tell the truth. More, Stevenson noted, some facts, some truths, are more enduring, more fundamental, than others and writers should work to uncover and make those plain for their readers, both as a matter of integrity and for posterity, as well:

Every fact is a part of that great puzzle we must set together; and none that comes directly in a writer's path but has some nice relations, unperceivable by him, to the totality and bearing of the subject under hand. Yet there are certain classes of fact eternally more necessary than others, and it is with these that literature must first bestir itself. They are not hard to distinguish, nature once more easily leading us; for the necessary, because the efficacious, facts are those which are most interesting to the natural mind of man. ... So far as the writer merely narrates, he should principally tell of these. He should tell of the kind and wholesome and beautiful elements of our life; he should tell unsparingly of the evil and sorrow of the present, to move us with instances: he should tell of wise and good people in the past, to excite us by example; and of these he should tell soberly and truthfully, not glossing faults, that we may neither grow discouraged with ourselves nor exacting to our neighbours. (Stevenson, 1905)

Humankind, that is, should be depicted for what it is, and as it is, and that truth should serve as the foundational rationale and impetus for one's written work. I saw this as a principal reason for *Reflections*; that is, as an attempt to aid its authors in discerning and sharing the reality of what they encountered and suggesting its import as clearly as they could.

Finally, Stevenson argued that writers must not only tell the truth, but also be true to themselves and the phenomena they aimed to describe or whose meanings they sought to share. In this endeavor, they should neither imitate others nor adopt sham, or mislead, on whatever grounds:

Man is imperfect; yet, in his literature, he must express himself and his own views and preferences; for to do anything else is to do a far more perilous thing than to risk being immoral: it is to be sure of being untrue. To ape a sentiment, even a good one, is to travesty

a sentiment; that will not be helpful. To conceal a sentiment, if you are sure you hold it, is to take a liberty with truth. (Stevenson, 1905)

I have long taken Stevenson to contend in this passage that authors should share what they find and do so without regard to what might be popular, acceptable, or perhaps self-advancing. I therefore sought in the series to help writers both ensure they could articulate clearly what they believed and wished to contend and do so transparently and truthfully. Through the life of the *Reflections* series, I sought to help contributors avoid cant and to help them avoid advocating for untested assumptions and claims.

Final thoughts

Overall, as I reflect on the years of editing this series, I am struck by the realization that I would undertake it again despite the deadline pressures, varied author personalities and abilities and the responsibility of carefully copy and line editing essays multiple times each week, in addition to an otherwise busy schedule. Several students have shared with me that their experience in publishing in *Reflections* was important, and in some cases transformative, to their evolution as thinkers, writers, and scholars, and many more have indicated that their other work had improved due to their engagement in the series and what they learned thereby. In hindsight, I really could not ask for more as an editor. More deeply perhaps, I suspect very few university scholars today have enjoyed the privilege that I did for more than eight years: interacting with a diverse array of graduate students from multiple disciplines interested in democratic governance and assisting each to deepen their understanding of writing and of themselves as well as of their subjects via the editorial process in which we were mutually engaged. I knew that editors can be vital to the development of those with whom they work. *Reflections* gave me the opportunity personally to address the challenge of doing so and to wrestle with helping the authors with whom I worked at least become aware of the deeper aspirations for writing to which Stevenson and Orwell and others had sensitized me.

Editing is both a privilege and a deeply exacting and demanding art. Editors must establish and maintain a standard of quality; must, at least at their best, be endlessly curious, intelligent, and empathetic; and must also possess strong technical knowledge of their substantive interests and of writing. Balancing among these claims, with looming publication deadlines ever present and seeking to recognize authors as individuals on the road to professional development and sometimes, too, to maturation, is no mean feat. But when it works and comes together, the editorial role and process can mediate the felicitous possibility of strong work and writer development, and that outcome is always exciting and personally fulfilling. Indeed, I suppose it was

with that ideal in mind that I began editing this series. Recalling that potential therefore seems a fitting place to end it, as well.

Max Stephenson Jr.
Salem, Virginia
July 3, 2022

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PART I

GENDER (IN)EQUALITY

The five commentaries in this section examine gender equality in different contexts: economic and community development, higher education, and professional opportunities. The international development agenda has long been predicated on the premise that the more actively economies support equal participation of women in all spheres of life, the more resilient, productive, and inclusive those societies will be. However, as these commentaries suggest, gender inequalities are also present in developed and wealthy nations.

In her examination of women's representation in science programs, Neda Moayerian offers a brief comparative analysis of factors influencing females' choice to pursue education in STEM fields in Iran and the United States. She specifically targets the relationship between capacity for personal choice and women's academic experiences in these two nations. While in Iran, a nationally competitive examination determines entry to a university and that fact is widely perceived in that nation to limit the importance of gender-related stereotypes, its actual impact has been low since women engineers and scientists are poorly represented in Iran's labor market and in academia. In the U.S. meanwhile, the interplay of cultural expectations, institutions, and policies plays an important role in whether women become interested in STEM fields. Put plainly, inequality of opportunity between the genders can still exist in covert ways, subtly shaping the prevailing social narrative concerning possible career trajectories for women.

Raj. G.C. examines potential strategies that the government of Nepal could undertake to support returned migrants who engage in agricultural production. Drawing on scholarly articles, newspaper accounts and interviews with agriculture experts, Raj touches on increased female involvement in agricultural production and local development decision-making processes in Nepal, prompted by a labor shortage created by the large-scale economic migration of young men. He concludes by sharing his personal reflections on the significant challenge to the Nepali economy that the pandemic and its associated return of migrant workers have posed.

Beth Olberding shares her personal reflections on leadership and the factors that mediated the success of a gardening project with which she was engaged with a group of women during her Peace Corp assignment in Costa Rica. She concluded that the local leader's drive, interest, and determination were crucial in the development of a garden that benefitted two families,

despite not reaching its full vision of a community garden that would help to support a larger group of individuals.

Saswati Das discusses the stories of several remarkable women who, historically, have achieved professional success in the male-dominated profession of space science and engineering in the United States: Margaret Hamilton, Katherine Johnson, Frances Northcutt, and JoAnn Morgan. At a younger age, Saswati was moved by the tragic death of Kalpana Chawla, an Indian-born American astronaut, in the space shuttle Columbia disaster whose loss echoed across India. Reflecting on her passion to pursue graduate study in space engineering, Saswati concluded that with the right motivation, time, and encouragement, females can succeed in rocket science and become commonplace in that field in the coming years.

Finally, in her reflection on strategies to alleviate homesickness and prepare psychologically before returning to her native country after several years abroad, Neda Moayerian ponders the main factors influencing gender equality. Drawing on examples from native folklore and literature, she contends that patriarchal norms, and not religious beliefs, constitute the main barrier to gender equality in Muslim majority countries. She concludes with a statement of personal hope for further progress toward full human and civil rights for today's Iranian women.

IMAGES, STRUCTURES, AND INDIVIDUAL'S CHOICES: THE STEM PARADOX

Neda Moayerian

Ph.D. Candidate, Planning, Governance, and Globalization (as of initial publication)

Originally published on September 6, 2018

To begin to probe how individual choices may shape women's educational experience, one can start by examining the gender ratio in higher education. According to Charles (2017b), one meaningful method of ranking countries on their degree of sex segregation in science education is to compare the "female-to-male" ratio among graduates in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields to that same comparison among graduates in all other educational domains. By such a measure, the wealthy and highly industrialized United States is situated in about the middle of the spectrum—alongside Ecuador, Mongolia, Germany, and Ireland—an otherwise heterogeneous group on most conventional measures of "women's status" (Charles, 2017b, p. 112).

According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) concerning the number of degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, while American women are increasingly outpacing U.S. males (57% female vs. 43% male earned Bachelor's degrees in 2017), they comprise only about 30% of all STEM degree holders. Moreover, women with such degrees are less likely than their male counterparts to pursue a STEM occupation; they are instead more likely to work in education or non-STEM-related healthcare fields (Noonan, 2017). Figure 1 depicts the breakdown of STEM degree graduates by gender in the United States in 2015. The specific health care and education percentages refer only to non-STEM degree holders working in those fields. Professionals in STEM-related posts active in those domains appear in the STEM totals (in red) in the figure.

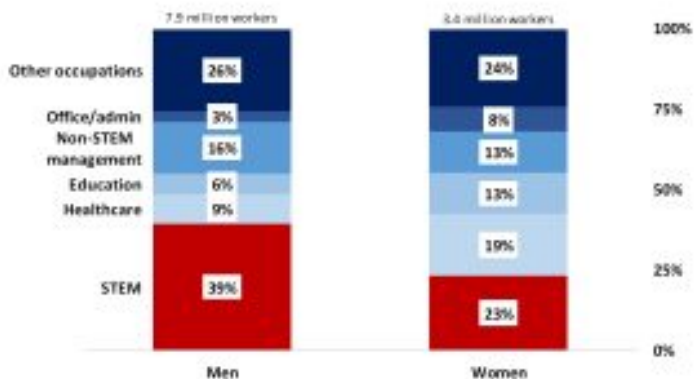


Figure 1. College-educated Workers with a STEM Degree by Gender and STEM Occupation, 2015.

Source: Noonan, 2017. Public Domain.

Paradoxically, internationally, women's representation in science programs is weakest in the Netherlands and strongest in Iran, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, and Oman, where science is disproportionately a female enterprise (Charles, 2017). At first blush, this fact seems strange, as none of these nations are as democratic or progressive as Holland or the United States concerning women's rights. Indeed, on the more basic, as Weingarten has dubbed them, "indicators of gender equality—women's political participation, access to education and economic opportunities, and the existence of overtly discriminatory laws or policies—women are for the most part faring better in the U.S. than in some of these developing nations." (Weingarten, 2017)

Charles has argued that one would expect the United States should be a world leader in abolishing gender-based segregation of prestigious previously male-dominated occupations and fields of study since, "laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex have been in place for more than half a century, and the idea that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities is practically uncontested (at least in public) in the U.S. today" (2017b, p. 110).

Moreover, since at least the early 1980s the United States federal government has invested in initiatives aimed at increasing girls' participation in STEM fields (e.g., the 1981 Equal Opportunities for Women and Minorities in Science and Technology Act) which may have helped to increase the number of female undergraduate engineering graduates in the country from 2% in the mid-1970s to 17% in the 1990s (Kranov, DeBoer & Abu-Lail, 2014, p. 25). And that trend has continued as federal funds and other public, private,

and civic organization interventions have increased the percentage of female undergraduate engineering graduates from 17.3% in 1995 to 35.1% in 2014-15 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Nevertheless, while this trend is hopeful for engineering, across all the STEM fields, American universities and firms lag considerably behind those of many other countries, including developing nations with no such legal record, with respect to women's participation in STEM fields.

Kranov et al. have identified several factors that have shaped the uneven distribution of women and men across STEM fields internationally:

Women's overall lower status within societies, the structure of national educational systems, and cultural beliefs and norms regarding women globally and within specific countries, [...] the notion of engineering as a masculine-gendered field and macro-level forces such as societal and global cultural norms and the logic and structure of educational systems themselves. (Kranov, DeBoer & Abu-Lail, 2014, p. 23)

In this regard, Charles has noted that the freedom to choose a career may paradoxically encourage women in affluent Western democracies to construct and replicate stereotypically gendered self-identities (2017b, p. 112). Academic and career choices in these nations constitute acts of identity construction and self-affirmation, rather than serving simply as practical economic decisions. As a result, American females who aim to "study what they love" may be unlikely to consider male-labeled science, engineering, or technical fields, despite the financial security often furnished by the completion of such degrees (Charles, 2017a). Accordingly, Charles has suggested that, "by allowing wide latitude in course choices" modern systems of higher education "make the incursion of gender stereotypes even easier" (2017b, p.115).

Charles (2017b) has hypothesized that the high number of female students in STEM fields in developing and transitional economies has been driven more by concerns about advancing economic development than by interests in accommodating women's presumed affinities. Also, at the individual level, personal economic security and national development are such central concerns to young people and their parents in developing societies that there is less latitude and support for the realization of gender-specific preferences than in developed nations.

Nevertheless, several scholars have critiqued this argument. First, the fact that proponents of this perspective tend to view developing countries, including middle eastern/Muslim nations, as a single homogeneous population, calls the accuracy of this contention into question. As Kranov et al. (2014) have demonstrated in their case analyses of several predominantly Islamic countries, these societies evidence diverse levels of economic prosperity, different cultures, varied challenges, and quite distinct histories and education systems. It follows that females' incentives for choosing to study in

STEM fields in each of those nations are likely to differ widely. Indeed, Zahedifar, for example, has found that Iranian students choose university fields for an array of reasons:

- Personal interest (47.0%), very similar percentages for both genders (45.3% of male students and 48.9% of female students).
- Improving social status (an average of 21.2% for women and men) with 15.5% for male students and 27.2% for female students.
- Acquiring a well-paid job (an average of 19.6% for both genders) with 20.6% for male students and 18.5% for female students.
- Potential of meeting a marriage partner (6.4% for both groups) with 9.3% for male students and 3.2% for female students.
- Parental pressure (5.8% for men and women) with 9.3% for male students and 2.2% for female students. (Zahedifar, 2012, p. 41)

This data suggests that contrary to Charles' contention, personal interest and improving social standing are important factors shaping female students' academic choices, at least in Iran.

Second, Charles' analytical method limited the data she was able to gather to address her research questions. Employing personal interviews and focus groups, DeBoer and Kranov (2014) found that in Tunisia and Jordan (such also occurs in Iran), all secondary school students complete a national examination after high school regardless of their socio-economic status, and state officials place them into particular college fields based on their scores.

This practice likely accounts for the high percentage of STEM field female students in Iran. When boys and girls compete on a national exam, their ranking according to their performance on that test reduces the relative significance of gender-based career choices. At first glance, this appears to be paradoxical, since standing according to an exam's results seems to limit freedom of choice. However, those rankings give women opportunities and confidence to select fields otherwise dominated by males. In this way, the national examination system allows women to choose their future academic and professional fields based on their interests, rather than prevailing gender social constructs.

Nevertheless, although this mechanism seems to encourage women to exercise power and agency to pick their fields of study according to their interests, they may nonetheless risk compromising (sometimes inadvertently) those personal preferences for a fields' perceived popularity. For example, when a woman ranks among the first 100 students in Iran's

national entrance exam, she can choose to study any subject at any university that she desires. However, in most cases, individuals with such scores choose electrical engineering at Sharif University as the highest ranking (perceived as most prestigious) STEM program and University in Iran. Meanwhile, sacrificing one's personal passion for a socially valued STEM field seems to be common in Tunisia; "a large percentage of girls aren't driven by [their] passion for engineering, but by performance," according to Raja Ghazi, a Tunisian engineering professor at the National Engineering School of Tunis, who studied in the U.S. (Weingarten, 2017).

Another important factor to consider when evaluating the relative efficacy of this model (i.e., comprehensive entrance exam) in engaging women in STEM fields, is females' level of labor market participation/academic professions after graduating. It is generally true that more highly educated women raise healthier and better educated children (human capital), both of which are essential for economic development (Isfahani, 2008). However, the real impact of more women in STEM university fields is realized with their placement in STEM-related professions and positions. In Iran, for instance, according to one of the latest household surveys of expenditures and income, women with tertiary degrees are three times more likely to be unemployed than similarly credentialed men; 35% compared to a 12% unemployment rate for like educated men (Isfahani, 2008).

Conclusion

This essay has briefly examined factors influencing the female choice to pursue education in STEM fields in Iran and the United States particularly. I have sought to investigate the relationship between the capacity for personal choice and women's academic experiences in these two nations. In Iran, the structures and processes for gaining entrance to university have created a situation in which women are encouraged to choose their future field of study based on their level of skills and capabilities, at least as those are revealed by a nationally competitive examination. While some analysts have found this model successful in limiting the importance of gender-related stereotypes, others have argued that its actual impact has been low since women engineers/scientists are poorly represented in Iran's labor market/academic positions.

In the case of the United States, as noted, while passion for an academic and professional field is important, focusing on that factor alone overlooks the ways culture, institutions and policies can reinforce whether women become interested in STEM fields in the first instance. The view of equality as equal opportunities to realize preferences, understood to be properties of individuals and therefore sacrosanct, can occur in both developing and developed countries. One might imagine that the United States is rooting

gender inequality out of its institutions by abolishing formal restrictions and limiting policies and overt discrimination. Yet, inequality of opportunity between the genders can still exist in covert ways, such as the inculcation of stereotypical images of unattractive female scientists versus charming female “consumer” characters (e.g., the characters in the long-running comedy *The Big Bang Theory* on U.S. television) into young American women’s minds. Indeed, in individualistic societies such as the United States, according to Weingarten (2017), young women come to believe early on that they are destined—or designed—for a “particular” career, a powerful narrative shaped and fortified by the media they consume and the people with whom they interact concerning their possible career trajectory. Perhaps, as Weingarten has observed, “if we let go of the idea that our preferences, aspirations, and capabilities are completely self-determined, perhaps we’ll truly experience a freedom of choice that has so far eluded us.” (Weingarten, 2017)

Notes

In the United States, Women’s Status is measured via a wide range of indicators. These are tracked by the “Institute for Women’s Policy and Research (IWPR)” in each state along 6 different topics: Political Participation, Employment and Earnings, Poverty and Opportunity, Work and Family (added in 2015), Reproductive Rights and Health and Well-Being (with additional state and national level data provided on Violence & Safety).

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A PATH TO ENGAGE RETURNING MIGRANTS IN NEPALI AGRICULTURE?

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Nepal has witnessed a significant increase in the number of people leaving to work abroad during the past 15 years, especially in Middle Eastern countries. Most analysts agree that this trend has occurred due to a lack of in-country employment opportunities. The vast majority of those taking positions in other nations are unskilled young males. However, recent evidence, as of mid-August 2020, has suggested that nearly 50,000 of these economic migrants have returned to Nepal since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 (DCnepal, 2020). This figure is roughly 7% of approximately 700,000 migrants from overseas expected to return to Nepal by mid-2021.¹ They are disproportionally returning due to a loss or perceived fear of loss of employment and/or fear of COVID-19 infection in their host countries (Nepal Policy Institute & Migration Lab, 2020). In addition to this group of individuals displaced from their previous employment in the Middle East, thousands of undocumented workers have returned to their farming villages from Nepal's cities and neighboring countries, mainly India, during the ongoing pandemic.

I learned from multiple sources (news and social media, and communication with my relatives and friends in Nepal) that the largest number of those returning have become involved in farming as their major activity. This development motivated me to explore potential strategies that might allow them to earn livelihoods sufficient to permit them to remain as farmers in Nepal following the pandemic. Put differently, I here examine potential strategies that the Government of Nepal could undertake to support returned migrants now engaged in agricultural production or working in allied sectors. To realize this aim, I have reviewed relevant recent scholarly articles, newspaper accounts, and recorded interviews with agriculture experts. I conclude by sharing my personal reflections on the significant challenge to the Nepali economy that the pandemic and its associated return of migrant workers have posed.

Impacts of out-migration on agriculture

In 2018, Nepal's residents received \$8.1 billion in remittances from friends and relatives working outside the nation. That total qualified the country as the 19th largest recipient of such transfers in the world (Prasain, 2019). Overall, the nation has the fifth-most remittance-dependent economy internationally after Tonga, Kyrgyzstan, Haiti, and Tajikistan (Gill, 2020). Remittances contributed 26.2% of Nepal's GDP for the fiscal year 2018/2019 (Government of Nepal, 2019). In fact, such payments constitute the second largest contributor to the nation's economy after agriculture. Remittances not only comprise an important portion of the country's GDP, but they are also especially significant to its many vulnerable households. Nepali agriculture is characterized by smallholder subsistence farming, both crops and livestock, with 0.5 hectares (approximately 1.2 acres) of land per family (FAO, 2020).

The increasing out-migration of young, unskilled Nepali men seeking work in other countries during the past 15 years has created a shortage of farm labor. As a result, nearly one-third of the nation's cultivatable land now lies fallow throughout the year (GC, 2020). This trend of abandonment of otherwise arable property is continuing as this is written (Timilsina & Ghimire, 2020). In addition, a share of fertile parcels of land are increasingly being developed for housing. The confluence of these factors has led Nepal to suffer a loss in national agricultural production during the last 15 years, resulting in a high and increasing volume of food imports from India and China especially. In addition to these trends, previous studies have found that women's participation in agriculture, especially in small farm activities, has sharply increased as young males have left the country in search of employment (FAO, 2020; Spangler & Christie, 2019). Some researchers have dubbed this development the "feminization of agriculture" in the nation (FAO, 2020). Women are now significantly involved in both the daily tasks of agricultural production (mostly home garden vegetables and small livestock) and in decision-making concerning those efforts. Male out-migration created an imperative for family members to restructure their roles in the household and in the community (Spangler & Christie, 2019). As a result, women's involvement in local development decision-making processes has risen sharply as well, especially during the last 10 years.

Despite increased female involvement in homestead farming, the labor shortage created by the large-scale economic migration of young men has limited major farming activities, including cereal (rice, wheat, and maize) crop production, mostly on Khet land.² In this context, several studies have explored the relationships between remittances and farm production. For instance, a study by the Asian Development Bank reported that agricultural productivity for remittance-receiving farm families in Nepal has suffered,

due to insufficient availability of farm labor and a lack of investment of that income in production (Tuladhar, 2014). GC (2019) conducted a study of 202 subsistence farming families in the middle Western hills of Nepal and found similarly that “the odds/ possibility of a household being in the high production income group (relative to the low group) decrease[d] by 1.1 times when a household received a remittance.”³

Pant et al. (2013) have found that, overall, labor out-migration has also negatively affected overall agricultural yields in Nepal. In other words, the nation’s reduced rural labor force has contributed to a decrease in the overall agricultural production of the nation. The combination of remittance dependence and a diminished workforce implies that the returning laborers (the source of a significant share of remittances) will likely stimulate increased agricultural activity.

COVID-19 as an opportunity to engage returning migrants in farm production

I learned from recent communications with relatives and friends residing in different rural parts of Nepal that nearly half of those who have returned to the country from employment they had previously pursued abroad are now working on farms. This trend can at least ensure that these individuals can produce enough food to feed themselves and their families. In a similar vein, a recent article by Kaine (2020) in myRepublica suggested that “Reverse migration of youth due to COVID-19 provides an opportunity for [the] hinterland to engage the returnees in farming.” In this spirit, Yamuna Ghale, a well-known Nepali agriculture and food security expert, suggested in a recent television interview that the nation’s Government could involve returning individuals in agricultural infrastructure development, service provision, research and extension activities, and food processing work. She emphasized the possibility that agricultural processing and small-scale farm enterprises can provide immediate employment. Such activities could include ghee (a type of butter) and cheese production, flour milling, and drying herbs and fruits. Returnees could also be engaged as farm machinery operators and agricultural equipment maintenance technicians (FAO, 2020). Ghale (2020) also contended that the Government should have a concrete plan to encourage, and thereafter, to oversee these activities, once launched. She stressed that Nepal’s national government should focus on protecting farmers through multiple forms of support so as to maximize the probability that returning migrants will view farming as a profitable and respected profession. In this context, agricultural development practitioners and analysts have proposed several immediate and longer-term strategies to support those who are returning and interested in engaging in farming. I turn to those next.

Immediate strategies

Ghale (2020) has emphasized that the Government could provide educational training for agriculture as individuals return to the country and are placed in quarantine prior to journeying to their home communities. While cash strapped as a result of the pandemic, local governments (LGs) could provide returning residents seeds and small tools to support their farming activities. LGs could also offer those individuals professional advice and services via qualified crop and livestock technicians. A share of those experts could “train trainers” who could thereafter share strategies and information with other returning migrants. Kaine (2020) has proposed at least one agriculture and livestock technician should be made available per ward (the smallest administrative unit of LGs) to ensure effective service reach and provision. In addition, LGs could also invite nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with allied goals to share their technical personnel and expertise with newly returned laborers. Ghale (2020) has similarly suggested that Nepal’s federal and state governments should provide skilled support to LG officials. Such assistance could include recommending appropriate crop choices and varieties to match the specific needs and possible markets of growers. Additionally, the federal government’s research institutions, such as the Nepal Agricultural Research Council and universities could organize virtual learning platforms to share their expertise with LG representatives and private sector agricultural suppliers.

Long-term strategies

During the past several years, Nepal’s public, national and international NGOs, and private sector agricultural development professionals have been arguing that the national government should play a lead role in providing sufficient land to support landless or near landless people interested in engaging in farming. In response, the federal government recently announced a plan to establish a “Land Bank,” beginning in September 2020, with branches in 300 LGs (of a total of 753) in the country. Janakraj Raj Joshi, the spokesperson for Nepal’s Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, has suggested that his agency is preparing to establish the entity to ensure access to land for returnees particularly (Barakhari, 2020). The branch offices will seek to target land for use that has not been cultivated for several years and can be planted for commercial production. Even without federal action, the LGs could facilitate agreements with landholders to make land available to landless individuals interested in production. Access to low-interest credit, irrigation facilities, farm technologies, and agricultural markets and extension services could also materially assist growers, both during start-up and in later efforts to scale-up production (GC,

2020; Kaini, 2020). Timilsina and Ghimire (2020) have recommended that the national government set minimum support prices for agricultural products so that farmers located in more isolated areas can sell their produce at rates comparable to those available in towns. At the same time, it will also be important to make the services of locally based input suppliers and veterinary centers accessible to newly engaged growers. Investments in cold storage facilities may also prove important to prevent distress sales and potential losses due to unforeseen disturbances in market chains.

Most smallholder farmers are unlikely to take production risks without effective Government sponsored crop and livestock insurance services (GC, 2020). So, the nation should also offer that support. Likewise, LGs and interested I/NGOs must train returning individuals entering farming to grow diverse products to maximize potential returns. Taken together, these strategies appear to be central to addressing both current and future production needs (FAO, 2020). Overall, too, government officials at all levels should encourage start-up growers to begin farming in a way that fits their needs and resources. Growers should produce value-adding crops and goods (vegetables) and non-traditional agricultural enterprises (dry and frozen meats, cheeses, ghee, jams and jellies, flour, and gundruk (fermented and dried green leafy vegetables) to maximize their potential returns.

Personal reflections

As an aware individual from a Nepali rural farming family and a researcher interested in smallholder agriculture policy, I believe that returning migrants do have an opportunity to succeed as producers if profits from their farm production can be made sufficient to meet their family needs. The pandemic has rightly placed a spotlight on this imperative and the national government should act swiftly to mobilize returning migrants in efforts to construct a more productive rural economy. Notably, most of those coming back to Nepal are from vulnerable families (low-income, lower-caste, or other oppressed groups) and they often possess only limited land and financial resources. The Government should prioritize the members of these groups as it develops support programs of the sort outlined above. In the long run, it will be important to ensure that the other basic needs of these farming communities, including education and healthcare, are met alongside agricultural services.

Concluding remarks

While Nepal's agriculture sector has suffered from rising out-migration of young men during the past 15 years, the proposed short-term and long-term strategies sketched here, if implemented, could provide a way to engage

returning migrants in the agricultural sector and assist them in becoming viable commercial producers. Governments at all levels in Nepal must develop and implement concrete action plans to realize this aim, which will also require the sustained collective effort of I/NGOs, private sector businesses, and farmer cooperatives as well as other interested actors.

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Notes

1. A task force formed by the Nepalese government to study the impact of COVID-19 on foreign employment of the country's citizens projected that more than 700,000 such individuals will return to Nepal from overseas during the next year (i.e., until the middle of 2021) (Shrestha, 2020). Of the total of 700,000 migrants, approximately 300,000 are expected to return from India and the remainder from other nations (mainly in the Middle East) (Shrestha, 2020). The task force also projected that 225,000 of the expected total group returning are likely to arrive in Nepal in the next 3-4 months (Shrestha, 2020). As noted, approximately 50,000 of this total (225,000) have already returned since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak (DCnepal, 2020). The largest share of those who have arrived in Nepal to date were employed in Middle Eastern countries.
2. Khet refers to low-lying irrigated land outside communities used for a rice-based cropping system.
3. High group referred to the families whose income from production activities (mainly vegetables and livestock) was higher than the median income of families in their communities. Conversely, the low group included families whose production income was lower than the median income in their jurisdictions.

REFLECTIONS ON A GREENHOUSE PROJECT AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER IN COSTA RICA

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The Peace Corps, an agency of the United States government founded in 1961, has a mission to promote world peace and friendship by addressing three overarching goals:

- To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
- To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
- To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans (Peace Corps, n.d.).

While the Peace Corps is funded by the federal government, it is also known for its grassroots development projects. In contrast, Easterly has characterized the international aid system more generally as, driven by large players [and] tend[ing] to be top-down rather than bottom up. Such top-down and agency-driven approaches translate into projects that are not responsive to the needs of local communities, tend to serve the priorities and perspectives of so-called aid experts rather than the aid recipients and lead to inefficient results (2008, p. 463).

Indeed, and considering Easterly's observation, Peace Corps officials stress it is not an aid agency. Rather, it seeks to promote world peace and friendship as well as asset-based community development. Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) could apply for grant funding for small community-based projects as a part of their service. Volunteers are generally not permitted to raise more than \$10,000 and all funding they receive from the U.S. government must be matched both monetarily and in-kind (such as through labor, for example). I began my Peace Corps adventure in March 2015 and completed that journey in May 2017. This is a reflection on one of the small grassroots development efforts with which I was involved during my service.

The project

Early in 2016, I was approached by a woman seeking my assistance with a project on which she and a group of women were working in a neighboring town, about a 30-minute bike ride away. The group ultimately wished to construct a housing development in their village and to help pay for that effort by selling eggs from their chickens as well as by growing fruits and vegetables. In order to realize their dream, the women sought assistance and funding from the Peace Corps. I suggested as a first step toward realizing their goal that they consider developing a communal garden for which those involved in the initiative could assume responsibility. I did so in part because I had noticed that the small convenience-style stores in town did not routinely stock fresh produce and so it appeared there would indeed be a market for items they were able to grow.

