

Research in Economic Anthropology
Volume 32

Political Economy, Neoliberalism, and the Prehistoric Economies of Latin America

Ty Matejowsky
Donald C. Wood
Editors



POLITICAL ECONOMY,
NEOLIBERALISM, AND THE
PREHISTORIC ECONOMIES
OF LATIN AMERICA

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POLITICAL ECONOMY, NEOLIBERALISM, AND THE PREHISTORIC ECONOMIES OF LATIN AMERICA

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Group Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2012

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78190-058-1

ISSN: 0190-1281 (Series)



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PREFACE

Four years ago I co-edited a book with Geert De Neve and two of his colleagues at the University of Sussex – Jeff Pratt and Peter Luetchford. The chapters had originally been presented at the Hidden Hands in the Market workshop held at Sussex in April of 2007 and organized by Geert, Jeff, and Peter. After hearing about the workshop I wrote to Geert, hoping to scoop up a few bits of gold for *REA*, but as it turned out I had struck the mother lode. Our co-edited book was Volume 28 of *REA – Hidden Hands in the Market: Ethnographies of Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption, and Corporate Social Responsibility* (2008) – one of the installments that I remain proudest of, and the first *REA* volume under Emerald with which I was directly involved. The volume explores the relationship between producers and consumers, focusing on its moral and political content, in a very broad sense.

Now I am pleased to introduce a new book that continues *REA* 28's legacy – *Ethical Consumption: Social Value and Economic Practice* (Berghahn Books, 2012, 238pp.), edited by James Carrier and Peter Luetchford, both of whom were involved with *REA* 28. As the editors of *Ethical Consumption* explain in their joint preface, the volume's origins lie in the same 2007 workshop at Sussex that gave birth to *REA* 28. Their project, however, took a different form due to the influence of their continued exploration of the topic of ethical consumption at the 2008 meeting of the European Association of Social Anthropologists, which resulted in the participation of numerous researchers who had not contributed to *REA* 28.

Carrier and Luetchford's new volume shares many of *REA* 28's concerns, bringing the theme of ethical consumption to the forefront (hence, the title) with its strong focus on the Fairtrade movement. In this way it differs slightly from the *REA* volume, which was somewhat broader in scope. However, it very well compliments its predecessor by expertly exploring the ways in which alternative marketing systems and business models that aspire to higher standards of morality often wind up being consumed by their more powerful mainstream counterparts (to which they were originally opposed), and then used to boost the credibility of those systems and models, and even to strengthen them. Examples include corporate social responsibility (CSR) and fair trade movements themselves. In addition, like

REA 28, the volume well illustrates the complexity of fair trade (and Fairtrade), including the fact that the relationship between Southern producers and Northern consumers is always mediated by someone else, which relates to the perpetual mismatch between ethical image and ethical practice (see especially chapters by Luetchford and Vramo).

Carrier lays out the purpose of the book in his well-crafted and timely introduction, designed not to scrutinize ethical consumption as a unique phenomenon but as one among many related social processes, movements, and belief systems. Carrier sets up the problem by establishing a dichotomy between two realms of life – economy and society – which merge in the shopping experience and therefore give rise to a variety of moral questions that lead to ethical consumption, defined as “a collective commentary on the relationship between economy and society” (p. 12), or more concretely as a movement that “seeks to replace the impersonal calculation and task orientation that is part of the economy with personality” (p. 31). In other words, ethical consumption can be seen as a situation in which values of the social realm are collectively applied to an activity of the economic realm. According to Carrier this raises three questions: (1) What kind of relationship between these two realms would be better? (2) How should this goal be met? (3) Who can help attain this goal and what kind of relationship should they have with the realm in question and with one another? Most of the chapters in *REA 28* addressed these questions in one way or another, and the chapters in *Ethical Consumption* address them as well.

The volume is divided into two sections. Section I explores the relationship between producers and consumers, its four chapters illustrating in different ways the fact that this relationship often exists primarily in the imagination of the purchaser. For example, Amanda Berlan (a contributor to *REA 28*) explores the complexities of the ethical consumption of chocolate and Cadbury’s relationship to producers in Ghana as it mediates between them and buyers elsewhere (see also Berlan’s and Dinah Rajak’s chapters in *REA 28*). Peter Luetchford takes a critical view of Fairtrade and its shortcomings as a coffee marketing system that succeeds at selling attractive images to purchasers while failing to equalize power relationships or significantly boost the financial standing of producers in Costa Rica (see also Luetchford’s contribution to *REA 28* and Julia Smith’s chapter in *REA 29*). Lill Vramo concentrates on the consumption/giving end of trade (meant to be supportive of women in Bangladesh) in Norway, which takes place in accordance within a “trade, not aid” paradigm – a reaction, in part, to a period of perceived overly-generous spending on foreign aid. The case

explored by Vramo points to a discrepancy in consumption-side values and production-side effects (see also Geert De Neve's and Catherine Dolan's chapters in *REA 28* on production-side issues). Finally, this section closes with Audrey Vankeerberghen's analysis of organic farming in Belgium. Venkeerberghen's chapter illustrates the ways in which organic farming in many different parts of the world has been tamed by regulation and transformed through its market successes into somewhat of a parallel, almost complimentary, system – despite the fact that it originally arose as a critique of conventional agriculture. In this way, organic farming resembles Fairtrade itself (see also Carrier's chapter in *REA 28*).

