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# The Anthropology of Postindustrialism: Ethnographies of Disconnection

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# The Anthropology of Postindustrialism

This volume explores how mechanisms of postindustrial capitalism affect places and people in peripheral regions and deindustrializing cities. While studies of globalization tend to emphasize localities newly connected to global systems, this collection, in contrast, analyzes the disconnection of communities away from the market, presenting a range of ethnographic case studies that scrutinize the framework of this transformative process, analyzing new social formations that are emerging in the voids left behind by the deindustrialization, and introducing a discussion on the potential impacts of the current economic and ecological crises on the hypermobile model that has characterized this recent phase of global capitalism and spatially uneven development.

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*Edited by Ismael Vaccaro, Krista Harper and Seth Murray*



**The Anthropology of  
Postindustrialism**  
Ethnographies of Disconnection

**Edited by Ismael Vaccaro,  
Krista Harper, and Seth Murray**

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## Foreword

Industrialization (with its associated rapid expansion of production, waged employment, and market integration) has long been treated as a universal process—a recognizable if complex set of transformations that presents certain regularities and patterns, even as it takes different, “path-dependent” forms in different times and places. Thus, we have become familiar with the topic of industrialization as a rich field for comparative inquiry, with the familiar (and often intellectually very productive) dialectic between sweeping big-picture narratives proposed by “grand theory” and the closely observed qualifications and counter-narratives generated by ethnographers.

In contrast, deindustrialization (and its associated processes of market de-linking, mass layoffs, and economic decline) has tended to appear as a kind of terrible accident—an interruption, an exception, or a temporary aberration. Perhaps as a result, we have nothing approaching the sort of comparative literature that is associated with the topic of industrialization. Rich literatures exist, to be sure, on the social suffering caused by such processes, and on specific egregious forms of disinvestment (such as “red-lining”), but we have for the most part not framed deindustrialization, disconnection, and decline themselves as central and general topics for anthropological investigation.

This volume is an attempt to alter this state of affairs. Disinvestment, deindustrialization, and economic decline, the editors point out, have long been important features of the uneven global landscape of capitalist development. Far from being accidental blips, such processes are essential to the process of capitalist accumulation, a process in which the withdrawal of capital from some sites and its entry into others are two sides of the same coin. What is more, the editors suggest that the current moment, in which a global “free trade” regime often allows capital to move from one nation or region to another more quickly and easily than in the past, is one in which disinvestment and deindustrialization are becoming both more important and more visible features of global capitalism.

If this is so, then the time is surely right for increased comparative attention to such processes, with an eye both to identifying patterns and regularities that cut across cases, and to recognizing how specific histories and

sociocultural contexts inform the way that disconnection and decline are experienced and responded to. The contributors to this volume are in this respect exemplary, attending as they do to the local specificities of their ethnographic cases while convincingly relating them to other phenomena that are less place-bound (but equally particular), such as capital flows and global commodity markets.

One especially valuable aspect of this volume's contribution is its recognition that zones of disinvestment and deindustrialization are always sites not only of loss and suffering but also of innovation and creativity. There is sometimes a perception (not least among the people who must live through such difficult times) that a time of decline and abjection involves simply "falling back"—returning to a backward past while losing a more stable and secure recent past (and perhaps also an anticipated prosperous future). Yet as the editors emphasize in their introduction, the transformed social, physical, and ecological landscapes of failed or aborted industry offer no possibility of really "going back." Instead, the interruption of the plotline of industrial development always opens up a new space, within which, as they put it, "something new has to emerge" (1). Here ethnography has a special role to play in tracing the emergence of these various forms of "something new." And as the contributions to this volume show very well, people make their way in these new landscapes both by improvising new sorts of livelihoods (ranging from the respectable provision of tourism services to quite dodgy or illegal forms of "informal economy") and, equally importantly, developing new forms of social and political mobilization that allow them to make new sorts of claims on resources (which again can take a range of forms, all the way from lobbying state agencies for subsidies to violent predation on the part of those experiencing economic exclusion).

As a final thought, I would like to suggest that both such new, improvised livelihoods and new mobilizations around the issue of the distribution of resources may become even more important in the years to come. One reason for this is what seems to be, in much of the world, a certain decoupling of economic growth from employment. The cases treated in this book, like most of the other literature on the topic of economic decline, deal mostly with industries that have declined or closed down, and with capital flows that have withered or dried up. Such withdrawals of capital, as the editors note, have long been a fundamental feature of global capitalism, with its characteristic "cycles of capitalist investment and disinvestment." There is another process, though, that can have equally devastating results without being balanced by any countervailing cycle. That is the process through which new capitalist investment itself (and not disinvestment) renders people "redundant," unemployed, and cast off. In South Africa, for instance, capital investment in mining and agriculture has in recent years facilitated not increased employment, but mechanization and modernization that has put hundreds of thousands out of work. Here, as in some other world regions, it is a certain kind of transformative economic investment, not disinvestment,

that is casting people adrift or rendering them “surplus” (Li 2010; Ferguson 2013). And the fact that deprivation and decline (for communities that formerly depended on a regular demand for low-skilled manual labor) are unfolding in the very midst of expanded production (and indeed enhanced prosperity for many) renders the sorts of new social and political mobilizations traced in this volume especially important, part of what I have termed a “new politics of distribution” (Ferguson 2015).