The women who had approached me liked the idea, so we began meeting weekly to draft a proposal to obtain start-up funds for it. They were actively engaged in this process, which I was excited about because other PCVs had indicated that they had found it difficult to attract engaged participants to help develop community project ideas and plans. I came to trust the leaders of this group, because they demonstrated their work ethic through our weekly meetings. Additionally, the president of the entity arranged for those involved to complete classes concerning how to grow vegetables in greenhouses that were offered by a national institute in their town. We secured the grant funding, but unfortunately, before I could participate in the effort's implementation, I had to leave the country for a medical leave, and I was unsure as I departed whether I would be able to return. Nevertheless, the leader and I maintained communication during my absence, as she and her colleagues moved the garden project forward by attending greenhouse classes. In truth, following through with this grant was a key factor in motivating me to return to Costa Rica following my medical leave.

The effort takes an unexpected turn

When I returned to Costa Rica and met with the group's leader, she explained that only four (including herself) of the 12 women previously involved had completed the greenhouse course to date and that she now planned to move away. She felt badly that she was now leaving and introduced me to another woman, Ana, who was interested in the effort. Although, at this point, I was frustrated and was not expecting that we could create a successful project, I learned that Ana had wanted a greenhouse for some time and was willing to work for it. I communicated with the funding group, World Connect, to inquire if Ana could assume leadership of the endeavor and they agreed, as long as the three women who completed the

greenhouse classes could also participate. Additionally, Ana included her daughter and a neighbor in the project. So, at the time of transition, the initiative included five women, with Ana serving as their leader. Accordingly, she and I soon met with Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture officials to discuss the plans for the garden/greenhouse. That staff assisted us in various ways, such as locating needed topsoil and facilitating a meeting with another women's group that had years of experience with growing vegetables and fruits in a greenhouse. This effort became the most sustainable project I completed during my Peace Corps experience.

On reflection, I believe this was so because my role was that of a catalyzer or connector, rather than director or individual in charge. In the end, this initiative appeared to fit the form that Easterly (2008) has suggested is most likely to succeed—it responded to a locally determined need and desired strategy to address it.

Why was this project successful with Ana, when it had stalled without her active involvement? As I have reflected on this scenario, I believe several factors influenced the outcome. First, while the original group appeared to be active, I am not sure they worked cohesively together, since only a few members participated consistently. Second, Ana was willing and ready to lead the project since she had already attended classes about hydroponics and greenhouses, whereas the group's original members had agreed to complete such a curriculum as a condition of possible project funding. As noted, however, only four had done so. This was so despite the fact that the women did not need to pay for the instruction, nor did they need to travel to participate in the classes. I worried whether this had occurred because the first group of women were not truly interested in learning about growing their own produce to contribute to their livelihoods in this way.

The project's outcomes

When I asked Ana what happened, she suggested that when it comes to paying for a project (with time or money), people drop out, but when it comes time for a party, they find the time and funds. While this is a common assumption, this apparently in fact happened with this project. The three women from the original women's group agreed to move forward with Ana leading the effort; however, they stopped participating once money was due and/or when it was time to start building the greenhouse. Whether this sort of turn is a commonly repeated trope or a stereotypic story is not so important as the question of why this project proved a success under Ana's leadership. She led the effort to fruition despite the fact that she suffered (and suffers) from multiple medical conditions that otherwise have prevented her from working a steady job. Part of the explanation likely lies, as Easterly (2008) has contended, in understanding that Ana was passionate about plants

and was also an avid cook. She quite literally knew first-hand how the garden could serve families, whereas many of the other women who participated were learning about growing vegetables and fruits for the first time.

On reflection, this project also reminds me of the Grameen Bank model, which is predicated on the belief that individuals are natural entrepreneurs and that providing them access to small amounts of capital will yield positive economic outcomes (Yunus & Jolis, 2003). This surely worked for Ana and the few women with whom she worked. But I am not persuaded that everyone can become a successful entrepreneur. Hanlon, Barrientos, and Hulme (2012) have expressed similar skepticism. Instead, as in my experience, capital must be joined with human drive, interest, and determination if it is to bear fruit. Ana supplied that energy and capacity to create a successful garden whose produce could contribute to the health, welfare, and livelihood of her own family and her neighbor's family. The project to date must be considered only a limited success, since only Ana and her neighbor have benefited from the effort, in light of the original intent to construct a community garden that would benefit a larger group of individuals.

Despite its limited success as a community endeavor, the garden has proven sustainable under Ana's direction. She has continued the effort and regularly shares with me photos of the produce the garden is yielding. More, on her own initiative, she has also completed a canning class where she learned how to make salsas that she now sells locally. That is, Ana has scaled up production and has begun offering products from the garden for sale, as originally contemplated. She took full advantage of the grant (start-up) funding, whereas about 12 women passed up the opportunity it presented. Agency likely played a role in this; Ana seized the opportunity offered by the grant. Its economic consequences aside, in the end, this initiative allowed me to come to know Ana well and she is now one of my closest and dearest friends from my Peace Corps experience and that, in and of itself surely constitutes a positive outcome.





Source: Author photos.

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REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN PIONEERS IN ROCKET SCIENCE

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It was the Spring of 2003. As the world waited, eager-eyed, for the return of Space Shuttle Columbia, the seven-year-old me gazed at her television screen, looking at the image of Kalpana Chawla—a naturalized American citizen of Indian birth who had made it big in the world of space science and had lived true to her name (Kalpana, meaning “Imagination” in Sanskrit). The 2000-2010 decade in India was a time of change and progress during which the idea of women choosing a profession in science disciplines that previously had been viewed by many as the province of men was beginning to be treated as socially acceptable. Kalpana Chawla’s life had kindled a belief among many young girls that they, too, could dedicate their lives to exploring what was beyond the barriers of space and time, the space and time that we know anyway—Planet Earth. Her tragic death in the space shuttle Columbia disaster echoed painfully across India, even as her life had inspired new hope in many girls’ hearts in that nation.¹

In the fall of 2017, my personal quest to work in space science found me traveling several thousand miles to the United States to pursue a Ph.D. with a focus on Space Science and Engineering Research at Virginia Tech. This program has allowed me to explore and learn more about the possibilities and wonders of this field. As I have delved more deeply into this area of study, I have come to realize that while this is surely a mystery-filled realm, some of its denizens still maintain old ideas about welcoming the likes of my kind—a woman—to their ranks.

The thought of a female expressing ideas and uncovering fresh possibilities has not always resonated with the ethos and beliefs of many in our male-dominated profession. This perspective, prevalent for far too long, kept from public view the many contributions of women who were instrumental in putting a “man” on the moon. A review of the lives and manifest excellence of these great women always ends with the same question: Why do Americans still not give them enough credit for their many contributions and, even more importantly, support efforts to provide today’s women ample opportunities to share their talents in space exploration? I turn next to offering vignettes about four women who were pioneers in this field and conclude

with a few observations concerning my own ongoing experience as a female in this exciting area of study.

Margaret Hamilton: Preparing human beings to land on the Moon

Margaret Hamilton began her career in 1959 after graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She joined the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and served as that agency's lead programmer for the development of the groundbreaking Apollo guidance computer. Hamilton was a part of every crewed Apollo mission and led the team that developed the inflight software for the command and lunar modules for the historic Apollo 11 flight. From initially being questioned about her capabilities to being awarded the title of "Software Engineer" for that mission, Hamilton proved many times over that she was more than capable of filling her leadership role. As she observed, "When I first got there, I was the only one in that project. If you look at photos of the engineers back then, you can hardly find a woman in there." (Smith, 2019) Hamilton received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama in 2016 (Wikipedia, 2019).

Katherine Johnson: Flight trajectory analyst for the "Moon Shot"

Katherine Johnson, an African American and recipient of the Presidential Award of Freedom, is now more than 100 years old (The White House, 2-15). She was born and grew up in West Virginia during the era of Jim Crow segregation. As a result, despite demonstrating great talent for math, "college" of any kind was an ambitious dream. Nonetheless, motivated by the force of her conviction and hopes for the future, she attended college at West Virginia State University and graduated with a degree in Math in 1937. She later joined the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics' (the precursor to NASA) Langley laboratory in Virginia. She spent much of her career analyzing flight test data to move the nation's space exploration program forward. Her efforts yielded a historic outcome when her trajectory analysis allowed synching of the Apollo 11 lunar lander with that mission's command and service modules.

Francis Northcutt: Mission control engineer

A graduate of the University of Texas with a bachelor's degree in math, Frances Northcutt sought that degree to obtain a "man's job," and she succeeded. Northcutt became the first female to serve as a NASA mission control engineer. Her contributions to bringing the malfunctioning Apollo 13 module home safely are still lauded. As an outspoken feminist and the first

‘women’s advocate’ at NASA in Houston, Northcutt pursued a law degree and career as a criminal defense lawyer after she completed her stint with the country’s space agency.

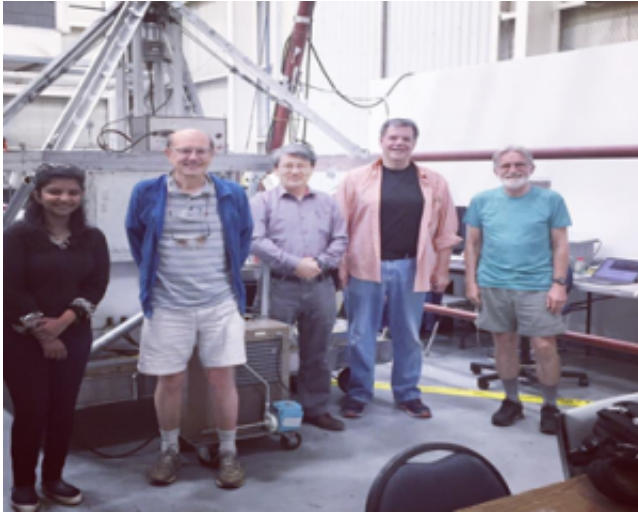
JoAnn Morgan: The “Mother” of rocket science

JoAnn Morgan was the only woman in the launch room for the Apollo 11 mission. Morgan’s journey from starting off as “a precocious little kid,” said to have rocket fuel in her blood, was not an easy one (Patrinos, 2019). In fact, as the only female on the Apollo 11 project team, she endured obscene phone calls, and lewd comments, and also had to travel with a male supervisor who guarded the door while she used the men’s restroom because there was no women’s bathroom at the facility where she worked. This was so because women simply were not expected to pursue, let alone occupy, the technical job of which she was a deeply admired master. Morgan always encouraged interested girls and women to study rocket and space science throughout her 45-year career at NASA.

A brief personal reflection on being a woman studying space science today

Today, more than five decades later, the space science workplace remains an often challenging and unaccepting environment for women. The astronomical industry, and its rocket engineering domain more specifically, continue to offer a world of possibilities and yet, still too often set up roadblocks to women’s full participation in the pursuit of those potentials. Despite continuing discriminatory assumptions held by too many of its professionals, I have had the opportunity to work on some amazing NASA projects—the GLO (Gas Filter Correlation Radiometry-Limb Occultation) instrument to fly on the SOCRATES Mission and the Polar NO_x Rocket Mission—during my two-years at Space @ VT.

I have also worked at NASA’s Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, and have studied hardware, coding, software development and other scientific dimensions of my chosen field. As a result of these experiences, I can say that I am now a confident woman ready to contribute to my profession. Having said that, I would credit a strong share of my development and self-confidence to my advisor, Scott Bailey, director of Space @ VT. His dedication to encouraging more women in rocket science and his advocacy for gender equality in the workplace are well known and deeply appreciated. His commitment has resulted in more female than male graduate students working on his research team.



An image of me with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory Team at NASA's Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility, Fort Sumner, New Mexico, taken on September 3, 2019. (Author photo)



An image of the Virginia Tech team that performed the Star Test on the Polar NOx Rocket in August 2019. (Author photo)



Some of the women working on the Rocket payload at the Optic Lab, Space @ VT. (Author photo)

These photographs are testimony to the fact that with the right motivation, time, and encouragement, females can succeed in rocket science. My fond hope is that women will become commonplace in this field in coming years.

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Notes

1. On February 1, 2003, Kalpana Chawla lost her life in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster when that orbiter disintegrated over Texas during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere shortly before it was scheduled to conclude its twenty-eighth mission, STS-107.

WOMEN'S POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A BRIEF ANALYSIS

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Similar to many international students pursuing graduate study in the United States, I have adopted different methods to simulate cultural experiences of my country to alleviate homesickness and more importantly, to prepare better for re-entry psychological readjustment¹ (Altweck & Marshall, 2015) or, as some have labeled it, reverse culture shock, when I return to Iran (Storti, 2003). In one of my recent attempts to address my homesickness and to prepare to return, I read *Shahnameh* and *One Thousand and One Nights* (often known as *Arabian Nights* in English), two major examples of the folklore and literature of my native region.

Providing a poetic account of the prehistory and history of Iran, *Shahnameh*² (The Book of Kings) includes the mythical, and to some extent the historical, tales of the Persian Empire from the creation of the world until the Islamic conquest of that regime in the seventh century. *One Thousand And One Nights* is a collection of stories and historical incidents gathered between the 8th and 13th centuries from different regions that today correspond with India, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt (Marzolph, 2007). Some of these narratives first arose in ancient and medieval Arabic, Persian, Greek, Indian, Jewish, and Turkish folklore (Irwin, 2004).

Among many fascinating themes, the leitmotif that specifically drew my attention in both books was the role of women and their relatively high social and political power during the time these volumes first appeared (prior to, and following, Islam's presence and dominance in the region). As Khaleghi-Motlagh and Pirnazar have observed, "women in *Shahnameh* are lively figures with warmth, courage, intellect, and even a certain degree of independence" (2012, p. 20). One finds examples in the tales of women advising kings, as generals, as traders traveling to far places, as passing citizenship to their children, and occupying many other roles. This standing was true even among common people. Such representations of women's agential power contradict the current broadly purveyed and accepted image (a mixture of reality and stereotypes) of women of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. For instance, today's MENA women often do not

share the same rights as men to make decisions, pursue a profession, travel, marry or divorce, head a family, receive an inheritance, or access wealth. Despite the growing pool of highly educated women who desire to work, MENA countries still have the lowest female labor force participation rate in the world (at 24% compared to an average of 60% among the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries) and the highest gender gap globally in entrepreneurship (OECD, 2017).

As a transcontinental region, today's Middle East is a geographically vast and culturally diverse area and one cannot generalize findings arising from the analysis of any one of the countries of the region to other nations, "[t]he status of women varies widely in the Middle East, and one should not project the norms in Saudi Arabia—one of the most sexist and oppressive states in the region—onto the larger Muslim world" (AbuKhalil, 2005). In his comparison of countries with majority Muslim populations, Geertz (1973) noted that Islamic ideas and practices have assumed widely different forms despite a common theology across the region. Here, to avoid Orientalism³ and for the sake of precision, I mainly focus on Iran's women.

I have adopted Zuhur's definition of female empowerment for this essay, "as a condition in which women hold or are in the process of obtaining educational, legal and political rights that are equivalent or nearly equal to those of male citizens." (Zuhur, 2003, p. 18) This conception meshes well with Cherif's framework of women's core rights, "female workforce participation and education serve as building blocks—or core rights—for advancement of other women's rights" (2015, p.7). Cherif has also argued that culture and international norms constitute additional critical elements in women's rights advancement/regression.

When considering women's rights in Middle Eastern countries generally, and Iran, more particularly, many commentators have argued that women's inequality in these Muslim-majority nations arises directly from Islam (Huntington, 2000). Inglehart and Norris (2003), for example, have contended that gender inequality is more evident and pronounced in societies in which Islam is the dominant faith. Relying on a number of Islamic laws concerning women's inheritance and the injunction to wear the hijab, for example, some have claimed that Islam and the Quran, "like the other Abrahamic scriptures, contains passages that are plainly sexist" (Rizvi, 2012). Conversely, scholars such as Carland (2017), have viewed the Quran as a holy book that accords equal rights to members of both sexes without discriminating between them. These analysts have also contended that Islam's egalitarian spirit can serve as a guide for Muslim women in their efforts to advance their rights to education (Abukari, 2014) and property ownership (Bishin & Cherif, 2017).

Some scholars have argued, in response to criticism of the Quran's content as sexist or encouraging misogyny, that the often-cited passages used in such

arguments should be seen as metaphors. These analysts blame patriarchal (mis)interpretation of verses and/or taking passages out of context as the main sources of justification for restrictions in rights for Muslim women (Bakhtiar, 2011). The term Islamic Law is generally used to refer to the legal aspects of Shari'a (that is based on jurists' interpretations of the Quran and other sources) and Muslims tend to believe that the legal quality of those principles and norms derives from their religious authority (An-Na'im, 2006, p. 4).⁴ Therefore, to convince many believing Muslims that Shari'a laws can change without injuring the spirit of the Quran has proven to be a difficult, if not impossible, task (Engineer, 2004).

Nonetheless, and in keeping with arguments that calls for the reduction of women's rights are based on a biased reading of the Quran, Bishin and Cherif (2017) have suggested that patriarchal norms, and not religious beliefs, constitute the main barrier to gender equality in Muslim majority countries. They have contended that when Islamic tenets dictate support for women's rights—such as the right to own and manage property—Muslim-majority national leaders have nevertheless been reluctant to extend or enforce those rights. For instance, most of the governments of the countries they studied tended to discriminate against women in inheritance rights (only permitting females to inherit half as much as men), but for property rights, where Islamic belief explicitly enjoins equality, the practice was more mixed (Bishin & Cherif, 2017).

If one accepts the argument that culture both underpins and supersedes religion when the two are in conflict in Muslim countries, one might nevertheless ask when the first seeds of patriarchal norms and beliefs formed in Iran and the MENA region. Bahrami has claimed that the position of Persian women relative to men began to deteriorate during the period 312 BC to 63 BC, during Greece's long occupation of their land, due to the fact that, "in Greece women did not enjoy equal rights to men [unlike their peers in Zoroastrian Iran]" (2008, p. 29). Iranian women regained their rights and privileges during the Sasanian dynasty, 224 to 651 AD, when Zoroastrianism became the country's official religion.

Historical explanations as well as recognition of the roles of external cultural forces are also applicable when one seeks to understand the change in women's place in the social hierarchy following the Islamic golden age, the era in which its author wrote the *One Thousand and One Nights* stories. Some analysts have linked the negative shift in women's power and the growth of misogynistic cultures across the MENA region to the rise of nation-states that promoted the role of warfare in society, with members of the generally physically stronger gender assuming more power as a result. Of course, this orientation was not the product principally or singularly of Arab or Middle Eastern nations alone. Rather, as Fisher has contended, several colonial powers, in particular, the Ottoman, British and French empires, served "as the

most important architects of institutionalized Arab misogyny" (Fisher, 2012). The colonialists shaped those cultures to accommodate their dominance during the centuries they ruled the Middle East region. According to Fisher, to obtain the acquiescence of men to their rule, colonial rulers offered them power over women as a quid pro quo. This implicit bargain became the norm only slowly, but whatever the pattern and dynamics of its social diffusion, it surely promoted misogynist ideas among Arab men who might otherwise have adopted (or maintained) very different norms and beliefs.

In sum, several internal and external forces have affected Iranian women's power negatively throughout history (additional factors have also played roles, but I could not include all relevant possibilities in this short essay). Modern Iranian women's progress, however uneven, in the educational, economic and political arenas has encouraged those who continue to advocate for their full human and civil rights to persevere (Janghorban, Taghipour, Latifnejad Roudsari, and Abbasi, 2014). That forward movement provides me reason for personal hope as I begin planning my return to my native country after several years abroad.

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Notes

1. Repatriates must readjust to their heritage culture after spending significant time abroad.

2. Iranian poet Ferdowsi wrote the *Shahnameh* between 997-1010 CE in 50,000 couplets (two-line verses). Definitive of the ethno-national cultural identity of Iran, this work is of a central moment in Persian culture and for the Persian language (Ahmad Ashraf, 2006).

3. "Propagated by writers, travelers, missionaries and colonial officials, Orientalist representations depicted the Orient as locked in an unchanging and mysterious cult [...] They included essentialist and binary categories dividing the East and West such as irrational/rational, traditional/modern, secular/sectarian, universalistic/particularistic, and active/passive" (Charrad, 2011, p. 419).

4. In Arabic, the word "shari'a" means "way" or "path." It is not a legal system, nor was it revealed by God. Instead, Shari'a is the overall way of life in Islam, as people understand it according to traditional, early interpretations of the Quran or the things the Prophet Muhammad said and did. These early interpretations date from 700 to 900 CE, not long after the Prophet Muhammad died in 632 CE. Shari'a can change with Islamic societies to address their evolving needs (An-Na'im, 2006).

PART II

CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

The commentaries in this section address the debates among democratic theorists concerning the meaning of citizenship and social justice. More specifically, they explore how those conceptions have been constructed and enacted as well as how a deeper understanding of cultural, social, and political factors may limit political participation and the promotion of equal citizenship and social justice.

In his reflection, Elliott Abbotts draws on John Dewey's vision of creative democracy and respective practices of cooperation, participation, and openness as a contrast with neoliberalism's narrow perspective of on material satisfaction, atomizing individualism, fictional self-reliance, and fierce social competition that prevent individuals from achieving a broader vision of their social and democratic roles. Abbotts concludes by arguing that Dewey's conception of education for democracy and robust citizenship represents a viable alternative to today's dominant, and socially corrosive, neoliberal public philosophy.

Nada Berrada explores the intersection of trust and justice in John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. She argues that while Rawls emphasized institutional trust as an important element of social justice, Hume focused on interpersonal and self-trust. She suggests that a combination of Rawls' and Hume's conceptions of justice would better capture the complexities of trust as a vital component of human interaction and of an ideal justice system. The outcome of such a conceptualization would, she contends, constitute a multilayered 'trust-justice' model, as trust plays a crucial role in ensuring the stability of justice in both Hume's and Rawls' theorizations.

Robert Flahive traces the continuity of Mubarak-era urban plans for Cairo, the "Cairo 2050" masterplan, through the three successive administrations following Mubarak's fall. He argues that the continuity in aspiration and content across those otherwise disparate regimes points to close connections between urban planning and leaders' perceptions of the security of their rule, revealing more about the fears and psychoses of those leaders than about their genuine intent to serve their nation's citizenry.

In the fourth essay in this section, Rosa Castillo Krewson explores how the juxtaposition of broad popular ignorance within the United States of Puerto

Ricans' U.S. citizenship and the historical marginalization of the island's residents contributed to the slow and inadequate federal disaster response to the devastation wrought by then-recent Category 5 hurricanes. She coupled her analysis with a brief overview of how those events relate to the ongoing debate among Puerto Ricans concerning whether they should remain a U.S. Commonwealth, become a state, or pursue independence.

Finally, Seyedreza Fateminasab critically analyzes the impact of international sanctions and boycotts on citizens in the wake of then-President Donald Trump's imposition of sanctions on Iran and withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. Although both sanctions and boycotts use political, economic, cultural, and other devices to achieve their goals, the consequences of those actions Fateminasab contends may differ dramatically: in the case of Iran and U.S. sanctions, for example, the most vulnerable population is bearing a disproportionate share of the costs, among them the unavailability of medicines necessary for patients suffering from severe diseases, including certain cancers. In the case of other nations' boycotts of Israel, those have targeted the economic elite of that nation, i.e., its large business owners and did not affect the health and safety of that group's members. He concludes by questioning the authority of the United States to limit others' freedom to choose, thereby infringing on the citizenship rights of those affected, whether intentionally or not.

CORRECTING THE ILL EFFECTS OF NEOLIBERALISM FOR SELF-GOVERNANCE

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Today's dominant contemporary social construction or philosophic frame, known as neoliberalism, gauges social value in largely economic terms. That orientation ultimately serves capitalism foremost as it assumes that the market should serve as the primary arbiter for as large a share of social decision-making as possible. This is to say that this construction of reality is a profoundly limited one that assumes that social value is and ought to be principally economic in character and focus. This perspective ultimately truncates the human experience and limits a citizenry's vision of how its shared interests may be advanced.

Harvey has succinctly defined neo-liberalism:

A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. ...if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, that state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies for their own benefit) (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

Neoliberalism assumes that individuals are economic animals who both reflect and should embrace individualism, competition, and self-reliance. This organizing principle discourages and may stifle the development of alternative narratives of value and worth beyond the simply utilitarian. Durkheim has argued that individuals working in pursuit of human ideals ultimately gave rise to Scholasticism, the Reformation and Renaissance, the

revolutionary era and the Socialist upheavals of the nineteenth century (Durkheim, 1974). That is, history has witnessed the development of a host of alternative forms of social organization and valuations of meaning and justice that did not simply reify the economic. In stark contrast, neoliberalism has produced both sharply circumscribed and instrumental values that are actively antagonistic to any common or core structure of social aims or ideals beyond the utilitarian. Durkheim posited a dichotomous relationship between Real and Ideal forms. For Durkheim, the Real connoted existing conditions broadly understood, while the Ideal concerned the “ought” of collective consciousness and individual imagination, a shared striving for a common vision of the good society (Miller, 1996). In Durkheim’s terms, the neoliberal model is best conceived as today’s dominant Real and its tenets now serve as the touchstone on which leaders and citizens alike routinely envision, evaluate and reify ideal forms.

The problem

Widespread social acceptance and adoption of neoliberal assumptions has created a Real that now pervades the consciousness of the populations of most developed and many developing countries. Since it is likewise clear that in the developed countries that have pursued it, including the United States especially, neoliberalism has benefitted a narrow portion of the nation’s population immensely, while failing to assist, marginally aiding, or actively undermining the interests of a majority of residents. For evidence, one may point to the huge and growing inequality of income and wealth in the United States that has arisen under the sway of neoliberal ideology. This unacceptable outcome in a democratic society suggests that no guiding social philosophy should be sacrosanct. Instead, democratic citizens should engage in a continuous vigorous conversation regarding their national ideals. At its best, such an ongoing clash of ideas helps to ensure that a descriptively narrow Real form, to use Durkheim’s term, does not, as now, create a meta-level monopoly of social possibility that effectively prevents, or hobbles governance attempts to advance the human condition. Neoliberalism has done so by encouraging widespread adoption of norms and values that serve the interests of few and enshrine the economic as architectonic.

This raises the question of how to kindle a civic conversation of sufficient power and breadth to change the dominant neoliberal social frame now creating profound social and income inequality. Hall and Lamont (2013) have contended that today’s regnant ideology constructs, organizes and evaluates the reality in which it exists and has thus far proven impervious to criticisms calling for adoption of alternative ideal forms. Shahrier, et al. have suggested further that neoliberalism has undermined moral dispositions that support a “social value orientation” (2016, p.1). Instead, as a guiding perspective, the

ideology actively promotes less prosocial behavior and encourages individuals to view others principally as competitors for a fixed array of material goods.

An alternative ideal

John Dewey's theory of creative democracy provides an alternative organizing principle for society that addresses the principal individual and societal-scale limitations of neoliberalism. Dewey saw creative democracy as, "a moral practice of radical equality in the pragmatic, [a] collective project of hammering out answers to the questions of how we should live" (Lake, 2016, p. 479). Ultimately, this ideal, in practice, attempts to advance the human condition by encouraging the values of cooperation, community, participation and openness. Notably, these beliefs align uniformly with Durkheim's aim of developing social ideals. These values accord greater consideration and authority to conceptions of equity, justice, equality, and lived experience in social decision-making, as compared to neoliberalism's singular focus on utility maximization and efficiency as cardinal tenets. John Dewey contended too that the path to social adoption of creative democracy had to occur via an educational process that prepared children and youth for pragmatic engagement with public citizenship.

In Dewey's view, such efforts served as the foundation that ensured and permitted possibilities for individuals to come together to work out how they ought to live individually and collectively in society. This emphasis on social acculturation intertwined with education and seen as vital to democratic citizenship and possibility contrasts sharply with the current neoliberal conception of society generally and of education, more particularly. Neoliberalism views education instead as existing principally to prepare individuals for capitalism's perceived workforce requirements (Lake, 2016).

Dewey, meanwhile, understood education as a central element of society's development of its citizenry for democratic self-governance as well as for engagement in the marketplace. Indeed, he asked more broadly if, "a material, industrial civilization [can] be converted into a distinctive agency for liberating the minds and refining the emotions of all who take part in it?" (Lake, 2016; Dewey, 1929/1960, p.100; p.488)

Still more deeply perhaps, Dewey envisioned education as integral to preparing citizens to be "democratically competent political agents empowered to engage in the collective performance" of "cooperative experimental intelligence" aimed at "creating a desired world" (Lake, 2016, p. 487). Traditionally, economists have assumed that consumers possess all of the information necessary to make buying choices that maximize their utility. Neoliberals have extended this simplifying assumption to a wide array of not only economic, but also social choices and to citizenship itself. However, as

Rorty has argued, “the democratic community of Dewey’s dreams, [was] a community... in which everybody thinks that it is human solidarity, rather than knowledge of something ... that really matters” (Rorty, 1999, p. 20). Reimagining inquiry and citizenship as a nonhierarchical process in which self-and-social interests enjoy equal claim, rather than as a consumer maximizing perceived personal desires, is central to reclaiming democracy as the central organizing principle of society.

Conclusion

Neoliberalism has limited our polity’s view of human possibility to the simply economic and placed that yardstick as the arbiter and metric of virtually all social action. The social facts produced by neoliberalism’s focus on an atomizing individualism, fictional self-reliance, and fierce social competition work actively to prevent individuals from achieving a broader vision of their social and democratic roles. John Dewey’s vision of creative democracy offers an alternative to this narrow perspective or imaginary that envisions an expansion of individual and societal values and possibility through democratic practices of cooperation, participation, and openness. Dewey argued that citizens could and should acquire a deeper understanding of these fundamentals via education. Put differently, Dewey saw that freedom and human advancement cannot be predicated on material satisfaction alone. As this nation’s prevailing social philosophy for some five decades, neoliberalism has surely advanced the economic positions of a minority of citizens even as widespread acceptance of its organizing assumptions has simultaneously degraded the capacities for self-governance of those populations that have adopted it. Dewey’s conception of education for democracy and robust citizenship provides a much needed and viable alternative to what has proven to be a socially corrosive public philosophy.

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TRUST AND SOCIAL JUSTICE BY DAVID HUME AND JOHN RAWLS

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Trust is a bond, among others, that helps to tie society together. Citizens trust every day; when we choose to put our money in a bank, or when we provide personal information to guarantee a service, for example. We routinely place trust in other people and institutions to perform everyday practices. More, we just as often trust ourselves to take appropriate actions in the countless scenarios we confront daily. Without self-trust, it would be hard to rely on our ability to behave as moral agents. Without interpersonal trust, it would be difficult to believe that other individuals would not trespass on our rights and liberties. Without institutional trust, the laws and principles of justice adopted by our society could not be upheld. Trust is, therefore, multi-layered and arises in part from the condition that the persons or institutions with whom one interacts act in an expected or agreed upon manner, independently of one's capacity to monitor their actions (Gambetta, 1988, p. 217). Trust requires a solid basis upon which a person may expect that another person or organization accorded it will not violate it.

