The 2015 general election, and electoral politics further afield, have dominated much of the last few months. As various political parties clamour for our attention, hoping we might grant “permission” to lay hands on the mechanisms of governance, it can be difficult at times to get below this surface noise and enquire with greater clarity into the broader reality of the contemporary state. What holds such a configuration in place? And how can we define and scrutinise its composition; its logic, manifestations, institutions and boundaries?

Disciplinary mechanisms bombard us from all sides, forming borders across terrirories, bodies and forms of life, wherein a cruel game of accusatory agency is staged, plays out, unfolds: the cult of work, enforced by ritual humiliation at the jobcentre; the housing crisis, micromanaged by local councils whose housing offices place unlawful barriers between people and their homes; the National Health Service, which moulds and punishes psyches deemed unproductive and/or subservient; the Border Agency regime that brutalises migrants who have often simply followed the trail of inherited dispossession back to the colonial heartland - many subjected to indefinite detention and deportation without access to care and support; and the police, always on hand to ensure total violent compliance to prevent a “Breach of the Peace”.

Beyond the immediate encounter with the nation-state, we can broaden the sense of our subjectification under the influence of numerous discursive or institutional tendencies and structures, themselves often emergent via social and cultural reproduction. Oppression has a way of finding roots in many structures and (sub)cultures, even those formed in opposition - and we include here organisations and movements that seek to define themselves as progressive or alternative. Consideration must be given to the distinct formations of differential modes of thought and being, as the concerns with statehood and subjectification are equally apparent across often smaller or more nuanced ‘proto-states’ of differing scales and formations of differential modes of thought and being, as the concerns with statehood and subjectification are equally apparent across often smaller or more nuanced ‘proto-states’ of differing scales and magnitudes; wherein oppression takes on different qualities and appearances; the party form, patriarchy, misogyny - how often we see these qualities emerge beneath the banners of the alternative.

Not only are we confronted with boundless configurations, we also face the similarly abundant conceptions of establishment, especially with forces such as the UK state: long, bloody histories of conquest, colonialism and oppression - and all the guises these have worn. If we wish to articulate our opposition to the everyday imposition of state oppression, we may be in a stronger position in considering its composition not as edifice, but rather as a logic.

The contemporary UK state provides effective management on behalf of capital, instituting strict frameworks of private property - not to mention the reproduction of racism, misogyny, heteronormativity and other violence - and implementing heavy discipline upon its subjects, including in areas of colonial rule. As capital attempts to navigate new horizons beyond the limits it encounters in its endless quest for accumulation, so the state’s logic and representation must adapt to serve and survive beneath this force: after another boom-bust cycle almost seven years ago, “austerity” was the lie given to the process of devaluing the UK working class to poverty wages and, through the coalition government’s Big Society ideals, the state has been willing to source some of its lesser desirable affordances onto already struggling community enterprises, justifying this with the language of responsibility, civil society and efficiency.

The solutions are apparent, and as many state provisions attached to notions of welfare - itself a vestige from the previous limits of capitalism - evaporate, people are coming together to attempt to reimagine production beyond, or beneath, the state. We can see examples scattered across the globe, from the health services provided by volunteers in Greece during the imposition of their harshest cuts, to the collective organising in response to Hurricane Sandy. Closer to home, a growing number of groups and individuals are working together to provide a more fervent culture of care across London. The desire to counter the logic of the big states - capital’s states, nation states - was perhaps best articulated by Autonomia, a member of the Out of the Woods collective at a public discussion earlier this year who, paraphrasing Frantz Fanon’s work on colonialism, suggested: “We shouldn’t be interested in ending the state, but rather the end of the world in which the state makes sense.”
The abuses of the UK’s immigration process do not end with DFT. Harmondsworth has been repeatedly criticised for its poor healthcare provision, and reports of mental health issues, heart complaints and soaring blood pressure being treated with paracetamol are common. In 2012 Muhammed Shukat died shortly after being moved from Harmondsworth, and an inquest jury decided that neglect had contributed to his death. Staff at the healthcare unit had failed to obtain his medical records, in spite of the oppressive structures which seek to silence and mute the voices of people in immigration detention, there is a continuing surge of collective resistance both inside and outside of centres, in reaction to abuses in immigration detention. On Friday 2nd May 2014, over 150 detainees went on hunger strike and staged a sit-down protest in the exercise yard of Harmondsworth. Their demands were straightforward: access to legal aid, better medical care, and an end to DFT.

On Monday 5th May 2014, supporters rallied outside the centre, conducting a noise demonstration in solidarity with the strikers. By Wednesday 7th May, dozens of detainees who had protested were issued with deportation orders. On the same day, unrest spread to Colnbrook IRC, Campsfield House, and Brook House. Protesters were placed in solitary confinement, or removed to other centres and consequently lost contact with supporters.

Independent film company 'Standoff Films' continues to uncover the ‘unsettling realities’ experienced by people who ‘speak out’ in immigration detention, for example, the situation which emerged from Campsfield House, in which a detainee was physically beaten by riot squads for speaking to journalists after a fire at the centre spread. It was discovered that outsourcing firms Mitie had failed to install sprinklers.

Every month since the May 2014 protests, ex-detainees and supporters organised by grassroots solidarity group Movement for Justice have returned to Harmondsworth to amplify the demands of the protesters. The demonstrations call for an end to fast-track deportation procedures and immigration detention.

Of course, the situation of UK immigration detention does not sit within a vacuum. Whilst the UK is the only country in Europe which practices the indefinite immigration detention of individuals, in February 2014, the Legal Council of the Greek State proposed a new ‘indefinite detention before deportation’ policy, which is still awaiting a response from Greek authorities.

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Voices from Amygdaleza

by roz karta

"Please, help us. I don’t think that detention solves any problem. How would you feel if you were in my place? What would you do if we were to swap places?"

Boy, 16. Detained for the last six months.

"There was another one here who had been held for twelve months. The day he was to be released he was told that the law had now changed and he would be held for a further six months; he went insane. He stopped eating and he stitched his mouth shut. The policemen paid no attention to him for 2 to 3 days. When he passed out, they dragged him out handcuffed, and hap hazardly ‘unstitched’ his mouth by force with a knife”.

Boy, 18. Detained for the last nine months.

The police advised that whoever applied for asylum would have to remain in detention for eighteen months, whereas those who do not would be released much earlier; this is why I decided not to seek asylum.”

Afghan boy, 16. Detained for the last nine months.

Several months ago, I had asked to be released due to the fact that I was underage. Many people older than me have already been released. I requested this repeatedly but they kept turning down my request. I was extremely upset and was thinking about my family a lot of whom I have no news. As they would not set me free, I thought I had better jump off the roof than stay here. I broke both my legs. I was transferred to the hospital and then back to the Komotini detention centre. I was bedridden and in pain for the next two months. My legs keep hurting, and so do my teeth when I eat as I slammed my face against a wall when I jumped”.

Boy, 18. Detained for the last nine months.