As we try to think through such new developments, we will need good ethnographic accounts that can track the ways that people in a range of different settings are actively responding to predicaments of disconnection and abandonment, creating that “something new” that may show us the way to something more hopeful. This volume provides us with such accounts. In doing so, it makes a valuable contribution to an area of investigation that could hardly be more timely or more important.

James Ferguson  
Palo Alto, California  
April 30, 2014

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# 1 The Anthropology of Postindustrialism

## Ethnographies of Disconnection

*Ismael Vaccaro, Krista Harper,  
and Seth Murray*

### THE POSTINDUSTRIAL MOMENT

How do the economic mechanisms of capitalism, characterized by a hypermobility of flows, affect actual places and people? The principal motivation or rationale that underlies these mechanisms is a quest to increase profits through market expansion, establishing favorable terms of trade, or cost reduction. This is most easily and commonly achieved by rapid relocation from place to place in search of a labor force with cheaper costs, new pools of resources or raw materials, or sites with weak environmental regulations. It is in this sense that mobility and commodification—be it of people, corporations, goods, or ideas—becomes the fundamental framework through which to understand late modernity, its new economic articulations, and their associated sovereignties (Steinberg 2009). Anthropology has often discussed and theorized the impact of market integration on local communities across the world (Ensminger 1992). This volume, in contrast, analyzes the disconnection of a community away from the market.

The goal of this collection is to create a framework through which to understand places affected by disinvestment after a period of capitalist integration, as well as the radical transformations resulting from industrialization and abandonment. How do communities respond to cycles of connection and disconnection from the markets that pushed their industrialization? Peripheral locales are radically transformed by sudden integration into an economic framework characterized by mass extraction and transformation of natural resources (Pels 1997; Peters 1994). In other cases, industries draw people into urban centers that decline within a generation or two as investors seek new fast-growth locales. Disconnected communities cannot go back to the world as it once existed, as society and environment have forever changed. Yet the model provided by the market integration becomes obsolete. In its place something new has to emerge, even if this means an abandoned landscape, a legacy of pollution, or the informalization of employment.

Our anthropology of postindustrialism examines how the retreat of market-oriented mass production produces diverse, but repeated patterns

2 *Ismael Vaccaro, Krista Harper, and Seth Murray*

in places around the world. Scholars have used the term “postindustrial” in a number of ways to characterize economic and social reconfigurations. Initially, “postindustrial” referred to a transition from manufacturing to service industries (Bell 1973). Many viewed this shift with optimism about the growth of skilled jobs in the new “knowledge economy” (Drucker 1994). Bluestone and Bennett viewed deindustrialization and postindustrialism more pessimistically, with industrial collapse leading to the decline of stable, unionized, and well-paid employment in manufacturing (1984). Others criticize the term “postindustrialism” because it seems to imply that the industrial era of capitalism is over, when in fact manufacturing continues to take place on a massive scale—in other places than Western “industrialized nations.” Contributors in this volume, however, demonstrate that communities around the globe are confronting uneven development (Smith 2008), industrial booms and busts, and their attendant social dislocations. More popularly, “postindustrial” refers to the traces of previous industrial development and labor that appear in infrastructure, social relationships, and memory—a sense that we are living in postindustrial times (Ringel 2014). Scholars today are writing about postindustrial landscapes, archaeology, and heritage (Cowie and Heathcott 2003; Dawdy 2010; Edensor 2005; Storm 2014).

As with most anthropological definitions, we use the term postindustrialism more flexibly, as an entry point to comparisons that may trouble earlier, more evolutionary definitions. Katherine Verdery harnessed ethnography to the field of “postsocialism” as a way of deconstructing mainstream transitology and the idea that “shock therapy” could lead to a smooth and predictable transition to free markets (Verdery 1996). In Verdery’s spirit, we use the term “postindustrial” not to refer to a predetermined development trajectory but as a way of imagining “what comes next” in different places facing the social, economic, and ecological legacies of prior industrial development that continue to influence people’s present-day lives.

Regardless of terminology, the human burdens of disconnection and industrial transformation are unequally shared across people and places (Doussard et al. 2009). We discuss how communities are drawn into the mobile uneven networks of capitalism. Drawing from political ecology, we explore how industrialization and deindustrialization transform nature and landscapes. We then move to the scale of everyday life: how people experience “postindustrial time” (Ringel 2014) and space. Finally, we present several postindustrial pathways that resonate with the ethnographic case studies presented in this book.

## MOBILE UNEVEN NETWORKS

The anthropology of disconnection is the study of the local impacts of the capricious unraveling of uneven transnational networks. This asymmetrical

unfolding is best understood through the lens of uneven development, in which volatile transnational networks spatially restructure economic and social life (Castells 1996; Harvey 2001; Smith 2008). Neil Smith points to the ways that unequal power relations fundamentally regulate these processes:

The logic behind uneven development is that the development of one area creates barriers to further development, thus leading to underdevelopment, and that the underdevelopment of that area creates opportunities for a new phase of development. Geographically this leads to the possibility of what we might call a “locational seesaw”: the successive development, underdevelopment, and redevelopment of given areas as capital jumps from one place to another, then back again, both creating and destroying its own opportunities for development. (Smith 2008: 151)

These pages describe a global network in a perpetual state of change and in which peripheries and centers are continuously made and unmade.