This essay briefly explores the intersection of trust and justice in John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, first published in 1971 and revised in 1999 (1999) and David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, originally published in 1740 (2000). Hume and Rawls reflected on the attributes and conditions necessary to produce an ideal moral agent and social justice system. I argue that while Rawls emphasized institutional trust as an important element of social justice, Hume focused on interpersonal and self-trust. Neither philosopher offered a multilayered 'trust-justice' model. I contend that a combination of Rawls' and Hume's conceptions of justice would better capture the complexities of trust as a vital component of human interaction and of an ideal justice system. Although not explicitly detailed in their theories, trust implicitly plays a crucial role in ensuring the stability of justice in both Hume's and Rawls' theorizations.

Thick and thin interpersonal trust

Khodyakov (2007) has offered a three-dimensional view of trust that distinguishes among trust arising from strong ties (thick interpersonal trust), weak ties (thin interpersonal trust) and institutions (institutional trust). According to Khodyakov (2007), thick interpersonal trust is most likely to arise among people with the same or quite similar characteristics and backgrounds. Their shared attributes make the development of trust among such groups less risky for their members. However, this human inclination produces tight-knit networks that may exclude those who do not share the dominant/shared characteristics. In this view, thick interpersonal trust arises from familiarity and similarity with another individual. People who hail from common backgrounds, know each other well and share beliefs and principles are more likely to trust each other. Khodyakov has argued that thick interpersonal trust of this sort within groups often becomes automatic and those according and receiving it in such networks often do not even perceive their ties as trust.

In contrast, thin interpersonal trust arises when individuals trust others with whom they may not share conceptions of justice or of behavior. This scenario can create a complicating expectation that others will share the same principles as one's own, which may not obtain. These premises "depend on the notion of morality, commonly shared 'ordinary ethical rules', or they can also be of a more pragmatic nature" (Khodyakov, 2007, p.121). The key point, however, is that trust may arise even when those interacting are otherwise dissimilar across commonly differentiating characteristics.

Thick interpersonal trust was implicitly significant for both Hume and Rawls in their conceptions of social justice. For instance, Hume contended that individuals can sympathize better with others who share strong associative ties. Indeed, both philosophers described ideal agents in their theories, who in principle would share moral beliefs with others. For Hume and Rawls alike, thick trust arose from the capacity of individuals to behave as agents acting in accord with shared principles and mutually accepted rules. Rawls and Hume posited that that possibility in turn could be constructed on the basis of shared ideals and a capacity for reasoning and reasonability. Indeed, for both Rawls and Hume, an agent without a sense of justice could not be considered trustworthy. However, for Rawls, one needed to be a liberal agent of a certain kind; one who respected the priority of justice claims in moral reasoning, while for Hume, what mattered most was that individuals agreed on commonly shared principles that constituted justice and just action in their shared territory.

Institutional trust

According to Fukuyama if a society has a narrow radius of trust, which he defined as “the circle of people among whom cooperation and mutual understanding exist,” it is characterized by ‘low trust’ (1999). In such societies, people tend to trust only those similar or identical to themselves, i.e. by race or tribe or ethnicity. In contrast, in societies with a large radius of trust or ‘high trust,’ citizens develop trust in the public sphere and social institutions as they actively engage with other individuals in those spaces. For Fukuyama, trust in agents is a necessary condition for the development of trust in institutions, meaning that institutional trust arises from interpersonal trust. However, the relationship between trust in people and trust in institutions can go in both directions. That is, in Fukuyama’s view, institutional trust can also promote, or hinder, the development of interpersonal trust.

For their part, Hume and Rawls offered different views of institutional trust. For Rawls, trust in organizations can occur irrespective of whether individuals trust one another:

Those who hold different conceptions of justice can, then, still agree that institutions are just when no arbitrary distinctions are made between persons in the assigning of basic rights and duties and when the rules determine a proper balance between competing claims to the advantages of social life. Men can agree to this description of just institutions since the notions of an arbitrary distinction and of a proper balance, which are included in the concept of justice, are left open for each to interpret according to the principles of justice that he accepts. (Rawls, 1999, p.5)

That is, Rawls contended that although individuals might hold different conceptions of justice, institutions can enact principles of justice and ensure access to basic rights and duties acceptable to all citizens. For Rawls, institutions play a crucial role in representing principles of equality and in establishing a climate of trust among agents. In this sense, it can be argued that institutional trust plays a critical role in his conception of justice. Rawls contended that organizations are regulated by moral agents and he suggested that “a person taking part in an institution knows what the rules demand of him and of the others. He also knows that the others know this and that they know that he knows this, and so on.” (Rawls, 1999, p.48) Hume, meanwhile, saw individuals as self-interested and he explained their willingness to obey government institutions on that basis:

Tho’ the object of our civil duties be the enforcing of our natural, yet the first motive of the invention, as well as performance of both, is nothing but self-interest: And since there is a separate interest in the obedience to government, from that in the performance of promises, we must also allow of a separate obligation. To obey the civil magistrate is requi-

site to preserve order and concord in society. To perform promises is requisite to beget mutual trust and confidence in the common offices of life. The ends, as well as the means, are perfectly distinct; nor is the one subordinate to the other. (Hume, 2000, p.348)

Hence, while Rawls argued that institutional trust was necessary to ensure interpersonal trust, Hume contended that interpersonal trust was foundational to trust in broader society. More, he contended that it arose directly from human self-interest.

Rawls and Hume on the climate of trust

Interpersonal trust and a shared belief in the social structures and political mechanisms those individuals construct, and control are at the heart of what keeps a society together (Mitchell, 1994). Rawls' principles are political, and not social. His aim was not to regulate broader social life, but to create a well-ordered democratic society of justice predicated on a principle of fairness. Hume was concerned with what he saw as humankind's natural inclination to pursue its self-interest and how and whether that proclivity could result in shared just action.

Mitchell has argued that for Rawls, "the widespread existence of what might be called a civic virtue: trust," constitutes the glue that joins citizens into a society (1994, p.1920). Rawls acknowledged the difference in points of view and applications of justice among individuals in a free society. However, he nevertheless argued that as reasonable and rational moral agents, citizens are capable of making just decisions. Mitchell has contended that Rawls suggested that individuals develop trust and confidence in just and fair arrangements when they see other citizens complying with decisions arising from them. Trust and confidence strengthen and develop as "cooperative arrangements" (Mitchell, 1994, p.1922).

For Rawls, citizens mutually gain benefits from behaving as morally just agents:

Thus a desirable feature of a conception of justice is that it should publicly express men's respect for one another. In this way, they ensure a sense of their own value. ... For when society follows these principles, everyone's good is included in a scheme of mutual benefit and this public affirmation in institutions of each man's endeavors supports men's self-esteem. (Rawls, 1999, p.156)

Ultimately for Rawls, respect and compliance with institutional rules understood in this sense builds trust among individuals. Hume similarly argued that people will cooperate with others whom they believe will not break commonly accepted and enacted rules of behavior. That is, shared

norms of moral action build and sustain cooperation and trust among citizens. As Hume observed,

After these signs are instituted, whoever uses them is immediately bound by his interest to execute his engagements, and must never expect to be trusted any more, if he refuse to perform what he promis'd. (Hume, 2000, p.335).

Nonetheless, Hume placed far less emphasis on the role of institutions or rulers than Rawls, since he believed that, in the long run, individuals would cooperate with one another because it was in their self-interest to do so. Hume conceived of trust as linked tightly to the human pursuit of self-interest, as the quotations above suggested.

In many respects, Rawls can be said to have further developed Hume's argument concerning social trust. Nonetheless, while both thinkers agreed that trust is crucial to the establishment and maintenance of social justice, Rawls argued that institutional and interpersonal trust are mutually reinforcing, while Hume viewed interpersonal and self-trust as foundational. A multi-level trust in society is so important that its absence, as Rawls put it, would "corrode the ties of civility" while tempting agents "to act in ways they would otherwise avoid" (1999, p.6).

Conclusion

Trust is multi-layered. As an individual, I trust myself and that I will behave as an inevitably at least partially self-interested, but in the end moral agent. I trust that others will do the same, and I trust that social institutions will safeguard the systems of justice arising from and regulating these behaviors and guarantee equality to all members of society. My goal in this short essay was to highlight the significance of the concept of trust in both Rawls' and Hume's political thought and to argue that a society that evidences trust at all scales is likely to evidence more just behavior and outcomes than one that does not.

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AFTER CAIRO 2050: THE SPATIAL POLITICS OF REGIME SECURITY

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The popular mobilization that brought the resignation of Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, on February 11, 2011, injected new hope into the hearts of many of that state's citizens, especially those in its sprawling capital, Cairo. While many believed Mubarak's removal would result in a transformed city, government, and country, this brief article traces the continuity of Mubarak-era urban plans for Cairo. I argue each of the three successive administrations following Mubarak's fall—those of Mohamed Tantawi (2011-2012), Mohamed Morsi (2012-2013), and Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (2013-Present)—adopted strategies outlined in the Cairo 2050 masterplan, first released by Mubarak's government in 2008. This continuity in urban management goals and practice suggests that, despite the revolution and different administrations, Cairo urban planning continues to be guided largely by priorities and logics first articulated during the Mubarak years.

Cairo as gauntlet and proposed solutions

Cairo, home to more than 20 million inhabitants, is characterized by “high population density, traffic congestion, continuous increase of unplanned and unsafe areas [informal settlements], high air pollution rates and other environmental problems” as well as the intense urban sprawl beyond the Nile River Valley that creates and accompanies these conditions (MHUC & UN Habitat, 2012, p.10). The ever-expanding borders of the city have contributed to, and generated, a range of issues, including fast growth in informal housing, overburdened and often inadequate water and sanitation systems, overcrowded transportation infrastructure and the sprawl of “ghost” cities beyond the Nile River Valley, among others. These deeply interwoven issues constituted some of the kindling that eventually led to mass mobilization to oust Mubarak from office.

The General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) office in the Ministry of Housing first released Cairo 2050, a 200-page document outlining a master plan for the city, in 2008. The foundational principles of that vision

were “decentralization” and “de-densification,” which the Mubarak administration pursued through “megaprojects”—large-scale “priority developments of regional and national importance” (GOPP, 2008, p. 36). These included the relocation of government ministries and public institutions to areas beyond the city’s core (Ibid). While the Mubarak administration succeeded in developing the Six of October City and New Cairo megaprojects outside the boundaries of Cairo, the major ministry buildings—many that would-be sites for protest in 2011—were never relocated, perhaps due to the financial crisis of 2008 or the competition of other priorities. The Mubarak administration employed public-private partnerships to lure Persian Gulf state investment as fuel to expand the city. Indeed, by early 2012, half of the 26 most valuable real estate developments in Egypt were majority-owned by Gulf-based conglomerates (Deknatel, 2012).

Post-revolution urban management of Cairo

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) administration shifted the focus of the city’s planners from Cairo’s periphery to its urban core as they sought to manage post-Mubarak Cairo. Mohamed Tantawi’s SCAF erected concrete barriers around the Interior Ministry and police stations throughout the traditional core of the city. The military also actively regulated population flows in and out of centrally located Tahrir Square, particularly in the aftermath of the Mohammed Mahmoud Street standoff between Egyptian police and protesters that resulted in the deaths of 40 people in November 2011.

The June 2012 transition to civilian rule following the election of Mohamed Morsi to Egypt’s Presidency, brought new salience to the Cairo 2050 masterplan. The Morsi administration maintained many of the walls erected in downtown areas during the SCAF era and also embraced Mubarak-style megaprojects once more. For Morsi’s government, the show-case piece was the Nahda project, whose architects promised would “redistribute the population density of Egypt’s 80 million to 90 million people” and “get [them] out of the Nile Delta Valley to new regional growth areas” (Deknatel, 2012). The government did not realize these aims as it was removed from office in the Egyptian Armed Forces coup d’état in July 2013.

For its part, the Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi administration announced two megaprojects on a scale that dwarfed Mubarak’s earlier aims: a Suez Canal expansion and a “New Cairo” Capital City. Al-Sisi’s public 2014 announcement of the planned construction of an additional lane for the canal led to a series of contracts with European, Persian Gulf, and American companies to collaborate with Egypt’s Engineering Authority of the Armed Forces to dredge for the expansion (Kalin, 2014).

The New Cairo Capital City, announced in early 2015, fostered still more

vigorous economic ties with China, Egypt's largest trade partner, and looks set to contribute to additional sprawl in its planned location, twenty-eight miles outside of the city in the eastern desert (Kirk, 2016). China's state-owned construction company has pledged \$15B, and the China Fortune Land Development Company has pledged \$20B to help underwrite the proposed effort. Egypt must still raise its own share of the funds needed, an additional \$10 billion (Ibid). Construction has begun. If completed, this new city will be located beyond the fertile Nile River Valley, prompting questions of whether sufficient water, sanitation, and basic infrastructure can be made available to sustain it via systems already operating beyond their design capacity.

The new Capital City and Suez Canal expansion initiatives garnered headlines for the new administration and helped to shore up its legitimacy with Egypt's residents, even as each effort helped the state expand its financial ties and networks in tough economic times. The Cairo Capital City project also embraced the Mubarak-era goal to move the state's principal ministries to the periphery of the city to make it more difficult for residents to mount major protests at them. The al-Sisi administration moved the symbolically contentious Interior Ministry to New Cairo in April 2016. All other major government ministries are slated to follow suit and will eventually be moved to the new Cairo Capital City on its completion between 2020 and 2022.

Regime security and management of Cairo

The continuity in aspiration and content across the otherwise disparate recent Egyptian regimes highlighted here, points to close connections between urban planning and leaders' perceptions of the security of their rule. While it would be too reductive to suggest that Egypt's leaders' self-interest alone has driven Cairo's planning choices across the four administrations, there is little doubt that this motive appears, and strongly, in their selected means to manage the city.

The various regimes' attempts since Mubarak's fall to manage Cairo through continued sprawl and internal partitions reveal the intimate relationships between space and power across geographies, institutions, and the wider society. Power is always situated in space, and this brief examination of development and development policy in Cairo has sought to foreground the material manifestations of regime power. However, the nation's mass mobilization during 2011 reminds analysts that a regime's power is never absolute. Given this reality, it becomes possible to conceive of the projects of the recent successive Egyptian national government administrations less as arbiters of absolute control and power over land use and populations and instead, as evocations of the fear, insecurity, and uneasiness within which their rulers have operated. Cairo's stubbornly persistent urban transforma-

tion plans—both imagined and achieved—reveal more about the fears and psychoses of those leaders than about whether any of the efforts conceived might actually better serve the Egyptian citizenry.

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PUERTO RICO'S CITIZENSHIP STATUS AND DISASTER

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More than two months have passed since Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated Puerto Rico, but the inadequacy of the disaster response of both the federal and Puerto Rican governments has left millions without electricity or drinkable water as this is written. The disaster mitigation and response for Puerto Rico have proven particularly challenging because of its status as a United States (U.S.) territory. Many Americans are unaware of Puerto Rico's complex relationship and history with the U.S. A *New York Times* article published six days after Hurricane Maria landed reported that 46% of those it surveyed did not know Puerto Ricans were American citizens (Dropp & Nyhan 2017). The poll also showed that 81% of those who knew that the island's residents were citizens supported disaster aid, whereas only 44% of those who were unaware of that fact expressed support for such assistance.

This snapshot of how the American public views Puerto Rico, at a time when its residents have enjoyed U.S. citizenship for 100 years, reminded me of how African Americans were referred to as "refugees" after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005. Many of those who were so described were offended by the label because it appeared to suggest that the nation was providing support to them out of pity, rather than as an innate responsibility owed to its citizens (Sterett, 2011). Many observers of the situation in Puerto Rico have recently voiced similar concerns and have reiterated that the United States has an obligation to assist its citizens: "Indeed, Puerto Ricans and U.S. Virgin Islanders are U.S. citizens and expect the same federal aid and support during natural disasters as the rest of the United States" (Zorrilla 2017, p. 1801). This essay explores how the juxtaposition of popular ignorance of Puerto Ricans' citizenship and the historical marginalization of its residents, have contributed to the slow and inadequate federal disaster response still underway as this is written (Mack, 2017; Venator-Santiago, 2017).

The aftermath of hurricanes in Puerto Rico

On September 6, 2017, only a share of Puerto Rico was in Hurricane Irma's path. Nevertheless, the Category 5 hurricane left one million people without power on the island. Two weeks later, however, Hurricane Maria, also a Category 5 storm, struck the island directly. This time, all of Puerto Rico was left without power. Soon thereafter, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) estimated that it would take at least four months to restore power to all affected residents. Puerto Rico also faced severe financial woes before the destruction wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The island's infrastructure, including power and healthcare, was already in crisis because of austerity measures taken to address a fiscal crisis that began in 2006. Moreover, with Puerto Rico's economy also in decline in recent years, underemployed professionals, such as doctors and teachers, have been steadily leaving for the U.S. mainland to find employment (Melendez & Hinojosa, 2017).

As I write, the Puerto Rican power grid is operating at 58% of normal capacity and 93% of the Commonwealth's water meters have been reactivated, although it is not clear what portion of residents are actually receiving services as a result (Status.pr, 2017). Moreover, the Puerto Rican government has issued a public advisory that no water (other than bottled water) is safe for consumption unless first treated with bleach or boiled (Status.pr, 2017). The migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland due to the living conditions in Hurricane Maria's wake is expected to accelerate and may result in an estimated 14% reduction in the island's population in the near term, according to a new report issued by The Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Melendez & Hinojosa, 2017).

Puerto Ricans are citizens but not Americans?

Puerto Rico's status as a United States commonwealth has presented significant challenges for disaster response. To understand fully the island's situation as it works to address the damage inflicted by recent storms, one must highlight the importance of the Jones-Shafroth Act of 1917 (also known as the Jones Act), which granted a limited form of citizenship to Puerto Rico's residents. Although the United States acquired the island in 1898 after the Spanish American War, the decision to grant Puerto Rico's residents citizenship arose in an effort to quell a growing independence movement and to ensure the U.S. maintained permanent control of the territory as a strategic asset (Ramos, 2001). Yet this extension of citizenship did not mean that Puerto Rico would become an "incorporated" area with the eventual promise of statehood. This was also a result of a series of Supreme Court decisions in the Insular Cases that were rooted in racist ideology (most notably *Plessy v*

Ferguson in 1896). In those decisions, the Court treated Puerto Rico's inhabitants and those of other newly acquired U.S. territories as "alien races" and "rescued peoples" incapable of governing themselves in the Western/Anglo tradition (Mack 2017; Caban 2017). Indeed, the congressional legislators who crafted and adopted the Jones Act explicitly treated Puerto Ricans as political subordinates (Ramos 2001). Because islanders have historically been viewed as not-fully citizens, they cannot vote for the President of the United States and do not enjoy full voting representation in Congress. In short, their legal status has entrenched Puerto Ricans in a unique form of second-class citizenship.

However, today, more than 100 years after the U.S. acquired the island, and in the wake of the massive destruction wrought by two Category 5 hurricanes, Puerto Ricans are now invoking the citizenship rights they do possess to demand adequate post-disaster assistance and treatment (Ramos 2001). Puerto Ricans are arguing that as citizens, they have grounds to expect to receive disaster mitigation, response, and recovery assistance from the United States proportionate to the damage the storms inflicted.

"Puerto Rico se levanta" (Puerto Rico rises)

The inadequate response to the devastation wrought by two Category 5 hurricanes on the part of the U.S. and Puerto Rican governments has resulted in millions of Americans living on the island without power or water more than two months after the storms struck. It is hard to imagine that such a situation would be acceptable in the states of Iowa or Nevada, for example, whose populations are smaller than that of Puerto Rico, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, were those states to experience a similar disaster scenario (U.S. Census, 2016). Yet, because Puerto Rico is not a state, it is viewed by many Americans and United States officials with less empathy and broadly seen as less deserving of assistance. Indeed, for example, on September 30, 2017, at 4:26 AM, President Trump (@realdonaldtrump) tweeted "...Such poor leadership ability by the Mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help. They want everything done for them when it should be a community effort. 10,000 Federal workers now on the Island doing a fantastic job."

Puerto Rico's government faces many challenges as it continues to respond to the immediate needs of its residents and plans for its recovery. It remains to be seen how Puerto Rico will rebuild, but pro-independence sentiments are growing among those who resent what they now perceive as likely continued U.S. marginalization and subjugation. In fact, some Puerto Rican analysts now darkly believe that the poor U.S. response has been deliberate so as to force a significant share of the native population to depart to allow for new development for tourists: "They want to rebuild Puerto Rico without

Puerto Ricans.” (Clemente, 2017) Given President Trump’s public and deeply misleading stance concerning post-hurricane(s) recovery efforts on the island and the poor support Puerto Rico has received as it has confronted calamitous storm damage, it is clear that U.S. citizenship has not served residents as a political buffer from continued discrimination by the United States government.

While a share of Puerto Ricans sees independence as the path to addressing this scenario, the island’s governor, Ricardo Rosello, is advocating for statehood instead; arguing that such standing would have eased bureaucratic “red tape” and allowed the Puerto Rican and federal governments to respond more effectively and quickly after the storms hit than they were able to do given the realities of the island’s current legal status. Partisans of independence and statehood alike see Puerto Rico as a blank slate and the current difficult situation as an opportunity to advance their preferred alternative to the status quo. Whatever may obtain concerning this debate, however, it is clear that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, and, “out of necessity to survive ... most Puerto Ricans have ‘negotiated’ in practice their status. They have appropriated the category imposed on them, and they have tried to make the most of it...” for 100 years (Ramos, 2001, p 189).

Notes

On September 29, 2017, in a speech to the National Association of Manufacturers, President Trump emphasized that the difficulty in disaster relief in Puerto Rico was in part due to its location: “This is an island surrounded by water, big water, ocean water.” Puerto Rico is located in the Caribbean Sea.

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BOYCOTTS VS. SANCTIONS: AN ETHICAL COMPARISON

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On May 8, 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump officially announced that government's withdrawal from The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal or Iran deal. He also signed a Presidential Memorandum ordering the reinstatement of sanctions on Iran at the same event ("Remarks by President Trump on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," 2018). This essay argues that such sanctions are illegal and immoral. At the same time, I argue on behalf of certain boycotts against Israel as a tactic to pressure that country's government to change its behavior toward the Palestinians. At first blush, these two stances might appear to be contradictory. Nonetheless, I contend here that these views can ethically coexist. Although the fact that I am Iranian was surely important in my choice of cases for study, I believe the analysis I offer is applicable to other sanction and boycott initiatives.

As with any argument, context matters. Although both sanctions and boycotts use political, economic, cultural, and other devices to achieve their goals, the consequences of those actions in the present examples, differ dramatically. In fact, the most vulnerable groups within the Iranian population are bearing a disproportionate share of the costs of United States sanctions. An illuminating example is the unavailability of medicines necessary for patients suffering from severe diseases, such as certain cancers. Although these treatments are formally exempt from the sanctions, in reality, pharmaceutical companies prefer to avoid any transactions with Iran, rather than risk the imposition of possible penalties. Moreover, even when a corporation is willing to sell medicines to Iran, there is no financial channel for companies within the country to pay for them, since the nation's banking system is under sanction as well (Borger & Kamali Dehghan, 2018; Qiblawi, Pleitgen, & Otto, 2019).

In contrast, the boycotts against Israel have targeted the economic elite of that nation, i.e., its large business owners. The boycotts do not affect the health and safety of that group's members. Instead, they are aimed at limiting the financial resources that can be directed toward military weapons con-

struction and purchases. Perhaps more importantly, boycotts also question the legitimacy of such businesses. Similarly, cultural boycotts, such as musicians refusing to perform in Israel, merely limit middle class citizens' ability to access some entertainment options. Such efforts certainly do not endanger the lives of Israelis. A common criticism of cultural boycotts is that they unduly close the doors of communication while any movement toward peace can only occur through dialogue. Although I agree with this contention, those who usually use this argument, such as the British band Radiohead (Beaumont-Thomas, 2017), for example, rarely use the opportunity such creates to engage in a dialogue with their Israeli audience.

Another distinction between sanctions and boycotts is the difference in power dynamics they evidence. The boycott is a political tool for groups of individuals to press powerful entities to adopt alternate agendas. A famous example of one such initiative was the 1965-1970 Delano, California grape boycott during which Filipino and Latino grape workers successfully pressured Delano-area table and wine grape growers to sign union contracts that included better pay and benefits (Kim, 2017). Similarly, boycotts of Israel confront the fact that its government is supported economically and militarily by the most powerful government in the world. In contrast, sanctions are usually levied against countries lower on the power hierarchy. Otherwise, in truth, their implementation would be quite costly to the businesses and governments of the nations imposing them and therefore, quite impractical. In the case of sanctions against Iran, the United States, is acting against a government that is at best a regional player.

This difference in power matters as it mediates the morality of boycotts and sanctions. In my view, the morality of an act depends in part on how much the unwanted consequences of a specific action are avoidable. In other words, if one can achieve a goal without causing pain and suffering to others, but instead chooses an approach that causes affliction, that step is immoral, even before discussing the morality of the goal it was undertaken to serve. This fact suggests that the sanction or boycott decisions of governments that possess disproportionate power should always be scrutinized closely on moral grounds.

Both of my previous arguments are contextual, although this fact does not diminish their significance. However, the distinction between boycotts and sanctions is more fundamental. Those individuals and groups that choose to boycott Israel are exercising their right to choose who benefits from their financial, cultural or other interactions. Even if they have erred in taking their course, as long as they are not forcing others to adopt their view or endangering anyone, they are free to take such actions. On the other hand, sanctions, by definition, limit the freedom to choose not only of those targeted, but also of those that might otherwise have wished to continue to support them. For instance, when the United States announced sanctions against

Iran, it also suggested that it would punish other individuals and countries that desired to continue to interact with Iran in ways it had elected to bar.

If we are collectively to realize a more democratic and lawful international politics, as I personally hope we will attain, we need to ask ourselves what authority legitimates the United States action to limit others' freedom to choose whether they wish to interact with Iran. Although the United Nations (UN) is far from a perfect democratic assembly, it is important to note that the recent imposition of sanctions on Iran by the United States has not been approved by that body. Meanwhile, and similarly, the UN's international court of justice has reprimanded the U.S. for its unilateral decision to sanction Iran (Kamali Dehghan & Borger, 2018).

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PART III

POLITICAL DISCOURSES AND IDEOLOGIES

Focusing on the metaphors and slogans used in the media, policy, and public discourse, the essays in this section illustrate how concepts such as justice, inclusion, well-being, and disadvantage have often been hijacked by economic elites. Showing how neoliberalism has changed discourses about appropriate moral and political goals and democratic outcomes, these commentaries trace issues such as instrumentalized efficiency and governance, commodification, and minority oppression back to the triumph of materialist individualism in social rhetoric.

In the first essay, Andrea Briceno Mosquera explores how today's governance is shaped by interactions among actors at all levels and across all branches of government and non-governmental actors. With the rise of neoliberal governance, non-governmental actors and for-profit contractors have become core partners in the policy-making process, as that frame has declared them more capable of efficient, effective, or legitimate action than the government itself. Mosquera outlines how political and institutional structures and characteristics must change from their current alignment to ensure appropriate and accountable democratic outcomes.

Jake Keyel critiques neoliberal individualism as a barrier to substantive justice. Keyel concludes by pointing out that the commitment to building more just and democratic societies implies a fundamental transformation of global political-economic structures and patterns of state violence to ameliorate human suffering. Achieving this goal will require working toward radical democracy in homes, workplaces, and governing institutions alike.

Noting that "inclusion" may be uncritically regarded as a tool that incorporates minoritized groups or individuals into the majority, Garland Mason questions whom and what ends such inclusion serves. She contends that inclusion is a tool that may be wielded in the service of absolving the racial guilt of the majority while allowing that group to ignore its responsibility to change the dominant epistemic frame. She argues that inclusion can and must be constructed in the pursuit of justice and will never truly be achieved if defined in terms of instrumentalized efficiency or simply in economic terms.

In the fourth commentary in this Section, Rob Flahive focuses on the remnants of colonialism in former "metropolises," such as Amsterdam. Reflecting

on his visit to the material archive of Dutch colonialism located in that city, Flahive argues that despite the best intentions of present-day curators to confront the racialized violence and delusions that underpinned colonialism, selected objects in the permanent collection at the Tropical Museum continue to reinforce the Eurocentric gaze.

Pallavi Raonka and Anthony Szczurek compare and contrast how Muslims are being targeted for discrimination in the United States and India. These authors argue that the current Modi government is seeking to delegitimize the long history of Muslims in India. In an ongoing attempt to promote tensions among Hindus and Muslims, Modi's government has used the issue of the Rohingya refugee crisis to call for limitations on Muslim immigrants and refugees entering the country. Under former President Trump, the U.S. strongly allied itself with one Muslim-majority country, Saudi Arabia, against another, Iran. The status of Muslims in these two societies under Trump and PM Modi should serve as a warning of how minority communities can be used and abused for short-term political gain at the expense of democratic tenets of civil and human rights.

Johannes Grow's analysis focuses on the then-ongoing presidential nomination campaigns of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders. While Trump espoused vitriolic, xenophobic, and bizarre policies, Sanders attained a certain celebrity status through the effective use of YouTube, hashtags, Facebook, and Twitter. Grow argues that the now dominant forms of campaign politics reduce the potential for the emergence of alternatives to neoliberalism within the Democratic and Republican parties.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF GOVERNANCE IN A NEOLIBERAL WORLD

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Examining the evolution of the United States governance system is like looking at the original architect's sketches for a building that has been reshaped by those using it over many years. Today's structure may bear only slight resemblance to its original version, as the once all-alike, but now often wildly distinctive, post-World War II Levittown homes of New York's Long Island famously illustrate. The Constitution created a "building" whose operation required accountability and cooperative work between leaders and managers at the federal and state levels, and an attentive and prudential citizenry to "reify" the public good. However, the nation's current governance system is far from resembling the original sketch envisioned.