When the police arrested me, I told them that I am only 16, that I am underage, and that I feel afraid and very sad. It has been nine months that I have been in detention. Since I arrived in Greece I have had to witness and undergo inconceivable things. I cannot believe that I have actually been through these things. I try to push away those nasty images and thoughts, and this makes me feel unreadable. I have nightmares most nights. I would very much like you to read my story and think why is it that a child of my age, without having committed some sin or crime must be detained for such a long time? I don’t know what or whom to blame. Fate? My homeland? The police? I just hope that nobody has to go through this. Please, spare a thought for us…”

Boy, 16. Detained for the last nine months.

"I have been detained for over nine months. It has been more than eight months since I last managed to contact my family back home. I don’t have money to buy a call card. I asked two people who left from the detention centre to call my family and let them know I am ok, but I don’t know if they ever managed to find them.”

Man, 20. Detained for the last nine months at the Komotini detention centre where detainees are not allowed mobile phones, and the where the payphone cost is prohibitive for many detainees.

"Even prison is better than here. You have come in and you have seen it for yourselves. You are witnesses. If there is any justice, somebody should defend our rights”.

Man, 34. Detained for the last seventeen months.

"Because I have been detained for so long, I feel that my brain no longer works properly”.

Man, 22. Detained for the last five months.

"The Komotini detention centre is not even suitable for animals. It is very dirty. The toilets don’t function. The sewage system is broken. Human waste drop from the first floor drains of to the ground floor. We are locked inside almost all day. They allow us outside in the courtyard for just one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. Not daily. Komotini is not a detention centre; it is a stable for animals.”

Man, 28. Detained for the last seven months.

"I have not seen the Sun for three months at this police station”.

Man, 28. Detained for the last nine months.

"From the 24 hours of the day, they only let us out for one. I wish they let us stay for a little longer in the courtyard so that we could have the chance to exhaust and distract ourselves”.

Man, 23. Detained for the last five months.

"Before the arrival of Doctors Without Borders, there were no medics. The policemen mistreated anyone that asked for one. They could not care less even when things became serious. Often I was in need of a medic but there was no problem. How would you feel if you were in my place? What any justice, somebody should defend our rights”.

Man, 20. Detained for the last eleven months.

"To be honest with you, they treat us very harshly. I had severe toothache and I had been asking for a doctor for several weeks. Eventually, they ended up transferring me to the hospital because of the heavy bleeding after I had removed my tooth myself.”

Man, 34. Detained for the last seventeen months.

"My mental health is now suffering. After such a long time in detention, we are beginning to break. We are desperate. I cannot sleep. My weight dropped from 72 to 64 kg. I cannot express the situation we are in.”

Man, 34. Detained for the last seventeen months.

"The police do not respect anyone. You cannot speak to them. When we ask them about something, they yell at us and swear at us. Sometimes they hit us.”

Man, 20. Detained for at least the last five months.

"In Greece, people have no idea about what is happening in Somalia. The tribe I belong to has been ‘bleeding’ for the last twenty years.”

Soomal man, 20.

[Editor’s Update - at time of publication]:

Following the recent elections, the new Syriza government declared that it would close Greece’s immigration detention centres. They have released some immigrants - mainly elderly detainees, minors, some of of those with health problems, and refugees who were illegally detained for over 18 months. But the new government has not provided those released with housing or documentation, instead most have been left to fend for themselves in the homeless shelters and soup kitchens of Athens. Meanwhile, immigration and deportation centres remain open and deaths have continued to happen inside them: 23-year-old Afghan Sayed Mehdi Alhali on February 18 due to lack of medical treatment, 28-year-old Pakistani Mohammad Nadim hanged himself in his cell, where he had been incarcerated for 25 months, 23-year-old Mohamed Camara from Guinea died on February 28 because he wasn’t treated for diabetes.

Over 8,000 migrants and refugees are currently detained in concentration camps throughout Greece. Among them are minors, families and those with significant health problems. Six people have died in these camps because they had no access to medication and recently two people committed suicide once they were informed that they would be held in detention for over 18 months. Legislation introduced by the previous Greek government makes it legal for people to be detained indefinitely in deplorable sanitary conditions without access to lawyers, the asylum system or doctors - all backed with European Union financing. These camps are not only in Greece. All around Europe there is this investment in racism, in the marginalisation and criminalisation of migrants and refugees. The newly elected Greek government very soon pledged to shut all migrant detention centres. As of the time of publication, it is unclear how or when the centres will be closed down, or what will be introduced to replace them.

These testimonies are just a fraction of the voices of people who are illegally detained in Amygdaleza concentration camp in Athens. People are punished because they tried to escape from war and to live with dignity. The message behind the policies of the European Union is clear: if you do not die in Europe’s seas, you can die in its concentration camps.
In recent weeks the mainstream media spotlight has shone on the conditions faced by the hundreds of people in the UK who are imprisoned in immigration detention centres. A large number of detainees reacted to reports by staging protests (certainly not for the first time) from within detention, with many of these protests taking the form of hunger strikes. A new social media presence - Detained Voices - emerged and began to broadcast the experiences of migrant detainees taking part in these protests. Below is a selection of quotes from the Detained Voices blog. At the time of writing, protests continue across the majority of UK-based detention centres.

9 MARCH 2015

“I’ve been in here with no windows for years, it’s not fair. It takes ages to see a doctor and dentist. People are cutting themselves. Detained 14 months. Been in the UK for 3 years.”

“One guy tried to do suicide for three times once he jumped down from first floor but he saved then again he tried to cut himself but saved last time he drink soap but saved and now he is saying he will hang himself till death but officers and health care don’t care about any of us.”

“Things are not right in here. We decided to start the hunger strike from today, others have started yesterday, so they can say I’m fit to be detained. It’s not right. It’s been 6 months now.”

10 MARCH 2015

“We the detainees at Harmondsworth immigration centre are demanding that:

• All the detainees on fast track process are removed from fast track.
• The facilities are outdated and deteriorated.
• The health care are poor and detainees can’t see a doctor even in emergency.
• Detainees are detained unlawfully in the detention centres as if they are criminals.
• Detainees are given poor food.
• Physical and mental health of detainees are worst than they were before they came into detention.
• Detainees are treated as animals by the Home Office.
• Due to the vulnerability of many detainees in the centre, some of them cannot afford to hire lawyers and barrister to defend them, the only option they have is to use legal aid appointed by the home office to act on their behalf.
• Those people from legal aid are working hand in hand with the home office.
• There is high rate of human trafficking around the centre. The more a detainee is moved from one centre to another the more money the centre. The more a detainee is moved from one centre to another the more money the security company get.”

“I’m here for for 5 months. I was told 28 [days] while they decide but I’m here for 5 months. It’s not only about me – there are lot of people who have been here 1 year, 2 year. This is a prison, we are not criminals – some people have children and wives outside. Everybody has a different story but we all want freedom.”

“Because of our hunger strike immigration centre turn off the water line. Now in 5 wings, there is no water to drink, shower or in the toilet!”