We present cases of rural and urban postindustrial regimes alongside one another. The central nodes of the networks tend to be cities because the gravitational pull of larger markets dominates network flows (Appadurai 1988; Bestor 2001; Freidberg 2001). But not all urban areas are created equal in the global capitalist system. Cities, or even sections of cities, might get disconnected from other cities and segments of the global networks of production and consumption. The auto-producing midwestern United States became the Rust Belt as Japanese car companies started to distribute equivalent and cheaper products in America and as American car companies started to outsource parts manufacturing to Mexico and other countries (Dudley 1994; High 2003; High and Lewis 2007). Parts of that industry then returned to the United States—not to Detroit, which remained in decline, but to lower-wage regions in the Appalachian states from whence an earlier generation of Detroit workers had come (Kingsolver 2011). The post-socialist industrial areas of eastern Europe also faced pressures following the end of state socialism. Heavy industrial regions like northern Hungary were consciously developed and integrated in state-planned economies (Burowoy and Lukács 1992). After 1989, the privatization of state-owned firms produced a landscape of small cities with unemployed workers and quiet, empty factories stripped of their machinery, which was sold and shipped to other regions (Harper 2012; Pickles and Smith 1998).

We also see the effects of rural disconnection in industrial agricultural and extractive sectors. Vaccaro’s field site in the Catalan Pyrénées in the early twentieth century offered cheap coal, yet most mines closed as Spanish power plants switched to cheaper South African coal (Vaccaro 2006). Timber mills all over North America were outcompeted and abandoned due to the massive flows of transoceanic processed wood (Clark 2001; Power 2006).

Fish processing towns became ghost towns when processing ships took over and delocalized the fishing industry (Marchak et al. 1987; Sepez et al. 2007; see also Acheson and Acheson in this volume). Others have documented disconnection due to ecological destruction in the form of depleted fishing stocks resulting in abandoned canneries and quiet fishing ports (Schrank 2005; St. Martin 2005) or deforested and impoverished timber country (Mattey 1990; Raffles 1999). Social scientists have also examined plantation economies suffering the vagaries of the market (Mandle 1974; Wiley 2008) and decapitalized industrial farming economies (Dudley 2000; Tauxe 1993). In all these cases, the hypermobility of capital, people, information, commodities, ideas, and energy has had an important transformative effect on communities, landscapes, and regions all over the world (Inglehart 1997; Sivaramakrishnan and Vaccaro, 2006). When the strategic advantage of one such rural area disappeared, the productive activity vanished with it, leaving abandoned landscapes and communities behind.

These phenomena are not exclusive to the internal peripheries of the global North. Ferguson's *Expectations of Modernity* tracks how this process affected the Zambian copperbelt when extraction costs rose and global prices dropped (1999). The Amazonian rubber tapper industry evaporated once someone learned to cultivate the rubber tree and opened plantations in Asia (Dove 2002). The economies of entire countries in the global South collapsed when their main export markets failed because of significant shifts in global supply (Frynas et al. 2003).

The events studied here are not ontologically new: as E.P. Thompson observed, industrialization created similar boom and bust cycles all over the English countryside in the nineteenth century (Thompson 1968). The novelty lies in their frequency, speed, and range. The cases presented here look at how, on a local level, economic systems, institutions, demographic patterns, and individual and collective identities are reshaped in the conflictive process of connection and disconnection to and from productive and consumptive processes at a regional and global level. Each site faces well-known socioeconomic processes: market integration, expansion, hypermobility, abandonment, or reinvention (Charles and Lipovsky 2005; Hannerz 1996; Pred and Watts 1992). Financialization is also a fundamental feature of the current model, contributing to the speed and spread of speculative markets (Ho 2009; Holmes 2009; Van der Zwan 2014; Palomera 2014).

What happens with localities and their people that, after a period of capitalist integration and connection, suddenly find themselves on the wrong end of the seesaw? Usually, there is a crisis of social reproduction as material conditions and the range of possible livelihood strategies and life trajectories are recast. Industrialization requires higher densities of labor for the factories, which in turn increases the level of consumption in absolute terms due to the sheer number of people required and in relative terms due to the development of new needs associated with modern life. These needs are covered by a continual flow of cheap commodities produced elsewhere in other

peripheral nodes of the networks controlled from the urban centers. When mass production moves away from a given location, local communities tend to have reached dimensions beyond the carrying capacity of their local environments and are no longer self-sufficient productive regimes. At that point, however, nobody is interested in providing these community members with the products they have grown to desire because the community members no longer have wages to pay for them. In addition, the expectations, the perceived quintessential needs, the imagined futures of these postindustrial populations cannot be covered by the preindustrial local mode of production, which is neither developed nor diverse enough to do so.

Emerging postindustrial modernities, thus, are characterized by restructuring and, more often than not, different levels of scarcity and crises. As the global stock-market crash of September 2008 and the subsequent U.S. governmental plan to salvage the market should have proven to the last believers of the free market, state and big corporations work and exist in close articulation. Public national interest, as defined by the national centers of power, directs governmental agency. The achievement of the highest possible margin of economic benefit in the shortest possible time directs capital investment. We can only comprehend the paths taken by postindustrial locales by attending to the agency of state and major economic actors in shaping territories and resources.