Today's governance is shaped by interactions among actors at all levels and across all branches of government: executives, legislators, and judges, and by an array of non-governmental actors, including the general citizenry. A wide range of stakeholders reflecting particular values and employing diverse policy instruments are engaged in the policy-making and implementation process. This shift has accompanied the rise of neoliberal governance that advocates that non-government actors can lend legitimacy to an otherwise illegitimate government's work. Currently, and as a direct result of this assumption, which has reigned at all levels of governance since at least the early 1980s, non-governmental actors and for-profit contractors are core partners in the policy-making process, on the view that they are per se more capable of efficient, effective or legitimate action than is the government itself. This assumption has wrought remarkable complexity in policy implementation and added, one might say, a "loft" to the U.S. Constitution's original building design.

This neoliberal turn in governance arose from ideological skepticism towards strong federal (and state) government involvement in public affairs, programmatically and fiscally. Nonetheless and paradoxically, federal and state governments are still the main source of legal, fiscal, and regulatory

resources to address public demands. Indeed, national spending has grown enormously, but direct federal public employment has been relatively flat during the decades of neoliberal dominance (Kettl, 2015, p.221). Light (2019) has also pointed out that the services and costs of government have risen, while the “visibility” of government has declined since it now delivers so many services via intermediaries. Skepticism toward a strong government gained popularity during a period of unprecedented “stagflation” in the late 1970s, resulting in widespread public fear. Popular concern was also fed during these years by persistent government fiscal deficits. During the 1980s, those criticizing government action, e.g., Ronald Reagan, argued that only markets could provide efficient outcomes and that governments should do as little as feasible to allow those entities to produce and distribute public goods and services to the maximum extent feasible. In effect, advocates contended that government, because it was government, was ineffective, while the private sector, because it was market-driven, was efficient and effective. Neoliberal proponents of a sharply limited role for governments also argued that nonprofits were somehow more transparent and “closer to the people” and therefore more democratically legitimate, even though unelected and representative of only those who founded them, compared to their public sector counterparts. No similar claims could be made for deepened for-profit institutional involvement in governance, so proponents of this public philosophy contended their engagement would result in increased public program efficiency and effectiveness.

A transnational element may also have influenced these arguments. Indeed, Kettl (2015) has suggested that the blurring of lines among government actors that neoliberalism has wrought and the delegitimization and skepticism of public institutions it has also brought in train, has been strongly, if indirectly, influenced by a deep and accelerated transformation of international relations in an economically and socially globalized world. Moreover, that globalization has adopted and pressed processes of standardization, challenging governments’ sovereignty (Bellamy & Castiglione, 1997).

Under the sway of neoliberalism, the United States Executive branch, Congress, and the Supreme Court have sought to devolve responsibility for policy implementation in many domains to state and local governments and to nonprofit and for-profit entities (Conlan, 2017; Terman & Feiock, 2014). That is, private, public, and semi-public actors have partnered with federal, state, and local governments to implement a range of policies. In this regard, neoliberalism has pressed two major trends in policy-making: one suggesting that all levels of government should be less involved in the political economy as a matter of principle and another that non-governmental actors (for-profit and nonprofit alike) should co-manage government programs whenever possible.

This turn in the nation’s regnant public philosophy has produced a gover-

nance system in which multiple interdependent government and non-governmental actors must pursue joint action to implement federal, state, and local policies to address public needs (Mayntz, 1993; Agranoff, 2017). In addition to this change during the last forty years, in some cases, citizens have become involved in policy implementation directly through the coproduction of public goods and services (Kettl, 2015). Put differently, today's governance system operates via complex inter-organizational networks that are ultimately accountable to public actors, but which those entities do not unilaterally control.

Indeed, at this point, non-governmental actors are so interwoven with policy design and implementation—whether nonprofit, for-profit organizations, or citizens—that trying to remove them from the public agenda would not only be complex, but also would put at risk, at least temporarily, the supply of government-provided goods and services. Also, non-governmental actors may provide innovative solutions to public problems that would not have emerged from the government alone (Moynihan, 2003). Despite the involvement of these many organizations in public policy implementation today at all scales, governments must still be accountable for program outcomes since they hold the essential and irreplaceable role of creating and reifying the public good and are, in truth, the only institutions democratically responsible to citizens. Governments are also responsible for deciding what basic goods and services citizens may receive, ensuring equity in their distribution, promoting economic growth, and managing the program processes that now involve many separate parties. This responsibility now demands that government officials create and maintain relationships across public and private organizational boundaries while preserving their sovereignty, creating appropriate financial and performance management systems and building human capital. This last requirement implies an effort to professionalize the delivery of public services even when those providing them are not within the direct jurisdiction of responsible government officials (e.g., nonprofit or for-profit contractors).

Surely, government actors today confront a major challenge as they seek to steer and manage institutional and financial resources as well as human capital across political and economic boundaries to produce public aims. In this regard, as Kettl has contended, “government should be strong without becoming so muscular as to limit individual liberty and entrepreneurial energy” (2015, p.228). Government officials must now oversee complex networks of governance actors to secure public aims. Nevertheless, it should be noted that today's bureaucratic system is not as problematic as its naysayers claim. Rather, the problem may be that there is a “mismatch” between society's demands for services and governmental institutional, fiscal and human capacity at all scales. We are now in an era of growing demand for goods and services, but limited public resources to address those claims. Therefore, the

solution is not to divest the government of its rightful responsibilities, but to ensure that its institutional resources and human capital systems operate as efficiently, effectively, equitably, and accountably as possible by means of the complex service delivery structures policymakers have embraced. Thus, the challenge lies in creating appropriate financial and performance management systems that allow for not only administratively efficient, but also politically and socially accountable programs for which collaborating non-government actors must also share responsibility when they are involved.

Asking that the government remain as our regime's architect, even as we have adopted a distributed service delivery model that involves actors from across our political economy in public action, has occasioned significant changes that have affected a wide range of social interests. Reacting to this change in public requirements and expectations in policy implementation is not only a technical problem. It also requires ongoing shifts in political and institutional structures and characteristics to ensure appropriate and accountable democratic outcomes, a project that continues as this is written.

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CULTIVATING RADICAL IMAGINATION

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Setting the stakes

Every historical moment contains risks for social retrenchment, exploitation, violence, and attempts by one or another group to dominate others. However, simultaneously, there are always possibilities for collective liberation. Human social, cultural, and political history unfolds not as the overused metaphors of a circle of repeated mistakes nor as a straight line of progress. Members of every society in all times and places contend with unique contexts and constraints as well as the reality that human beings have a nearly infinite capacity to create, but also to destroy.

The challenges societies face today are acute, sharing continuities with past struggles, but also exhibiting new and different contours. Most pressingly, human-induced climate change and overall environmental degradation—caused by global patterns of resource extraction, polluting production, and private-profit-driven disposable consumption—and the continued stockpiling of nuclear weapons are threats that exist at a scale unique in human history (Wuebbles et al., 2017). The technologies that societies could distribute to provide safety and material comfort for everyone instead have been employed in ways that have brought us to the brink of self-annihilation as a species.¹

Intertwined with and exacerbating these twin crises is the current ascendancy of reactionary political movements in the United States and elsewhere around the world (Bond & Chazan, 2018; Tharoor, 2018).² The individuals now in control of all three branches of the U.S. Government are committed to maximizing short-term profits for their primary supporters through carbon-fueled exploitation of natural resources and human labor (Eilperin, Dennis, & Mooney, 2018) and to dismantling international agreements of all sorts, including efforts to reduce nuclear proliferation (Bump 2018; Doubek, 2018). Further deepening these crises is the inability of the primary electoral opposition in the United States, the Democratic Party, to offer a robust chal-

lenge or propose genuine alternatives to the GOP's reactionary vision, even when in power.

The American electoral spectrum is narrow and the leadership of both major parties is committed to perpetuating the joint projects of neoliberal capitalism and global U.S. military hegemony.³ While the modern Democratic Party has been more willing than Republicans to enact limited regulation to mitigate the consequences of capitalism's inherent instabilities and inequalities, it has done so based on a commitment to "save capitalism" rather than with the objective of altering or dismantling it as a political-economic or social system (Yglesias, 2018).⁴ Moreover, in the past two decades, the Democratic Party has supported a borderless and limitless war against terrorism accompanied by a concomitant expansion of mass surveillance, the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and ever-increasing military spending (Bamford, 2016; Herb, 2017).⁵

For those of us who wish to see an end to the catastrophic consequences of both projects, the task is urgent and multifaceted. First, it is crucially important to reclaim the intellectual, moral, and political terrain from reactionary movements and from the impoverished politics of technocratic liberalism. Second, we must expand our moral and political imaginations to envision alternatives to ecologically devastating "free markets" and perpetual war. I argue here that we need to draw resources from emancipatory traditions, working to turn radical visions of the future into practice and reality.

Cultivating radical imagination

Reclaiming this terrain and expanding the horizon of moral and political alternatives requires cultivating and exercising a radical imagination to envision fundamental transformations in the present organization of life in American society. This intellectual exercise is revolutionary because it is rooted in a commitment to join with others to work toward individual and collective liberation (Freire, 2005, p. 39). It is crucial to begin from the intellectual position that human creativity is boundless. There is no reason to believe that the limited set of policy prescriptions presented by political parties, media, and defenders of existing institutions are the only available choices. Observers should deeply question the notion that capitalist liberal democracy is the pinnacle of human achievement; societies can always be freer, more democratic, and more just.⁶ While change is always constrained by historical, social, and material realities, envisioning utopian alternatives allows analysts to search for the most progressive directions to push within, against, and beyond those boundaries.

This exercise in critical thinking requires moving beyond "common sense" that insists we accept the limited confines of social and political life in its current manifestation and that forecloses alternatives pejoratively deemed

idealistic.⁷ This practice of reflexivity necessitates instead, as Said has argued, constant alertness and unwillingness to allow cliché and half-truths to guide intellectual inquiry (1996, p. 23). It means deeply exploring a wide range of historical and contemporary attempts and approaches to create better societies to identify strategies, tactics, and insights for social change. To imagine in this way also entails continued reflection on one's commitments and actions to avoid falling into determinism or reproducing the injustices one hopes to ameliorate. Exercising radical imagination is the creative act of critically examining and deconstructing ideological assertions. For example, the notion that individualism, entrepreneurship, and private accumulation of wealth are synonymous with freedom and the belief that violence is an immutable aspect of human nature needs to be challenged.⁸ Contra these assertions, analysts should imagine social and political structures founded upon principles of cooperation, mutual aid, and nonviolence as alternatives to current structures and conditions.

Importantly, however, radical imagination prefigures the processes of creating detailed plans and schematics to develop alternative institutions. Proponents of change should resist the mandate from so-called realists that any critique of existing structures must come with fully developed, implementable strategies. Often couched in the language of pragmatism, recourse to feasibility and practicality is a discursive tactic that too often proscribes the potential for radical action. The task for partisans of change is to identify structures of domination and to demand that those who support and benefit from those arrangements justify their continued existence. The burden of proof should lie squarely with those who defend social and political norms and institutions that create and sustain inequalities, oppression, and violence.⁹ For example, it is the responsibility of corporate chief executives and stockholders to justify the morality of continued environmental destruction in pursuit of profit, and leaders of nuclear-armed states must explain the rationality of maintaining weapons (and/or expanding their stock of them) that could end life on the planet.

Optimism motivates praxis

A critique of this kind does not arise from a position of pessimism. Rather, radical imagination is at its root an exercise in optimism and hope. The foundation for envisioning a better world is the belief that human actions can change conditions and that society can be made more just. It is difficult to remain optimistic in the face of cataclysmic long-term prognoses for human societies and daily assaults on the rights and lives of vulnerable people. The fragmented, atomized individualism of neoliberal capitalism exacerbates feelings of hopelessness and helplessness in the face of right-wing attacks. Collective action is the antidote through which advocates for change can

move from imagination to a praxis that confronts those forces. Hope can be found by coming together with others in the common struggle to fight these assaults and to build new organizations and institutions (Davis, 2016, p. 49). Without committed struggle, there can be no progress. Those facing oppression must, in Frederick Douglass' famous formulation, collectively demand liberation (1857, p. 22).

A commitment to building more just and democratic societies means those seeking change can reject the racism, misogyny, and cruelty of the right-wing, tout court. Americans must also reject as a barrier to substantive justice the neoliberal individualism that insists upon equality of opportunity as its highest moral and political goal (Seitz-Wald, 2018). Instead, those seeking change must demand nothing less than a society that guarantees the resources to live healthy, happy lives to every member without caveat or precondition. Achieving this goal requires working toward radical democracy in our homes, workplaces, and governing institutions. The most vulnerable people worldwide are already suffering the consequences of inaction on the pressing issues facing humanity at large. Nothing short of a fundamental transformation of global political-economic structures and patterns of state violence is needed to ameliorate human suffering and avert a looming disaster.

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Notes

1. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists—an organization founded in 1945 by scientists involved with the Manhattan Project nuclear weapons program—publishes an annual report on pressing threats to humanity. The nonprofit is known for its “doomsday clock,” a visual metaphor for humanity’s proximity to the catastrophe caused by “nuclear weapons, climate change, and new technologies emerging in other domains” (Mecklin, 2018). Midnight on the clock face represents “apocalypse.” In 2018, the Bulletin’s editors moved the hands of the clock from two and a half to two minutes to midnight, the closest it has been since the 1952 U.S. and Soviet hydrogen bomb tests.

2. In order to obtain and maintain power, U.S. President Donald Trump and many other leaders within the Republican Party have mobilized xenophobia, racism, and revanchist discourses of reclaiming the country from enemies internal and external (Riotta, 2018), advocated political violence against opponents and journalists (Holmes, 2018) and courted support from white supremacist organizations (Newkirk II, 2018; Onion, 2018).

3. In the United States, there are substantive policy differences between the modern Republican and Democratic parties, particularly domestically. The Democratic Party has not employed the overtly misogynistic, nationalist, and anti-immigrant rhetoric that Republicans have. And, for example, the Obama White House, after initial reluctance to take a strong position, pushed for and secured significant expansions of rights for LGBTQ Americans (Horsley, 2016). It is important not to discount such material improvements in the lives of millions of people. However, such gains cannot be disconnected from both parties’ economic and military policies. On such matters, the parties differ only in degree. While specific policies vary, both are broadly committed to the right-wing, neoliberal economic ideology—advocating private ownership and control of profit-driven firms by capitalists, deregulation, austerity, and privatized public services and individual over collective action—and militarist foreign policy (Cooper, 2018a; 2018b). For example, Obama’s signature legislative achievement, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, entrenched private, market-based insurance coverage as the central mechanism to meet Americans’ healthcare needs, rather than create public or socialized universal provision of care. Obama also authorized expenditures of \$1 trillion to maintain and upgrade U.S. nuclear weapons during the course of the next 30 years (Wolfsthal, Lewis, & Quint, 2014), took over and dramatically expanded the global drone assassination program begun by Republican George W. Bush (Scahill, 2015), deployed American special forces to more than 130 countries around the world (Turse, 2015) and supported the devastating Saudi Arabian-led assault on Yemen with record-breaking arms sales, intelligence, and coalition warplane refueling (Emmons, 2018).

4. U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, for example, widely considered to be on the left wing of the Democratic Party declared in 2017, “I love markets—I believe in markets!” (Foer 2017) and in 2018, “I’m a capitalist to my bones” (Grim, 2018).

5. In Donald Trump's first two years in office, Democrats in Congress have overwhelmingly voted with Republicans to increase the U.S. military budget. In 2017, the majority of Senate Democrats voted in favor of a \$700bn military budget, authorizing \$37bn more than requested by the Trump Administration (Stolberg, 2017). In 2018, Senate Democrats unanimously voted in favor of a short-term spending bill to increase the 2019 Pentagon budget by \$17bn (Werner, 2018).
6. The late novelist Ursula K. Le Guin—whose work *The Dispossessed* sketches a detailed vision of a cooperative, left-anarchist society—noted in a 2014 speech at the National Book Awards, “We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable – but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings” (Le Guin, 2014).
7. The 2016 Democratic Party primary season serves as an illustrative example of the closing of moral and political imagination. U.S. Senator and self-identified democratic socialist Bernie Sanders campaigned on an essentially Keynesian, New Deal platform of improving infrastructure and expanding social program spending including free at-the-point-of-service universal health care coverage (Purdy, 2015). Eventual Democratic presidential nomination winner Hillary Clinton, who ran as a “pragmatic progressive,” dismissed this proposal declaring its consideration a “theoretical debate” that would “never, ever come to pass” (Chozick, 2016). Far from a speculative proposal, dozens of countries around the world operate such programs (World Bank, 2013). Clinton also called Sanders’ proposed tax-funded, tuition-free college education “pie in the sky” (Merica, 2016). Again, many nations around the world, including poorer societies such as the U.S.’s southern neighbor, Mexico, have tuition-free or very low-cost tertiary education programs (Jilani, 2014).
8. One hundred years ago, well-known figure Helen Keller identified what she understood to be the fundamental problem with American society. Keller, a committed socialist and supporter of radical unionism, argued that America was not democratic because its society was founded on the wrong basic principles of “individualism, conquest and exploitation, with a total disregard of the good of the whole” (1967, p. 55). Informed by her activist work with women and children forced by circumstances to toil in dangerous, health-destroying factories, she argued that American capitalism prioritized the “output of a cotton mill or a coal mine” over the “production of healthy, happy-hearted, free human beings” (Ibid).
9. On this point, I draw particularly on Chomsky’s articulation of anarchism as a tendency toward suspicion of all forms of authority and hierarchy. The task of the anarchist is to identify systems of domination and oblige them to justify their authority over others. If they cannot—which is often the case—such systems ought to be dismantled and replaced with structures that are freer and more just (Wilson & Chomsky, 2013).

INSTITUTIONAL INCLUSION AND EPISTEMIC ABUNDANCE IN THE NEOLIBERAL ACADEMY

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Introduction

“Inclusion” may be uncritically regarded as a tool that incorporates minoritized groups or individuals into the majority. As Sarah Ahmed has argued concerning the concept, “we might want to be cautious about the appealing nature of diversity and ask whether the ease of its incorporation by institutions is a sign of the loss of its critical edge” (2012, p. 1)—a similar question applies to projects of inclusion. A critical analysis of ‘inclusion’ raises such questions as inclusion for whom and to what end? Ahmed’s scholarship and that of Ashon Crawley (2018) and Roderick Ferguson (2012) provide insight into these questions. Their analyses of the implications of modern inclusion projects, as well as of that construct’s philosophical and logical underpinnings within the context of the neoliberal academy, frame this essay. Guided by Crawley’s and Ferguson’s exploration of how an ideational rupture might occur that could begin to dismantle neoliberalism’s epistemic hegemony, this article analyzes existing possibilities for a more epistemically “abundant” imagining of inclusion (Crawley’s term).

Taken together, these scholars contend that inclusion is a tool that may be wielded (intentionally or inadvertently) in the service of absolving the racial guilt of the majority, while allowing that group to ignore its responsibility to change the dominant epistemic public frame, which often permits continued othering and discrimination of specific minority groups as well as commodification of the concept of inclusion. Even more concerning, these authors argue that inclusion projects may act to suppress expressions of criticality, radicality, and epistemic difference. This contention implicates today’s neoliberal university in foreclosing possibilities for the emergence of epistemic abundance. This essay draws on Ahmed, Crawley, and Ferguson to highlight provocative questions concerning the logic underpinning other-

wise benign sounding diversity and inclusion efforts in the neoliberal university. I argue that inclusion can and must be constructed in the pursuit of justice, broadly understood. It will never truly be achieved if defined as the handmaiden of neoliberalism's cardinal claim, instrumentalized efficiency, or defined simply in symbolic terms. Grounding inclusion in epistemic justice rather than oppression allows the analyst to imagine the dismantling of neoliberal philosophic hegemony in the academy and the development instead of inclusive universities rooted in epistemic abundance. In short, these three authors raise profound questions with which universities must grapple if they wish to promote inclusivity in the service of epistemic abundance and possibility rather than as a commodity framed by an imperative of neoliberal marketing.

A critical analysis of projects of inclusion

I employ Ahmed's concept of the "racialized stranger" here to highlight the targeted subjects of modern projects of inclusion because that formulation points to the ways that black and brown bodies are depicted as "strange" or "other" within the context of a dominant epistemic frame that assumes the norm of a white majority, namely, "how some more than others will be at home in institutions that assume certain bodies as their norm" (2012, p. 3).

Crawley and Ahmed both point to neoliberal inclusion projects as too often absolving whites of responsibility for discriminatory conditions and social cruelties by asking those bearing those costs also to shoulder a disproportionate allocation of the labor of representation. That is, both authors point to the invisible labor that projects of inclusion and diversity often impose on the racialized/minoritized "other." Crawley has suggested that those labeled as "other" within the neoliberal university are frequently called on to perform public relations during times of perceived social tension or crisis. Ahmed has argued similarly that "becoming the race person means you are the one who is turned to when race turns up. The very fact of your existence can allow others not to turn up" (2012, p. 5). In this sense, inclusion efforts not only impose the labor of representation on the racialized/minoritized "other," they may also absolve members of the majority (i.e., those whose bodies and thoughts fit easily within the hegemonic norm) from responsibility to incorporate differences. In this way, the regnant neoliberal frame is never subjected to overt critical scrutiny and potential change.

Ahmed has also highlighted the professionalization and depoliticization that now characterizes university inclusion staff and their projects. As she has explained,

... as diversity becomes more professionalized, practitioners are less likely to mobilize an activist framework ... diversity practitioners have an ambivalent relationship to institutions,

as captured by their use of the phrase ‘tempered radical’ to describe the[ir] attitude [to their work]. (2012, p. 15)

In short, today’s university inclusion efforts often ask much of the minorities already being victimized in the name of “helping” them. In so doing, they frequently absolve the majority of any compelling need to reconsider their framing social assumptions regarding the human difference. Similarly, the professionalization of such efforts brands them as apolitical, which fact tends to the same result; no compelling rationale to visit the existing and problematic framing episteme.

Problematizing the neoliberal university’s concept of inclusion

All these authors suggest that the twin phenomena of professionalization of inclusion efforts and asking the vulnerable to carry a disproportionate share of the burden of securing change has resulted in an ongoing difficulty in the academy to open possibilities for epistemic abundance. As Crawley has suggested,

In its normative function and form, then, the university exists to make some knowledges major and others minor, and then to short-circuit and extinguish minor knowledges, minor epistemologies, because they constitute an ongoing, thoroughgoing, and unceasing variation around a theme: the performative force of the critique of Western civilization. (2018, pp. 6-7)

In other words, Crawley argues that universities have persistently exercised their power to categorize, translate, make legible, and validate preferred ways of knowing, to support epistemic hegemony. While re-affirming knowledges aligned with that perspective as legitimate forms of knowing (i.e., as “major”), this orientation others alternative ways of understanding the world—including those that hold the potential to undermine that view—to the category of “minor” and therefore of relative insignificance.

Crawley has contended that this minoritization of knowledge and its associated risk of epistemic subjugation, if not erasure, has foreclosed the possibility for genuine epistemological abundance in university curricula and life. Referring to this outcome, Ferguson has argued that this process has allowed the academy to “beguile minorities with promises of excellence and uplift” (2012, p. 7). For his part, Ferguson has suggested that such inclusion of minority knowledges as has occurred within the academy has constituted a mechanism of taming and control rather than providing opportunities to challenge prevailing ways of knowing. In Ferguson’s view, the academy is an “eco-nomic domain” (reflecting the dominance of the neoliberal frame) through both its categorization of knowledges and its admission, member-

ship, and participation protocols (Ferguson, 2012, p. 12). According to Ferguson, this process has been largely an effort “to affirm difference and keep it in hand,” (2012, p. 12) rather than to open up opportunities for any shift in dominant epistemic understanding.

Echoing Ferguson, Crawley has observed that “the presence of minoritarian difference is harnessed by the academy, not to unsettle, but to produce anew the occasion for white self-ordering, the very possibility for white thought” (2018, p. 11). Crawley’s and Ferguson’s analyses of epistemic hegemony pose critical questions regarding how a reimagined form of institutional inclusion could be developed: Given the hegemonic hold of neoliberal logic within the academy, from where might the process of reimagination and its associated possibility for the flourishing of abundance arise?

Reimagining of inclusion

These authors suggest that it might be possible to reimagine inclusion as efforts to promote epistemic abundance in a shared quest for justice. Both scholars highlight the possibility for interdisciplinary ethnic studies to disrupt the academy’s prevailing nomos of subjugation, exclusion, and silencing. Ferguson has argued that interdisciplinarity holds promise to identify “the ruptural possibilities [for epistemic scale reconsideration and change] of modes of difference” (2018, p. 18). Crawley has likewise contended that such a shift would entail the interrogation of systems of white self-ordering that result in the continued dominance of neoliberal social norms and ordering.

The work of Ahmed, Crawley, and Ferguson suggests that today’s neoliberal university inclusion project has fallen far short of addressing its nominal goal. A diversity project that legitimated epistemic abundance would upend the self-ordering system that now validates only neoliberal logics as legitimate. For Crawley, in contrast, knowledge produced in the service of the flourishing of abundance is a “practice of freedom” (2018, p. 13). These scholars agree that change within the academy generally, and inclusion more particularly, will not occur until those within it are pressed to consider their epistemic assumptions and their often-discriminatory effects on minority and vulnerable populations in favor of what Crawley has called an imagined “otherwise possibility” (Crawley, 2018, p.11).

Concluding thoughts

Ahmed, Crawley, and Ferguson have illuminated the often pernicious effects of neoliberal inclusion projects that assign the labor of public relations to those adversely affected by dominant social norms and thinking. They have also highlighted the fact that such efforts often de facto absolve non-minorities from responsibility for pondering the imperative need for

epistemic change. The work of these three scholars suggests that the foreclosure of possibilities for epistemic shifts and abundance, the dominant group's self-forgiveness and self-absolution of responsibility, as well as a companion silencing of racialized "others," points to a profound need to revisit the neoliberal assumptions now underpinning inclusion initiatives within the academy.

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DISTURBING COLONIALISM IN THE TROPEN MUSEUM

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My research primarily focuses on the spatial and architectural legacy of early 20th-century colonialism in postcolonial cities, such as Casablanca, Morocco, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. However, this inquiry has provoked an interest in the remnants of colonialism in former “metropolises,” such as Amsterdam.

The most troubling encounter with these vestiges occurred during my visit to the material archive of Dutch colonialism, located in Amsterdam. Such European collections, established and furnished with late 19th- and early 20th-century imperial and colonial plunder, have sought to recalibrate their purposes in the post-colonial era to serve as opportunities for guests to reflect on the racialized violence and hubris that underpinned the projects that occasioned their founding. The recently renovated Royal Museum of Central Africa (outside Brussels) along with the Tropen Museum (Tropical Museum) in Amsterdam are examples of repositories that have reshaped their purposes in this way.

This article reflects on my experience with a small sample of the material traces of colonialism displayed in the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam. I argue that despite the best intentions of present-day curators to confront the racialized violence and delusions that underpinned colonialism, selected objects in the permanent collection at the Museum nonetheless reinforce the Eurocentric gaze. I first sketch the history of the museum, then offer comments on a small sample of its vast permanent collection. I conclude with a reflection on the broader implications of these colonial remnants and the museum.

What is “Tropical” about the Tropical Museum?

Tropen or “tropical,” as in “tropical architecture,” relates to the notion of “tropicality,” a reductive discourse of representations that suggests Said’s notion of Orientalism (Arnold, 1996; Clayton & Bowd, 2006; King, 1995). Tropicality, like Orientalism, draws racialized distinctions between Euro-

peans and Non-Europeans. It was developed and saw its fullest expression during the colonial project of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Arnold has described the notion of the “tropical” as a “way of defining something environmentally and culturally distinct from Europe,” much in the way that Said examined Orientalism as a discourse aimed at drawing imagined distinctions between the “orient” and “occident” to rationalize “dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Arnold, 1998, p. 2; Said, 1978, p. 3).

The Tropical Institute and Museum was first established as the Colonial Institute and Colonial Museum in Amsterdam in 1926. The Colonial Museum was occupied by the Nazis between 1940 and 1945, then was converted to the Royal Tropical Institute and Tropical Museum in 1950 (Lohmann, 2016). The nation’s government officials saw a need to shift the focus of the museum amidst changing global dynamics—the Dutch acknowledged Indonesian independence in 1949 (four years after it was declared)—and thereafter “the museum expanded its mandate to include all “tropical and subtropical regions throughout the world” (Ibid., p.17). Today, the institution, located in East Amsterdam, serves as a public “ethnographic” museum with a permanent collection of approximately 175,000 objects and rotating exhibits.

The Tropical Museum has positioned itself as a “Museum of World Cultures” that displays exhibits with, “objects that all have a story to tell about humankind. Stories about universal human themes like mourning, celebration, ornamentation, prayer, conflict” (“History of Tropen Museum”; “About Tropen Museum”). The overriding message the museum conveys concerning its orientation is that, “despite cultural differences, we are all essentially the same (About).”

Yet this “ethnographic” “Museum of World Cultures” glosses over, or worse, silences the violence, racism, and injustice that produced its collection and the “founding violence” of the museum itself (Edkins, 2003, p. 53; Trouillot, 1997). As such, this space provides an ideal site to reflect on the legacy of colonialism.

Coping with the colonial project’s legacy

I found the traces of the imperial and colonial projects contained in the museum disturbing. The colonial project was founded on delusional notions of a “civilizing mission” as justification for exploiting territories for settlement and/or resource extraction (Wright, 1991; Young, 2001). Those colonizer objectives, premised on a racialized order backed by violence, prompted me to consider the ways these appear in the museum. As Mitchell has observed: “The Oriental was a creation of that [colonial] order and was needed for such order to exist. Both economically and in a larger colonial

order that depended upon at once creating and excluding its own opposite” (1988, p.164).

Vitalis has argued that a common tactic for reproducing this order through knowledge occurs in the notion of “recoding.” He has highlighted how the *Journal of Race Development* was recoded as the *Journal of International Affairs* and became the preeminent international relations journal, *Foreign Affairs*, in 1922. Vitalis explained scholars recoded “race development” or “enlightened imperialism” as “economic,” “political” or just “development,” and in some cases, as “nation-building” (2015, pp.133, 173, 178). Anievas, Manchanda, and Shilliam sharpened the implications by arguing that “new terms and vocabulary often remain embedded within the same racialized logics that they claim to displace or, at the very least, dispense with in the field of international relations” (2014, p.10).