“My wife is outside, she tried to commit suicide last week. It is a very, very upsetting situation. No one is helping me. I have no money for a solicitor, nothing. Because I am in detention I am not with my wife, and I don’t want to leave her. I don’t want to see her troubled. That’s why I’m on hunger strike.”

11 MARCH 2015

“I just wanted to say that I am here since late 2014 and I have a father in this country and he is British, I wanted to be with him, he want me to be with him as well and I am just 18 years old thats it.”

“Still around 320 people are on hunger strike at Tinsley House for the third day. It’s quite a small centre. Officer are coming into our room and saying why are you on strike. It’s not going to work. They laugh saying it’s not going to work – the Home Office don’t care about it.”

“After I left my house... you know some people in Paki- stan are trying to find me. They want to kill me. They know what time the charter is coming back... they will wait and find me. This is very big trouble for me. My weight was 90 kg, now I weigh 65 kg. They have this on record. I was very very depressed. I’m slowly slowly dying here. It is better to not go back to my country. It is better to die here. I can’t sleep more than one hour, two hours. I don’t wanna go back.”

12 MARCH 2015

““In 2007 I go to claim asylum in Sweden, in Sweden, they release me on the second day. They don’t want me in this prison. And anywhere, in Germany I have relatives in Germany and everywhere- they don’t put them in this prison.”

“If this place was in another country all you would see is BBC and every media... but because it’s a place in the UK they defend…so when I say to the Home Office “This place is prison”, they say to me “NO- is not prison”.

“You can hear people protesting that they are treating us like animals. People have mental health depression. They are not getting medication or good food. The food they give us - even animals would not like it. People have not been eating- they are on hunger strike. There has been a lot of racism inside.”

13 MARCH 2015

“I have a gay partner so I have a serious threat in Paki- stan. I have serious threats against me. I have police reports against me. I have the phone records of someone threatening me on the phone. I have emails of people threatening me, saying they will kill me. Immi- gration just say you are lying.”

“We are dying. Because of protest yesterday, one of my mate went to hospital because of that, because he got ill. He started vomiting because he was not eating. He was on hunger strike, he got ill, and started vomiting, and now we don’t know where he is.”

Republished with permission from Detained Voices detainedvoices.wordpress.com / @detainedvoices
Right now over 90,000 people across the UK are locked inside cages that are socially and intellectually justified, rationalised - even celebrated - as fundamental to the smooth running of a liberal democracy. Many more people are in detention centres, young offenders institutions and psychiatric units. It's called the prison system. Its role and reach has moved far beyond a simple statist disciplinary framework to one that is emphatically embracing the ethos of neoliberalism in the pursuit of profitable revenue streams. This interlocking and reciprocally reinforcing relationship between the state and private industry under capitalist relations now makes up what is known as the prison-industrial complex (PIC).

Surveillance, policing and imprisonment are sold as solutions to economic, social and political problems caused by capitalism and repressive social structures such as the state and patriarchy. It is not just the grey walls and fences of prisons; it is the courts, the police, probation services, and the companies profiting from transporting, warehousing and expediting human beings. Increasingly and intentionally, the criminalisation of communities boosts capital accumulation in an age of austerity. This is no accident.

The UK opened the first privately-operated prison in Europe, welcoming with open arms correctional corporations, including G4S, itself historically birthed from the Wackenhut Corrections Corporation, once the second largest for-profit prison operator in the United States. Under the government's private finance initiative, 14 private prisons have been opened in the UK since 1992. Private companies have been cashing in on incarcерated workers: powerless, unorganized and desperate for wages for phone credit and tobacco and an alternative to the state's madas operated of 22 hour bang-up.

The prisoners being held is placed in a cage. One of the most brutal forms of dehumanisation, it doesn't matter if they "have a Playstaion" or opportunities for education, or any other myths perpetuated in the press about pampered prisoners. Prisons harm us. They harm the people inside - many of whom resort to drugs, fighting, self-harm and suicide. They harm the families, partners and loved ones of those incarcerated. They harm our communities as they steal energy, creativity and contribution. House, jobs, relationships are lost. Prisons disappear people. They try to disappear social problems but instead they multiply them.

The PIC is rationalized and normalized as the way to keep society's law-abiding majority safe. We are told that all safety of all kinds can be guaranteed by watching, controlling and caging groups of people. Who these groups are is not incidental. Working class people, people of colour, queer communities, individuals experiencing mental health struggles, political organisers - all are targeted by the state. PIC entreprise several functions in state security, maintaining class hierarchies and perpetuating poverty. Rooted in the values of the 18th and 19th centuries, prisons emerged ideologically from the values of the prison and capitalism - an individualist logic that confinement, solitude and punishment can lead to individual development and moral improvement: putting the penitente into penitentiary. Such moral justifications for the existence of prisons may be gradually disappearing from mainstream discourse, as is must rhetoric of "rehabilitation". But this is not to deny the role the prisons continue to play in the formation and disciplining of subjectivities (both inside and outside the penitentiary) and gender roles - prisons have become the ultimate patriarchal punishment from the patriarchal state.

Like all capitalist industries, the prison-industrial complex needs its "raw materials" to not only sustain profits, but increase them. This cannot be left to chance. The private prison industry, international building firms and security specialists all finance intensive lobbying efforts to keep the huge population growing. Under the Labour government alone, more than 3,000 new criminal offences were created - meaning that people who previously had not been criminalised are now swept into the criminal justice net. Specific changes to post-industrial economics and societies in the last forty years has also seen a huge growth in the number of women being incarcerated as the logic of the prison-industrial complex sought more bodies to extract value from. Abolitionist Angela Davis has shown that by 2010 in the US there were more women in prison than there were prisoners of both sexes in 1970. Did women suddenly become exponentially more criminal?

The prison population has doubled not because rates of violent or imprisonable crimes have gone up (they haven't) but through changes to sentencing laws and the introduction of repressive sentences such as IPPs (imprisonment for Public Protection), whereby you have a minimum tariff and then can't get parole until you prove you are "safe" - so people are serving 4 years for burglary and doing several years more than their original sentences. Davis argues that "punishment has to be conceptually severed from its seemingly indissoluble link with crime".

We cannot simply organise to stop prison expansion, it is a product of whole areas in America now meeting their economic needs through investment in incarceration. This model is now being adapted for the UK - the "economic benefits" of incarceration was a celebrated feature of the "Investing in Britain's Future" manifesto of the Coalition government.

CAPE reject both moral and economic arguments for incarceration. The expansion of the prison-industrial complex has been shown by Angela Davis and others to be both a locus of private enrichment and a strategy of state control - not a strategy for public safety. This double movement demands suitable forms of resistance. We cannot simply rely on local actors lobbying the council with petitions. Resistance to prison expansion will go hand-in-hand with social movements that are prepared to confront capital and the state.

Resisting Expansion in the UK

The United Kingdom is facing an unprecedented expansion of the prison system, justified by appeals to "public safety" and the supposed economic benefits for local communities. In response, a new campaign network has been launched called Community Action on Prison Expansion (CAPE). CAPE is a network of counter expansion plans and stems the growth of the prison-industrial complex.