## POSTINDUSTRIAL POLITICAL ECOLOGY

While trying to understand a globalizing modernity through the idea of disconnection we are forced to unpack the workings of the late capitalistic territorial logic. The point of such logic is the generation of maximum profit by extracting or processing at the cheapest possible location with the goal of sending it for consumption to often distant affluent markets. Mainstream economists championed this model as an export-led development strategy for decades (Giles and Williams 2000). Other scholars have drawn attention to the vulnerabilities of this model: market crashes and ecological destruction (Boyce 2002; Martinez Alier 1991). The last thirty years of environmental social sciences have been devoted to the understanding of the interaction between production and consumption as well as its local social and ecological consequences. Because an important part of this research—i.e., political ecology—occurred initially in the global South where rampant spoliation and ecological collapse have been not uncommon, these questions were identified as postcolonial (Bryant and Bayley 1997): that is, that the rationality behind the inequalities, behind the exploitation, was mostly understandable as an outcome of the legacies of colonialism, of the tensions between metropolises and colonies. This tension, following the “world system” model provided by Wallerstein (1974), was articulated around the center and periphery axis in which countries or regions were

more or less connected with capitalistic centers that coincided with the old and new colonial centers.

Prior to co-editing the present volume, the three co-authors had separately conducted fieldwork in various locations in Europe. Our field research shared the grounding of a political ecology framework, and we had invariably encountered instances of inequality and dispossession that paralleled in many notable ways scenarios familiar to us from the anthropological literature focused on the global South (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Escobar 2008; Godoy 2001). However, as our analyses could not rely as unconditionally on colonial or postcolonial tensions to strengthen our explanatory frameworks, our interpretations of the territorial “behavior” of late capitalist modernity seemed to require something with a wider explanatory potential (McCarthy 2002). First of all, the old colonial capitalistic centers were quite heterogeneous, and a quick review of those countries’ histories unveils radical processes of internal expropriation, rebellion, and repression as turbulent as anywhere else (Hobsbawn 1975, 1987; Thompson, 1968). Instead, the fault line that seemed to connect conflicts in the global South and North alike was the tension between resource-hungry capitalistic and urban populations and the disempowered rural hinterlands (Cronon 1991; Gandy 2002).

Postindustrial landscapes are often characterized by depopulation and economic recession, and, consequently, important ecological transformations are associated with these changes based on the variations of the level of human pressure. Idealized versions of culture and nature emerge in this situation. The state expands the idea of national patrimony to the realms of nature and culture, allowing for public agency intervention. Nature is culturalized through conservation as it becomes a symbol and a commodity. Culture is naturalized through its preservation and consumption as an ideal form in museums and other cultural heritage sites (Vaccaro and Beltran 2007). This patrimonialization happens in parallel to a commoditization of the environment. The enjoyment of the environment has become a multimillion-dollar business, sustained on the consolidation at all strata of western society of post-materialistic values (Inglehart 1997). Even the environmental discourse has become a commodity in itself, just another link in the mass consumptive behavior of enlightened contemporary households (Guha 2000; Santamarina 2006). In many rural peripheries affected by depopulation and economic crises, the revalorization associated with patrimonialization and commoditization has opened new venues to market integration, in order to reconnect with different regional, national, or international networks (Escobar 2008; Zanotti 2009; Zimmerer 2006).

This revaluing of nature and landscapes has a history. During the nineteenth century, industrial elites reinvented the concept of leisure (Plumb 1973; Veblen 1998), turning non-productive activities into an identity marker, a distinction that is part of a habitus (Bourdieu 1984). The consumer preferences, cash availability, and easy mobility enjoyed by the urban

masses made it possible for more people to become “nature lovers” (Carr 1999; West et al., 2006). The enormous creation of wealth associated with the consolidation of post-World War II capitalism resulted in the spreading out of post-materialistic values from the elite to the rest of the social structure (Galbraith 1958; Inglehart 1997). In this way, leisure then became a quintessential post-materialistic economic sector that was expanded as a social and cultural right across western societies (Galbraith, 1993). The consumptive domains were expanded because of new leisure preferences. In the post-scarcity society that consolidated during late industrial capitalism, leisure became a central social domain (Giddens 1995; MacCannell 1999; Nazareth 2007). The consolidation of post-materialistic values and leisure as an economic sector have had a fundamental influence on the paths taken by many rural areas experiencing the decay that follows industrial abandonment.

The economic and cultural shifts that accompanied the unfolding of modernity became associated with important new legislative developments as well. The construction of the idea of national interest, the public good that characterizes the emergence of the modern states, and their consecution of the governmental and coercive monopoly (Dean 1999; Foucault 2007) evolved to include environmental protection (Gottlieb 1993; Guha 2000) and cultural collective heritage. This new type of governmentality began to be implemented at the end of the nineteenth century with the first territorially based protected areas (United States in 1872, Canada in 1885, and South Africa in 1902–1926). Since then it has become a massive worldwide phenomenon. The increased value attributed to nature as a space of contemplation and leisure has gone, thus, hand in hand with increased penetration of public agency into environmental protection. In 2005, 6.1 percent of the world, 1,506,436 hectares, was under some level of IUCN protection. This process has resulted in the conversion of the environment into public patrimony (Cooper 2000). The intellectual introduction of the environment into the realm of the public dominion prepares the redefinition, via conservation, of landscape and territory from private (individual or communal) to public, thereby making it susceptible to being expropriated by governmental agencies (Agrawal 2005; Haenn 2005; Hayden 2003, Li 2007).