Section II of the volume focuses on ethical consumption as a practical activity shaped by the contexts in which it is carried out, seeking to discover the processes through which ethical consumption spreads and takes root, why this happens, and what arises from it. First, Tamas Dombos (also a contributor to *REA 28*) presents case studies from Hungary to show that individual reasons to engage in ethical consumption are highly varied and do not necessarily mesh with larger and higher goals of ethical consumption espoused by the Association of Conscious Consumers and others. Next, Giovanni Orlando investigates ethical consumption as practiced in Palermo, Italy, where it is known as “critical consumption.” Orlando's is a case in which residents who feel powerless to change a system they perceive as corrupt attempt to do so in at least small ways through the practice of consumption. The final three chapters of this section focus on social motivations to consume ethically and some results of doing so (or not doing so). Cindy Isenhour looks at consumers in Sweden who choose to consume less but aim for higher quality and how this relates to their social networks, which often change because they have elected to go against the grain; Peter Collins investigates religion as a factor in consumption activity among Quakers in Britain, for whom proscriptions and conformity are strong motivational factors (recalling the focus of *REA 31*); and Cristina Grasseni concentrates on cheese production and marketing in northern Italy, showing that cultivating direct relationships between producers and consumers can become quite complicated when issues of food authenticity are involved and contested (see also Jeffrey Pratt's and Jennifer Esperanza's chapters in *REA 28*).

The Preface to *Ethical Consumption* declares that the book represents a collaborate effort more so than do most edited volumes, and indeed its chapters are expertly linked not only by the way they are handled in the introduction and in the introductory material to each section of the volume, but also by the authors themselves, and – additionally – by the very fitting

conclusion to the book, written by James Carrier and Richard Wilk. As editor of the Research in Economic Anthropology series, I am elated to see that participants in the 2007 Hidden Hands workshop that gave birth to *REA 28* have continued their explorations of the moral aspects of production and consumption, and I am thrilled by the appearance of a volume of this magnitude to complement *REA 28*, expand on its achievements, and carry the messages of the entire project to new audiences. *Ethical Consumption* and *REA 28* are must-reads for anyone interested in the intricacies of moral production and consumption, and who wants to deepen their understanding of both the demand-side and the supply-side of Fairtrade and other related movements. I expect that many more exciting publications will appear in the future from the continued research and collaboration of the contributors to *REA 28* and *Ethical Consumption* and their respective organizers.

Donald C. Wood*
Editor

*Volume 28 of REA is scheduled to be released in paperback in August of 2012.

UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT, NEOLIBERALISM, AND PREHISTORIC ECONOMIES: AN OVERVIEW OF *REA* VOLUME 32

Donald C. Wood and Ty Matejowsky

This thirty-second volume in the *REA* series represents a joint effort between two former students of Norbert Dannhaeuser, who edited *REA* together with his colleague Cynthia Werner from 2001 to 2005, and who served as the chair of both Donald's and Ty's M.A. thesis committees at Texas A&M University. Norbert also was chair of Ty's Ph.D. committee. Donald was just settling on Japan as his geographic focus in anthropology around 1993, and although this was not Norbert's specialty he was very familiar with the canon of postwar Japanese village studies. Introducing Donald to this body of work had a tremendous influence on his academic development and his future path. Prior to this more intensive and focused guidance, however, it was taking Norbert's core Anthropological Theory (ANTH 410) course at Texas A&M in the autumn term of 1992 – exactly 20 years ago – that convinced Donald to commit himself to a career in anthropology in the first place. Similarly, Ty's career development as an anthropologist owes a considerable debt to Norbert. The knowledge acquired from him both in the field (the Philippines) and classroom (Texas A&M University) has proven indispensable in influencing Ty's geographical and topical focus. Both of us would like to take this opportunity to thank Norbert for all of his guidance and encouragement. We humbly dedicate this volume of *REA* to him in honor of all of his contributions to the field of

anthropology, and also out of gratitude for his support when we were just starting out.

This volume is divided into three parts, which are reflected in its title, and which in turn reflect the themes explored in the chapters that comprise them. Part I is the least homogeneous of the three sections, and it consists of five investigations of economic thought and practice in a variety of situations. First, Jamie Cross investigates the delicate intersections of giving and working on a diamond-cutting shop floor in India. The chapter shows how acts of giving help to define and maintain relationships inside the company, to boost the prestige of givers, and also at times to smooth the giver's upward movement. The case presented by Cross recalls discussions of the "embeddedness" of the economy in social relations. (See also G. De Neve's chapter in *REA* 28 on a factory situation in India and R. Prentice's chapter in the same volume on resistance to authority on a factory floor. In addition, see C. Danby's critical take on the gift/exchange dichotomy in *REA* 21.)

In the next chapter of Part I of the present volume, Monica L. Smith draws on a broad spectrum of studies to argue for a greater influence of individual abundance-seeking activities in the historical formation of large population centers and complex societies than has heretofore been granted in investigations of the phenomenon. In her ambitious enterprise, Smith builds her argument on a foundation of research on the importance of surplus production in economic, social, and political development, where property is created through labor, and where increasingly complex production in centers where labor and materials are plentiful encourages the extension of political power, which also supports the creation of more complex items. Importantly, the focus here is on the abundance-seeking and abundance-creating activities of non-elites, and not so much as responses to orders from above but rather as part of the perpetual human quest for a better life and increased survival (see also A. Martín's chapter in *REA* 30, and see P. McAnany's chapter in *REA* 27 on Maya elites). This is surely not the last time we will hear of the argument put forward here by Smith.