In the UK, several expansion initiatives are being implemented, often with little national press attention nor indeed much push-back from social movements. In Wrexham, North Wales, on one of Europe's largest industrial estates, the continent's second biggest prison is set to be built, with the stated aim of warehousing more than 2,100 prisoners. In Oxfordshire, there are plans to expand Campsfield Immmigration Detention Centre. In Leicester, the government is set to build its first "Secure College", a rebranded prison that will lock up 320 children aged between twelve and seventeen. Successful lobbying has halted plans to build a large women's prison in Scotland but the overall picture points to plans for more decentralised state 'solutions' across the country.

The infamous Feltham Young Offenders Institute in West London is to be torn down which, for many, will be a source of celebration. It is to be replaced, however, with the capital's first 'mega prison'. Meanwhile, other prisons sitting on prime land with rising property values will be sold to the highest bidder. The government has already undertaken feasibility studies and commissioned an architect to design a prison that would hold more than 2,000 people.

Right wing think tanks have been lobbying hard for "prison reform". Policy Exchange produced a report called Future Prisons", which outlines a national plan for closing down and selling off several older, unionised and desperate for wages for phone credit and tobacco and an alternative to the state's madas operated of 22 hour bang-up.

The growth in the prison population is not just a result of national policy. Julia Sutcliffe writes of how the growth in the prison-industrial complex links to patterns of control internationally. She draws attention to the fundamental shift in the role of the state that has occurred as a result of neoliberal globalization, as organisations such as the International Monetary Fund pressure governments to "reform" their welfare systems. Combined with the emergence of the US-led "War on Drugs", increasing numbers of women of colour have been violently integrated into this burgeoning growth industry.

The phenomenal development of mass incarceration in the United States correlates most singularly to the abolition of slavery and the criminalisation of people of colour as a contemporary tool for racist repression. Similarly in the UK in 2011, over 25% of the prison population was from a "black and minority ethnic" background despite that categorisation representing only around 12% of the overall population. Across Europe (and the world), undocumented migrants now also face prison cells (branded as "detention centres"). Multitudes of commodified bodies fuel capitalist growth while the ideological view that says prisoners are natural, normal and necessary remains almost entirely unchallenged. To fight for prison abolition is not just practically organising to stop prison expansion, it means challenging, on a daily basis, the very premise that the caging of human beings is a place in the world we want to create. Our solidarity must be centred on those behind bars, those experiencing harm (state and interpersonal) and those who don't want to spend another day in a prison visitors' waiting room.

The PIC has seen little resistance in the UK. Groups organising have lacked popular support. It is clear that the time for reforms has past. Now is the time to fight with all we have. Our bodies are not for sale, our lives are not for stealing. Until every cell and cage is empty.

By an ex-prisoner and member Empty Cages Collective, who is one of thousands harmed by the PIC.
When the Empty Cages Collective facilitates workshops on prison abolition we ask participants to share their first cultural memory of prison. Was it the TV show ‘Porridge’? Or when Dumbo the Elephant’s mum is locked up? Together we explore how normalised prisons are and how, as abolitionist Angela Davis describes, “prison is considered an inevitable and permanent feature of our social lives.” We look at the way in which, from the youngest age, we’re taught that prisons are where the ‘bad people’ go, who would harm us should they escape. And at how we’re socialised to see prison as an inevitable part of working class life, where everyone will do some ‘bird’, where it’s almost a rite of passage.

Reactions to the idea of prison abolition are generally that it’s impractical, an unachievable utopia or that prisons are necessary because, well, “what would you do with all the dangerous people?” Prison abolition is often considered a pipe dream – even while other revolutionary or otherwise utopian ideals may be considered possible or achievable. For abolitionists on the other hand, it’s seen as a progressive frame for organising for social change, as much as a long-term goal in and of itself.

Having spent enough years inside us, members of the Empty Cages Collective have observed prison reform campaigns consisting of the same articles in prison newspapers, the same inspection reports, the same calls for ‘change’, for decades. The abolitionist stance, on the other hand, offers a clear position that can be summed up quite simply: prisons are inherently violent and oppressive institutions and they cannot be reformed.

If prisoners organise themselves and issue demands, such as the end of solitary confinement, we will of course support them. We cannot, however, call for reforms or work in a way that justifies, rationalises or normalises the existence of prisons. We cannot organise around reforms that extend the life of the prison-industrial complex. Two hundred years ago prison reformers lobbied to end capital punishment, to separate women from men prisoners and for prisoners to be given purposeful work. We now have a profitable industry warehousing long-term prisoners, we have women as the fastest growing prison population worldwide and have companies profiting from prison labour as ‘out of cell activity’.

Nobody knows the exact profit made by private companies using incarcerated workers. A report by Corporate Watch researching labour in UK detention centres, showed that the firms Serco, G4S, Mitie and GEO saved more than £2.8 billion from the exploitation of detained immigrants. A popular call from reformers to de-private the prison system, however, is unlikely to affect the prison-industrial complex’s potential for accumulation because profit-making services and products are so embedded in the public sector.

Of course, the changes in the prison system we see now aren’t solely the unintended consequences of reformists. There’s a complex historical pattern of capitalist growth and state innovations in social control. History does show, however, that allowing prisons to be normalised over time, accepting that cosmetic changes can be made and that the underlying notion of imprisonment is sound, has been a disaster. All of this positioning has enabled the accelerated growth of the prison system.

Abolitionists may fight for some ‘non-reformist re-forms’ (ie changes that do immediately improve some prison conditions) but we can never back down from our guiding premise that prisons are harmful, violent and oppressive, do not keep communities safe and cannot be allowed to continue to exist.

As a collective we are not blind to the fact that acts committed by many people who end up in prison can and do harm other people. We would never downplay the trauma of being raped, the feeling of violation when robbed or the life-long memory of assault. The fact remains, though, that it’s often the same communities being criminalised that are most likely to experience these forms of harm. Prison offers no solution to violence or damage and is in fact only part of perpetuating more of the same.

We fight for abolition, some of us as survivors of abuse, because the state cannot meet our needs for safety. Interacting with the police and courts is well recognised to be disempowering and ineffective at meeting survivors’ needs because the law doesn’t place the survivor or victim at the centre of the process but rather seeks punishment for or restitution from the perpetrator on behalf of the state. Our power to articulate our needs and determine our own lives is taken away from us.

Furthermore we know focus on interpersonal harm isn’t enough. It creates an incomplete picture. To imprison individuals while creating and perpetuating conditions of poverty and war (such as is the uniquely privileged hypocrisy of the state) is a kind of madness. We see that these two aspects – interpersonal harm and state harm - are interlinked. We don’t believe, nor is there evidence, that policing and imprisonment reduces harm. Caging people does not solve the social crises in our societies of racism, sexism, drug abuse, violence, or psycho-emotional struggles.

As abolitionists we are committed to organising and working towards safe and healthy communities that can genuinely reduce harm. It is in this way that organising for abolition is a creative act. It is the unstoppable desire for self-determination, social justice and ecological living. It is the work that is already taking place in struggles for housing, access to food and land, in collective childcare projects and radical education networks. It is also the inspiration we get that’s going on to find better ways of responding to acts of harm when they do arise.