Nature, as a hot commodity, has paid off in numerous locales across the globe that are transitioning away from an industrial, mass-oriented, productive system. In the Spanish Pyrenees, the closure of mines and factories, combined with the near-disappearance of traditional mountainous agro-pastoralism, resulted in a process of accelerated depopulation and reduced human pressures on the environment. Ironically, depopulation and environmental recovery set the stage for social and economic revival. The landscape, with its natural values and beauty, became the next commodity that these areas could offer to the urban customers (Vaccaro and Beltran 2010). Protected areas, ski resorts, and second residences became powerful economic forces in the renewal of mountain economies.

Not everyone benefits from the shift to nature tourism, however. In South Africa, former Afrikaans farms around Kruger National Park have been converted into thriving safari enclosures in which the veld—the bush—is recreated, and wild animals are unleashed for the pleasure of European and American tourists or hunters. The social impacts of such shifts are numerous, however. Game farms require a smaller labor force from neighboring Black communities than did industrialized farms. These new, smaller productive units produce money (remunerated services) instead of food that could fulfill basic household needs in the area.

Citizens around the world are starting to question the wisdom of the current economic model as a result of the global financial crisis, the volatility of energy prices, and the visible consequences of climate change. Serious consideration of relocating productive centers has coincided with the consolidation, in the West, of a pool of consumers interested in high-quality local food, *terroir* products, and organic agriculture (Welch-Devine and Murray 2011). These trends may yet alter the global economic market and provide incentives for the relocation, once again, of the productive poles closer to their markets.

#### AT LIFE SCALE: ETHNOGRAPHIES OF EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE

As ethnographers of postindustrial contexts, we must simultaneously attend to temporal and spatial scale. In the previous section, we presented how communities and regions embedded in national- and global-scale political economic processes experienced industrialization and de-industrialization over the course of time. The rise of industries and the new connections they foster across global space are often strikingly visible in new buildings and industrial complexes, consumer goods from faraway places, and influxes of workers from other places. The process of deindustrialization can be seen in abandoned landscapes and depopulated homes, but the evidences of disconnection can be more difficult for scholars to discern. At this scale, the analytic task is to render the connections and disconnections occurring across space and generations visible. As Friedman and Ekholm Friedman write, “Ordinary lives do not confront the global as such. They face more immediate issues” (2013: 249). Ethnographers come to understand cultural change across geographic distance and time by attending to people’s everyday practices and sense-making.

Spatial scales become visible in everyday life in many forms: in the built environment and infrastructure where people live and work; in the goods they consume; and in people’s consciousness and ways of thinking about connection to “other places.” Roads and railroads, factories and warehouses, workers’ neighborhoods with homes and public spaces—all these facilitate some kinds of connections while discouraging others. Infrastructure communicates spatial connections that encompass but also exceed

production. In Harper's field site in northern Hungary, railroads carried materials into the state-socialist era glass factory and transported finished products out. Locals took pride in the fact that people throughout the country used jars and glasses produced there. But the factory and railroads facilitated other spatial connections as well: ethnic Hungarians worked alongside Roma from the "Gypsy Row" on the other side of town, and factory workers competed in integrated boxing and football leagues against opponents from other counties. Following the collapse of state socialism, the factory closed and residents without motivation or means to travel beyond their neighborhoods now live in ethnic segregation (Harper 2012; Szelenyi and Ladanyi 2006). This is in fact an example of disconnection, not only from a market perspective, but also from the state apparatus, which has its own set of social and ecological consequences.

In the United States, Carbonella looks at infrastructure through the history of Fordist workers' housing projects built by industrialists. These developments elevated an idealized form of the "New England village" as a model for garden cities but eliminated public buildings, such as union halls, that characterized many historical New England mill towns with histories of labor activism (Carbonella 2006). In today's deindustrializing cities, the project of Fordist urban planning and garden cities is over. Some cities and regions have converted industrial workspace into postindustrial leisure space—Manchester United fans now may watch televised games at pubs overlooking the city's late nineteenth century canals built to transport cotton to the textile mills. Many deindustrializing cities, however, have not made the shift to the postindustrial service and information economy that Bell (1973) predicted. Economist Edward Glaeser has proposed that cities like Buffalo and Detroit should stop building infrastructure and instead aim for "shrinking to greatness," even if it means encouraging residents to leave (Glaeser 2007). Yet even in the fastest-shrinking cities, some residents stay on, struggling to endure in the places that are most meaningful to them (Ringel 2014).

In everyday life, one also experiences spatial scales through consumption. Ferguson's "ethnography of decline" pays close attention to the forms of cosmopolitan consumption and sociability adopted by Zambian mine-workers, and their sense of loss when their urban livelihoods collapsed. The Zambian economy of the 1960s and 1970s had been a model of national modernization via export of a single commodity, copper. Zambian mine-workers migrated to the city, where they worked in unionized enterprises and became accustomed to middle-class consumption patterns—wearing British suits, enjoying international jazz and blues music during leisure hours, living in city apartments with electricity and running water, and eventually, moving through an expanding range of city spaces after the end of colonial rule. All this ended during the 1980s due to a worldwide bust in copper prices and exports. The emergent Copperbelt urban society collapsed, too, and the cosmopolitan networks connecting Zambian workers

to the global economy were gradually severed. Retired and laid-off mine workers were forced to reconnect with the rural areas from which they had originally come in order to secure access to local sources of food. The country shifted from being an emerging modern nation to an aid-dependent postcolonial nation subject to structural readjustment. Lacking alternative commodities attractive to the global market, Zambia entered, in Ferguson's words, into an era of global disconnect. Individual miners experienced this shift as abjection, as they lost the daily comforts, mobility, health, and intellectual stimulation that shaped their everyday lives (1999).