In the third chapter, Justin A. Elardo revisits the (in)famous substantivist – formalist debate in economic anthropology that had already largely faded away by the time *REA* first appeared in 1978. But he does this not to rehash old arguments for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the so-called Great Debate, but rather to investigate the evolution of the substantivist and formalist positions vis-à-vis their relations to institutional economic anthropology since that debate. Elardo does this as a means of reaching four different ends: to illuminate the persistence of the debate's theoretical disagreements among institutional economic anthropologists (both "new"

and “old”), to outline recent critiques of the “new” institutional approach in economic anthropology, to attempt to explain the origin of the debate and its perpetuation by institutional economic anthropologists, and to seek a way for institutional economic anthropology to move beyond the debate. In its concern with the work of Karl Polanyi and the Great Debate, Elardo’s chapter digs into the question of the power of scarcity in determining human economic thought, behavior, and organization, and the usefulness of scarcity as an analytical construct. In this way, Elardo’s chapter resonates off the chapter by Monica L. Smith that precedes it. It also continues *REA*’s long-standing interest in the substantivist – formalist debate and its various implications (see especially Part IV and the introduction to *REA* 25, B. Isaac’s and R. Halperin’s chapters in *REA* 14, Halperin’s chapter in *REA* 7, and also *REA* 4).

The fourth chapter of this part of the volume investigates religion (Protestantism, precisely) as a factor in vegetable production in a small community in Guatemala. As one might surmise from the title of the chapter, authors Andrés Marroquín Gramajo and Luis Noel Alfaro are treading ground prepared for them by Max Weber in his famous essay on the topic. Indeed, the authors support Weber’s thesis with data from a small indigenous highland community, where Protestantism appears to have been a strong driving force in local farming success and prosperity (see chapters in *REA* 31). Just as the previous chapter by Elardo had a conceptual link with the one before it by Smith, Marroquín Gramajo and Noel Alfaro’s chapter has a methodological connection to Elardo’s in the general institutional economics approach to the problem it tackles.

Finally, Part I of this volume concludes with an analysis of maize storage choices among Fremont Indians, who dwelled in the modern-day state of Utah and several other western states up until about seven centuries ago. The authors, Kerk L. Phillips and Renee Barlow, seek to prove that financial theory can help to comprehend perceived threats of maize raids, which would relate to Fremont people’s choosing to use cliff granaries – difficult to both build and fill, but better for security. To achieve their goal, the authors utilize two mathematical models that take into account factors such as the caloric content of maize and the caloric expenditure necessary to transport it to granaries located at high elevations. They find that relatively low threat levels could have been enough to prompt the use of such storage facilities (and also their initial construction). Phillips and Barlow’s chapter illustrates one possible way in which large gaps in archaeological evidence might be filled with methods borrowed from other disciplines.

The two chapters that comprise Part II of this volume offer differing but nevertheless critical assessments of neoliberalism's inequitable impact on everyday lives in today's global political economy. With a long-standing concern for the local and an abiding interest in how macro-level processes are eventually articulated among diverse populations, it is really not all that surprising that anthropologists, especially economic anthropologists, would gravitate toward topics involving intersections of this increasingly dominant market ideology and the lived experiences of ordinary and often marginalized groups. For well over 30 years, the political and socioeconomic landscapes of many countries has been drastically reshaped through policies favoring, among other things, the privatization of state assets, market deregulation, and enhanced private sector participation in public life. This ongoing transformation has clearly benefitted some and marginalized many – so much so, in fact, that the significant inequalities perpetuated by neoliberalism's hegemonic tendencies have effectively emerged as major points of contention for contemporary social movements including 2011's Occupy Wall Street.

Although Part II represents the shortest of volume 32's three sections, it nevertheless addresses timely issues that will have real resonance for readers; particularly those who have lived through and were adversely affected by the global recession of late-2000s. In the section's first chapter, Anna Ochoa O'Leary examines properties of social capital vis-à-vis the experiences of migrant women who have crossed the border into the United States from Mexico without official authorization. This work is grounded in a solid narrative base and calls into question the efficacy of social capital as a means for solving real world problems. The tensions between already-vulnerable female migrants and the human smuggling rings or *coyotes* are laid bare amid the increased border enforcement and anti-immigrant sentiment that pervades much of the recent political discourse in North America and elsewhere. By focusing on the gendered dimensions of this type of immigration, O'Leary offers new insights into the pros and cons of enhanced border security and how social capital can sometimes have very problematic outcomes. (See Tamar Diana Wilson's chapter in *REA* 29, and also see the introduction and W. Tseng's and Marroquín Gramajo's contributions to *REA* 25 in regards to social capital.)

Part II's second chapter is by Sidney M. Greenfield and it considers the ramifications and contradictions of the recent global economic crisis from a substantive economic anthropological perspective. Greenfield explores notions of responsibility and rationality within the framework of a moral philosophy that he terms "just deserts." That is, those who have more are

viewed as arguably more deserving. Challenging accepted beliefs at the core of modern economic thought, Greenfield envisions a more thoughtful and in some ways humane way to mediate economic anomalies such as the recent collapse of the U.S. housing market. In this way the work of economic anthropologists can add clarity and depth to the defining political and economic debates of our time (also see Greenfield's chapter in *REA* 30).

Readers will notice a decided shift in historical and geographical focus as they encounter the chapters collected in volume 32's third and final section. As indicated in its title, Part III considers the prehistoric economies of Latin America primarily from an archaeological perspective. Such analysis compliments work presented in previous *REA* editions and reflects the series' inclusive approach to the work of economic anthropologists who study past societies. Over subsequent chapters, analysis that is both theoretical and data-driven teases out the profound and subtle patterns that characterize ancient economic practices from this part of the world. In a very real sense, these chapters serve as an indicator of the dynamic work currently being done by archaeologists in various countries of Central and South America.