Anarchists, radicals and rebels of many types continue to struggle to prevent and/or respond to harm within our communities where instances of interpersonal violence such as partner abuse and rape are, unfortunately, still common. We’re not living in a vacuum, unaffected by patriarchy and other patterns of domination. The US-based group, Incite!, for example, is a network of feminists of colour working to end violence against women, gender non-conforming and trans people of colour. In March 2015 they organised a conference called ‘Beyond the State: Inciting Transformative Possibilities’. The conference highlighted emerging strategies and new frameworks focused on ending violence without having to rely on policing, mass incarceration, restrictive legislation, and other systems of violence and control. And many other groups are also beginning to envision what new models for negotiating harm could look like.

One such framework is known as Transformative Justice (TJ). In the new publication, ‘What about the Rapists? Anarchist Approaches to Crime and Justice’, the authors aim to summarise this grassroots, dialogue-based model that has its origins in indigenous practices, mediation work, and Restorative Justice (RJ), which it closely resembles:

‘Like RJ, it strongly opposes punitive responses to crime, places the parties in conflict at the centre of the process, and is (in theory at least), voluntary. Like RJ, it facilitates understanding between individuals, and allows them to agree steps to ‘repair’ the harm caused. However, TJ advocates have rightly focussed RJ being co-opted by the state, which undermines its potential to challenge structural inequalities. For instance, in the case of domestic violence, RJ at best ‘restores’ both parties to the unequal positions they held before the abuse took place.’

Paying attention to and reconfiguring power inequalities, placing survivors at the centre, creating opportunities for dialogue with a focus on accountability and support for all, is about the desire not to restore, but deeply transform. Transform everyone involved in beautiful, powerful and challenging ways.

Clearly there’s no one-size-fits-all solution. There never can be. The criminal ‘justice’ system fails because it dehumanises and is just an extension of a damaging social context. Abolition is about learning what it means to be human, creating the space for communities to recover their humanity, and determine their own systems for navigating power, living in more life-affirming ways and keeping each other safe and cared for.

Together we can consign the absurdity of the prison-industrial complex to the history books. No longer will caging human beings be held up as a solution to the complex challenges we face. Instead, a multitude of approaches and a diversity of tactics and actions will lead us to more social cohesion, mutual aid and respect. But that kind of change involves reinventing our lives, not reforming the current paradigms. Without an abolitionist framework our dreams will remain behind lock and key. prisonabolition.org
The US: Not a Colonial Power?

In a 2009 interview with Al Arabiya Television in Dubai, soon after his first inauguration, President Barack Obama affirmed that the US government could be an honest broker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, saying: “We sometimes make mistakes. We have not been perfect. But if you look at the track record, as you say, America was not born as a colonial power.”

One has to query the president: How did the United States begin with thirteen small colonies/states hugging the Atlantic seaboard and end up in the mid-twentieth century with fifty states over much of North America, and a number of island colonies in the Pacific and the Caribbean? Apparently, it was Manifest Destiny at work.

According to the centuries-old Doctrine of Discovery, European nations acquired titles to the lands they “discovered,” and Indigenous inhabitants lost their natural right to that land after Europeans had arrived and claimed it. Under this legal cover for theft, European wars of conquest, domination, and in some cases — such as the United States — settler-colonial states, devastated Indigenous nations and communities, ripping their territories away from them and transforming the land into private property, real estate. Most of the land appropriated by the United States ended up in the hands of land speculators and agribusiness operators, many of which, up to the mid-nineteenth century, were plantations worked by another form of private property, enslaved Africans. Arizonas as it may seem, the Doctrine of Discovery remains the basis for US laws still in effect that control Indigenous peoples’ lives and destinies, even their histories by distorting them.

From the mid-fifteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, most of the non-European world was colonized under the Doctrine of Discovery, one of the few principles of international law. Christian European monarchies promulgated it to legitimise investigating, mapping, and claiming lands belonging to peoples outside Europe. It originated in a papal bull issued in 1493 that permitted the Portuguese monopoly to seize West Africa. Following Columbus’s infamous exploratory voyage in 1492, sponsored by the King and Queen of the infant Spanish state to the Indies, it extended similar permission to Spain. Disputes between the Portuguese and Spanish monarchies led to the papal-initiated Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which, besides dividing the globe equally between the two Iberian empires, clarified that only non-Christian lands fell under the Doctrine of Discovery.

The doctrine, on which all European states and the United States relied, thus continued with the arbitrary and unilateral establishment of the Roman monarchies’ exclusive rights under Christian canon law to colonise foreign peoples, and this right was later usurped by other European monarchies colonising projects. The French Republic used the legalistic instrument for its nineteenth and twentieth century settler-colonial projects, as did the newly independent United States when it continued the colonisation of North America begun by the British.

In 1792, not long after the US founding, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson claimed that the Doctrine of Discovery developed by European states was international law applicable to the new US government as well. In 1823, the US Supreme Court issued its decision in Johnson v. McIntosh. Writing for the majority, Chief Justice John Marshall held that the Doctrine of Discovery had been an established principle of international law, and of English law in effect in Britain’s North American colonies and was also the law of the United States. The Court defined the exclusive property rights that a European country acquired by dint of discovery: “Discovery gave title to the government, by whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession.” Therefore, European and Euro-American “discoveries” had gained real property rights in the lands of Indigenous peoples by merely planting a flag. Indigenous rights were, in the Court’s words, “in no instance, entirely disregarded; but were necessarily, to a considerable extent, impaired.” The Court further held that Indigenous “rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, were necessarily diminished.” Indigenous people could continue to live on the land, but title vested with the discovering power, the United States. The decision concluded that Native nations were “domestic, dependent nations.”

In fact, Indigenous peoples were not allowed to continue living on their land under Andrew Jackson’s presidency, with the Indian Removal Act that he pushed through Congress, all the Indigenous nations east of the Mississippi were dissolved and their citizens were forcibly relocated to “Indian Territory,” which itself was later dissolved to become a part of the state of Oklahoma.

The Doctrine of Discovery is so taken for granted that it is rarely mentioned in historical or legal texts published in the United States.

In the era of global decolonisation of the second half of the 20th century, Native American nations remained colonized. Native American nations and communities are involved in decolonisation projects, including the development of international human rights law to gain their right to self-determination as Indigenous Peoples, having gained the United Nations’ 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This was a project initiated by the Indigenous militants who occupied Wounded Knee in 1973, demanding self-determination. Indigenous North American resistance to colonialism has never stopped since the first British settler-colonies were established.

It is time for US American social justice movements to educate themselves about the colonial past (and present) of the United States and to make a commitment to work in solidarity with Native American decolonisation efforts. How can the United States be decolonised? How can US society come to terms with its past? How can it acknowledge responsibility? The late Native historian Jack Forbes always stressed that while living persons are not responsible for what their ancestors did, they are responsible for the society they live in, which is a product of that past. Assuming this responsibility provides a means of survival and liberation. Everyone and everything in the world is affected, for the most part negatively, by US dominance and intervention, often violently through direct military means or through policies that are an urgent concern.