Finally, spatial scales reverberate through people's ways of thinking about connection to "other places." People imagine spatial affinities in numerous ways: through producing products to be used in other places, as in the Hungarian glass factory (Harper 2012), or through consuming music and products from far away, as Ferguson describes in Zambia (Ferguson 1999). In these cases, deindustrialization marked a turn away from the national and global connections. But in some cases, translocal affinities arise to fill the vacuum left by fleeing industries. Kristen Ghodsee studied an Alevi Muslim community in a post-socialist Bulgarian mining town as the national mining sector entered into decline. Residents' allegiances shifted when an Islamic charity from the Gulf States built a beautiful new mosque. Young people, influenced by new non-profit organizations promoting religious education, began to criticize their elders' "Bulgarian" clothing and way of life forged over years of negotiating a way to be Alevi under the Bulgarian communist system (Ghodsee 2004). In other instances, working-class communities have responded to disconnection from markets by organizing translocally to fight the global "race-to-the-bottom" for their product. Charles Menzies' ethnography of a Breton fishing community traces its history of national-level labor activism as a response to the rise of large-scale trawl fisheries (Menzies 2011). Today, these artisanal fishworkers are forming alliances beyond France with fishing communities in India through the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) (Menzies, n.d.).

Ethnographers must also move between temporal scales—from historical shifts to daily life—as we study postindustrialism in specific places. British cultural theorist Raymond Williams reflects on the difficulty of representing individuals' experience in light of economic formations. Williams identifies the problem of the "habitual past tense" of political economic analysis, in which the analyst is only able to see clearly those aspects of social life that have crystallized into institutions and fixed forms (Williams 1977: 128). Williams instead draws our focus to moments in the individual's micro-scale of everyday life when accepted common-sense beliefs brush against practical experience. These moments allow us to discern emergent "structures of feeling" embedded within larger historical processes (Williams 1977).

"Structures of feeling" include ways of thinking about time. Under industrial regimes, individuals come to experience their days divided into units determined by clock time (Attali 1985, Thompson 1967). Clock time,

whistles, and bells are applied to other parts of social life, such as education, even as individuals devise ways to “poach” time back from these institutions (De Certeau 1984, Scott 1976). On a longer scale, individuals learn to think about their lives and their families’ lives as temporal trajectories: ideally, these stories center upon the “hope of a better life” in which hard work pays off, if not for the workers, then for their children (Narotzky and Besnier 2014). These aspirations shape what people do and their sense of what futures are possible—as well as people’s ability to mobilize around those hopes.

The postindustrial moment is represented in popular discourse through temporal metaphors. These may evoke decline and decay, or through the rosier lenses of the “knowledge economy,” an evolutionary process of economic change. Christine Walley observes:

Deindustrialization, then, is not so much about evolutionary historical transformations in which . . . one abstracted kind of economy (an industrial one) turns into another (a service-and knowledge-based one). Rather, it’s about the reworking of social relationships in moments of historical flux in a way that benefits some at the expense of others. (Walley 2013: 82)

Every massive economic transformation comes with an attached new framework of individual and collective positionalities that articulate identity and rights. By replacing the previous socioeconomic model, this new framework leaves a generation of already socialized individuals “offside,” unable to play by rules that are no longer valid. The local moral economy is challenged by these massive and successive alterations (Polanyi 1944; Scott 1976; Thompson 1968).

In industrialized locales, entire generations were raised to fit a way of life intensively connected to urbanization patterns, wage economies, and market-regulated distribution of resources. Peasants and tradespeople became workers: miners, fishermen, loggers, factory workers, plantation laborers, or monoculture farmers. They developed occupational and political identities, friendships, forms of knowledge, and patterns of work and leisure around these new economic activities (Vaccaro 2008). The collapse of the industrial complexes and infrastructures that sustained these “structures of feeling” left these emergent ways of life stranded with nowhere to go. This disintegration resulted in cultural and economic dislocations as the expectations of modernity created by the economic boom failed with the bust (Ferguson 1999). This seems to suggest that the reconfiguration of economic structures seems to occur at a faster pace than the equivalent redefinition of local collective and individual identities. These undigested transformations result in cultural “disenchantments” or “reroutings” associated with cycles of failed expectations (Holmes 1989, Kalb 2009).

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As the speed of industrial change increases, people are now expected to reinvent themselves several times in their lifetimes or else be left behind in the world of wage labor (Urciuoli 2008). Richard Sennett refers to this emergent postindustrial process as the “specter of uselessness” (Sennett 2006). Workers must successfully re-skill to new industries as their previous jobs become automated, de-skilled, or obsolete. Sennett notes: “‘Skill’ became defined as the ability to do something new, rather than to draw on what one had already learned to do” (2006: 98). Bell and others forecasted that postindustrial capitalism would shift work away from the easily automated skills of the manufacturing economy to the cognitive skills and “good jobs” of the information age. Firms then developed strategies to automate, de-skill, and outsource many of these service economy jobs. In light of these volatile, unpredictable shifts, Sennett pinpoints “the capacity to surrender, to give up possession of an established reality” as a key characteristic of flexible, postindustrial workers (2006: 98). However, skills alone cannot guarantee “good jobs,” which history has shown are only created and maintained through political struggle.