Recoding terms drawn from past historical narratives represents a significant problem for coping with the legacy of the colonial project. Muppidi has suggested these altered vocabularies run the risk of reconceiving colonialism—and colonial violence—as a potentially “desirable model of governance for our times” (2012, p.8). Efforts to re-envision or “recode” the purpose of the exhibits and displays of the Tropical Museum raise the question of whether the institution can escape its founding legacy.

Inside and beyond the colonial archive

In my view, there are things so searing that they cannot be unseen by those who visit the Tropical Museum. For example, the institution displays the deranged accoutrements of the racialized pseudo-science that nourished the colonial and imperial projects of the 19th and early 20th centuries. My immediate reaction when viewing these objects was to turn away in revulsion. It is, in fact, disorienting to encounter the twisted racism that underpins many of the items, which represent, in effect, the material traces of unrestrained violence, plunder, exploitation, and genocide in the Indies, Indonesia, and elsewhere.

These objects range from the outright perverse to the celebratory and the mind-boggling. For example, the Tropical Museum offers an exhibit addressing the significance of photography to the Dutch colonial project, which recreates the scene of a sweaty colonial photographer capturing an image of subjects on a boat. This display overlaps with a room dedicated to life-sized mannequins of Dutch colonial figures, such as Jacob Theodoor Cremer, who was the “Joint initiator of coolie regulation” (1880), a “Tobacco planter in Deli (Sumatra)” and a “Joint founder of the Colonial Institute Amsterdam” (1910). The racial slur in the name of the organization along with Mr. Cremer’s role in establishing the Colonial Institute prompts the question of whether this is someone worth showcasing in a museum. Does the display

glorify his legacy or are we confronting this unseemly past through the exhibit?

Other notable objects suggest the extent to which colonialism was normalized for families in the metropole. There are puzzles for children that allow them literally and figuratively to piece together stolen islands, such as Curaçao. Similarly, there is a ceremonial teapot to commemorate 300 years of Dutch colonial rule of Curaçao, a country in the Caribbean near Venezuela that was a part of the Netherland Antilles until 2010.

This said, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that the museum has taken steps to expand the reach of the conversations its exhibits provoke. In October 2017, for example, the Tropen added an “Afterlives of Slavery” exhibit to its permanent collection. That display confronts visitors with “today’s legacies of slavery and colonialism in the Netherlands” (“Afterlives of Slavery” page). However, the three rooms of the exhibit are overshadowed by the organization of the remainder of the permanent collection largely according to former colonial territories (New Guinea, Indonesia, Southeast Asia) that, together, are three times the size of the new permanent exhibit.

The massive and imposing structure of the museum overwhelms its visitors. The magnificent Great Hall is a remarkable space that encourages one to linger. Yet any ease is interrupted by second-floor signs for “Indonesia” and “New Guinea” that remind visitors of the founding violence upon which the institution was established. The reductive depictions throughout the museum and the structure itself encourages one to confront the fragments of colonialism that have adapted with time.

The Tropical Museum brings the visitor into contact with the racism, pseudo-science, unapologetic exploitation, and hubris of the imperial and colonial project. Visitors confront the extent to which colonial violence seeped into the everyday life of those living in the metropole. The children’s puzzles, accoutrements, and commemorative teapot made me uncomfortable because they point to the ugly beliefs and rationalizations underpinning everyday colonial life. That is, the objects themselves prompt consideration of the ideas that produced them and of the broader portent of colonialism for the present and the future for those nations and peoples it affected.

Vitalis concluded his indictment of the racist origins of international relations in *White World Order, Black Power Politics* with a question, “what other unselfconscious factors of the day distort scholars’ understandings, given that so many in the American academy were hypnotized so long by the seeming truths of racism (2015, p. 181)?” My experience at the Tropical Museum extends this question to the traces of violence that seep into our everyday lives in the present: What traces will the injustices of racialized, exploitative, structural and actual violence of the current moment leave? How will those who inherit the buildings, museums, institutions, ideas and cities we have produced look back on our participation in those systems?

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MODI AND TRUMP AND THE POLITICAL TARGETING OF MUSLIMS

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In recent years, democratically elected leaders have increasingly targeted refugees and immigrants to mobilize voters to reap electoral gains. Populist governments have commonly employed mass vulnerabilities and fears of the “Other” as a mobilization tactic. Muslims, in particular, have been the subject of efforts to “other” them, especially in Western countries, including the United States, France, and Italy. However, this phenomenon is by no means confined to Western societies. For example, the existence of internment (“re-education”) camps that today contain several million Uyghurs in China is one of the most egregious and large-scale examples of segregation and suspension of basic civil and human rights currently aimed at Muslims.

As the two most populous democracies, developments in the political cultures of India and the United States affect hundreds of millions of people and can signal broader political shifts. And today, the respective heads of state of those nations, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump, have each increasingly attacked Muslims to whip up populist fervor that they believe benefits them electorally. This article compares and contrasts how this targeting is occurring in both countries. What does this ugly trend tell us about democratic societies’ treatment of minorities more generally?

A brief note on Trump and Muslims in the United States

Explicit anti-Muslim rhetoric became a strong presence in American political discourse following September 11, 2001, attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. by Al-Qaeda members. In the several years that Donald Trump has been a national political actor, he has framed a variety of minority communities, including people of color, the LGBT community, and several religious groups as threats to the United States. To be clear, Trump did not initiate anti-Muslim rhetoric in American politics, but he has surely champi-

oned it and thereby provided it a sense of legitimacy it did not previously enjoy. Trump has long spoken of Muslims and Islam as “Other,” even prior to his campaign for the presidency. When asked if there was a “Muslim problem” in 2011, Trump answered “absolutely.” In the immediate years preceding his presidential candidacy, he gained publicity for vigorously advocating the “birther” conspiracy, which argued that then-President Barack Obama was not born in the U.S. and therefore ineligible to serve as chief executive. Together with these lies, he often asserted that Obama was secretly a Muslim: “He doesn’t have a birth certificate, or if he does, there’s something on that certificate that is very bad for him. Now, somebody told me – and I have no idea if this is bad for him or not, but perhaps it would be – that where it says ‘religion,’ it might have ‘Muslim’” (Trump, 2011). In this way, Trump conflated fears of religion and race for those willing to countenance his falsehoods.

Soon after announcing his candidacy for the presidency, Trump called for widespread government surveillance of Muslim Americans, the establishment of a “registry” of such individuals and closures of mosques when officials concluded such action prudent. In December 2015, he called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” (Pilkington 2015). He also called for the mass expulsion of Syrian refugees in the U.S., referring to them as a potential “trojan horse” (Trump 2015). It is fair to say that a large part of Trump’s presidential candidacy was based on anti-Muslim rhetoric.

On January 27, 2017, one week after his inauguration, Trump signed Executive Order 13769, banning entry to the United States by citizens from seven Muslim-majority states, including Yemen, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. After that order was met with popular and judicial resistance, a subsequent Executive Order (13780) and Presidential Proclamation (9645) added two non-Muslim states to Trump’s initial list, Venezuela and North Korea (White House 2017). During his tenure as President, Trump has continued to speak of Muslims and Islam negatively and with a broad brush. Following his announcement of a proposed Muslim travel ban, he read an excerpt from the poem, “The Snake,” comparing immigrants and refugees in general to a snake that will, in the end, betray America. Trump has also continued to use the phrase, “radical Islamic terror,” in order falsely to conflate the Islamic religion and terror organizations.

Trump’s rhetoric has clearly had an effect. Anti-Muslim and white nationalist groups have been encouraged to become more public and that fact has helped to create a more hostile environment for Muslims. Reported hate crimes against Muslims have risen sharply since 2015, as have hate crimes committed against other minorities. Anti-Muslim hate crimes rose by 20% between 2015 and 2016 (FBI, 2016). Last year, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported a 21% increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes

in the second quarter of 2018 compared to the first (Council, 2018). Trump routinely frames Muslims as inherently alien, suspicious, and even evil and therefore a direct threat to the continued existence of the United States as both a functioning society and nation. The fact that the President has employed this rhetoric has clearly contributed to the rise of a climate of fear and hate among some population segments that has resulted in anti-Muslim hate crimes.

A brief note on Modi and Muslims in India

One of the constants of PM Modi's political life has been his framing of Indian Muslims as "not true" Indians. As Chief Minister of Gujarat State, Modi's government was accused of complicity in mass anti-Muslim riots in 2002. Several thousand Muslims were murdered, raped, and/or assaulted by Hindu gangs during those events, often with the implicit support of local authorities. The violence drove approximately 150,000 Muslim Indian citizens, including women and children, to refugee camps (Concerned Citizen Report, 2013). Summarizing academic analyses of these events, Nussbaum has argued that, "There is by now a broad consensus that the Gujarat violence was a form of ethnic cleansing, that in many ways it was premeditated, and that it was carried out with the complicity of the state government and officers of the law" (Nussbaum, 2003). The Gujarat riots constitute an indelible stain on Modi's political leadership that followed him to the Prime Minister's office.

The politics of Hindutva, as represented by India's current ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata, cannot be separated from the larger grassroots movement from which they stem. The BJP belongs to a family of organizations known as the Sangh Parivar (or "Sangh Family"), which collectively represents the tenets of Hindutva in its many social and institutional forms. The primary ideological organization within the Parivar is the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), or World Hindu Council, supported by its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or "National Volunteers Society," provides the organizational backbone of the movement and its members work at the grassroots. The extent of these groups' influence in contemporary India speaks to the fact that anti-Muslim discourses have been a part of right-wing mobilization efforts for decades. Today, many Hindu nationalist organizations directly encourage attacks on Muslims as part of a concerted campaign to promote and exploit communal tensions to further the BJP's political rule. These condemnations are supported at the local level by militant groups that operate with impunity under the patronage of the state.

One important way that the current Modi government aids these hate groups is by seeking to delegitimize the long history of Muslims in India. One prominent case is the destruction of the Babri Mosque in December

1992, a part of a concerted campaign by Hindu fundamentalist groups to promote their faith's social domination. The demolition of the mosque sparked Muslim outrage around the country, provoking several months of communal rioting in which Hindus and Muslims attacked one another, burning and looting homes, shops, and places of worship and resulting in the deaths of several people. Twenty-six years later, as India marked the anniversary of this demolition in December of 2018, the BJP and its allies demanded the construction of a Hindu temple on the site and, in so doing, severely escalated communal tensions.

Another interesting case of Modi's and the BJP's anti-Muslim actions has concerned the "holy" cow, an animal of religious importance among Hindus, but often consumed by non-Hindus, including Muslims. The struggle concerning the cow as a symbol of right-wing ideas about the nation has existed for at least a century. The views of the RSS regarding cow slaughter are rooted in the nineteenth-century Hindu reform movement's use of cow veneration as a symbol to create a norm that would help unify that community. The number of Hindu vigilante groups across the nation dedicated to "protecting" cattle rose rapidly after the BJP and its allies came to power. As one prominent BJP leader mentioned in a much-remarked speech, "the spike in cow vigilante activity was due to the failure of the states to frame laws to end illegal cow slaughter, and the violence took place when cow vigilantes sought to protect cows" (The Indian Express, 2017). The BJP has argued its calls for the protection of cattle constitute a way of demonstrating national patriotism and religious faith. Fresh restrictions on the sale and slaughter of cows have led to vigilante killings (often, public lynchings) of more than twenty people during the last year, most of them Muslims who were accused of transporting cattle or eating beef (Sequeira, 2018).

In an ongoing attempt to roil tensions among Hindus and Muslims, Modi's government has used the issue of the Rohingya refugee crisis to call for limitations on Muslim immigrants and refugees entering the country. The Rohingya, the vast majority of whom are Muslim, live in Myanmar. They have been migrating to India and other neighboring countries in recent years to escape State persecution in their homeland, Myanmar's western Rakhine state. India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but it nonetheless has a strong history of taking in large numbers of refugees. In recent decades the nation has provided shelter to millions of refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tibet, and other neighboring countries. In stark contrast, in the case of the Rohingya, PM Narendra Modi's government has not only brushed aside India's long-established tradition of granting entry to refugees, but also flouted the administration's own professed guidelines by routinely deporting them to their country of origin. This is occurring as more than 500,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh to escape military and civilian reprisals in Myanmar that the United Nations

has described as “ethnic cleansing” (Cumming-Bryce, 2017). The Indian government’s decision to deport Rohingya people de facto is abetting the Myanmar government’s ongoing genocide against an entire class of people in that nation.

Under PM Modi’s tenure, the government has explicitly and implicitly framed Muslims as “not true” Indians. Beyond the specific cases discussed here, it is clear Modi and the BJP’s anti-Muslim arguments are having a large effect nationwide. According to a report on communal hate crimes, ninety percent of such offenses against Muslims reported in the country since 2009 have occurred during Modi’s tenure as Prime Minister of India (Fact Checker, 2018).

Similarities and contrasts

Broadly considered, Modi and Trump share a similar worldview regarding the extent to which Muslims should be considered full political, social, and cultural actors in Indian and American society, respectively. Despite the many similarities in Modi’s and Trump’s treatment and views of Muslims, there are several significant differences between how the two leaders have treated that population. For one, while both view Muslims as essentially foreign and alien, the actual Islamic presence in both societies is long-standing, although the size of the Muslim population in India is much larger and its influence much more obvious.

Islam arrived in India during the 7th century CE, via a series of political, economic, and military conquests by the Arabic and Persian empires (Sethi, 2007). For several centuries, these interventions took the form of varying degrees of direct and indirect rule by various kingdoms located in present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. This extensive history of interaction, co-existence, and conflict has meant that Islamic influence suffuses Indian culture, politics, and society. Indeed, Muslims today constitute roughly 14% of India’s total population, a sizable 172 million people. While Islam has been present in the United States since the early days of the colonies, it has not been until recent decades that Muslims have begun to comprise a measurable proportion of the overall population. Tweed and Diouf, respectively, have estimated that 10-20% of African slaves (between 35,000 and 70,000 individuals) brought to the colonies and the United States were Muslims (Tweed 2009, Diouf 2013). In the latter half of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th, tens of thousands of Muslims immigrated to the United States from the Ottoman Empire. As of 2017, 3.45 million Muslims lived in the United States, a little more than one percent of the nation’s overall population. Interestingly, despite these very different histories, both Modi and Trump speak of Muslims as similarly and completely incommensurable

with the supposedly “pure” Hindu or Christian societies embodied by the BJP and Republican Party respectively.

Further, both Trump and Modi have been able to gain votes in their respective countries by framing this minority group as a threat to the majority. In each nation, the leaders have exploited the fear and vulnerabilities of a share of the majority population and scapegoated the Muslim minority as responsible for those concerns. However, international concerns also play an interesting role here. Under Trump, the U.S. has strongly allied itself with one Muslim-majority country, Saudi Arabia, against another, Iran, and so the President often talks out of both sides of his mouth when talking about Islam.

In contrast, Modi’s targeting of Muslims has little to do with India’s geopolitical interests. Instead, his policies can usefully be understood as a continuation of the British imperial legacy of “divide and rule.” By targeting Muslims in India Modi has been able to mobilize the strong support of Hindu fundamentalist groups. In so doing, the prime minister has diverted these groups’ attention from economic, development, and unemployment concerns by blaming Muslims for their woes. Indeed, both Trump and Modi have found it useful to “other” Muslims to distract domestic attention away from their governments’ actions. During Modi’s regime, the failure of the government to deliver on issues of development, unemployment, and the alleviation of hunger has been very well covered in the nation’s media, yet that fact has been pushed aside by many in favor of anti-Muslim sentiments. Currently, India’s GDP growth is at an all-time low. Similarly, Trump’s tenure as President has been marked by constant chaos, a skyrocketing federal deficit, and growing national debt as well as revelations of improprieties and charges of law breaking. Modi and Trump’s use of anti-Muslim rhetoric has usefully diverted many voters in their nations from focusing on these issues.

Balancing majority interests and minority protection is a perennial issue for democratic societies. Today, as we see many democratic states moving toward more authoritarian politics, the question of minority rights must be at the forefront. In both India and the U.S., anti-Muslim rhetoric has been used to delegitimize members of that minority, to contend they do not belong to the nation and to sanction violence against them. The status of Muslims in these two societies under President Trump and PM Modi should serve as a warning for how minority communities can be used and abused for short-term political gain at the expense of democratic tenets of civil and human rights.

Notes

During the early 1900’s, hundreds of gaushalas (cow shelters) were built as

part of the early Hindutva groups efforts to support Hindu nationalism. Cow protection, which was supported by Mahatma Gandhi, also had the backing of the Congress Party after Independence.

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HASHTAG REVOLUTIONS, SPECTACLES, AND POLITICS

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The nomination process for the next presidential candidates is in full swing in the United States. Although this election cycle has been noteworthy for several reasons, the most notable is not only the success of billionaire Donald Trump, but of the self-proclaimed “socialist,” or at different times, “democratic socialist,” Bernie Sanders. Although both the Democratic and Republican primary races are fascinating, this analysis will focus on Trump and Sanders and their ongoing presidential nomination campaigns. Specifically, what concerns me is the role of what Luke has called “entertainmentality” in both the Democratic and Republican primaries. Luke has suggested that:

Plainly, ‘entertainments’ are arrangements to keep one preoccupied, to engage one in a specified manner, or to maintain one as such. To speak of entertainment, one already moves rhetorically into spaces of ‘entertainmentality,’ or practices that keep us held in some mutually pre-specified manners. (2002, 4; quoted in Nickel 2012, 168)

In other words, as Nickel has noted, this “preoccupation” with entertainment narratives “not only hold our attention while holding us apart, it also imparts a false sense of individualized entertainment as a form of togetherness” (2012, p.169). These “celebrity parables” have turned the race for President of the United States into the equivalent of a TV reality show complete with heroes and villains, obscuring alternatives to crisis-ridden and contradictory neoliberal governance, or “roll-out neoliberalism,” that has continued under both the Left and Right (Peck, 2010).

The current Democratic and Republican primaries represent the latest iteration of this entertainment narrative. Americans’ preoccupation with the celebrity character of the Democratic and Republican primary races, despite their ideological differences, is propelled by a “media spectacle” that precludes any “political #revolution” or anti-establishment politics (Fletcher 2016; Kellner, 2009). Although I argue that all of the candidates fall within this entertainmentality narrative, Sanders and Trump have each proclaimed

that they are “anti-establishment” candidates and thus beyond “political orthodoxy” (Roberts & Jacobs, 2016). Each presidential candidate adheres to ideologically distinct views, but nonetheless embrace entertainmentality narratives and media spectacle. As a result, these continue to dominate Democratic and Republican election politics.

While we are continuously told that both potential presidential nominees treated here are tapping into the anger of the disenfranchised, the excluded and outraged citizens, Sanders and Trump’s campaigns are radically different (Brooks, 2015; Savage, 2016). Sanders has promised to lead a “political revolution” by securing major campaign finance reform and has embraced universal higher education and the breakup of big banks while also advocating New Deal-era style policy projects. He seems to be energizing the much-maligned Millennial generation, albeit to a lesser extent than “Obama’s miracle” accomplished in 2008 (Davis 2016; cf. Schaeffer 2016). This is not to say that Sanders is refusing to speak about issues that need to be addressed. The massive amount of student loan debt, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United* that opened space for an almost unfettered role for money in politics, and the role of the banking-financial sector in the recent financial crisis, should be addressed. Yet, we must be careful when proposed remedies for these concerns are advertised as a “political #revolution,” when in reality, these ideas remain ensconced within a neoliberal narrative that presumes that we can solve our issues solely through offering more education, providing more jobs, or repairing crumbling infrastructure (Halsey III, 2015).

Trump, on the other hand, has espoused vitriolic, xenophobic, and bizarre policies. For example, his statements on “irregular migration” from Mexico or his stance embracing torture are outrageous and have very little basis in reality (Davidson, 2016; Porter, 2015). Nonetheless, Trump’s presidential nomination campaign has gone from being a “joke” and a “public stunt,” to a serious political phenomenon. Indeed, unless the Republicans can somehow finagle a “brokered convention” and prevent Trump from gaining the required 1,237 delegates, the businessman may capture the GOP presidential nomination (RealClear Politics, 2015).

Despite their significant ideological differences, the 2016 campaigns for the GOP and Democratic Party presidential nominations have fully embraced what Kellner has termed the “media spectacle,” a phenomenon marked by the promotion and production of would-be presidential nominees as “‘faux celebrities’ propelled by the ‘implosion’ of entertainment, news and politics” (2009, p.716). This is perhaps no more evident than in the meteoric rise of Trump. Kellner has also highlighted the fact 2008 Democratic Party presidential candidate and presumptive 2016 Democratic Party presidential nominee Hilary Clinton enjoys the same faux celebrity (Kellner, 2009, p.716). Clinton’s entertainmentality narrative has developed because of her husband, former President Bill Clinton’s sex scandal as well as the cur-

rent “email server scandal” (Kellner, 2009). Kellner has suggested that in the 2008 election:

... The spectacle of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—the first serious African American candidate versus the first serious women candidate—generated a compelling spectacle of race and gender. ... As media spectacle, the Democratic Party primary could be seen as seen as a reality TV show. For the media and candidates alike, the Democratic primary was like ‘Survivor’ or ‘The Apprentice’ (‘You’re Fired’), with losing candidates knocked out week by week. (2009, p.717)

In retrospect, Kellner’s portrait of the 2008 Democratic primaries seems prescient, capturing both that Party’s nomination race and that of the GOP as well. Not only were there originally seventeen potential nominees to “knock out” during the Republican primaries, but the current delegate leader for the Republican Party nomination is also the former host of a reality television show, *Celebrity Apprentice*. Moreover, Trump’s rhetoric on the campaign trail and during debates has been deeply intertwined with his TV persona. Indeed, his constant references to his ability to “win” and the success of his business ventures connects his celebrity persona with his presidential aspirations (Porter, 2015).

Sanders has also reached and embraced a certain celebrity status. Like the 2008 Obama campaign, whose “masterful leveraging of Web 2.0 platforms,” such as Facebook and Twitter, marked a “major E-ruption in electoral politics,” Sanders has also become a Web and media spectacle, across platforms that include, “Bernie Sanders’ Dank Meme Stash” as well as countless hashtags and videos on social media and the Web (e.g., #feelthebern) (Dutta and Fraser 2008; Dewy 2016). Similar to Obama’s presidential campaigns, Sanders has made effective use of YouTube, hashtags, Facebook, and Twitter (Kellner, 2009). The reliance of U.S. politics on E-politics and media spectacle obscures the “real issues,” “interests,” and “ideologies” behind the façade it creates. This form of campaign politics also reduces the potential for alternative(s) to neoliberalism within Democratic and Republican party politics to emerge (Ibid, 783). Yet, this is not to contend that Sanders’ campaign, partly modeled on the recent Occupy and Black Lives Matter social movements, will not help build a “more egalitarian and diverse Democratic Party” (Marcus 2016). On the contrary, regardless of whether he wins the Democratic Party nomination, he may have changed the direction and composition of the party for the future (Ibid).

In sum, although what Sanders espouses is no doubt imperative, the increasing entertainmentality of presidential elections, with Trump representing perhaps the pinnacle of this (con)fusion, continues to obscure alternatives to the currently dominant (neo)liberal public philosophy (Brown 2005). In the end, Sanders’ calls for a “political revolution” must be contextu-

alized. Yes, inequality must be reduced; yes, higher education should be accessible; yes, our infrastructure must be repaired. Nonetheless, Sanders' calls for a "hashtag revolution" and for Americans' collective participation in politics remain superficial and deeply intertwined and even enthralled, with entertainmentality and spectacle.

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PART IV

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The essays in this section discuss sustainable development policies that purport to balance sustained economic growth, a healthy environment, and inclusive social development in varied contexts. However, these goals have often clashed with market-driven interests, underpinned by a fundamental ideological and paradigmatic shift in development thinking from a state-centered to a market-oriented perspective, thus significantly affecting the prospects for sustainable development. Moreover, that shift prevents the involvement of local communities and the integration of their knowledge, needs, and perspectives into policy and project outcomes. Written by several students of agricultural development, these essays collectively outline the measures needed to mitigate the challenges to sustainability posed by neoliberal policies and assess the prospects for achieving a more genuine sustainable development.

Laljeet Sangha revisits the Green Revolution in post-independent India, focusing on agricultural development in Punjab, which became the “Granary of India” and made India self-sufficient in agricultural production. However, in this process, the state lost its traditional form of agriculture and depleted its water resources and soils considerably, and these trends have been accompanied by the development of widespread popular outrage against a continued market-oriented approach to agricultural policy that does not stress sustainable farming.

June Ann Jones seeks to understand the implications of the Green New Deal proposal that marked a historic turn in the United States Congress’s attention toward the issue of climate change. Interested in discerning how such significant policy changes could affect all sectors of the U.S. economy, Jones inquires into the issue of who exactly the farmers that this Green New Deal intends to support are and whether its adoption and implementation would indeed lead to sustainability and social justice. She cautions the leaders pressing for a Green New Deal that to address systemic injustice while improving the health of our soils, they need to become much more aware of the scale and power dynamics of the current agricultural sector in the U.S. and craft policies that take those realities into consideration.

Jeremy Elliott-Engel reflects on his experience as an intern with an EU-funded dairy improvement extension education project in rural Eastern

Turkey. Elliott-Engel shares his deep discomfort that the project's implementers had not involved local community members in the program planning process, thus preventing the integration of their knowledge, needs, and perspectives into the project's outcomes. He concludes by noting how essential understanding contextual complexity and power dynamics is to efforts to make the world a better place.

Drawing on his ten years of professional experience working in Nepal's rural communities, Raj Kumar G.C. questions whether international aid is succeeding in the existing policy context and with current development practices. Reflecting on his direct work with hundreds of communities on projects involving planning, design and construction of school buildings, culverts, roads, irrigation and water systems, and market centers, he argues that assistance can be effective when approached in concert with community leaders and residents. While governmental institutions simultaneously effectively assume responsibility and accountability.

Lia Kelinsky-Jones reflects on the challenges of employing science-based knowledge in policy decision-making as democratic choice-makers address wicked problems for which there is no single scientifically derived response. When applied to agriculture, neoliberal thinking seeks to quantify, measure, and manipulate knowledge to advance economic efficiency and profitability as its foremost aims, thus dismissing other forms of knowledge that do not comport with this assumption concerning what should be valued in society. She suggests that instead of employing science alone for policy-making, a dialogue between scientifically developed knowledge and other forms of knowledge such as indigenous, experiential, or artisanal ways of knowing is needed.

REVISITING THE IMPACTS OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION IN INDIA

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It was 1947. India had gained its freedom from British rule, but like many countries worldwide in the aftermath of World War II, the new nation was experiencing severe food shortages. The war-induced famine in Bengal in 1943 had earlier resulted in the death of between 1.5 and 3 million people. In 1947, the country's food supply was again disrupted as the agrarian state of Punjab in northwestern India was divided by the agreement creating the new state of Pakistan. This territorial division also left Punjab without any of its primary agricultural research facilities, as the Agricultural College and Research Institute at Lyallpur, Punjab, was now located in Pakistan. To help to fill the supply gap it now confronted, India relied on food imports from the United States.

In fact, throughout much of the Cold War era, then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi (1966-1984) “hoped” for USA food aid without openly admitting to doing so. India faced two severe droughts in 1964-65 and 1965-66, leading to shortages of food once more. Those events resulted in India receiving 5 million tons of wheat aid from the U.S. Food for Aid Program. Overall, India received American aid in the form of concessional food sales totaling 10 billion dollars between 1950-1971 to purchase 50 million tons of emergency food from the United States. The government of India expected to have to import an estimated 10 million tons of cereal grains per year by the 1980s to feed its growing population and it did not then have an overarching plan to address the issue.

However, the story was different in the small northwestern Indian state of Punjab. The name Punjab is derived etymologically from the Persian words panj (five) and āb (waters), meaning “the land of five rivers.” Punjab occupied about 2% of India's land area following the 1947 partition that created Pakistan. After rebuilding its economy following its division, Punjab emerged as one of the wealthiest states in India. Blessed with natural surface water resources, as its name suggests, and having been willing to undertake fundamental institutional and land reforms after independence, the state's government also worked to develop irrigation systems, electric power resources, a foundation of agricultural research and extension and a solid cooperative

credit structure for its population. During a period when India overall was struggling to meet the food needs of its citizenry, the state of Punjab recorded a 4.6% growth rate in agricultural production between 1950-1964 (before the Green Revolution) and became more than self-reliant in fulfilling the needs of its population as a result (Bhalla et al., 1990). The state's farmers were ready to assist when the opportunity presented itself in the form of the Green Revolution.

The Green Revolution era

In April of 1969, 16 leaders from the world's major foreign assistance agencies and eight scientific food production consultants met at the conference center at Villa Serbelloni, Italy to devise a strategy to feed the world's hungry through science, rather than food aid (Hardin, 2008). The government of India selected Punjab to receive a Green Revolution support "package" recommended by the conference because of the state's track record of working effectively to improve its agricultural production. One example of that innovation had occurred in the mid-1960s before the Green Revolution. India imported 18,000 tons of dwarf wheat seeds from Mexico in 1966. Punjab seized the initiative in transporting its share of that shipment from its port of arrival via trucks to ensure a timely arrival, while other states awaited trains for transport. Meanwhile, the state's Corrections Department arranged for prisoners to prepare an adequate number of 10kg bags to distribute the new seeds to farmers when they arrived in Punjab. This effort, in concert with the state's previous initiatives to ensure adequate support of its growers, persuaded the Indian central government that Punjab possessed the political, social, and economic wherewithal to accept and make productive use of Green Revolution technology.

And so began the tale of India's journey toward agricultural self-reliance. The early years of the Green Revolution required that Punjab's farmers replace indigenous seeds with new high yielding varieties (HYV). Those varieties absorbed higher levels of nitrogen than their native counterparts and required synthetic fertilizers as a result. Punjabi farmers also began to employ pesticides in their fields to boost yields. Farmers likewise replaced traditional diverse crop choice strategies with wheat and rice monocropping. These steps resulted in a phenomenal rise in wheat and rice production in the state (Figure 1). Wheat yields increased by 2% per year from 1952-65 and rose again annually by an average of 2.6% during the 1968-85 period. Meanwhile, Punjab's rice production increased from typical growth rates of 1.7% per year in the pre-Green Revolution era to 5.7% annually from 1967 to 1985. Rice cultivation had traditionally been low in Punjab; the state produced 0.1 million metric tons in 1950 and 0.5 million metric tons in 1970, for example. But with the introduction of Green Revolution strategies, this

value rose to 5.1 million tons per year by 1985 and it reached a record high of 12 million tons in 2017. Meanwhile, wheat output increased from 1 million tons in 1950 to 10.2 tons in 1985 (Bhalla et al., 1990). As a result, wheat and rice soon emerged as the two dominant crops grown in the state. The upshot of this growth in production during the 1970s was that Punjab virtually single-handedly delivered India its much-desired food independence. When the famine of 1975 struck, India was prepared to address it because its farmers were equipped with sturdy, disease-resistant, fast-growing, and highly responsive seeds to face that challenge. Indeed, India emerged as an exporter of food grains for the first time after independence during the 1970s (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Index of agricultural production: India and Punjab, 1960/61-1986-87 Source: Bhalla et al. 1990.