In the first of these chapters, Stephen A. Kowalewski takes something of a macro-level approach by addressing questions of how the ancient Mesoamerican economy arguably worked. Relying on previous historical and archaeological studies, he develops an ideal-type of societal model to theorize about the role of market-based principals in shaping the region's economy. In essence, his argument is predicated on notions that "the Mesoamerican economy, at least in Classic and Postclassic times, operated far more as a market economy than one structured by tribute." This premise does not, however, discount the role of non-market forces as Kowalewski goes on to note in the latter sections of his article. Among other concepts explored in his chapter are notions that households operate as firms, ritual obligations effectively stimulate economic activities, and consumption and exchange serve as the primary agents of specialization. Perhaps more than anything, Kowalewski offers a viable model that other Mesoamerican archaeologists can explore in future research endeavors.

Next, in relation to Monica L. Smith's chapter in Part I of this volume, Gary M. Feinman and Linda M. Nicholas narrow focus to examine the late prehispanic economy of Mexico's Valley of Oaxaca. Building upon and diverging from long-standing explanations for the region's development that are primarily based on Marx's Asiatic mode of production, Feinman and Nicholas highlight the dynamic role played by households and market exchange in this process as opposed to the top-down control and

management of irrigation and administered systems of production and distribution. Utilizing residential exaction findings from three different Classic-period sites as well as ethnographic data from other sources, Feinman and Nicholas provide alternative explanations for understanding the economic character of this part of prehispanic Mesoamerica. Significantly, the flexibility and/or variability in domestic productive practices, residential mobility, inter-household interdependence, and market reliance that they emphasize suggest a type of local agency that is largely absent from earlier held paradigms.

Part III's third chapter centers on Christine Beaulé's analysis of the camelid faunal remains and subsistence practices of a highland Bolivian village. The processing of herd animals that have served as a primary dietary staple for centuries in the Andes provides significant insights into emerging patterns of local status and wealth. The author is able to reconstruct disparities in accessibility to faunal packets or cuts of meat at the site of Jachakala in Oruro, Bolivia (ca. AD 150–1100). These differences, she argues, provide strong evidence for those interested in answering questions about how wealth differences first develop within the context of a subsistence oriented community. Complimenting Beaulé's Andean focus is Part III's final chapter, by Sarah R. Taylor. In this work she considers the developmental trajectory of frontier communities based on their interactions with neighboring populations. Data collected from the archaeological site of El Dornajo in southwestern Ecuador offers various insights into how inter-regional exchanges can foster heretofore unavailable opportunities for political-economic development for moderately complex frontier communities. She argues that an emerging regional prestige economy developed in El Dornajo even amid periods of fluctuating subsistence resources, due to interactions with more complex neighboring groups. Interested readers might benefit from considering Taylor's argument in light of Monica L. Smith's contribution to Part I of this volume.

In sum, Volume 32 of *REA* represents continuity and coalescence – continuity of research themes and coalescence of approaches. The series' long-standing tradition of supporting archaeological research on human economic thought and behavior (established by past editor Barry Isaac) and its strong historical interest in the legacy of Karl Polanyi, established by its first editor, George Dalton (and continued by Isaac), are evident. In fact, it is usually not easy to obtain as many archaeological papers for consideration as were obtained for this volume. Hopefully this will not always be the case. In addition, this volume represents continuity and coalescence in that the academic paths of two students of Norbert Dannhaeuser (also a

past editor of *REA*) have crossed in it with the collaboration of its two editors. Neither of us would be doing what we are doing now if it had not been for Norbert's instruction, encouragement, and general influence during our respective times at Texas A&M University and later, which is why we have decided to dedicate this volume to him, as explained at the start of this introduction.

Herzlichen Dank Herr Professor Dannhaeuser!
Ohne Sie, ohne Ihre tiefen Kenntnisse und Ihre Weisheit,
haetten wir es kaum geschafft.

PART I
VIEWING THE POLITICAL
ECONOMY

SWEATSHOP EXCHANGES: GIFTS AND GIVING IN THE GLOBAL FACTORY

Jamie Cross

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This chapter asks what we should make of the gift exchanges that take place between workers and their managers on the floor of a massive offshore manufacturing unit in South India. Such exchanges appear anomalous in the ethnography of global manufacturing yet here they underpinned the organisation of hyper-intensive production processes.

Findings – Following diverse acts of giving, this chapter shows how these transactions constituted the performative and relational grounds on which workers came to know themselves and sought to shape the world around them. In doing so it extends the anthropology of work and labour by showing that acts of giving are integral to global commodity production.

Keywords: India; labour; production; exchange; the gift; Graeber

THE HIDDEN ABODES OF GLOBAL MANUFACTURING

At the end of 2004 I was granted open ethnographic access to a large subcontracting unit for the global diamond industry in Andhra Pradesh, South India. The factory in question, Worldwide Diamonds, occupied several thousand square feet inside the state's first free trade zone. The zone itself was spread across 350 acres of flat scrubland and was surrounded by an eight-foot high perimeter wall topped with broken glass.

Since the 1970s zones like this one have played a crucial role in the globalisation of production, creating capitalist enclaves across South and South East Asia that are free from state regulation. These have become vital spaces for the diffusion of just-in-time inventory systems, total-quality control mechanisms and hyper-efficient models of workspace organisation, which David Harvey identified as the cornerstones of flexibility in large-scale capitalist production processes (Harvey, 1990, 2005) and have made informality and precariousness an integral part of many global commodity chains (Burawoy, 1985; Cross, 2010; Ross, 2009; Tsing, 2009). There are currently over 400 planned and operational zones across India and the diamond industry has become a prominent investor. Between 2002 and 2007 gemstone and jewellery production in India's new offshore economy grew faster than textiles, garments and micro-electronic manufacturing.