## PREVIEW OF THE VOLUME

How do individuals and communities respond to the massive ruptures, dispossession, and human suffering that happen when capital moves on to more profitable places? Imagining futures without the security of industrial workplaces—which may be a romanticized security that looks best in hindsight—can be a scary business. After all, as Narotzky and Besnier remind us, “the economy is about projecting into the future” (2014: S10). The close-up lens of ethnography allows us not only to understand how people make sense of the world through structures of feeling—we also can see how people plan and act in response to change.

The chapter contributors show community responses to the postindustrial crisis unfolding along four different pathways: ghost towns, collective action aimed at the state, reconnection, and the search for alternatives. These four pathways might occur in isolation or in different combinations in any given place. In the first response, residents migrate away from an industrial center as factories close and the state starts to neglect infrastructure, creating ghost towns. The residents who remain must find ways to cope with reduced services and public amenities. Even in ghost towns, life goes on, and ethnography helps us to see the webs of remittances, non-market economic practices, and household strategies through which people endure. The second pathway is mobilizing and petitioning the state to remake local economies through state subsidies and reconfigurations of value. Often this means revaluing a natural resource in terms of payment for ecosystem services (Rosa et al. 2007). A third pathway is reconnection—identifying and exploiting a new, substitute commodity that is currently valued in the

global network. Finally, some people respond to crisis and uncertain futures by attempting to develop local community alternatives to the capitalistic framework (Gibson-Graham 2006). The seeds of renewal may be found in non-market activities that already exist, submerged but allowing people to survive in the current system. Or communities may creatively invent new, cooperative ways to organize livelihoods. Several ethnographers in this volume have taken a participatory action research framework in which community members and researchers join together to cultivate emergent economic subjectivities and practices (Cameron and Gibson 2005; Gibson-Graham 2008; Kingsolver 2010, 2011).

The chapters of this volume all explore community responses to disconnection from the global capitalist market and its supporting centers of power. Each examines different facets and angles at a local level of this global transformative process, analyzing new social and ecological formations that are emerging in the voids left behind by the absconding industries. Through the lens of ethnography, contributors develop a broader, comparative frame for the anthropology of disconnection in postindustrial regimes.

For more than two decades, development on the Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea has been largely dependent on natural resource extraction, namely oil, timber, and mining. Although operations such as the well-known Porgera gold mine have the potential to integrate local communities into the global marketplace and could ostensibly benefit indigenous groups, Jerry Jacka argues that the development of resources and the distribution of wealth has been markedly uneven: only a few customary land-owning groups were compensated for land lost or damaged by mining activities, and few individuals are directly employed by the mining consortium. Even the development of a coffee-growing scheme that was intended to help local farmers as a corporate social responsibility outreach program has failed, and the reality is that the prospective mining wealth has bypassed most people of Porgera. Jacka's chapter shines a light on a dark side of postindustrialism: many young men in Porgera now work in the "life market," which entails attacks and extortion by those marginalized from the benefits of the gold mine on groups receiving benefits such as royalties from mining proceeds. Within this context, the "value of labor-less wealth" has destabilized social network ties and directly contributed to the resurgence in tribal warfare in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Ann Kingsolver's chapter follows the industrial and postindustrial transformations of Nicholas County, Kentucky, a part of Appalachia that has witnessed the rise and fall of tobacco, coal, and textile industries. Kingsolver characterizes the rural region's history within global capitalist networks as a 200-year "cycle of abandonments by single commodity industries." She traces how these cycles shaped the landscape and infrastructure of the region through externally focused capital investments that simultaneously facilitate the movement of goods and the isolation of populations. Residents experience the ongoing recession of each industry as a series of "everyday

disasters.” Today, Nicholas County looks to the internet-based service economy as a way out of the latest cycle of industry abandonment, with Amazon distribution warehouses and call centers as pathways for reconnecting, even though many residents of this rural area remain unconnected in a “Broadband Desert.” Kingsolver examines the diverse economic strategies that Kentucky’s women and men have used to endure as their labor has been commandeered by absentee capitalists for decades. These strategies, much like those of the “life market” described in Jacka’s chapter, include illegal and informal cash economies—from alcohol distilleries and bootlegging during the Prohibition era to today’s trade in powerful prescription painkillers. More positive contemporary strategies involve collective action and civic organizations that promote youth development, environmental sustainability, local community media, and rural tourism.

Elena Khlinovskaya Rockhill’s chapter offers us a particular version of disconnection in the far northeastern Russian territory of Magadan, or Kolyma, an area replete with natural resources that was occupied in the early twentieth century following a state-sponsored project of colonization and development. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the costs of maintaining this northern frontier resulted in a punctuated disconnection, not necessarily from the market itself, but from the state structures, which until then had sustained the area’s model of exploitation and production. The area went through a rapid and intense process of depopulation, leading to social atrophy and the outright abandonment of some communities. The traumatic disconnection from its initial network of institutional support is being currently replaced by a new set of private commercial initiatives, both local and global in origin, that are reconnecting the region to global markets.

James Acheson and Ann Acheson focus on the ephemerality and mobility of market-oriented industries, such as timber and fisheries, in the state of Maine during the last three centuries. The geographical and chronological scale of their analysis creates an image in which mass extraction or production is in permanent mobility: one industry replaced by a new one due to the obsolescence of the product, the discovery of cheaper sources elsewhere, or the decimation of the local resource. The authors also track the impacts of these economic changes on the historical micro-demography and social vitality of areas of the state that experience fleeting golden eras followed by abandonment, or areas that have experienced cycles of economic collapse and recovery as they have been economically reinventing themselves for centuries.