As the Green Revolution proceeded, the net area irrigated as a percentage of total hectares in crops in Punjab increased from 49% in 1950/51 to a high of 81% in 1980/81. The net area irrigated by tube wells specifically, increased from 35% in 1950 to 57% of total planted area in 1980. By 1981, Punjab boasted one tube well for every 7 hectares of land in cultivation. Meanwhile, the state government electrified 100% of the state's villages by 1980, compared to 47% for overall India's rural communities. At the same time, the number of tractors in use by Punjabi farmers increased more than 11 times between 1966-1981.

Even before the Green Revolution, the national government had sought to ensure a favorable price environment and means to procure grain to help

farmers invest in new technologies. To do so, India's Parliament established the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in 1965. The FCI guaranteed the purchase of farmer-produced grains at a minimum support price (MSP). The government sought to use the MSP to protect the country's growers against an excessive fall in crop prices during high production years. During the 1970s, Punjab's farmers benefitted from the fact that they produced more food than the population of their state could consume and the FCI ensured that they were adequately compensated for that production. By 1983/84, per capita income, for example, in Punjab was 3,560 rupees compared to the national average of 2,288 rupees (Bhalla et al. 1990). In short, by the early 1980s Punjab had fulfilled the goals of the founders of the Green Revolution and emerged as a champion in India's war against hunger. Nevertheless, new challenges lay just around the corner.

More particularly, their narrow focus on "increasing production" came back to haunt Punjab's farmers as they replaced heirloom seeds with new HYVs. The principal reason for the change was not inadequate indigenous seed yields, but their inability to withstand the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides (Sebby, 2010). Farmers replaced the native crop varieties with expensive high yield and chemical and disease-tolerant varieties. The new seeds/crops replaced thousands of locally indigenous species and the agricultural systems they had sustained (Shiva, 1993). In addition to adopting widespread chemical fertilizer and pesticide use, Punjab's farmers replaced their traditional sustainable farming practices, involving diverse cropping and leaving fields fallow periodically to allow for the regeneration of nutrients, with monocropping. As the national and state governments achieved their targets for food production and security and shifted their focus to other areas, however, Punjabi farmers found themselves coping with the aftermath of these changes.

Post-Green Revolution

After an initial period of success, the switch away from indigenous agricultural practices trapped farmers in high-interest loan cycles as they sought to pay for expensive artificially developed seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Jodhka (2006) found in a study undertaken in the 2004-2006 period that 86% of farmers in Punjab incurred short-term loans to plant crops each year and 27% had recently borrowed to purchase farm machinery. The irrigation systems needed to keep up production also demanded new wells to keep pace. This imperative also increased farmers' capital costs in addition to exploiting groundwater resources. Punjab's Green Revolution farmers soon found themselves addressing high and continuing costs for seed, chemicals, fertilizer, and irrigation as well as rapidly depleting soils.

The ecological impacts of the adoption of modern high production agri-

culture in Punjab proved far reaching indeed. While some rice had always been grown in the region, it was not a native crop in the state, and farmers soon found that this incompatible climatic crop was depleting their water resources. Where once farmers could drill 10 feet and find water for irrigation, in many areas of the state today they must drill to 200 feet to do so and that depth is increasing at a rate of about 3 feet per year (Mohan, 2020). In addition, Punjab alone today consumes 20% of India's pesticides each year. The human consequences of this turn are visible in numerous areas of the state, which have experienced a marked rise in cancer cases, stillborn babies, and congenital disabilities (Zwerdling, 2009).

By the early 2000s the state and its farmers faced a crisis. In fact, Swaminathan, the father of the Green Revolution in India, has argued that the practices adopted as a part of that movement may not have been the best approaches for the long run sustainability of farming in the nation generally and in Punjab more particularly (Kesavan and Swaminathan 2018). Instead, as noted above, the industrialization and monoculture strategies advocated by Green Revolution enthusiasts have resulted in low water tables and depleted soils in Punjab. These techniques initiated a cycle in which farmers spent more and more on chemicals and pesticides to offset the deepening negative impacts of monoculture cropping.

Today, residents of Punjab are turning their backs on genetically modified produce and also eschewing products from other regions produced with high quantities of pesticides and fertilizers. Nonetheless, overall returns, including the government's MSP, which only supports commodities such as wheat and rice, have made it difficult for the state's farmers to shift away from existing high input agricultural practices. Many Punjabi growers today feel trapped between securing a living and supporting a sustainable farming system (Jodhka, 2006).

In retrospect it seems clear that after Punjab's farmers worked as requested to increase production during a period of national need, their national and state governments should have helped them modify their highly intensive practices when evidence mounted that those strategies were destroying the environment and trapping them in debt. However, that never happened.

In fact, by the 2000s, the MSP was no longer increasing at the same rate as it had previously. In the first decade of the 2000s, Punjab's farmers delivered bumper crops and the heaps of grain could be seen in farmers' markets across the state. But the FCI now declined to buy needed quantities from those growers, citing "quality" concerns. Farmers were left with no choice but to sell their harvest at a price lower than the MSP nominally supported. This situation, which has continued, has resulted in at least 7000 suicides among farmers since 2000 in Punjab. Some observers have argued that the actual number may be three times this government-issued figure (Singh, 2018).

This mounting economic and social crisis arose in major part due to a change in government priorities once the nation achieved food security. In the 1990s, Indian leaders began to emphasize the need to create a “new economy” and both the national and state governments have focused their primary energies on information technology and urban consumers since (Jodhka, 2006). Nonetheless, aware of this deepening predicament, the newly elected Indian government (in 2004) formed the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) chaired by Swaminathan in November 2004 to address the causes of farmer distress in the nation. In its 5-part report, the Commission suggested a comprehensive national policy to support the nation’s farmers (Sanyal, 2006). The report focused on land reforms, investments in surface water systems, adoption of groundwater recharge schemes, and promotion of conservation farming to preserve soil health and water quality and quantity. The Commission also emphasized the need to reduce the interest rate for crop loans, initiate a comprehensive crop insurance scheme, increase the MSP by at least 50% of the weight cost of production and extend the price support program to crops other than wheat and rice. However, 16 years after its publication, vigorous debate continues concerning whether the government has taken sufficient steps to implement its provisions.

What does the future hold?

The Indian government issued three new farm ordinances on June 5, 2020 (they became law on September 24, 2020) amid the COVID-19 crisis. The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020, the Farmers Empowerment and Protection Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 (Singh, Rosmann & Bailey, 2020). These laws have resulted in widespread farmer protests against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of India. Protestors have called these ordinances a “death warrant for farmers” because together, they argue, they deprive growers of the laws and agencies that had been in place to protect them. Contrary to the 2004 Commission report’s recommendations, these ordinances loosened rules concerning contract farming and public regulation of crop pricing and sales.

Historically, farmers sold their harvest at state government regulated markets under strictures aimed at safeguarding them from large retailers’ exploitation. In contrast, the new ordinances allow farmers to sell their produce outside state markets. The legislative aim of this change was to create more competition and better pricing by encouraging additional private buyers. However, protesting farmers have argued that the ordinances embraced these changes without also ensuring adequate government price supports for their harvests. Growers fear that lifting regulation in this way without assur-

ing adequate MSP support, will ultimately allow large companies a much greater, and largely negative in pricing terms, role in local agricultural markets.

These ordinances also create a framework for contract farming in which large retailers could buy quantities of agricultural products for a pre-agreed price. However, farmers argue that they lack control and compensating knowledge when offered these contracts and that the ordinances do too little to protect their rights when disputes arise with such purchasers. That is, contract farming shifts the power balance away from the farmer to companies. Another provision of recent policy changes removed cereal, beans, oilseeds, edible oils, onions and potatoes from the national government's list of essential commodities. In other words, the government has now indicated that it will not regulate production and storage of these commodities. Many farmers and other critics of this change are now contending that it could lead to the monopolization of supply of these commodities by a limited number of corporate growers, which could then manipulate production to maximize their returns.

It remains unclear why the national government enacted these changes despite large protests and opposition from the nation's farmers. But part of the answer appears to lie in India's ongoing dialogue with the World Trade Organization (WTO) concerning the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). The AoA is based on free trade in agriculture without barriers, and WTO views state support in the form of subsidies, including the MSP specifically, as a hindrance to achieving a free market agricultural economy in India.

Conclusion

Punjab, often known as the "Granary of India," made India self-sufficient in agricultural production, but in so doing, also lost its traditional form of agriculture and depleted its water resources and soils considerably. The distrust among farmers of the government has now risen to perhaps its highest level in the post-Green-Revolution era. Growers are in dire need of a plan focused on sustainable farming and soil and water reclamation plans and the Report of the National Commission on Farmers provided an excellent template for needed reforms. The Indian government, however, has chosen a different course in its recently passed policies. The new ordinances do not stress sustainable farming and contract farming looks likely only to increase stress on already stressed lands. As Wendell Berry has argued, "A good farmer who is dealing with the problem of soil erosion on an acre of ground has a sounder grasp of that problem and cares more about it and is probably doing more to solve it than any bureaucrat who is talking about it in general (Berry, 1972). There is no doubt that existing government regulation needs an overhaul, but farmers are now insisting that power should remain with

the government in any such changes and that new regulatory policies should address needed changes in agricultural practices. The more market-oriented approach of recent policy changes has thus far met with widespread popular outrage across India.

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WHO SPEAKS FOR THE FARMER IN THE GREEN NEW DEAL?

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Figure 1. Credit: Keith Weller, USDA Agricultural Research Service. Public Domain.

Introduction: The Green New Deal and the “agricultural sector”

On February 7, 2019, Senator Edward Markey (Mass.) and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (N.Y.) proposed companion congressional resolutions in their respective chambers that were collectively known as the “Green New Deal.” While such legislative acts lack the force of law, the Green New Deal proposal marked a historic turn in the United States Congress’s attention toward the issue of climate change and its language anticipated significant policy changes that would affect all sectors of the U.S. economy. Most boldly, the resolution sought to combine sustainability goals with an attempt

to address systemic injustice in the U.S. As someone currently working with lawmakers to enact legislation protecting small farmers in my native state of Maryland, I was especially interested in the subsection of the text that addressed how the “agricultural sector” would be transformed. The resolution called for the following:

Working collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible, including—(i) by supporting family farming; (ii) by investing in sustainable farming and land use practices that increase soil health; and (iii) by building a more sustainable food system that ensures universal access to healthy food. (H.R. Con. Res. 109, 2019, pp. 8-9)

The vagueness of these goals is perhaps at once a curse and a blessing. Their lack of specificity assures supporters and opponents alike that these are not actionable steps with immediate implications. As a result, any legislation that follows this resolution will need to tackle these challenges with clearly articulated policy provisions. Moreover, it is not clear that the Green New Deal will accomplish either its sustainability or social justice goals by “supporting family farmers” as a collectivity. As matters now stand, a large portion of “family farms” in the U.S. (including organic ones) are currently undermining local food systems and destabilizing bioregional ecosystems in pursuit of profit. After reading the resolution, I was left wondering *who exactly are the farmers that this Green New Deal intends to support, and will its adoption and implementation lead to sustainability and social justice?*

Not all family farmers wear overalls (just my mom)

The phrase “family farm” may bring to mind a large white farmhouse surrounded by green cow pastures and corn fields, or perhaps Wendell Berry’s vision in *The Unsettling of America* of nuclear families living off the land, free from the nuisances of modern life (1977). My childhood serves as my own agrarian benchmark, helping my parents plant, harvest, and sell our vegetables at our roadside stand. Nonetheless and despite its nostalgic connotations, these images bear little relationship to the large-scale farm operations that supply an ever-increasing proportion of our food in the U.S.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS), 98% of farms in the U.S. are “family” owned, but that percentage is misleading, as the ERS has defined the term as, “any farm where the majority of the business is owned by the principal operator—the person who is most responsible for making day-to-day decisions for the farm—and by individuals who are related to the principal operator” (2019, p.2). Within this definition, there is vast wiggle room for additional

non-family labor and absentee owner-operators who never touch the soil (white gloves instead of green thumbs). Large-scale “family farms” (those with sales of \$1,000,000 or more per year) account for 45.9% of U.S. agricultural production, while medium-scale operations (those with sales between \$350,000 and \$999,999 per year) account for 20.6% of that total. Small-scale family farms (those with sales between \$1000 and \$350,000 per year) account for 21.1% of production. By the Department of Agriculture’s definition, non-family farms account for 2.1% of farms and 12% of production.

Farm size can be classified by revenue or acreage, although their market share is more easily seen with sales statistics, since a well-managed small property can be just as productive as a poorly managed large one. Gross sales vary greatly, from as little as \$1,000 (the minimum to be considered a “farm” by the USDA) to \$5,000,000. It is clear from statistical evidence alone that adding the word “family” to the term “farm” in the U.S. obscures the vast difference between the daily lives and operating costs of owners at different income and production levels. For this reason, any policy inspired by the Green New Deal that treats “family farmers” as a uniform, collective group will not address any existing systemic injustices. That is, such blanket policies will likely favor the interests of already well-capitalized large-scale farms at the expense of smaller ones.

Organic and sustainable production are not synonymous

The case of organic food production provides a useful illustration of how blanket government regulation coupled with the pressures of industrial farming have failed to address systemic injustice in the agricultural sector. Organic food is one of the fastest growing market segments in agriculture, and it is often posed as synonymous with sustainability. For this reason, it is similar to the label “family farm.” Both terms are often proposed as self-evident panaceas, as though “encouraging” (by carrot or stick) all family farms to become certified organic would magically “fix” the U.S. food system. As with most proposed utopian dreams, this solution has a dark side. As practiced today in the United States, organic farming is a far cry from its original implication of holistic sustainability. Indeed, one of the biggest issues with this form of production is its transportation footprint. It is not clear that a head of lettuce grown (certified) organically and shipped thousands of miles is better for human or planet health than the same grown “conventionally” on a farm near to where it is sold. In terms of transportation costs, for example, the major share of vegetables (including organic produce) in American grocery stores today travels an average of 1,500 miles from their farms of origin to their point of sale. Meanwhile, produce sold by smaller farmers in regional farmers markets and farm stands travel an average of roughly 60 miles to its final point of sale (Pirog & Benjamin 2003). This fact speaks for

itself in terms of energy cost tradeoffs and the need for thoughtfully crafted policies.

As Guthman (2004) has argued, neither “organic” nor “family farm” inherently results in a sustainable agricultural system. Guthman has traced the organic farming movement in California, from its hippie “back-to-the-land” beginnings to its present-day appropriation by large corporations keen on “greening” their image with consumers. Some two decades ago, a study of California alone found that the state exported approximately 485,000 truck-loads of produce each year, with some of those travelling as far as 3,100 miles to their final point-of-sale (Hagen et al., 1999). Guthman contended that this export-heavy model had been adopted by large industrial farms, at the expense of nurturing diverse and accessible regional food systems.

In fact, the terms “family” and “organic” are today often used to describe many large-scale industrial farms that practice intensive monocropping and ship their produce thousands of miles. Even if the word “family” is dropped, large-scale “organic” agricultural operations raise other concerns. For example, General Mills announced in 2018 that it had contracted to convert an existing land parcel in South Dakota spanning 34,000 acres (53.125 square miles) called Gunsmoke Farm, to heavy organic wheat production with a (comparatively) small pollinator habitat. This move toward intensive organic cultivation is linked to growing consumer demand for such products, not necessarily to take better care of the earth. Nonetheless, some share of smaller farmers seeking to profit from the “premium” return organic food may command may now be priced out of the market by the glut of such products that General Mills (and others) are delivering.

Another and important piece of this puzzle is the fact that while organic may currently be an environmental “buzzword,” it is far from clear that its pursuit alone will transform our nation’s existing food system. The standard set by the United States Department of Agriculture for certified organic production, as Guthman has also argued, amounts to little more than a “no-go” (do not use) list of chemicals. Certified organic seeds, soil, compost, and chemicals (i.e., pesticides, algicides, disinfectants, and herbicides) also come with significantly higher price tags than conventional inputs, creating a higher barrier of capitalization, and therefore of market entry, for growers. In contrast, the original goals of the organic movement included ensuring production that honored bioregional limits, buying agricultural products from local farmers (thereby supporting the local economy and reducing transport time and costs), and encouraging crop diversity (preserving soil health and aiding with pest management). Indeed, the vision of agriculture originally associated with organics was constructed on the view that farmers should be seen as the primary stewards of their land and the backbone of local and sustainable food systems. In addition, the organic farming movement was initially conceived as an *alternative to* the dominant corporatism,

power relations, and management practices of the existing food system. These goals, however, fell to the wayside in the decade between the passage of the 1990 Organic Foods Production Act and the National Organic Standards developed to implement that statute and finalized in 2000. In the interest of finding a compromise between small and large growers, the final rule largely reflected minimum guidelines aimed at allowing farmers to remain competitive in international trade. Economic concerns superseded the sustainability and social justice aims of the original organic movement. As Guthman has observed,

A focus on allowable inputs has minimized the importance of agroecology, enforcement has become self-protective and uneven, and reliance on incentive-based regulation has created a set of rent-generating mechanisms that has profoundly shaped who can participate and on what terms. (2004, p.111)

Nonetheless, despite this reality, one of the most common solutions posed today to “fix” the food system in the U.S. is for it to “go organic.” However, as Guthman’s argument and the statistics above suggest, even if all family farms were to be certified organic, that outcome would not necessarily produce a sustainable food system, especially if sustainability is defined as, per the Green New Deal, “ensuring universal access to healthy food” and “sustainable farming and land use practices that increase soil health” (H.R. Con. Res. 109, 2019, pp. 8-9). Given current market incentives to scale up operations (i.e., increase acreage and specialize) and ship food to the highest bidder, it is likely that merely encouraging organic production without paying attention to the income inequality currently evident in the agricultural sector will lead to further consolidation of farm operations. A still more centralized food system would require heavy government oversight to ensure it adequately distributed its production to all Americans and to ensure that system’s protection from potential bioterrorism and food-borne illnesses.

Small is beautiful but is it sustainable?

It is debatable whether an agricultural sector rooted in small-to mid-scale farming (certified organic or not) would be more sustainable than a centralized, industrial one. In any case, today’s food system in the U.S. already operates largely based on the latter model. However defined, large-scale farms account for 62.5% of fruit and vegetable production and 69.3% of dairy production (USDA, 2019). On the positive side, these farms can supplement any gaps (particularly in terms of quantity) in regional food systems that local farmers either cannot or will not fill. Large farms often specialize by growing only one type of crop across several thousand acres, making them exceedingly efficient in comparison to smaller and often more diverse operations.

Is this sustainable? It depends on the analytic lens used to consider the question. In terms of agrobiodiversity, such a scenario is most certainly not sustainable. Monocropping (growing one crop on the same land every season) has been linked to decreased soil health, the destruction of native microorganisms, and an increased risk of pest and disease damage (Loviasa et al., 2017; Reddy, 2017). Recalling the Green New Deal's goal to invest in soil health, the prevalence of monocropping on large-scale farms speaks again to the need to differentiate between agricultural properties based on size and actual practices instead of certification.

Another lens through which one can evaluate large-scale farms is by the level of greenhouse gas emissions they produce. As noted above, however, the transport-related "food miles" associated with most produce in the U.S. makes it difficult to argue that our current level of centralized production is sustainable. The net numbers, however, may not be as damning as this ratio suggests. The Environmental Protection Agency combines agriculture and forestry into a unified category, as land-based activities. When so considered, the agriculture and forestry sectors contribute approximately 9.6% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, while also providing "a net sink of 270 MMT CO₂ eq. in 2013" (EPA, 2019; USDA, 2016). By "net zero" standards, therefore, the United States agriculture and forestry sector is effectively "carbon neutral" *as is*. In addition, and as Figure 2 suggests, it can be argued that agriculture and forestry are more sustainable than the other major sectors of the economy.

Nonetheless, if sustainability is to mean more than carbon neutrality and actually guide efforts to realize the transformative social justice goals of the Green New Deal and the organic farming movement, its proponents will need to harness the local eco-knowledge and know-how of farmers in the U.S. who are actively practicing regenerative, rather than degenerative, activities. Carbon neutrality obscures who is doing what and how; information that policymakers need to know if they are to enact provisions that will lead to climate justice in the longer term.

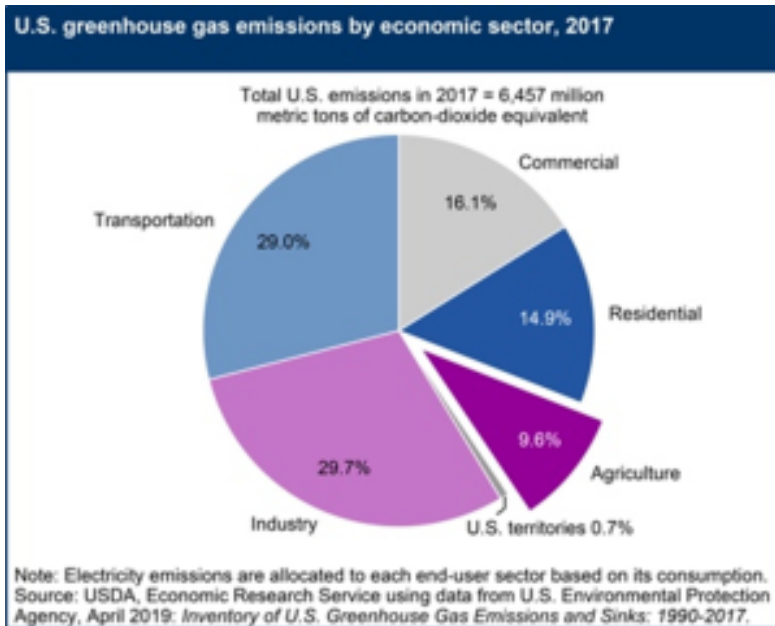


Figure 2. Source: EPA, 2019. Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990–2017. Public Domain.

All of this said, while the desirability of a centralized food system is debatable, the power dynamics of the existing food system are not. The industry's market imperatives and the political regulatory climate presently favor large-scale operations. If the past forty years of United States agricultural policy is taken for evidence, the nation can expect to continue scaling up the average size of the producing units of its agricultural sector and to rely on the owners of corporations to determine its definition of what constitutes "sustainable" agriculture.

Since former national Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz (1971-1976) told farmers in the 1970s to "get big or get out," small and mid-sized property farmers have seen the writing on the wall. While many use regenerative practices such as planting cover crops, planning crop rotation, and using no-till cycles on their land, they cannot afford simultaneously to obtain organic certification and compete with the large-scale farms now driving down the retail price of such products. In addition, many farmers already struggling to pay their bills are facing the prospect of costly operating upgrades imposed by the 2011 Food Safety and Modernization Act (i.e., time-intensive reporting requirements and creating near-sterile conditions in their fields and barns). Small acreage farmers grossing under \$25,000 per year in revenues

from their operations are exempt from many of these regulations, and that fact may explain why the number of such farms is rising. Most farms attaining this level of income are part-time or hobby farmers who report another primary occupation, a type of buffer against the increasing costs of farming. The real burden of these strictures falls on mid-scale full-time farms, the so-called “disappearing middle,” symptomatic of the U.S.’s rising income inequality and its implications for who possesses the capacity to capitalize on agricultural operations.

Given the cost squeeze many are now confronting, many mid-sized family farmers have given up their trade and sold their land. The American Farmland Trust estimates that 175 acres of farmland is lost to development every hour (2018). One can think of that acreage as a physical representation of the losers in the fight for control of the U.S. food system. Where small and mid-scale farming is no longer profitable, it is inevitable that more land will be sold to developers, stripped of its healthy microorganisms, and covered in impervious surfaces. Driveways and apartment building parking lots do not store carbon while cow pastures and cover crops do. This trend represents a definitive loss to communities losing local farms and to efforts to promote eco-friendly land use.

Concluding thoughts

The Green New Deal is just one example of policymakers calling for agricultural sustainability without specifying at what scale such should occur and how and which farmers would be helped or hurt by attempts to realize such goals based on existing production structures and land ownership conditions. This article has been primarily concerned with the common fallacy that assumes “family farmer” and “sustainability” are equivalent, a trap into which Green New Deal proponents appear also to have fallen. While corporations and industrial farming practices may be part of the problem, it must be noted that existing agricultural policy also supports their dominance of the food system.

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NGOS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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I served as an intern with a “successful” European Union (EU) funded dairy improvement Extension education project in rural Eastern Turkey, in the Fall of 2006. I have been uncomfortable with the role of development in improving people’s lives since that experience. This program ostensibly met its objectives by convening an appropriate number of meetings across the region and involving a posited number of dairy farmers. The Western-university trained Turkish faculty spent money on battery packs, projectors, and screens in imitation of the Agricultural Cooperative Extension meetings with which they had been involved in the United States.

But this orientation did not account for the fact that many of the dairy farmers involved in the project were illiterate, not only in their ability to read and write, but also in their understanding and practice of the scientific method. The Turkish agricultural faculty presented research results using Power Point presentations. The farmers sat attentively, men in one room, woman in another, and offered appropriate niceties to me, the Westerner in the room, to the culturally prestigious faculty and to the village elders. As I sat eating delicious food it occurred to me that everyone at the gathering was simply going through the motions. That is, it seemed to me that deep learning among the farmers was likely not occurring.

However, the reports, the ones I wrote on behalf of the project, were beautiful. I suggested that the team had achieved its targeted results: hundreds of farmers had sat through PowerPoint presentations on dairy cattle artificial insemination. EU officials were pleased, the Turkish government agency involved was happy and the presenting faculty were content. Yet, in reality, the costs for what I became convinced was an ineffectual program were exorbitant, and that fact led me to reflect that to the extent the effort had involved Turkish government resources, it implied real opportunity costs for the families and fellow villagers of the participating farmers. That fact struck me hard, but I was not yet able fully to articulate my sense of unease. As I grew in my understanding of education and community engagement, however, I realized the fundamental flaws of the project that I had served as an

intern. My involvement with this initiative proved transformational for me as it left me deeply uncomfortable with one-size, top-down, and expert-driven development. I came to see that, improperly conceived and/or implemented, international development work can cause as much harm, as good.

Nevertheless, I know that I and the overwhelming share of those who choose to do development work are deeply passionate about improving people's lives and that there is still a need to fight for a more perfect world to shift the pendulum towards justice. Development work can and should be conducted more effectively, meaning through more equitable and engaged processes to increase responsiveness to local needs. One step toward securing that goal might be for individuals and the organizations to which they belong, e.g., international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), to start acknowledging the complexity and power at play in their interactions with the people and organizations they aim to assist.

Constructivism is a social science paradigm currently being adopted by many professionals in the development field. It is dynamic and holistic and, as such, it can be useful in capturing the complicated phenomenon of development, "there is no rational choice theory of the pursuit of freedom in the global politics of human rights or beauty in global environmental politics" (Willetts, 2010, p.131). Indeed, human beings evidence intricate patterns of value preferences and typically seek to secure a shifting balance among security, freedom, wealth, justice, equity, equality, beauty, health and other values as conditions and contexts evolve (Willetts, 2010, p.130).

Because of their potentially grassroots character, nongovernmental organizations possess an ability to recognize and address the complexity of local conditions and populations and thus, when appropriately led, can respond effectively to the needs of specific local communities. Nevertheless, Schaaf has rightly declared that, "NGOs should neither be considered a panacea nor the 'magic bullet' for solving the problems of development," nor should any one implementation paradigm be considered so (2013, p. 214). Perhaps what she should have said is that there is no single magic bullet or panacea that can solve the problem of lifting the 3 billion poor individuals in the world out of poverty. This is to argue that there is not a one-size fits all approach to governance, to economics, to education or to any other imperative that must be addressed to secure positive change for half of the globe's population.

Indeed, the international development community has discovered during the last 70 years that implementing generic fixes without local residents' input, guidance, engagement, and 'empowerment' is very rarely successful (Easterly, 2013; Ronalds, 2010; Schaaf, 2013; Smillie, 2013; Wallace, Bornstein & Chapman, 2007). Ronalds, capturing a change in the international development sector, has observed that the prevailing perspective in the field has shifted to, "the more recent and broader understanding of development

that emphasizes people's capabilities and freedoms, not simply their material poverty" (2010, p. 65). In short, development officials are now beginning to acknowledge that the programs they develop are going to have to address the extremely complex and probabilistic and therefore non-linear conditions present, not only at the macro level, but also at the micro and hyper-micro levels, as well. Nevertheless, Wallace et al. (2007) have warned, that while welcome, this shift in orientation now implies a view of development as a slow and often fraught process that is likely to be characterized by many impediments, including the engrained mindsets, and often poorly understood values of those being served, as well as the ignorance of donors, implementers, and governments.

It is important to acknowledge that development, like education, is innately political in character. A modification in a person's social, financial or cultural capital capacity represents a significant political change. Understanding this is to say that even the most well-intentioned and effective NGO will cause both positive and negative social and political ripple effects when it intervenes in a community. This is not to say that those entities should not undertake such efforts, but instead to recognize that, "Constructivism makes the realm of ideas, the way we perceive the nature of the world and the evolution of norms central to politics" (Willetts, 2010, p. 131). If there is going to be a chance to attain positive outcomes from development initiatives, it will occur only when the perspective of every actor is perceived as legitimate and broadly viewed as such.

Power can be defined in a variety of ways, Cervero and Wilson (2009) developed a working theory of the phenomenon, called the planning table. Planning tables are developed for the purpose of implementing programs and are created by the individuals engaged in those processes. Planning table theory is concerned with the complex interactions that occur among stakeholders involved in program creation. Planning tables do not simply arise out of people's minds, but rather are the result of sociopolitical relationships among individuals and groups; in which power is both produced and used (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). As Cervero and Wilson have observed:

Power is a social and relational characteristic, not simply something that people 'possess' and use on one another. Second, it is necessary to distinguish between power relations as a structural characteristic and people's exercise of their power, which is an individual activity. Third, although power relations are relatively stable, they are continuously negotiated at the planning table (Cervero & Wilson, 2009, p. 85).