Indigenous peoples offer possibilities for life after empire, possibilities that neither erase the crimes of colonialism nor require the disappearance of the original peoples colonised under the guise of including them as individuals [assimilation]. That process righteously starts by honouring the treaties the United States made with Indigenous nations, by restoring all sacred sites, starting with the Black Hills and including most federally held parks and land, and all stolen sacred items and body parts, and by payment of sufficient reparations for the reconstruction and expansion of Native nations. These are the demands of Native resistance movements, and they must be the demands of all US social movements. In the process, not only consciousness, but the continuance itself will be radically reconfigured, physically and psychologically. For the future to be realised, it will require extensive educational programmes and the full support and active participation of the descendants of settlers, enslaved Africans, and colonised Mexicans, as well as immigrant populations.

The reaffirmation of democracy requires the denial of colonialism, but denying it does not make it go away. Only decolonisation of the United States can do that. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz is the author of An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States.
A critical cartography is the idea that maps – like other texts such as the written word, images or film – are not (and cannot be) value-free or neutral. Maps reflect and perpetuate relations of power, more often than not in the interests of dominant groups.

It is fairly easy to think of some ways in which maps embody power relations. One need not dig too deep within the history of mapping to see that they are intricately tied up in the history of nineteenth century colonialism and imperialism. Cartographers drew – and continue to draw – boundaries that separate people and resources. As another example, it is a fairly well-known fact that the commonly used Mercator projection of the globe is an inaccurate representation, because when cartographers ‘flatten out’ the spherical earth, they need to make certain choices: Size, shape and distances cannot all be maintained in the process. In the Mercator projection, the global North is vastly expanded at the expense of the South and Europe is placed squarely in the centre. As a further example, we may find it relatively easier – using an Ordinance Survey or Google Maps – to find a recently built supermarket than a longstanding, self-organised, autonomous space, social centre or other radical space, or perhaps the site of the Battle of Hastings rather than the site of a historical radical struggle or riot. This does not just have practical implications for finding a space. Maps structure and limit our knowledge of the landscape, affecting our perception of what is important, the relative sizes and relationships between objects and spaces and where it is possible or safe to travel.

Critical Cartography is therefore, in the first instance, interested with theoretical critique of the social relevance, politics and ethics of mapping. The assumption that this is even a possibility – that maps are not simply neutral tools but rather strategic weapons that express power – is subject to criticism. They can involve representing communities’ sometimes multiple and conflicting desires as a single representation, ignoring power differentials and exclusions within communities. This can be a necessary strategic act when attempting to make rights or resource claims to hierarchical entities such as states or trade organisations, yet can also help to perpetuate and legitimise such structures.

This is not to say that alternative mapping practices do not have a place in anarchist and non-hierarchical movements and studies. Social movements already use cartographies as ways of producing and communicating knowledge, yet these have rarely been studied in academic work. Examples of groups using counter-cartography include Bureau D’Etudes (http://bureaudetudes.org/) who produce huge geopolitical maps with massive amounts of information, highlighting for example links between corporations, financial institu-

### Critical Cartography

- **by Rhiannon Firth**

Most of us use maps on a day-to-day basis as practical tools to help us find our way around. Not too long ago we would have used Ordnance Survey maps, or pocket-sized city maps. Increasingly people are drawn to using Google Maps on smartphones. We rarely reflect on the ways in which our use of these maps might actually structure our experience of the world and our relations within it, blinding our imagination and possibilities for activity.

- **Is it psychologically transformative?**
- **Who is the intended audience of the map?**
- **Who will be mapping, why and for what purpose?**
- **Who will be able to access, or might be excluded from the process?**
- **Are there any formal or informal hierarchies in the space, and how might these be addressed?**
- **Does the process itself produce any emotions or affects?**
- **Is it psychologically transformative?**
- **Who is the intended audience of the map?**
- **What material or technology will be used?**
- **What will be drawn, in what style, what colours?**
- **Are there any practical considerations for the map’s intended use? e.g. should it be waterproof or capable of duplication?**

**The LIFE of the MAP**

- **How will the map continue its life outside this space?**
- **How might the map function as a tool?**
- **Does it have any practical use?**
- **Who will be able to access, or might be excluded from using it, and how will it be used?**
- **What kind of knowledge is produced?**
- ** Might the map trigger other cycles of learning/critique/mapping elsewhere?**
- **What are the political/ethical/social implications of these decisions?**
- **What changes or desires might the map bring into the world?**
How Will Surrogates Struggle?

The following story is a mix of fact and fiction. Outside Mumbai, a worker in a surrogacy home was refused permission to travel back to her village to visit a dying relative. The gestational surrogate, like all the others in her dormitory, was growing a fetus whose genetic design and implantation via IVF-ET (in vitro fertilisation followed by embryo transfer) had been curtailed at significant cost by private clinicians on commission for ‘intending parents’ from Europe. The pregnancy was nearing its third trimester, and the manager of the dorm denied her leave, invoking the contract she had signed prior to beginning hormonal treatment. It was a standard Indian surrogacy contract which she had not been able to understand at the time, not least because it was written mostly in English, with no explanation for phrases like “transvaginal ultrasound” or “cesarean section if requested”, and of which, moreover, she had not been given a copy to keep (Sharmila Rudrappa attests that throughout her extensive ethnographic research on surrogacy labour she has not encountered a single worker who could show her their contract.) The woman urgently wanted to visit her family but, unlike her friends and former colleagues in the garment factories, she could hardly bargain with her boss by going on strike. Or could she? According to the team that toured the documentary Made in India, when she ‘threatened to ‘drop the baby. They finally let her leave a few weeks.’ Since then, more surrogates have begun to follow suit...

This rare documented moment of victorious surrogate power captures a particularly visceral example of the moral blackmail to which all care workers are beholden under capitalism—nurses, midwives, nannies, etc. While striking nurses, as we know, face impositions of personal responsibility for risk and harm caused to patients during the shift, surrogates have no shift (rather, a nine-month, 24/7 piece-work commission) and can only halt their productivity by declining to continue giving life to the fetus. Downing tools, when your job is entirely within the limits of your own body, means killing a part of your own being. When your job is the blended affective and biological-corporeal capacity, both vital and partly unconscious, to make another viable human being, which is how the 1980s TV docu-drama, ‘Baby M’, about Western culture’s first truly (infamous) surrogate, and, judging from the Q&As on reproductive tourism websites today, the industry is seriously jumpstarting this almost entirely anomalous figure. In the wake of the ubiquitously cited Baby M melodrama, commissioning parents frequently inquire after the immobility and hygiene of their ‘pregnancy’: how can they be sure that a surrogate will not run off? And, this primary fear assuaged, can they get a guarantee that she will not do manual labour, incur injury, have sex, smoke, or abuse drugs?