Vanesa Castán Broto identifies a pollution landscape in and around Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, one that is specifically attributed to coal ash pollution from power plants. She discusses how the long-term presence of pollution in Tuzla leads local inhabitants to incorporate pollution as a ubiquitous feature of their daily lives, shaping both individual and collective experiences. Drawing from Heidegger and Ingold’s ideas on the politics of

dwelling, Castán Broto suggests that a polluted landscape is not automatically stigmatized if a mode of production is created within this landscape, or if one persists in place. In this post-conflict instance, the appropriation and cultivation of a wasteland is a paradoxical process that enhances people's livelihoods by expanding their possible resource base while simultaneously increasing their exposure to pollutants and related health problems. Castán Broto examines how community members come to accept life in a polluted landscape rather than mobilizing the state for compensation and clean-up.

In her research with informal electronic waste (e-waste) recyclers in China, Anna Lora-Wainwright problematizes the distinction between industrialism and postindustrialism. She writes: "Situated as it is at the intersection between production of goods and provision of services, manufacturing and de-manufacturing, recycling is both industrial and postindustrial." China's e-waste "scalvagers" treat the discarded products of the information economy—mobile phones, computers, and monitors—as a resource to be mined in cottage industries. Recycling the flood of e-waste reuses rare minerals and metals that would otherwise rot after just a few years of consumer use. At the local level, however, the economic opportunities provided by e-waste processing come hand in hand with serious environmental and occupational hazards. Responding to media reports on the pollution created by e-waste recycling, the Chinese government is attempting to curtail informal scalvagers and to create its own large-scale facilities for e-waste processing. While these state policies may improve environmental oversight, informal scalvagers see them as an infringement on their autonomy as small producers. Lora-Wainwright's chapter offers a provocative lens on the uneven coexistence of industrial and postindustrial regimes within China's rising economic center.

Dawson's chapter discusses the collapse of an industry, such as sugar cane in northeast Brazil, with an extremely deep social and ecological footprint, as the result of the combination of global processes (competition) and national transformations (slavery abolition). This collapse in the nineteenth century looked different in the state capital than in the surrounding areas, where the old plantations and mills were once sited. This disconnection was accentuated by the loss of political centrality of this region due to the growth of the urban and industrial centers of the South of the country. Dawson also discusses how the capital, Salvador de Bahia, is currently experiencing a process of reconnection to national and global markets thanks to the oil industry and tourism. In other words, he provides an example of how increasing political marginalization, market shifts, and cultural transformations have resulted in a succession of historical disconnections and reconnections of Salvador de Bahia to the national and global economies.

Veronica Davidov writes about the world of urban explorers, or "urbexers," who explore industrial ruins as a hobby. Davidov sheds light on how abandoned industrial buildings around the world have become subcultural spaces. She explores the meanings urban explorers attribute to deserted

factories, hospitals, schools, and other once-thriving buildings: curiosity, nostalgia, heritage salvage, and the adventure of going “off-limits.” Davidov holds that urbex, as “pursuits involving abandoned urban spaces utilized and valued in ways that run counter to the conventional allocation of use-value in the late-capitalist city,” is a leisure form that poses an implicit and sometimes explicit critique. Urban explorers are attracted to industrial ruins as potentially emancipatory spaces because they show how much work and investment it takes to maintain the appearance of modernity and order, and how quickly rust, vines, and entropy set in without the resources and labor of day-to-day production. These ruins have a special pathos because they show the wastefulness of industrial systems: the abandonment of places, buildings, and tools that become mysterious artifacts when removed from use. Davidov maintains that urbexers create new forms of aesthetic, heritage, and leisure value in conventionally de-valued and abandoned spaces.

Nitzan Shoshan’s chapter focuses on one East Berlin *Plattenbauten*, or socialist-era high-rise residential neighborhood, which is portrayed in the national media as an urban ghetto devolving into a neo-Nazi zone. Shoshan interrogates these representations, placing them in conversation with residents’ perceptions of changes in the neighborhood. He contextualizes the neighborhood’s transformation in terms of the spatial reorganization of workplaces, cultural life, and participants’ expectations of a better life under state socialism and reunification. This reorganization of urban space and economy has rendered what was once a well-located neighborhood of residents who worked together in nearby socialist industrial firms into a distant urban periphery populated by *Wendeverlierer* (transition losers).

Janet Newbury and Katherine Gibson take a look at residents’ responses to changes coming to Powell River, British Columbia, once a “model company town” that was home to the world’s largest newsprint mill. With the decline of Canada’s paper industry in the 1990s, the paper mill provides fewer and fewer jobs to Powell River, and residents and policymakers are debating strategies for the town’s future. Drawing from geographer J.K. Gibson-Graham’s “community economy” approach, Newbury and Gibson have been carrying out participatory activist research in Powell River, eliciting citizen conversations about the role of diverse economic practices in possible “postindustrial pathways” for the town and region.

All of these chapters, with all their diversity and complexity, help us to reflect on the inherent temporal nature of industrial transformations, as well as on the impacts that this ephemerality has on the communities that experience the hypermobility of late capitalism. This compendium of study cases allows us to see the form in which the uneven networks that the contemporary economic system builds across continents grow and wither. Most importantly, these ethnographies show us how communities that struggle after industrial abandonment cope with that dramatic contextual change and seek more just, hopeful, and livable futures.

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