That is, power is the capacity to act (Cervero & Wilson, 2009). This capability is distributed to individuals by virtue of their position and their participation in social and organizational relationships (Apple, 1996; Winter, 1996). Defining power as a result of relationships frames it as involved inte-

grally in all human interactions (Foucault, 1977). Therefore, power is not specific to a particular form of relationship and it both enables and constrains actions, resulting in constant negotiation. Power relations matter because they shape who has the capacity to be represented at the planning table, a metaphor for the place at which decisions with significant implications for the general public occur.

As individuals working in development efforts navigate the complex relationships and sociopolitical exchanges in which their efforts are necessarily enmeshed, shifts in power are likely to occur. Democratic ideals of voice, agency, and action may not be respected by all actors at the table. For example, there may be too much self-interest among those in power to want to upset the status quo. In many developing nations, those advantaged by existing conditions very well may include international nongovernmental organization leaders and a broad share of global south government elites. This said, it is important to note that INGO leaders are and should be intrinsically motivated to seek their organizations' continuation and survival (Schaaf, 2013). There is nothing innately wrong with working to ensure the health and legitimacy of an enterprise in which you believe. The same holds true for government leaders.

Nevertheless, some public officials in some developing nations have surely personally benefitted from leading a poor population; by pilfering a portion of the aid money coming to assist their citizens via development efforts. More, as those corrupt leaders have grown richer, their populations have remained poor, ensuring a continued flow of aid from external actors. This situation can occur because very poor individuals, focused on survival, are generally less politically motivated and active than those possessing means and often lack a sense of what might constitute democratic self-governance in any case (Iyengar, 1990). Of course, happily, these conditions do not always obtain in practice. Nonetheless, even assuming the integrity and probity of all involved, a recognition of shared purpose, outcomes, and implications is still required for development organizations at all levels, from the largest INGO to the smallest NGO in a rural community to achieve their goals.

Lang (2013) has observed that "NGO representatives speak, but they do not speak for a clientele; instead, they suggest ways to do things that are then pushed back and forth in the discussion [with their stakeholders, including those they seek to serve]" (p.135). NGOs, when undertaking their work with a constructivist lens and a right-sized approach, will be engaged with the populations and individuals they are serving, and with society more broadly. NGOs possess the potential to alter the power relationships of individuals and society at large. As a consequence, many scholars have observed that NGOs are involved politically at multiple analytic scales: the local, state, and international levels (Easterly, 2013; Lang, 2013; Schaaf, 2013; Willetts, 2010).

The presence of NGOs at the proverbial development planning table at all these levels can influence the direction and character of the political discourse that occurs at each. In pointing out this possibility, it is important to note, too, that NGOs act principally on behalf of those stakeholders that created and sustain them. Given that reality, who is to say that their motives are positive or negative? The negotiations that occur among NGO staff, their donors, their clientele, and other societal actors, conducted either implicitly or explicitly, have implications for issues of participant power and access for those being served in international development work (Cervero & Wilson, 2006).

Returning to my experience in Eastern Turkey, what made me deeply uncomfortable is that the project's implementers had not involved local community members in the program planning process. Not inviting the dairy farmers to the planning table did not allow for the integration of their knowledge, needs, and perspectives and resulted in an offering that ill fit their requirements. This initiative maintained a hierarchical power dynamic and prevented those it nominally aimed to assist from exercising agency. Perspective, power, and contextual complexity are essential considerations at the planning table, whether as an NGO or as an individual who cares deeply about making the world a better place.

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COMPETING VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL AID IN NEPAL

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Introduction

A personal review of scholarly articles, news articles, recorded interviews, and government publications during the last two years concerning international aid to Nepal has prompted me to ask whether such initiatives are succeeding under the existing policy context and with current development practices. As I have reflected on this issue, I have considered not only what I have recently read concerning this question, but also my own experience in Nepal working professionally with internationally funded aid projects during the past decade.

Following the ratification of a new federal constitution in 2015, Nepal has undergone a historic political shift from a unitary governance system into a federated hierarchy with seven states and 753 local governments (Acharya, 2018a). The country's new governance framework arose from a comprehensive peace agreement between the Maoist party and the Government of Nepal in 2007 that ended a 10-year civil war. Nepal's new constitution sought to ensure that its people would enjoy freedom, peace, democracy, and social and economic prosperity. In May 2019, the majority Nepal Communist Party (CPN) announced an annual budget of 1.53 trillion Nepali Rupees (13.71 billion U.S. dollars) to operate the nation's government for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Foreign aid provided approximately 23% of that spending plan (Nepal Economic Forum, 2019).

Nepal has received international assistance for nearly seven decades and those efforts have touched all sectors of the country's economy. The United States established diplomatic relations with Nepal in 1947 and became the nation's first foreign donor in 1951. Foreign aid fully financed Nepal's first five-year development plan (1956-60) (Bhattarai, 2018). The country's five largest development partners today are the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union (EU). Earlier this year, the Nepalese government adopted its first policy regulating foreign aid since the adoption of the nation's new constitution in

2015. That strategy confirmed the need for continued international assistance to reduce poverty and achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Nepal remains one of the world's least developed nations. Meanwhile, the country's government has embraced a socio-economic development model aimed at achieving the long-term goal of providing conditions for "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepalis" (Ministry of Finance, 2018). This stance has assumed that "overall development is only possible through high economic growth and its equitable distribution" (Ministry of Finance, 2018). This aspiration suggests that Nepal will require financial assistance in coming years for the following reasons:

- The restructured and more extensive governmental system will require more resources, especially for infrastructure development and the capacity to sustain and maintain those efforts;
- The 2015 constitution provided the country's citizens fundamental rights relating to economic and social development;
- Nepal now aims to secure the status of a developing country by 2022;
- The government has committed to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the country by 2030;
- The nation has assigned high priority to infrastructure development (railways, waterways, airports, roads and hydropower) and attaining an annual economic growth rate (in GDP) of more than 8.5%.

The opportunities and challenges of foreign aid

International assistance seeks to promote social and economic development and combat poverty in underdeveloped and developing countries. It has arguably played a significant role in such nations in many respects, from infrastructure development and economic growth to democracy-building since such efforts began following World War II (Acharya, 2018b.; Cecen, 2014; Pandey, 2017). Nepal, with the help of foreign assistance, has made significant headway in its fight against extreme hardship within its citizenry. For example, the country's poverty headcount ratio declined from 75% in 1984 to 15% in 2010 (Index Mundi, n.d.). While deep indigence remains a challenge in Nepal, this change certainly indicates a positive shift. Similarly, the Global Development Network (2018) has claimed that most international rural development project aid is systematically evaluated and that most such

assessments, including those in Nepal, have suggested that such efforts result in positive impacts on livelihoods and poverty reduction for the populations to which they have been targeted.

In contrast, some analysts have claimed that aid-sponsored development to Nepal, in particular, has failed (Bell, 2015; Sharma, 2011; Tiwari, 2005). For example, in an interview with the editor of *The Third Pole*, Dipak Gyawali, a Nepali development expert and former government water resources minister, said in 2017, “most of the big donor interventions have been constructive where donors have been plural or more clumsy. But in many cases, they have come with a grand single vision of imposition, and they have failed badly” (Gyawali, 2017). Other critics of international aid in Nepal have argued that dependency on overseas support has created a mindset among Nepali recipients that outsiders can serve as their problem solvers. This critique suggests that such an orientation limits people’s own actions on behalf of community change (Malla, 2014; Pokherel, 2019).

More generally, those criticizing foreign aid have offered two basic arguments. First, these authors have contended that aid imposes strict conditions that often dilute the pursuit of national interests and priorities (Pokharel, 2019). Yubaraj Shangraula (former Nepali Attorney General and current writer and political analyst), for example, embraced this critical view in a television interview in 2018, arguing that donors often demand that recipient countries suspend or create specific policies in exchange for aid (Shangraula, 2018). That is, in this view, a donor’s political and strategic interests often dictate the aid process, rather than any genuine concern about improving life conditions or promoting good governance in recipient countries (Lyons, 2014).

A second criticism of foreign aid, also offered in Nepal, suggests that outsiders have a basic knowledge problem and that they do too little to ensure that their initiatives incorporate indigenous knowledge and practices, a fact that diminishes the value of many of their efforts (Karkee & Comfort, 2016; Warner, 2017). In a variant of this argument, Mohan Banjade, a legal expert, development analyst and former government secretary, for example, has suggested that foreign assistance in Nepal that has sought to support the preservation of local languages and culture has often had the opposite effect (Banjade, 2018). Put differently, these arguments posit that international aid inevitably cultivates donor agendas, rather than local ones. Representatives of those agencies and NGO personnel, however, have contested this view and instead contended that weak aid-absorption-capacity and lack of commitment to institutional reform among aid recipients has often been responsible for aid ineffectiveness in Nepal when such has occurred (Sharma, 2014).

Disjunction between Nepal's foreign aid policies and its actions

The Nepalese government has suggested that it will accept foreign assistance in areas and sectors that it has determined to be necessary for the development of the country and that its departments should administer that support within the nation's budgetary system. However, some foreign donors have hesitated to provide aid directly to Nepal due to the government's track record of poor spending capacity and administrative inefficiency (Pandey, 2017). In a similar vein, representatives of international aid agencies have blamed the Nepali government for hindering their work by delaying project approvals (Pattisson, 2017). In addition, in many cases, funding agencies will not provide assistance until their terms have been accepted by recipient governments. For their part, a share of Nepal's public officials has questioned donors' political and religious neutrality (The New Humanitarian, 2013). To address these concerns, the government has developed a policy suggesting that it will not accept foreign aid that might interfere with its sovereignty or negatively affect the country's religious, ethnic, and social harmony or national security. Nevertheless, and in fact, many experts agree that the government has not taken its formally adopted aid management policy seriously. In sum, there is a disconnect between the government's formal stance toward assistance and its apparent desire and capacity to enforce it effectively.

Personal reflections on aid to Nepal's rural communities

My 10 years of professional experience working in Nepal's rural communities as an engineer, researcher, and project manager for international donor-funded projects has shaped my perspective on foreign assistance. I have worked directly with hundreds of such communities to plan, design, and construct school buildings, culverts, roads, irrigation and water systems, and market centers, among other projects. And, in contrast to some critics of aid, I have been involved with many such projects that have materially improved rural citizen livelihoods, reduced poverty, and boosted local economies. More, in my view, sustained community involvement in the design and implementation of those efforts was integral to their eventual sustainability or failure.

Similarly, while analysts have argued that foreign assistance does not reach the nation's neediest communities, the international and domestic non-governmental organizations implementing foreign donor-funded initiatives with which I have worked have sought vigorously to reach out to help the poorest in remote areas of Nepal. My experience has not accorded with the view that aid is ineffective or only or primarily offered to secure donor political aims.

Overall, in my judgment, international assistance does not, in principle,

harm recipient nations. The recipient government's goal should be to regulate that aid effectively to ensure that it does not negatively affect its internal and sensitive affairs while also promoting engagement that positively benefits the nation's communities. In the case of Nepal, the government should seek to manage its internationally provided resources effectively and to negotiate with donor countries in the broader interests of its people concerning the availability and distribution of needed aid (Pokharel, 2019).

Concluding thoughts

This reflection has broadly reviewed the continuing debate concerning the efficacy of foreign assistance to developing nations in light of Nepal's experience. Critics have argued that aid creates dependency, fosters corruption, and erodes local social value systems. While I have not here provided a thoroughgoing solution to these concerns, I have contended that assistance can be effective when approached in concert with community leaders and residents. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to "healthy aid," but given Nepal's manifest needs, international aid will remain of paramount importance to complement the country's internal resources for the foreseeable future. The nation's government must enforce its foreign assistance policy in cooperation with international aid organizations. Donors must be expected to comply with domestic priorities and to employ Nepal's fiscal institutions and frameworks to implement their initiatives. Likewise, Nepal must ensure that its institutions can effectively assume that responsibility. Reliable aid can be an important resource for the country if it is wisely used to serve its needs.

Notes

A poverty headcount ratio of \$1.90 a day is the percentage of the population living on less than \$1.90 a day at 2011 international prices (Index Mundi, n.d.).

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AGROECOLOGY JUSTICE AND INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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The public policy process undoubtedly benefits from the incorporation of scientific claims and knowledge, which can aid policy-makers in their efforts to predict future public program impacts (Douglas, 2009). Yet, employing science-based knowledge in policy-decision-making is rife with difficulty as democratic choice-makers often must address criteria that are not captured by such efforts as they address wicked problems for which there is no single scientifically derived response. That is, science alone is typically insufficient to address complex public problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Instead of employing science alone for policy-making, a dialogue between scientifically developed knowledge and other forms of knowledge such as indigenous, experiential, or artisanal is needed (Ravetz, 1999; Santos, 2007b).

Unfortunately, such a proposition appears increasingly difficult to attain in the U.S. because some political actors have chosen to attack and dismiss science and its findings in the name of absolutist ideological tenets or in their quest for power or both. This stance has made the democratic possibility of an alternate form of knowledge-based policy-making involving both science and other epistemic frames increasingly unlikely in the American context. I acknowledge the battle ahead to save both democracy and science from disrepute in the United States, and I contend here that science has a rightful role in policy-making and also suggest that its usefulness to policy-makers can be magnified when combined with other ways of knowing. I illustrate this possibility by imagining a policy-making process for agriculture that employs agroecology as a model. In so doing, I focus on the subfield of international agricultural development. However, considering how the food system touches upon nearly every aspect of society, I invite the reader to consider how agroecology, at least metaphorically, could be used in other domains, to approach the policy decision process.

Policy-making involves trade-offs between scientific findings and other considerations including, for example, resource-limitations and social justice

concerns. Moreover, if lawmakers and analysts do not also directly attend to power dynamics in policy decision-making, unequal outcomes are likely as powerful interests overwhelm less powerful ones (Hossain, 2017). In any case, policies, whether or not guided by scientifically informed knowledge, will always reflect conflicts and tensions among salient values as well as judgments concerning whose knowledge and experiences should be considered.

The term wicked problems refers to complex social concerns for which conventional planning and knowledge lack obvious solutions (Rittel & Weber, 1973). Within international agricultural development, the neoliberal proposition that more production will necessarily result in improved lives and livelihoods for farmers and their broader communities is both widely accepted and sharply reductive. Notably, in this regard, efforts to maximize agricultural production for more than 50 years as a development tool and aspiration have thus far not eliminated hunger or food security.

One reason for this failure is that a singular focus on increasing production has neglected the reality that food insecurity arises in considerable measure from social and income inequality (Holt-Giménez et al., 2012). Nonetheless, increasing production remains the dominant approach to global food security (Altieri & Nicholls, 2017; Biovision & IPES-Food, 2020). Such efforts normally seek to increase crop yields by employing fertilizers and irrigation or, put differently, by leveraging a certain sort of scientifically based knowledge, to increase short-term harvests at the expense of concern for natural (land and water) resources over the longer term. Bolstered by evidence of the causes and consequences of widespread food crises in 2007–2008, 2010, and by the effects of the current pandemic, this value exchange is increasingly unacceptable to many activists, scholars, and development practitioners (Bello, 2020; Wittman et al., 2010). In short, the global food system and the policies that now underpin it require reconsideration and revision. To reimagine that structure and develop new and more sustainable agricultural policies, policy-makers need to be able to access alternate forms of knowledge beyond a single-minded focus on employing technical means to increase crop yields (Fraser, 2017; Giller et al., 2017).

Neoliberal thinking, when applied to agriculture (or any other domain) seeks to quantify, measure, and manipulate knowledge to advance economic efficiency and profitability as its foremost aims. This orientation can lead to the dismissal of other forms of knowledge that do not accord with this assumption concerning what should be valued in society (Santos, 2007a). For example, the introduction and promotion of the Green Revolution in the Global South dismissed existing traditional and indigenous farming practices as backward and inefficient. Subsequently farms were transitioned to monocrops reliant on fertilizers, pesticides, and hybrid seeds. That change also resulted in significant cultural change and an accompanying loss of practical knowledge of historical farming methods and area conditions. San-

tos (2007b) has employed the term epistemicide to describe the loss and erasure of knowledge occasioned by this ideological frame.

One can employ ecologies of knowledge as an overarching metaphor to describe how multiple forms of knowledge such as experiential, traditional, artisanal, and spiritual are valid and can be mobilized to address the profound injustice this erasure of the knowledges of these existing populations represented. Proponents of the ecologies metaphor as an alternative simultaneously reject the monopoly of Western insistence on efficiency and production maximization as a fundamental value valence, while arguing that calling on other co-existing forms of knowledge can and should occur to ensure both cultural appropriateness and long-term sustainability (Santos, 2007b). Ecologies of knowledge inherently acknowledge the complexity and incompleteness of a singular knowledge and recognize the possibilities of hybridization.

As an extension of ecologies of knowledge, Coolsaet (2016) has argued for agroecologies of knowledge. This construct simultaneously rejects a single imposed epistemology and its accompanying monocropping by promoting a multitude of agricultural knowledges and experiences. His conception builds on the systems-approach of agroecology: a science, practice, and movement seeking to shift the international food system towards environmental and human justice (Wezel et al., 2009). A guiding principle for agroecology is a dialogic approach that places Western thinking and technology in conversation with other agricultural ways of knowing (Minga, 2017; Wezel et al., 2020) in which both forms of claims are given the same legitimacy.

The potential for agroecology to combat cognitive injustice within international agricultural policy development is underexplored and underutilized. In a recent Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) webinar, Papa Abdoulaye Seck, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Senegal to the FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development, and World Food Programme, discussed the process by which Senegal has incorporated agroecology into its national policy through a participatory multi-stakeholder process across the nation (Seck et al., 2020). Bolivian policy too, now requires that participatory knowledge (existing farmer awareness, traditions, ethos, and values) be incorporated into all public decisions concerning land use (Kincheloe et al., 2017). Ecuador has similarly adopted a food sovereignty law (Peña, 2017). Each of these examples suggests the importance of attending to different forms of knowledge in agricultural policy development and implementation.

The increasing adoption of agroecology as a framework for agricultural development by the FAO and by nations indicates the success of international and local activists' efforts to bring attention to this vital challenge. However, more work is needed, especially at all governmental levels in the United States (Biovision & IPES-Food, 2020). The recent United States

Agency for International Development (2020) New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) argued that the agency would now seek to work with organizations deeply embedded in target communities. This turn represents a possible vehicle for changing the stance of U.S.-funded development policies and programs toward existing epistemic and cultural claims. Of course, unequal power relations will always exist in international development policy processes. However, should United States governmental programs such as the NPI choose to commit to listening, providing a holding environment, and incorporating other ways of knowing into the policy process, the spirit of agroecologies of knowledge, power scales may shift, even if only slightly, in the direction of the communities with and for whom development is intended.

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PART V

ADVOCACY

The essays in this section describe the complexity of advocacy strategies to achieve positive change and greater justice in day-to-day and emergency situations. With a focus on collective care and shared responsibility, the authors highlight the role of community actors, institutions, and policies in shaping democratic decision-making and positive social change.

Lehi Dowell explores the relationship between creative placemaking and transportation hubs and, more specifically, outlines how such efforts can be evaluated. Transportation hubs—train and subway stations, bus terminals, ferry ports, and airports—were originally designed foremost for safe and efficient movement of travelers. Although city planners have recently argued that such centers should incorporate creative placemaking strategies, an even bigger challenge than pursuing that approach when designing or redesigning a project is understanding how to measure or evaluate the success of such efforts. Drawing on existing research, Dowell advocates for the use of a quantitative/qualitative evaluation and placemaking questionnaire to measure the outcomes of creative placemaking efforts at transit hubs, in addition to field observation, thus filling a gap in the urban planning literature.

Nada Berrada explores the meaning of youth as a social construct and traces its evolution as a subject of study from its consideration as a biological category in terms of standard age-based definitions to current conceptualization. She concludes by emphasizing the role that institutions play today, such as schools, corporations, the state, media, and social media, foundations, NGOs, the military, and youth experts, in constructing what it means to be young and successful. She highlights the importance of such constructs, as they define how the experience of youth is understood by young people and society at large. It is those views that shape public policies and actions that materially affect young people's life prospects.

Pallavi Raonka points to a paucity of scholarship that studies the relationship between the media and social movements in India, especially given the reality that major communications outlets are held privately by for-profit firms in that country. Raonka uses Indian examples to illustrate the fact that social movements can greatly benefit from the strategic use of media coverage to influence public actors within states and even transnationally.

Joanne Tang focuses on a vital aspect of emergency management and planning—communicating with residents with limited English proficiency. She recommends that local governments focus their planning on programs that

enhance language proficiency and partner with radio, television, and other media companies already serving immigrant communities to distribute important emergency information in their native languages. Moreover, these actions would build trust by engaging with these groups outside of disaster situations to describe city structures and programs aimed at relief and recovery. Additionally, Tang suggests public officials need to work with churches, community centers, and local immigrant advocacy organizations to address the distrust among residents arising from the language divide and unauthorized immigration status.

Finally, Stephanie Lovely reflects on the interaction between transportation systems and residents' often implicit values, advocating for more nature-friendly sustainable practices that do not degrade the environment. Lovely contends that increased emphasis on non-motorized transportation infrastructure development, such as bicycle lanes, pedestrian walkways, and greenway trails, may help connect people to their natural environments, improve overall public health, and spread and deepen sustainability values.

THE ART OF THE COMMUTE

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Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything. It is the essence of order and leads to all that is good, just and beautiful, of which it is the invisible, but nevertheless dazzling, passionate, and eternal form Plato. (Watson & Ware, 1991)

We live in a world in which travel to distant lands can occur with ease, super connectivity is an expectation and centuries worth of knowledge is accessible with a few strokes of the keyboard. However, amidst the omnipresence of globalization, there is a relatively new movement in the United States, creative placemaking, which encourages communities to recognize and purposefully employ art (music, dance, theater, visual arts, creative writing) to bolster individual and communal identity and culture in specific spaces and locations. Creative placemaking is currently a popular topic in the field of urban planning and several universities offer courses concerning it. This essay explores the relationship between creative placemaking and transportation hubs and, more specifically, focuses on how such efforts can be evaluated.

Transportation hubs are places where passengers and cargo are exchanged, and they usually also act as ports of entry to large cities. Hubs include train and subway stations, bus terminals, ferry ports, and airports. Many major transportation hubs (i.e., the New York Port Authority Bus Station Terminal, Washington D.C.'s Union Station, and Chicago's Union Station) were originally designed foremost for the safe and efficient movement of travelers, but many now are overcrowded and appear inhospitable.

The U.S. National Endowment for the Arts coined the term creative placemaking in 2010 and defined it as occurring when,

Partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired. (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010)

Transportation for America, an industry advocacy association, has argued that society should be harnessing the power of the arts to encourage human interaction and engagement within transportation-related spaces used by the public, “Done right, creative placemaking can lead to both a better process and a better product. The end results are streets, sidewalks, and public spaces that welcome us, inspire us, and move us in every sense of that word” (Transportation for America, 2019). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2018, the average American household spends more on transportation than food, healthcare, entertainment, or clothing (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). In fact, transportation expenses are second only to housing in most family budgets. Given its pervasive importance, transportation provides an opportunity, at least partially, to address the livability concerns of many communities, especially for residents who rely on public transportation. ArtPlace America, a nonprofit organization [that operated from 2010-2020, eds.] that argues that arts and culture should be a core component of community planning, completed a creative placemaking field scan in 2017 and suggested that transportation systems designed in the past had been hierarchic and technically focused, with negative consequences for major portions of the nation’s residents,

Transportation systems can and should be a powerful tool to help people access opportunity, drive economic development, improve health and safety, and build the civic and social capital that binds communities together. Unfortunately, a historic, top-down, technocratic approach to transportation planning and design has failed to achieve these goals for everyone. This has resulted in transportation systems that do not equitably serve communities of color, low-income people, and other disadvantaged communities. (ArtPlace America, 2019)

As noted above, transit hub design has suffered from many of these same flaws. More, their function and means-focused character has often amplified those difficulties exponentially and mitigated their ability to be a catalyst for joint community-transit development. But while this situation is often the case, it need not always be so, as the Transit Cooperative Research Program, a federally funded technical group, has suggested,

Transportation strongly impacts community livability concerns. Many communities end up with transportation networks that simply pass through them, without responding to community needs, relating to their surroundings, or concerns. (Transit Cooperative Research Program, 2019)

Although city planners have recently argued that transit hubs should incorporate creative placemaking strategies, an even bigger challenge than pursuing that approach when designing or redesigning a project is under-

standing how to measure or evaluate the success of such efforts (Rose, Daniel & Liu, 2017). Today's art projects are expected to demonstrate why, how, and to what degree they constitute a helpful development approach in efforts to create a more harmonious, enjoyable, and equitable society. Myerscough et al. (1998) performed one of the earliest studies on creative placemaking, even before the term was officially coined, and linked outcome measures purely to the economic importance of the arts. Their evaluation did so by limiting the outcomes of arts venues, including festivals, theater districts, and concert halls to their economic returns on investment. These investigators found that the arts significantly affected the prosperity of an area by creating training opportunities, establishing jobs, attracting arts-related spending, and increasing the attractiveness of an area for other businesses and residents.

However, as noted, arts projects should not be evaluated solely based on their economic outcomes. Instead, such evaluations and analyses should also consider whether, how, and to what extent specific art forms result in user or participant satisfaction or afford broader accessibility to otherwise under-represented or vulnerable residents.

Establishing clear cause and effect for arts initiatives, however, can be challenging and this is surely true for capturing the purport of creative placemaking for transit hubs as well, especially when one considers that the sample group is comprised of commuters rushing to or from work. Some arts nonprofit organizations are turning towards a theory of change approach to help define the path from identifying a community need or needs to evaluating the impacts of specific arts interventions in transportation hubs. Others have used logic models to develop an outcomes framework that specifies program planning and implementation activities. Regardless of the approach taken, it is essential to select outcome indicators that closely reflect the aims and objectives of the arts initiative being undertaken and this almost always requires that analysts consider more than simple economic outputs.

One arts organization that is facing this challenge and actively seeking to promote the benefits of a creative placemaking strategy, is Sing for Hope (SFH). SFH is a New York City-based nonprofit organization founded in 2006 that encourages interactions between artists and residents by making the arts more accessible to the public. Sing for Hope has three main programmatic areas; Healing Arts, Education, and SFH Pianos. The Healing Arts is a volunteer-based program that brings the arts directly into healthcare settings (hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, treatment centers) and works directly with those facilities' therapists to create an uplifting environment focused on reducing pain, enhancing healing environments, helping patients express emotions, and supporting caregiver wellness. The Education program offers a variety of arts experiences to students of all ages, including providing free arts-based curricula to deserving schools and to the Youth

Corps leadership training program. In addition, Sing for Hope helps to sponsor NYC Arts Week at locations throughout the city. SFH is perhaps best known for its Pianos program. Every year, the nonprofit purchases 50 pianos, has local artists from the five boroughs decorate them, places them in locations selected to offer public access, and thereafter donates the instruments to education and healthcare facilities.

A new SFH creative placemaking initiative, the Quality of Commute (QOC) program, promotes arts engagement, cultural sharing, and human interaction. The arts organization currently has a piano located in a major NYC transit hub, the New York Port Authority Bus Station Terminal, as part of the QOC program. The Port Authority initiative primarily affects commuters, travelers, and visitors, as well as a much smaller group of individuals consisting of nearby community groups, who are invited to attend regularly scheduled performances. The Authority's SFH Piano is available for use by residents and anyone passing by may play it. Each time I have walked past this piano in recent weeks, for example, there have typically been 5-10 commuters near it, listening to whoever is at the keyboard.

The Quality of Commute program is having a clear impact on the social interaction and mood of those who take the time to stop and experience it. However, when reviewing the SFH's metrics for evaluating the success of this program, I was surprised to learn that the measures now being used for the purpose were predicated primarily on observations. That is, the nonprofit's staff members currently guesstimate how many people walk by during or after a performance and could thus potentially have been exposed to this form of community art. While observation is helpful, I propose that SFH add a quantitative/qualitative evaluation to its piano project by asking audiences and passersby to complete a Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) and placemaking questionnaire, in order to collect data on how they perceive human-piano interaction affecting their mental health as well as their connectedness to the transit hub. Measuring the outcomes of creative placemaking efforts at transit hubs in this way, in addition to doing so via field observations, would fill a gap in the urban planning literature.

As the quotation from Plato above illustrates, art is an often intangible, yet intrinsic need. Past research has demonstrated how the arts have positively influenced the education and medical fields. The question today is whether the arts can do the same when integrated into planning for transit hubs.

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YOUTH AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

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Introduction

Youth as a subject of study has evolved from its consideration as a biological category to its conceptualizations as a social construct. In what follows, I explore the meaning of youth in the latter sense. In doing so, I first examine the standard age-based definition of youth. To provide dimension, I present the youth demographic imperative that has arisen in many developing nations in the essay's second section. In the third and last part of this analysis, I seek to expand the definition of youth based on age to one that acknowledges first and foremost the concept as a social construct.

Youth as a transitioning phase

For statistical and record-keeping purposes, the United Nations (UN) has defined a youth as a person aged between 15 to 24 years old. The UN Secretary-General first referred to this definition of youth in 1981 in his report to the General Assembly concerning International Youth Year and thereafter endorsed it in ensuing reports (UNDESA, Fact Sheet). Nonetheless, defining this group precisely is quite challenging because what constitutes youth varies in different societies around the world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for example, has suggested that a young person is,

A person between the age where he/she may leave compulsory education and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment. This latter age limit has been increasing, as higher levels of unemployment and the cost of setting up an independent household puts many young people into a prolonged period of dependency. (UNESCO Website)

Meanwhile, the African Youth Charter characterizes young people as individuals between 15 and 35 years old. In these definitions, the distinction between "youth" and "adult" is somewhat arbitrary. The fact that a 24-year-old or a 35-year-old is considered a youth, while a 25-year-old or 36-year-

old is an adult is a social construct, based on the conventions established and promoted by organizations such as the UN, African Union, and the International Labor Organization (O'Higgins, 2001). Such organizations' definitions have characterized youth as a transition in life that is "neither childhood, nor adulthood," comprising young people's move from school and/or work, to forming families and securing independent status and households.

Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) have offered an alternate perspective on how to conceive of youth. These authors have conceptualized this demographic cohort as a social category in the context of the global economy. However, before delving into their argument, it is important to outline why youths have emerged as a focus of attention for policy-makers, international organizations, and corporations.

Youth demographic imperative

The first and most obvious reason for today's increasing interest in young people is the fact that the world currently has the largest population of such individuals in its history. Earth now has about 1.8 billion youths between the ages of 10 and 24. Persons between the ages of 15 and 24 now number 1.1 billion, a figure that constitutes 18% of the global population. Youths and children together, including those aged 24 years and younger, account for nearly 40% of the world's inhabitants. The largest number of young people is concentrated in Asia and the Pacific. Approximately 60% of the world's youths live in Asia; 15%, in Africa; 10% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the remaining 15%, in developed countries and regions (Advocates for Youth, 2017). About 80 percent of the world's young people live in developing countries. The following figures illustrate this point: more than half of Egypt's labor force is younger than age 30. Half of Nigeria's population of 167 million is between the ages of 15 and 34. In addition, more than two-thirds of the population of Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, East Timor, Niger, Somalia, and Uganda is under the age of 25 (Foreign Policy, 2017).

Nearly half (45.9%) of the world's youths live in low-income countries, while another third (34.1%) reside in lower middle-income countries. The remaining fifth (20%) live in upper middle- and high-income countries. Nevertheless, more than 30 percent of 15–24-year-olds in the world live on less than \$2 per day (Advocates for Youth, 2017). Understanding the importance of these demographic realities is essential to grasping the importance of how young people emerged as a salient demographic for policy-makers.

Youth as a social category

According to Sukarieh and Tannock (2015), the social category "youth" has always been double-sided, encompassing both negative and positive stereo-

types. On the one hand, young people have been said by some analysts to constitute a “ticking bomb” that presents a threat to the security and fabric of society (UN Africa Renewal, 2017; NPR, 2015). In this view, young people represent potential denizens of unemployment, delinquency, or extremism. On the other hand, for some writers, youth constitute the “promise of the future,” the hope for addressing the ills and flaws of their societies (Daily Nation, 2015). This binary stereotyping highlights the fact that who is considered a youth, as well as how they are imagined, are social constructs. Indeed, young people have been viewed as a resource that can either be mobilized ‘efficiently’ or emerge as a major social risk. Thus, youth may be a signifier that embodies both potential and negative risk simultaneously.

Young people today not only represent a significant demographic cohort globally, but they also are navigating many of life’s perceived crucial transitions in a relatively short time as they emerge as adults. A 2007 World Bank Report on Development and the Next Generation, for example, has identified six main transitions that many youths undergo: learning, working, migrating and staying healthy, forming families, and exercising citizenship. These shifts suggest that a successful passage to adulthood involves navigating all or the major share of these transitions, laying aside the fact that some may conflict with one another.

It is useful to cite a few examples that illustrate the tension among these milestones. One might involve a situation in which a young person would have to work a low-paying job and pause their studies at a university to support themselves and pay the costs associated with their education. In such cases, a tension exists between learning and working. Another example might occur when a young person is deterred from forming a family, despite the fact that they want to do so, for fear they cannot support a spouse and children, or from visiting a doctor because they are unemployed or fear they cannot pay the related costs. In these cases, youths’ transition to work and forming families, as well as remaining healthy, are in tension.

Simply citing these changes as markers or milestones for young people fails to take into account the structural conditions that can mediate each, including poverty, family violence, inequality, war, or conflict. Indeed, the 2007 World Bank Report did not acknowledge the ability of young people to access work, school, healthcare, mobility, and so on when it highlighted these (necessary) transitions to adulthood. Viewing youths as an asset and a resource tends to commodify them and suggest that they need to work to adapt their aspirations and capacities closely to the interests of employers, the workplace, and the market economy if they want to avoid being regarded as a risk or detriment to society.

Considering this pervasive perspective, it is important to emphasize that youths are more than a grouping of individuals who constitute a more or less arbitrary assigned age category. Instead, they are a heterogeneous group that

possesses agency and may seek to chart their own course as individuals and as a group in ways that embody risk and potential in many different ways:

Young people are never simply passive dupes or empty vessels when they participate in youth programs that have been designed by other organizations and states, but actively contest, resist and rework such programming to their own ends. (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015, p.29)

While it is essential to recognize young people's potential agency to defy the socially constructed binary in which many find themselves enmeshed, it is also paramount to emphasize that the institutions shaping youth today, such as schools, corporations, the state, media and social media, foundations, NGOs, the military and youth experts, all play roles in shaping and constructing what it means to be young and successful.

Youth can be shaped and constrained by these entities' discourses that too often fail to take into account the structural circumstances young people confront. That is precisely how a definition of youth as a social construct serves to bring to light the multiple ways of defining youth and their implications. The fact that we live in an era characterized by the largest youth population ever recorded evokes the importance of these social constructs. This is so not only because such constructs define how the experience of youth is understood by young people and society-at-large alike, but also because those views shape public policies and actions that materially affect young people's life prospects.

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MEDIA AND MOBILIZATION: THE KHUNTI DIARIES

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Members of a local advocacy grassroots group in Khunti, India, serve as a bridge between the poor and laborers in that community and its government administration. The group is comprised of local residents and student volunteers and its activities are focused on assisting the area's population with bringing their concerns and grievances to the local government. Individuals, mostly of the Munda community with which I worked at the time, held a meeting with the national government's Cabinet Minister for Rural Development, Jairam Ramesh Khunti, in Summer 2012, to discuss the grievances of individuals who were not receiving the food and minimum wages to which they were entitled from the local administration.

Many representatives of the national, regional, and local media, and members of the community, including unarmed Maoists dressed as residents, and the District Magistrate (DM) responsible for the area, attended the gathering. The grassroots advocacy group's members arranged the meeting to bring attention to an issue to which the DM of the area had proven unresponsive. As Magistrate, he was charged with ensuring the dissemination of individual welfare benefits in the region. Nonetheless, the DM was not distributing those funds on time. Indeed, very often, the transfers were never completed and there was no information available concerning the disposition of the funds. Eligible beneficiaries in Khunti had repeatedly requested their public entitlements for work on government-sponsored civil construction projects, but to no avail.

The grassroots advocacy group members convened the meeting to ensure that the responsible Cabinet Minister could question the DM with television staff and journalists present. The NGO's leaders believed that simply sending the Minister the relevant data concerning alleged misappropriation of funds would not lead to timely and affirmative action without such overt public pressure.

There were two groups in the audience. One consisted of local villagers who had not received their allocated entitlements for several months. They participated to demand explanations and accountability from various government ministerial and bureaucratic officials, who made up the second

group. Overall, approximately 150 people attended the event. Beyond those participating, several dozen members of the paramilitary forces, assigned to protect the ministers, stood nearby.

Overall, this experience taught me the critical role that news media can play in mobilizing wider support outside the affected community for the concerns of a group seeking change or support. It also taught me the processes through which discourses may shape whether such demands are legitimated or validated by the wider society. Finally, this episode suggested that it can sometimes be useful for groups to seek to broaden the scope of awareness of a conflict. In this case, that meant involving national officials in a local matter. This essay explores the relationship between social movements in India and the media in that nation by sketching the benefits and risks involved in seeking to involve news organizations in advocacy efforts. I also briefly address how media actors affect the character and direction of social movements in India.

How does the news media affect social movement goals in India?

The members of the local advocacy groups had invited a range of electronic and print media representatives to the Khunti gathering from local, regional, and national outlets because they hoped to ensure transparency for the outcomes villagers desired by helping hold public officials accountable. This was a strategic move to ensure that the issue received attention. If such could occur, the members of the grassroots advocacy group hoped that it would build hope among the villagers that they enjoyed options when selecting tactics to employ when approaching/lobbying government officials and that those could reap tangible benefits. Journalists asked the political officials questions about the alleged misappropriation of funds and how much longer it would be before an investigation was undertaken concerning the entitlement payments that might hold any individuals found culpable accountable. The media representatives asked the members of the grassroots advocacy group representatives how long the missing funds had been a problem; which specific populations had been affected and how; and, finally, they asked the villagers for details on the effects of not being able to access their food entitlements, as well as how the drought at the time had exacerbated their life situations.

As a general proposition, the targeted government officials, who travelled with security forces, appeared unapproachable to the villagers. As a result, many local residents were frightened to assert their democratic rights in public. Despite a long series of previous protests, strikes, marches and reports, and inquiries shared with relevant Ministries, it was this meeting, with the presence of the media, that obtained effective government action. More specifically, this gathering resulted in the case being taken up by the

Central Ministry of Rural Development, whose leaders in turn summoned the DM to New Delhi to answer for the holdup in paying entitlements. Thereafter, the long-delayed funds arrived within two weeks. Moreover, the government not only paid currently owed sums, but also cleared a backlog of payments owed to Khunti's citizens.

The result of this action for the local group with which I volunteered was quite positive as it suggested to affected residents that collective mobilization involving the media could lead to successful advocacy on behalf of otherwise marginalized individuals and groups. Further, several of the communications outlets whose representatives had participated in the original briefing, continued to follow up with state officials to ensure their ongoing accountability to the citizens affected. In retrospect, it was clear to all concerned that the media's presence had brought widespread attention to an issue that otherwise likely would not have gained political salience (Williams, 1995).

Nevertheless, the advocacy group privately received pushback from national government officials in Delhi, who accused its members of not working collaboratively with local government representatives to address the issue. The group's leaders disagreed and concluded that the presence of journalists had made it clear to public sector leaders that while it was happy to work with them, it was not beholden to them. The group could (and had, in fact, already done so) pursue other strategies to hold government actors accountable if need be.

The media and social movements

The relative autonomy of a movement in its relations with a media outlet depends in part on temporal and spatial factors, as well as on what territories and populations its efforts address. Long-lived and well institutionalized social movements tend not to challenge the status quo directly. In consequence, they are less dependent on journalistic coverage for their survival. However, media attention can be crucial for less well-known or established movements that may not yet have acquired strong public legitimacy. Their outsider status, their marginalization from central political decision-making processes, and the fact that they are often resource-poor, may make it more difficult for such groups to garner publicity. The situation may also force them to rely on alternative methods to obtain popular support for their concerns.

Ultimately, this challenge translates in practice into social movement leaders identifying strategies to align their goals with public concerns in ways that capture media attention and thereby increase the likelihood of reaching larger groups of people and galvanizing action. Many social movement leaders have found this imperative easier to address during election campaigns. These provide moments for such entities to pressure government officials

and candidates to include their concerns on their agendas. For instance, India's Right to Food movement was successful in using media salience strategically to press elected officials to enact poverty alleviation acts in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections of 2014. The type of advocacy used by a movement is also key. Certain spectacular strategies, such as hunger strikes, can quickly draw widespread public attention to an issue but, to succeed, all concerned must perceive that those employing this approach are completely serious concerning it. Further, where advocacy occurs may matter as much as how it is undertaken. Demonstrations and acts occurring in very visible, public areas, such as outside Parliament, government offices, etc. are much more likely to receive media attention than private meetings in offices or community/village gatherings.

Positives and negatives

Broadly speaking, social movements gain in several ways from positive media treatment of their efforts. First, press, radio, and television coverage can legitimize a movement's claims and processes. Second, the media offers frames that the broader population can adopt to understand the causes and potential solutions for an issue. Third, journalistic coverage can bring a much broader audience's attention to a local concern or specific community. Fourth, media salience provides social movements opportunities actively to shape public understanding of important issues. Fifth, strong sympathetic media coverage of a topic can serve to mobilize support among a larger public. Sixth, media may serve as an important resource for publicizing messages when social movements are cash strapped. Finally, and as the example outlined above suggested, media coverage can serve to press State and corporate actors to behave in more transparent and accountable ways.

However, engaging with the news media can also result in adverse effects. Outlets may frame a social movement and its attendant issues negatively. This has occurred at times with several movements in India, including anti-nuclear activists, as well as Right to Food advocates. In one famous incident in 2012 in India, several media organizations depicted a member of a missionary group as part of an effort to obtain land illegally in Jharkhand. In fact, she was a part of a local advocacy group that was fighting corporate land grabbing efforts. Sadly, the erroneous coverage prompted some members of the affected community to murder her. In this case, corporate actors persuaded journalists of an untrue narrative in an effort to delegitimize resistance to their actions.

This example demonstrates how important the nexus of state, corporate, and media institutions can be to social movements. State and corporate actors often seek to frame social movements and issues for media representatives in a negative light to delegitimize them. Media actors can also

adversely affect an issue by simply not publishing or publicizing it for any number of reasons. Reporters may also frame the strategies used by social movements in a negative light. For example, the media has often condemned the destruction of State property by members of the Maoist insurgency in one state in India, while not mentioning why the group is pursuing such measures. Also, owing to concerns with gaining the largest audience possible, media outlets are selective concerning the social movements and issues they cover. Overall, movements working in urban centers and affecting upper and middle-class individuals are more likely to be covered than, for example, those aimed at assisting rural villagers located in the middle of a jungle.

Media can strongly influence how movements are popularly perceived and thereby affect their possible direction and action strategies. The India Anti-Corruption Movement, for example, was based on Gandhian ideology in India, which gained high media coverage, that consistently discussed its non-violent strategies and in turn, implied a direct tie between the Movement and Gandhiji, a celebrated figure. In terms of actors and issues, while corruption in public offices is widespread and affects all communities, the Indian media focus primarily on issues affecting the middle and upper classes, such as delays in passport processing and receiving business permits. In contrast, the vast majority of people affected by corruption are poor. The Anti-Corruption movement received widespread attention because of the way the media elected to characterize it. Journalistic accounts concerning the movement suggested that all corruption could be eliminated if its aims could be fully realized. Many media and political actors touted a “corruption-free India” as a way of achieving much higher economic growth, a goal desired by people of all classes. This, emphasis however, obscured how deeply corruption is enmeshed in the government’s bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the news media played an active role in “creating legitimacy and [a] favorable discourse” in support of the movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Williams, 1995).

In short, the way that such activities are reported in the media is fundamental to the effectiveness of the feedback loop between the public and its government leaders, elected and appointed. Public officials are often openly critical of social movements that undermine their authority.

Conclusion

There is a paucity of scholarship that studies the relationship between the media and social movements in India, especially in a time when major communications outlets are generally held privately by for-profit firms in that country. I have sought to use Indian examples to illustrate the fact that social movements can be greatly benefited by their strategic use of media coverage.

The scholarship concerning this topic is becoming ever more important, as social movements not only seek to influence public actors within states, but also transnationally.

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PLANNING FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN DISASTER SITUATIONS

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Empathy for underserved communities is vital to planning and making decisions that will be inclusive, particularly during emergency situations and disasters. Hurricane Harvey is now in the history books as one of the most damaging storms the United States has experienced in decades. Thousands of Houston, Texas-area residents, for example, are now addressing its effects, which included more than 50 inches of rain, when that city typically only receives 48 inches of precipitation in an entire year (Erdman, 2017). More than 31 people in Houston died because of the storm (DallasNews.com, 2017). Many homes in its path were damaged or washed away completely, some individuals lost family members and friends and there is a long road ahead for many whose properties were devastated by the wind, rain, or flooding. As those directly affected continue to assess the damage, public officials at all levels of government and nonprofit organization leaders have begun to ask, “What could we have done better?”

In that spirit, this essay focuses on one vital aspect of emergency management and planning; communicating with residents with limited English proficiency. Specifically, I treat the following concerns related to this imperative and use Houston’s emergency management planning efforts as an example:

1. Language barriers to emergency communication
2. Distrust of law enforcement and government representatives within communities with language barriers, which include unauthorized immigrants
3. Solutions that combine community feedback and emergency management best practices.

Communicating with residents who may not speak or understand English entails more than translating English into their native language or offering an interpreter’s services when necessary. It requires sensitivity to the cultures and specific needs of the residents of such communities. These populations

frequently have legitimate cultural concerns that make their members nervous about trusting local authorities. Meanwhile, municipal and county governments have often made assumptions about communities' needs, in lieu of asking those affected to share their concerns themselves. How can policy-makers and communities work together to address the unique challenges linked to natural disaster preparation and recovery amidst lingual and cultural heterogeneity?

Recognizing and addressing language barriers

Spanish and Vietnamese are two of the top five languages spoken in Houston. Houston has the fourth highest population of Hispanic residents (2.3 million) among cities in the United States and about 39 percent of that number are foreign-born (Pew, 2017). The city also has the third highest population of Vietnamese residents (120,000) among cities in the United States. Approximately 37.9 percent of Vietnamese-speaking residents in the Houston metropolitan area have limited English proficiency, defined as having difficulty reading, writing, speaking, or understanding English (City of Houston, 2013).

The U.S. Census defines a household as “linguistically isolated” if its members 14 or older evidence difficulty with English and speak a different native language (Shin, 2003). People with limited English proficiency may struggle or adapt differently to tasks than fluent English speakers. For example, they often navigate public transit by memorizing symbols on signs and notable features of a station, since they are unable to read the words on them (Community Transportation Association of America, 2016). City transit officials should work to communicate changes in bus or subway routing or timetables broadly and in multiple languages in areas where different languages are spoken. Appropriate transit information sharing is necessary to ensure that all can adjust. Emergency management efforts are no different. They, too, must be offered and planned in ways that seek to involve members of a community's population, regardless of their capacity to speak or write English.

Existing language barriers in a community can be exacerbated during natural disasters when government officials assume high-level English fluency when sharing emergency information. In an interview with *Good Magazine* in 2014, for example, Thomas Phelan, an emergency management researcher, suggested that emergency messages and warnings are often written at the college level, which is far too complex to be understood by non-English speakers, children, and a share of the elderly (Hennefer, 2015).

It is especially difficult for those with limited English proficiency to obtain medical help during times of emergency. Meischke, et al. (2010) surveyed professionals at health call centers and found that 80 percent of respondents encountered callers with limited English skills more than once a week. Meis-

chke, et. al. (2010) also found that during these calls, dispatchers had to repeat information. In consequence, these researchers found a significant difference in the time it took to dispatch different types of emergency medical technician crews to those with limited English skills compared to those who were fluent, the consequences of which will need to be investigated further. Mieschke et. al. (2010) did suggest, however, that dispatchers' techniques for communicating with callers of limited English proficiency may not be as effective, since the language barrier can negate the usefulness of a technique, such as repeating a question or statement, in order to calm a distressed caller.

Understanding distrust and gaining trust are important

Another barrier in Houston and other cities that arises during and following natural disasters between those with no or limited English facility, including unauthorized immigrants, and government representatives, is distrust. The Migration Policy Institute has reported that a majority of Houston area immigrants lack English proficiency, which means there is a significant overlap between those populations and unauthorized immigrant populations on this critical criterion (Capps et. al., 2015). These two factors together exacerbate distrust of government representatives. Put yourself in an unauthorized immigrant's shoes and imagine you had just lost your home and belongings or have otherwise suffered catastrophically from a storm or fire and a complete stranger with a government-agency logo on their shirt approaches you speaking a language you do not command. During a vulnerable time, such as in the aftermath of such a disaster, how would you know whether that person is trustworthy?

The Department of Homeland Security has defined unauthorized immigrants as, "foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents" (Department of Homeland Security, 2017). There are about 575,000 unauthorized immigrants in the Houston area (Sacchetti, 2017). This translates to 1 in 10 Houston metro residents being unauthorized (Florida, 2017).

For this reason alone, it is important for Houston's emergency managers to consider how immigrant communities could be apprehensive and fearful of government activities, rather than assume that public officials will be received with open arms during relief and recovery efforts. Residents may not know how to identify emergency responders, they may be unauthorized to be in the country, or they may have previous life experiences that have sown distrust in police or other government representatives (Florida Department of Health Office of Minority Health, 2013). For example, many unauthorized immigrants in Houston were afraid to seek shelter following Hurricane Harvey because they feared U.S. Customs and Border Protection employees, who were assisting with search and rescue. As a result, many resi-

dents waited in contaminated water for the storm to abate, when they could have obtained warm and dry shelter. Indeed, representatives of Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha (Spanish “For Families and Their Education,” or FIEL), a Houston, a nonprofit immigrant advocacy group, received dozens of calls from residents asking whom they could trust, as relief efforts were underway (Florida, 2017).

As a rule, non-English speakers did not trust federal immigration and emergency management officials. More, many did not trust Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, even as he insisted that those receiving assistance would not be subject to identification checks. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection also announced they would not check immigration documents at shelters. Nonetheless, these statements did little to allay residents’ fears predicated on the fact that prior to Hurricane Harvey, there were widespread reports of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arresting and detaining at least 6,500 immigrants in the Houston area (Straw, 2017).

Solutions for local governments

Language and cultural barriers can exacerbate a complicated post-disaster recovery. Houston officially provides services in five languages, including Spanish and Vietnamese, but interpreters are often stretched thin during emergencies. Families may have members who are fluent in English, but these may be children and it is unrealistic to rely on young people to interpret information accurately and convey it to their families. Local governments should focus their planning on programs that will increase language proficiency in both directions. For Houston, this implies that the city should work to provide opportunities for its residents needing to acquire more English proficiency and, also, train responders fluent in English to speak and read Spanish and Vietnamese.

City officials should also focus on partnering with radio, television, and other media companies already serving immigrant communities to distribute important emergency messages in their native languages and to build trust by engaging with them outside of disaster situations to describe city structures and programs aimed at relief and recovery. That is, put more generally, Houston should work with firms with ties to non-English speaking communities to help them develop and maintain emergency communication programs. Vietnamese Americans in Houston, for example, have access to only one radio station that broadcasts in Vietnamese. And that outlet, Saigon Radio (KREH 900-AM), briefly stopped broadcasting during Hurricane Harvey. If Saigon Radio had not been able to resume service, many members of the city’s Vietnamese community would have been unable to obtain informa-

tion and receive updates from public officials in their preferred language (Lam, 2017). The Houston Police Department cooperated with Saigon Radio in the summer of 2017 to discuss crime prevention efforts in the community, suggesting that such collaboration can occur. Such efforts should be expanded (Kragie, 2017). To help alleviate the burden on a single broadcasting outlet when only one such exists, Houston and other cities confronting a similar scenario should work to incentivize new forms of emergency broadcasting targeted to non-English speaking residents.

To address the distrust among residents arising from the language divide and unauthorized immigration status, public officials need to work with churches, community centers, and local immigrant advocacy organizations, such as FIEL Houston to develop ties and ongoing communication channels. Words need to be backed up with actions. In 2011, Houston's Department of Health and Human Services partnered with community organizations to explore ways to communicate more effectively with citizens and residents. Today, many of the city's preparedness guides are published online in several languages as a result. For its part, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has recommended community mapping as a way to investigate empirically a neighborhood's resources and capabilities. Such efforts involve documenting critical infrastructure, resident makeup, and types of buildings and businesses that could store supplies or be used to feed responders and residents during or following emergencies (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011). Houston should also recruit members of the community to be trained in emergency response as bridges between government representatives, first responders, and residents. This step is key because when disaster strikes, residents are often the first to help other residents. Houston has conducted disaster preparedness classes in Spanish for several years and began to do so in Vietnamese in 2014 (Ready Houston, 2014). These initiatives should be strongly supported and expanded.

Finally, any city-sponsored emergency management planning should reflect the needs of Houston's immigrant communities and address them in practical ways, including continuing efforts to address the lingual divide. Communities with low English proficiency and significant populations of unauthorized immigrants in Houston are especially vulnerable to natural disasters, and public safety requires that city officials take this situation into consideration in their planning. Indeed, emergency response planning for communities evidencing language and cultural barriers requires managers to think beyond an English language-centric perspective. It requires them to consider the many reasons why they must work harder to gain the trust of community members, and how vital those efforts are for effective response to emergencies.

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NATURE, SUSTAINABILITY, AND TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

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The journeys we take every day as we travel to work and school often go unnoticed and unquestioned, but they influence us profoundly. As part of the immense network of transportation infrastructure that constitutes an important part of our communities, the paths we take to move from home to work or school and elsewhere each day not only affect the logistics of our schedules, but also influence our world views, values and ways of connecting with the people and world around us. On buses and in cars, on foot, astride bicycles or even aboard electric scooters, we experience our environment with a proximity to nature or an apparent separation from it, and our predilections toward adopting sustainable behaviors are reinforced or challenged in part by these travel-related experiences and perceptions. This essay reflects on the transportation systems with which many residents commonly interact, the implicit values each evidences, and the capacity individuals have to challenge the ability of these systems to structure their behavior.

Scholars and professionals in the planning discipline commonly view sustainability as a balance among environmental, social, and economic goals (Campbell, 1996; Immergluck & Balan, 2018). The relative emphasis assigned to each of these aims varies with different socio-spatial contexts. Neoliberal land development policy and practice has often accorded economic sustainability the highest priority and has defined that objective in a way that undermines the other two goals (Campbell 2013, 2016; Immergluck & Balan, 2018). Manifestations of this ranking have included roads and highways built to support and encourage personal vehicle usage, airports constructed to cater to tourism, and the construction of buildings, homes and walkways in environmentally sensitive or significant areas. This way of thinking is also apparent in what is too often not included in infrastructure planning; safe and connected walkways, bikeways, and public transportation options.

With systems in place that highlight the ease and efficiency of individual travel and hide the value of environmental and social experience, the

inevitable majority of individuals using those systems reify the need for their expansion. When communities continue to invest in such systems, they ultimately lose political will and capacity to develop alternative transportation. In this way, communities create increasingly convenient, yet unsustainable, systems of personal vehicle infrastructure, and their residents develop a deeper dependency on unsustainable capitalism-driven transport (Smith, 2010).

Transportation scholarship has a history of valuing economic impact above all other forms of evaluation that dates to the early twentieth century, when Fordist and Urbanist visions of progress resulted in massive changes to the landscape (Spann, 1998). These social visions had several significant consequences. First, these perspectives effectively separated Nature from Humankind, with Nature viewed as something wild and romantic that could be conquered or saved by human beings, who existed apart from it (Kitchall, 2012; Smith, 2010). Second, vehicular transportation was given the highest priority in planning as a way to promote capitalism and was also marketed to the public as a means to realize personal freedom (Kitchall, 2012; Smith, 2010). Third, these views reordered how the general public conceived of community, resulting in a diminution of its inherent value and that of the natural environment in which it was ensconced in favor of its economic potential alone (Fullilove, 2005; Harvey, 2006; Sandercock, 2003; Smith, 1994). This perspective, and standards and practices derived from it, is still dominant today.

Insidious repercussions of a view of the landscape as existing primarily to be manipulated for economic gain reveal themselves in clear and discrete ways. Climate change and environmental degradation are now well documented, with flooding, erosion, and poor air quality in the public spotlight (Dorst, 2019). Wildlife habitat destruction and shrinking life-sustaining biodiversity are also becoming more evident (Hammen & Settle, 2011; LaFuite, 2017). Less visible are the influences of this neoliberal perspective on human wellness and behavior, but these may be just as important as that public philosophy's environmental effects.

Humans' felt connection to nature has been shown to influence individual mental wellness, public health, community connection, and altruistic pro-environmental behavior (Gifford, 2014; Jones & Davies, 2017; Keltner, 2009; Schultz et al., 2016; Shanahan et al., 2015). In fact, the more analysts have learned about the vast network of connections between human wellness and the natural environment, the more arbitrary the distinction between human beings and the environment seems (Blok, 2013). In a call to broaden the understanding of landscape in his discipline, architect Peter Jacobs has highlighted the necessity for such a shift. He described the environment as "an expression of who we are and what we value" and asserted that it "provides critical support for what we wish to become and how we live within nature"

(Jacobs, 2011, p.318). That meaning is never absent, but it is often hidden as we go about our daily lives because we have chosen to ignore or diminish its reality and significance.

Options for the design and implementation of transportation infrastructure are vast, and their implied values and practical implications for the communities they touch should be identified and thoughtfully considered. Catering to the needs of single-passenger vehicles or private planes distances people from one another and from Nature, supports unsustainable practices, and requires a massive quantity of constructed space that itself can serve to degrade the environment. Assigning priority to infrastructure for mass public transport, such as buses, may still distance people from the environment of which they are a part, but nonetheless result in a smaller ecological footprint than private automobiles and aircraft. Emphasis on non-motorized transportation infrastructure development, such as bicycle lanes, pedestrian walkways, and greenway trails, may help connect people to their natural environments, increase public health and spread and deepen sustainability values. The physical activity involved with their use is associated with many aspects of physical and mental health and wellness. E-assist bikes, scooters, skateboards, and the like capture some benefits of connection to nature, but also deemphasize physical activity.

Any of these examples of transportation infrastructure may be designed more or less sustainably and with more intimate or distant interaction with the natural environment. Landscape design addressing these developments may also be self-consciously crafted to promote biodiversity, community building, and safety. Moreover, designing for such connectivity may enhance accessibility to alternative transportation throughout communities. Art and culture may also be incorporated into such designs and feature diverse community perspectives. Where and how transportation infrastructure is situated can also promote or hinder social justice, depending on how planning for those efforts is conducted and who is involved in those processes.

The potential for encouraging changes in current widely held frames and values through sustainably crafted transportation infrastructure offers hope that community residents may reimagine their visions of who they are and how they wish to be represented in their landscape. With intentional design, these systems can send powerful messages about how to live well in Nature. First impressions of a community and its connections to the broader world can symbolize respect for people and their environment. Appreciation of nature and a local culture that protects it can exemplify new, but also timeless, knowledge about humans' place in the world and their key roles in preserving it. We can be strengthened by the paths that lead us as we take literal and figurative steps toward a sustainable future in our communities and beyond.

As residents, all individuals can play a role in how their communities are

planned. They also have the power to influence the design of how they move about the transport structures already in place. Funding for transportation often requires public participation, and municipalities regularly hold open-to-the-public comment meetings concerning possible bikeways, walkways, and roadways. Communities regularly redesign and construct transportation system elements from crosswalks to bus stops and all of these contribute to system sustainability. Likewise, planners and officials respond to resident use of the existing bus, bicycle, and motor vehicle systems. By showing up to meetings and by making conscious choices to travel in ways that demonstrate that they value the environment and social interaction, citizens can influence policy-maker transportation structure choices. In so doing, residents also inevitably influence their own values, behaviors, and quality of life.

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