When it opened for business in 1997, Worldwide Diamonds was the first wholly European owned and operated diamond factory in India. Attracted by a bouquet of tax exceptions offered to foreign investors, its owners set out to establish a world-class factory that would offer on demand diamond cutting and polishing services at very low cost to their European and North American clients. Over the following ten years the company's managers successfully took modern assembly line technologies and applied them to the diamond industry, undercutting all their major competitors to emerge as one of the world's cheapest, high volume, producers of small-sized, medium-quality diamonds. What was considered the art and craft of diamond cutting and polishing in Antwerp's early 20th century workshops was here divided into a series of specific specialised tasks, that were easier to learn and more amenable to control. At its peak in 2008, before the global financial crisis and a crash in world markets for consumer diamonds, Worldwide Diamonds processed 1,400 carats of low-grade rough diamond, with an export value of approximately four million dollars, every month.

The zone in which Worldwide Diamonds operates is located midway between Andhra Pradesh's industrial port of Vizag (Visakhapatnam), a

heavily polluted and densely populated city of over 1.5 million people, and the rural sugar trading town of Annakapalle. In 2005 Worldwide Diamond's company employed a Telugu-speaking workforce of approximately 1,200 people. Most of these workers were aged between 18 and 24, roughly seventy per cent of them were men, and all were native to this region of coastal Andhra Pradesh. The zone offered no accommodation and factory workers lived with their families in caste-segregated villages across a semi-rural, peri-urban, hinterland or in housing colonies along the busy highway that cuts through the region.

On the factory floor day-to-day operations were managed by a group of young Indians, recent graduates with degrees in engineering, business or human resources. They were overseen by a small number of European expatriates, English, Belgian and Israeli men, who had been posted here to oversee production processes to train workers in specialised diamond cutting and polishing techniques. Some of these men had worked in the diamond industry since they were young apprentices and had witnessed the industry's transformation as production shifted from European workshops to sites of low cost sub-contracted manufacturing in South and South East Asia.

Work in Worldwide Diamonds was poorly paid and chronically insecure. For their first year, a new recruit was expected to work for a stipend of 1,200 rupees (\$US15) per month, after which they entered a piece rate wage regime that might earn them up to \$40 per month, equivalent to the rates of day-labour in the local construction industry. The formal employment contracts that workers' signed with the company were rendered essentially meaningless by the company's hire and fire policy. Workers who were deemed unproductive could be summarily expelled from the workplace and those who attempted to organise colleagues in protest at working conditions with the support of a local communist trade union were either blacklisted or sacked. In 2002 the intimidation of union organisers here had made the factory a cause celebre for Indian unionists and, in a test case, saw it investigated by the UN's International Labour Organisation.

As I saw it, a factory like Worldwide Diamonds offered a unique window onto the emergent politics of life and work at new sites of industrialisation in India and I approached the company's management with a research proposal. I explained my interests to them in cautious terms as a study of 'workplace culture' and explained a methodological interest in becoming an unpaid participant in the factory's work processes. In a tradition of industrial ethnography (Burawoy, 1982; Cross, 2011a, 2011b; Prentice, 2008; Yelvington, 1995) I hoped to become a participant in rather than just an observer of labour processes and work unpaid on the factory floor. To

my considerable surprise they agreed, with the factory's general manager imagining, like the early pioneers of industrial ethnography (Wright, 2006) that having a social scientist around would have a positive effect on the factory's dynamics. 'It'll be like having a shrink on site,' he told me.

In January 2005 I joined 120 other people on the 6 am–2 pm 'A Shift' in the Preparation Department, where rough diamonds began their transformation into polished gemstones. What began as a provisional arrangement for three months was gradually extended to twelve and, over the course of the following year, I gradually rotated between the Preparation Department's three work sections, *corning*, *bruiting* and *blocking*. In each I was trained to become a competent and productive machine operator, learning to handle single spindle machines, semi-automatic bruiting machines, rotating scaifes and handheld tangs, and eventually able to cut and polish rough diamonds into a basic round shape, give them eight basic facets, a smooth, flat table and their sharp pointed culet.

At first the factory had conformed to my expectations of the global sweatshop as a space marked primarily by the commodification of labour. As I was taught to corner, bruit and block rough diamonds, however, I came to understand that a complex economy of non-monetary and non-monetised transactions was flourishing on the shop floor. As became clear, everyday working life in the Preparation Department involved a whole host of transactions that were neither encompassed by what we might call the wage-labour economy nor by what anthropologists understand as commodity exchange. Workers gave away items of homemade food, brand name sweets and chocolates, handcrafted art-pieces, blessed temple food and decorative or ornamental consumer goods to other workers and to their monitors, supervisors and managers, and they spoke of giving their labour to the company.

These acts of giving crisscrossed the factory floor, with different aims and effects. Some transactions took place without any immediate expectation of a return or any explicit agreement about one, in ways that created, transformed, cultivated and nourished relationships of friendship and care, solidarity and mutual aid. Other transactions were more transparently interested or instrumental attempts to gain favour or foster relations of patronage, clientage and service. Some took place between people who identified themselves as members of the same caste community, while others took place between members of caste communities that have, historically, maintained prohibitions on exchange. Some took place between co-workers, people who occupied positions of equality in the factory hierarchy, while other exchanges took place between workers and their managers, people who occupied differential positions of power, control and authority. Such

transactions offer a vivid illustration that what anthropologists call ‘the gift’ is never a unitary category and that gifts can be animated by what David Graeber (2011) calls different moral or transactional logics, significantly ‘co-operation’, ‘reciprocal exchange’ and ‘hierarchy’.