A customer’s overriding concern is that the surrogate will ultimately relinquish the child. Do they have laws over there that force her to do so? Indeed, an economic geography of commercial surrogacy shows that ‘they’ do. The BRIC-dominated purveyors of private Assisted Reproductive Technology (A.R.T.) are usually keen to stress the privacy of tech and lab expertise in the process, over the individual ‘carriers’’ files. Agencies often characterise surrogate women as grateful “Third World” charity cases (the fee you pay for this “gift of life” will change her life!), while medical experts become centred as the real team leaders, delivering Your Baby. The term A.R.T. in itself pretends that overcoming Your infertility is achieved by ‘technology’ alone.

Star clinic director Dr. Neyna Patel epitomises broader biomedical business attitudes when she says in the 2012 HBO documentary, Google Baby: “All my surrogates are very humble, simple, nice females... very dedicated... very religious” Patel, of the Akanksha Clinic, who has appeared on everything from Oprah to BBC’s HARDtalk, clearly sees no contradiction in touting overwhelmingly debt-stricken proletarians from Gujarat to an international audience in this way and asserting that “there’s nothing wrong with empowering women.”

Or perhaps she understands full well the contradiction at the heart of Western capitalist figurations of the Global South, which seek to embrace and heal poverty while simultaneously keeping the poor exactly as they are (and where they are, to boot). Her message to buyers is that they can have it all: the baby’s face. Surrogates, they can say, are transplants at capitalism’s periphery, who are well ordered by today’s new international division of labour. Don’t worry, she tells us; the women I enlist to carry your child are reliable, they are disciplined by poverty and by an ingrained local patriarchal culture that you, as a Westerner, can barely imagine. At the same time, naturally, they dream of an end to their poverty (though not, apparently, of an end to their placidity and productivity). So why not make poverty history today, and get a genetic child of your very own into the bargain?

Which is not to say that concern isn’t warranted. Caesar-ean sections - for the purpose of timing the delivery effi- ciently and, arguably, for reasons of symbolic control - are the industry norm for surrogacies. Caesarean sections profoundly disempower women whose access to healthcare reverts, postpartum, to a very low level. In the opening of Google Baby, a camera crew documents a woman crying, following the removal of a white baby from her abdomen and its immediate dispatch out, to “the mother.” Colostrom (first milk) typically won’t pass between surro-gate and newborn.

The choreographies of assisted reproduction are nerve-jangling, even for a remote onlooker who may be relatively uninvested in the symbols of the baby. As Abigail Cooper have shown, of neoliberal economics. As such, the affluent and the destitute of the world, alike, can become entrepreneurs (or ‘repropreneurs’) of their own anato-mies. The majority, however, are those without the luxury clear transfer, whereby multiple (perhaps poly) parents can be genetically inscribed in an embryo. Yet by making an es-sentially proprietary attitude towards children more visible, and seeking to naturalise (via markets) the ruling class’s right to have reproductive assistance, it enshrines eugenic fissures in the world. Surrogate workers are well placed to spearhead a movement that asks: how do we want to repro-duce ourselves (and the world)? Why shouldn’t all pregnan-cies be directly paid for? How should the configuration of families be decided?

Despite its unsettling challenge to heteronormative familialism, surrogacy is almost never framed in terms of wider reproductive justice, let alone as a prompt to rethink common, even communist, ways of making and relating to children. Legalistic and lobbyist calls for progressive regulation of surrogacy are legion (especially in Australia, India and Western Europe) but always, unsurprisingly, retain a private and pro-prietary concept of the family. As ‘equal marriage’ rights become entrenched through surrogacy, recent conservative protests in France have also demanded that it, specifically, be outlawed. Meanwhile, the U.S. pro-life right-wing is cautiously in favour of reproductive technol-ogy’s pro-natalist function and eugenic potential. Military wives with Tricare health insurance have made a name for themselves as ‘the most wanted surrogates in the world.’ American surrogates generally, in states where surrogacy is legal (attracting fees of up to $100,000), retain a high degree of personal autonomy: they tend to command the nature of the communication with the future family, determine degree of medicalisation of their pregnancy, manage their own fee transactions, and frequently hand-pick parents from applicant pools via support forums like SurroMomsOnline.

By contrast, in the Ukraine, Russia, Mexico, Guatemala, Thailand, China and India, surrogates belong, economi-cally, to ‘surplus’ populations similar to those harvested for kidney “donations”. This intimate frontier of “clinical la-bour” is a major innovation, Catherine Waldbillig and Melinda Cooper have shown, of neoliberal economics. As such, the affluent and the destitute of the world, alike, can become entrepreneurs (or ‘repropreneurs’) of their own anato-mies. The majority, however, are those without the luxury
of ‘choice’. They are those who suffer the opportunism of the wealthy, facing their own corporeal enrollment under conditions of anonymity, surveillance, partial deception, lack of control over their biology, and for pay they discover is unacceptable (if calculated per hour across the whole nine months it is invariably less than $1). Cases of commissioning fathers banking on multiple surrogates at once and dropping those who failed to conceive twins, without payment, while putting pressure on them to abort, are not unheard of. The case of Baby Gammy, who has Down’s Syndrome and was abandoned by Australian commissioning parents in 2014, prompted Thai law to ban commercial surrogacy altogether last year.

The stark and ugly two-tier geography of surrogacy—boutique and mass, transparent and opaque, North and South, voluntaristic and desperate—can be mystified through the telling of new age spiritual stories, and the blogging of miracles, that pretend there is no difference. Infertility having become subject to wholesale pathologisation, a surrogate’s fatal pay-day (parturition) inevitably becomes the happiest day of a long-waited would-be procreator’s life. Women helping women it’s beautiful - that’s why the optimistic contingent of the surrogacy industry (and Oprah) likes to platform. As is doubtless palpable with the breathless descriptions of unforgettable journeys, bonds, unlikely comings-together, and incredible reciprocal transformations, which the industry and Oprah alike likes to platform. As is doubtless palpable to those workers, in many ways the outsourcing of gestation is typical of post-Fordist labour trends. A growing suite of reproductive and intangible domestic ‘goods’ now enter the international market in services, produced by wet nurses, governesses, ayahs, sex-workers and nannies. Surrogate struggle by no means demands a technophobic attitude against assisted reproductive technologies, which should only need to be reimaged—made to realise collective needs and desires. Actually, those who work as surrogates are the technology profitably controlled by others; they embody not only the form-giving fire but the partially conscious primary components. And the woman who stood up to her boss, with whom this article began, points the way to a revolution that begins simply with naming the labour of surrogacy as labour; naming the not-fully-conscious, not-fully-human, body, in which the commissioned baby resides, as synonymous with the labourer herself. We might imagine this struggle as one aimed to overthrow all conditions of life that strictly and impedes the flourishing and re-growing of already-existing humans. Starting, certainly, with global markets in reproductive labour as they currently exist, intensifying patterns of neocolonial inequality. But doubtless also including the nuclear family, based, as it is, on genetic heredity, inheritance, and oppressive divisions of work that prop up the tangled relations of nation, gender and race. Surrogacy, in short, has the potential to make palpable to us how risks of risk disclaimers). Indeed, to zoom in on this small subsection of twenty-first century work is not to argue that it is qualitatively unique.