What, though, should make of such transactions on the floor of a global sweatshop? The ‘hidden abode of production’ into which Karl Marx (1990) descended to examine exchanges between the owners of capital and the bearers of labour power still lies beneath the surface of anthropological theorising about gift exchange. Marcel Mauss’s (Mauss, 1966) essay on the gift was written partially in response to Marxist political economy, the anthropologist deploying ethnological material in a tone that was nostalgic and utopian to describe societies in which the market was not the main medium of human relations and in which the objects of exchange did not inevitably become alienable, quantifiable commodities (Coleman, 2004; Graeber, 2001). Chris Gregory’s (Gregory, 1982; Gregory, 1997) influential post-Maussian approach distilled the essence of gift and commodity exchange into separate, analytically distinct and seemingly incompatible regimes of value (Caliskan & Callon, 2009) and many anthropologies and geographies of labour in the global factory have perpetuated this sharp distinction between spheres of commodity and gift exchange.

The kinds of transactions that I encountered on the floor of Worldwide Diamonds, however, appear anomalous in ethnographic accounts of industrial work at similar sites of global manufacturing in China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Mexico and Sri-Lanka (Hewamanne, 2003; Lynch, 1999; Mills, 1999; Ong, 1987; Salzinger, 2003; Wolf, 1992; Wright, 2006). In this literature the precarious labour contracts between workers and supply chain capitalists in the world’s economic zones epitomise the short-term transactional orders that Gregory described as belonging to the sphere of commodity exchange (Gregory, 1982, 1997). Indeed most discussions of exchange in export manufacturing zones are primarily concerned with the commodification of labour, which is often understood to reach some kind of contemporary apotheosis in these spaces. In China’s economic zones, for example, Pun Ngai (2005, p. 163) has written how rural labour migrants or *dagonmei* transform their bodies into objects for consumption and are forced to confront themselves as something hostile and alien. Aihwa Ong’s (2006) writings present a similarly dystopian portrait, showing offshore zones in China as caceral work camps in which men and women are valued for their labour alone and are condemned in perpetuity to live the bare life of a commodity.

Yet many different ‘economic and moral possibilities’ exist on the floor of the global factory (Graeber, 2010, pp. 1–2) and the diversity of economic

transactions that take place here are not limited to commodity exchange or to the terms of the labour–capital relation. In other discussions and bodies of literature anthropologists have consistently pointed to the blurring and overlapping of exchange categories in the modern industrial workplace (Parry, Mollona, & De Neve, 2009; Prentice, 2008). As Mayfair Yang has shown, for example, the organisation of labour in contemporary China’s manufacturing and service sectors depends on *guanxi* – social ties, networks or connectedness – and mechanisms for producing relatedness through gift giving (Yang, 1989, 1994, 2002, 2009). Meanwhile, Mao Mollona’s (2009) ethnography of labour in contemporary Sheffield’s small machine workshops reminds us how opaque the theoretical distinctions between gift and commodity economies, alienated and non-alienated labour actually are for the subjective, experiential and symbolic ways that manual workers conceive of and shape their relationships of production (Mollona, 2009).

The ethnography of work at an outpost of large-scale export-manufacturing in contemporary India that I present here makes a contribution to these debates by exploring how different acts of giving on the global shop floor shape the labour process in different ways. Examining the transactions that took place on the floor of Worldwide Diamonds, I explore how they were premised on different transactional logics, underpinned by principals of co-operation, exchange and hierarchy, in ways that performed different kinds of social action. As I show acts of giving constituted the performative and relational grounds on which people came to know themselves and sought to shape the world around them. If these transactions fit into the analytical distinction that Michael Burawoy (1982, pp. 15–16) made between ‘relations *in* production’ (relationships that workers and managers enter into with each other on the shop floor) and ‘relations *of* production’ (the relationship between capital and labour under which surplus can be appropriated from producers), they do so by suggesting that it is through ‘the gifts that they give’ as much as the ‘games that they play’ that workers manufacture their own consent. At the same time, these gifts remind us that workplace relationships are animated by transactional logics other than that of commodity exchange.

‘EVERYBODY GIVES’ (CO-OPERATION AND CAPITAL’S FREE GIFT)

Sitting on the floor of his rented two-roomed house one Sunday afternoon in November 2009 thirty-two-year-old Prakash, Worldwide Diamonds’

oldest employee, played with his six-month-old daughter and reflected on thirteen years of factory labour. Prakash had joined the company in its first batch of 75 new recruits in September 1997. I had known him since my first day on the A Shift, when I had been told to sit alongside him and learn how to hold, touch and look at a rough diamond. During that time he had never been slow to criticise the company, to lambast its wage regimes, its systems of control or the intensity with which it required people to work. But when I now asked why he had never left the factory, he put the factory's shop floor gift economy squarely at the heart of his explanation.

Prakash: Worldwide Diamonds' workers are really good: everybody gives! People will always bring you little things at work and if there is some event, no matter if is something small or something big, if somebody gets married or somebody has died, everybody will give something. Whether it is one hundred rupees or thirty rupees, they will give whatever they can, but everybody will give something. You can't find those kinds of relationships everywhere. I've been thinking of leaving that factory for so long, so why am I still there? My relations keep me there, that's why.

'Everybody gives!' It was an exacting phrase and the conclusion Prakash drew from it, 'my relations keep me there' suggested that he understood these exchanges to have powerful social effects and that these effects bound him to the workplace. As Prakash recognised, gift giving did not just reveal ties and relationships on the factory floor but constituted the very mechanism through which these relationships were created.

In many respects during my original fieldwork the Preparation Department had conformed to my expectations of a global sweatshop. The dusty, poorly ventilated open plan space was divided into work sections by hardboard dividers. Rows of workers wore identical blue uniforms and stood or sat to operate machines beneath fluorescent strip lights. In each section, workers were directly overseen by section monitors who wore a maroon coloured uniform. Off the factory floor a department supervisor and a department manager oversaw the quality and rate of production. Wages here were paid at a piece rate, which was subject to constant adjustment as the company's management sought to extract ever greater value from their labour. Work on the shift was hyper-intensive, and each work section was required to meet daily, weekly and monthly production targets. Eight-hour shifts frequently become twelve and six day weeks sometimes became seven as the factory struggled to meet client orders on time.

Each work section was monitored by a closed circuit television camera that relayed real-time images of the factory to banks of screens in a central control room. Here the factory employed a surveillance manager to keep watch for slowdowns in productivity, for attempted thefts and for any sign

of political action. Any sluggishness or sleepiness that was caught on camera prompted a telephone call to the shop floor. Alarms rang if a diamond got lost, and several hours of video would be reviewed to check anybody could have palmed or secreted the missing stone. The movements of people who had been singled out as ‘trouble makers’ were closely tracked, and their gatherings or conversations raised immediate concern about some imminent labour action, a downing of tools or an organised ‘go-slow’.

Beneath this complex surveillance apparatus, however, existed a complex economy of gifts and gift transactions. The earliest transactions that a new trainee here became a party to involved the transmission of skilled knowledge; as a learned technical competency with machines, tools and raw materials was passed down to them from more experienced co-workers (Cross, 2011a, 2011b). Piece rate work in a factory like this one depended upon a whole host of similar micro-interactions with other people; from those who give the novice hints and tips, offering guidance, support and initiation onto the shift to those interactions with co-workers upon whom each individual is dependent if they are to maintain minimum rates of productivity and to guarantee their wage. In the cornering, hand blocking and bruiting sections where I learned to cut and polish rough diamonds in 2005, acts of giving between co-workers frequently proceeded according to what David Graeber has called a principal of ‘from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs’; these were transactions in which individuals recognised each other’s mutual interdependence and in which the taking of accounts would have been considered inappropriate, offensive or bizarre (Graeber, 2011, pp. 94–99). Cornering workers, for example, shared the hammers that they used to adjust their spindle machines and small pieces of fabric to mop up machine oil. Meanwhile in the blocking section, where rudimentary hand tools were used to push rough diamonds backwards and forwards on a rotating scaife, workers shared pieces of torn cloth to prevent blistering. Across the department people shared black marker pens, variously used to mark the surface of rough diamonds, to sketch cutting edges and angles on the white table surfaces, and to record production tallies on scraps of paper.

Cooperation, Marx wrote in the first volume of *Capital* (1990), is the ‘necessary concomitant of all production on a large scale’ and a ‘free gift offered up to the capitalist’. Marx saw cooperation as a natural, integral part of any economic system, a social phenomenon that takes place spontaneously and naturally with the simultaneous employment of large numbers of people in one place, along with a concentrated mass of machines and tools for production. In his example, a dozen masons passing stones from the bottom to the top of a ladder might each be said to perform the same movements and actions but

taken together these separate actions from connected parts of one single operation. This kind of cooperation takes a distinct form, Marx argued, when people are brought together by capital for the purposes of waged labour. In the capitalist factory cooperation served both to increase the productive power of the individual and also to create a kind of collective power that capitalists sought to harness, manage and control for the purposes of profitable exploitation and expansion (Marx, 1990, p. 453). For Marx, this cooperation is usually hidden from view or invisible because it appears to us as the social effect of having brought people together in one place and puts them to work. For Graeber this principal of cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity exists in many different kinds of social contexts, not just work groups, and it is one of the ironies of contemporary capitalism that the internal organisation of some of today's largest corporations comes to hinge upon it (Graeber, 2011, p. 100).

A global subcontracting company like Worldwide Diamonds could not function without the raft of transactions that took place as people involved in the common project of production collaborated by establishing certain things that could be shared or made freely available to others. As workers passed tools or materials between each other on the factory floor, and shared knowledge and skills, they established their mutuality and interdependence, offering us a reminder of how central mutual aid, assistance and cooperation are to global commodity production.

One phenomena in particular, the redistribution of blessed or sacred food or *prasadam* on the factory floor offered a particular insight into the principal of cooperation. As Arjun Appadurai (1981) has written, food in South India can be used to signal, indicate and construct social relations characterised by equality, intimacy or solidarity, as much as rank or difference (p. 507); and the 'gastro-politics' of holy food as it was redistributed by factory workers returning from a pilgrimage might be said to hinge on the principal of 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.'

In coastal Andhra Pradesh a pilgrimage to the state's most holy site, the temple to Lord Venkateshwara (Vishnu) at Tirupati, is considered by Hindus of all castes and ages a necessary trip. People make the pilgrimage at times of wealth as well as ill health. For some a pilgrimage to Tirupati is considered one of the only opportunities to travel outside the district and pilgrims invariably bring home with them large quantities of sanctified food or *prasadam* [Hindi. *prasada*] to distribute. When one of Worldwide Diamond's Hindu factory workers returned from a pilgrimage to Andhra's most important holy site they invariably brought with them a large quantity of *prasadam* to distribute amongst their work colleagues.

Prasadam is a collective noun for substances – often items of food but also water, flowers, ash and powder – that have been offered to a deity during worship and which are subsequently distributed to priests, devotees, relatives and friends. When these substances are offered to and symbolically consumed by a deity (in its image form) they undergo a transmutation, becoming *prasada*, potent substances that are imbued with a divine power and grace and which can be absorbed into the human body (Fuller, 2004, pp. 74–75). In the ritual symbolism of everyday Hinduism, the adornment of the body with *prasada* substances like ash or flowers or the swallowing of *prasada* food marks the absorption of divine grace and power into the body, effecting a merger between deity and worshipper. But, like all Hindu rituals and substances, the distribution of *prasadam* is about relationships between people as much as between the worshiper and a deity. As Appadurai wrote (1981), ‘the consumption of divine leftovers’ is the central sacramental feature of divine worship in South Indian temples’ (p. 505).

Over the course of a year I watched several of the Preparation Department’s workers make the pilgrimage to Tirupati. When they returned to work they brought with them carrier bags full of *prasadam*, usually a mixture of puffed rice, groundnuts, gram and jaggery. On their first day back at work they asked permission to walk around the department from section to section, enabling their colleagues and work mates to share the blessed food. These acts of giving took place in public and en-mass, with the donor making a point to offer food to every one of the Department’s 150 strong workforce, including cleaners and security guards as well as co-workers, monitors, supervisors and department managers, irrespective of caste or religion. This distribution and consumption of *prasadam*, the highest form of leftovers, on the floor of Worldwide Diamonds gave real, material form to the workforce as a collective body or organic entity. It was a process of co-substantiation through which, as Marx put, people as co-operators’ become members of a ‘total productive organism’.

As I will show, however, the shop floor relationships between workers involved other kinds of transactions, premised not upon principals of mutuality, but upon principals of reciprocity and hierarchy.

RECIPROCITY AND RECOGNITION

Every day people arrived at the entrance to the Preparation Department carrying small items of food that by the end of the day they would have given to somebody else. These things were carried past the security guards

posted at the doors to the department under people's regulation blue uniforms, wedged into their trouser pockets, tied into the corner of their *saris*, or tucked inside their *churidars* (tightly fitting trouser pants). An incredible range of foodstuffs were smuggled onto the factory floor in this way to be passed from hand-to-hand, underneath a table surface or in a subtle brush of fingers, that sought not to draw attention from managers.

The things circulating in the cornering, blocking and bruising sections included the ubiquitous one-rupee boiled sweets, lozenges, éclairs and toffees, that are found in the smallest of street side trade stores across India, as well as brand name chocolates, like five-rupee bars of Cadbury Five Star or ten-rupee bars of Dairy Milk. They also included seasonal fruits and nuts, lemons and gooseberries, handfuls of aniseed, sultanas, cashews, fried potato chips, Bombay mix and popcorn, even entire cobs of maize. Alongside foodstuffs were other kinds of things. Some of the most popular non-food gift items were images, playing cards or stickers with colour pictures of deities and saints or matinee film star heroes and heroines. Alongside these were handmade things. All manner of origami paper objects circulated around the Preparation Department, including boxes, animals, and flowers, tiny pieces of folded artistry that were made at home, or during lunch breaks from scraps of paper, including the computerised diamond labels or production charts, that had been picked up or lifted off the factory floor.

At first these exchanges seemed so petty that I overlooked them as insignificant or insubstantial. They took place with such frequency as to be part of the factory's social fabric – as normal as conversation. Yet during the months I spent on the factory floor it became apparent that what appeared to be mundane or spontaneous gifts between workers could be mapped onto more complex shop floor relationships between people with different levels of experience or different workloads, and between people whose tasks tied them into workplace relationships with each other. While the intimate knowledge of machines and materials that passed between workers appeared to be transacted according to a principal of solidarity and mutual aid, these acts of giving appeared more clearly animated by a reciprocal logic of gift exchange and equivalence. Gift objects – things and foodstuffs were exchanged for favours, preferential treatment and even labour from co-workers – as people struggled to meet their daily production targets and complete their own work tasks. These gifts were passed backwards and forwards in such a way that each gift appeared to cancel the other out, and in such a way that each party appeared to be keeping account, motivated by the ways that the exchange reflected upon and

rearranged their relationship. As Graeber puts it (2011, p. 103) the principal of equivalence between the objects of exchange also implies an equivalence or parity between the parties to an exchange, and these transactions marked the floor of the factory out as a particular kind of social space, one that differed in important ways from the caste landscape beyond its walls.

Cornering section workers collected stones from the fixers, who cemented each and every rough diamond onto a cylindrical rod that could be inserted into a spindle machine. As they ground the angular corners away, rough stones invariably broke off their holdings, sometimes flicking onto the floor or falling onto the work surface. Cornering workers were allowed to walk these diamonds over to the fixing table themselves and if they wanted to get back to work and finish the stone they needed a fixer who would give them priority, dipping the stone in concrete over a heater while they waited. On the A shift cornering section workers like Appala Raju and Condom Rao went out of their way to build good relationships with the three women fixers by giving them small gifts of chocolate, handed over in the mornings to coincide with the small stainless steel beaker of milk tea that the company granted each worker.

These exchanges continued off the factory floor during the half hour lunch break when more substantial foodstuffs, rice and curries, were shared between co-workers out in the open, beneath a line of palm trees or beneath a corrugated shelter. Every day people came to the factory carrying portions of home-cooked food – prepared by themselves, or by sisters or mothers – which they shared with colleagues. Many of these exchanges of boiled rice and curries took place against the grain of local caste hierarchies, with the parents and extended families of many factory workers still recognising symbolic and social restrictions on inter-caste contact. Exchanges that took place between people from farming or landowning castes and Dalit communities, then, marked the factory as a space of transgression from widely accepted and observed social prohibitions on inter-caste exchange and commensality.

Like all of the factory's units, the Preparation Department was broadly representative of coastal Andhra Pradesh's caste demographics. Recruited into the factory as entry-level workers and thrown together on the shift were the higher ranking *Velamas*, *Gavaras* and *Kapus*, who are the district's major landowners, as well as a cross-section of occupation castes, *Mallas*, *Palles* and *Vadabalijas*. In north coastal Andhra inter-caste relationships between these communities has been tightly regulated, marked by endogamy and restrictions on contact. Yet references to each other's caste was studiously erased from everyday interactions between workers. Thrown together on the