Rather, the challenge for surrogates, the value of whose labour is literally embedded in their bodies as living things, is to generalise their struggle. The experience of bodily unity with a child destined for an ‘other’ family seems like a very good place from which to instigate a politics of reproductive freedom. It springs from the same subversive medico-technological subject-position occupied throughout his-
THE THIN BLUE LINE IS A BURNING FUSE
WHY EVERY STRUGGLE IS NOW A STRUGGLE AGAINST THE POLICE
by CrimethInc Collective

It should have come as no surprise when the grand jury in St. Louis refused to indict Darren Wilson, the police officer who murdered Michael Brown last August in Ferguson, Missouri. Various politicians and media outlets had laboured to prepare the public for this for months in advance. They knew what earnest liberals and community leaders have yet to acknowledge: that it is only possible to preserve the prevailing social order by giving police officers carte blanche to kill black people at will. Otherwise, it would be impossible to maintain the racial and economic inequalities that are fundamental to this society. In defiance of widespread outrage, even at the cost of looting and arson, the legal system will always protect officers from the consequences of their actions—for without them, it could not exist.

The verdict of the grand jury is not a failure of the justice system, but a lesson in what it is there to do in the first place. Likewise, the unrest radiating from Ferguson is not a tragic failure to channel protest into productive venues, but an indication of the form all future social movements will have to take to stand any chance of addressing the problems that give rise to them.

A profit-driven economy creates ever-widening gulfs between the rich and the poor. Ever since slavery, this situation has been stabilised by the invention of white privilege—a bribe to discourage poor white people from establishing common interests with poor people of colour. But the more inequalities there are in a society—racial, economic, and otherwise—the more force it takes to impose them.

This explains the militarisation of the police. It’s not just a way to sustain the profitability of the military-industrial complex beyond the end of the Cold War. Just as it has been necessary to deploy troops around the world to secure the raw materials that keep the economy afloat, it is becoming necessary to deploy troops in the US to preserve the unequal distribution of resources at home. Just as the austerity measures pioneered by the IMF in Africa, Asia, and South America are appearing in the wealthiest nations of the “First World”, the techniques of threat management and counter-emergency that were debuted against Palestinians, Afghans, and Iraqis are now being turned against the populations of the countries that invaded them. Private military contractors who operated in Peshawar are now working in Ferguson, alongside tanks that rolled through Baghdad. For the time being, this is limited to the poorest, blackest neighbourhoods, but what seems exceptional in Ferguson today will be commonplace around the country tomorrow.

This also explains why struggles against the police have taken centre stage in the popular imagination over the past decade. The police are the front line of capitalism and racism in every fight. You might never see the CEO who profits from fracking your water supply, but you’ll see the police who break up your protest against him. You might not meet the bank director or landlord who forces you out, but you will see the sheriffs who come to repossess your home or evict you. As a black person, you might never enter the gated communities of the ones who benefit most from white privilege, but you will encounter the overtly racist officers who profile, bully, and arrest you.

The civil rights struggles of two generations ago have become struggles against the police: today, a black man can become president, but he’s exponentially more likely to be murdered by an officer of the law. The workers’ struggles of a generation ago have become struggles against the police: in place of steady employment, a population rendered expendable by globalisation and automation can only be integrated into the functioning of the economy at gunpoint. What bosses once were to workers, police are to the precarious and unemployed.

In view of all this, it is not surprising that police violence has been the catalyst for most of the major movements, uprisings, and revolutions of the past several years:

- The riots that shook Greece in December 2008, ushering in an era of worldwide anti-austerity resistance, were sparked by the police murder of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos.
- In Oakland, the riots in response to the police murder of Oscar Grant at the opening of 2009 set the stage for the Bay Area to host the high-water mark of Occupy and several other movements.
- The day of protest that sparked the Egyptian revolution of 2011 was scheduled for National Police Day, January 25, by the Facebook page We Are All Khaled Said, which memorialised another young man killed by police.
- Occupy Wall Street didn’t gain traction until footage of police attacks circulated in late September 2011.
- The police eviction of Occupy Oakland, in which officers fractured the skull of Iraq War veteran Scott Olsen, brought the Occupy movement to its peak, provoking the blockade of the Port of Oakland.
- In 2013, the fare hikes protests in Brazil and the Gezi Resistance in Turkey both metastasised from small single-issue protests to massive movements calling for complete police reform in the region.
- The same thing happened in Eastern Europe, setting off the Ukrainian revolution at the end of 2013 and sparking the Bosnian uprising of February 2014.
- Other cities around the US have witnessed a series of intensifying rebellions against police murders, peaking with the revolt in Ferguson following the murder of Michael Brown.

It isn’t just that the police are called in to repress every movement as soon as it poses any threat to the prevailing distribution of power (although that remains as true as ever). Rather, repression itself has been producing the flashpoints of revolt.

The police cannot rule by brute force alone. They can’t be everywhere at once—and they are drawn from the same social body they repress, so their conflicts with that body cannot be concluded by purely military means. Even more than force, they need the public legitimacy and appearance of invincibility. Wherever it’s hard for them to count on one of these, they’re careful to exaggerate the other. When they lose both, as they have in all of the previously described movements, a window of possibility opens—a Tahrir or Taksim Square, an Occupy encampment or building occupation, the occupied...
I was heartened by the United Families and Friends Campaign’s annual march in October 2014, even though it was still small. In 2013, around 100 people marched on Whitehall, whilst one year later there was a much improved number of around 300. The 300 came together in a year which should be remembered for when the state flagrantly attempted to silence the bereaved and abused. 2014 was the year in which a jury deemed Mark Duggan’s killing to be “lawful” Constable Peter Fahy over the death of Anthony Hogan- Howe was made to apologise regarding the restoration of determination and passion. Though I have previously written that the struggle against deaths in custody, the Metropolitan Police firearms officer saw Anthony Long, the Met Police firearms officer who shot and killed Azelle Rodney, charged with spying on them than investigating the murders of those who have waded through many bitter rivers to attend and build these demonstrations. I have a little faith that this social movement will be achieved through the wonders of social media. The struggle against deaths in custody is laden with too much sorrow to be summed up in 140 characters. The families who form its core are often burdened with grief and tragedy, sharing a haunting or a gripping image could not do justice to laying the path ahead. I fear that relying primarily on the easy, loose connectivity that is constructed on social media reduces rather than underlines the emotional power which is the basis of this currently fledgling movement. Communication and retweets alone do not alter power structures. Mental abstraction in this instance is our enemy. The thousands who died, to misquote Stalin, are merely a statistic, an inconvenient detail alone do not alter power structures. Mental abstraction in this instance is our enemy. The thousands who died, to misquote Stalin, are merely a statistic, an inconvenient detail that plagues all of us. How do we end their violence?

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This social movement is not limited to those who have died, though they remain foundational. Justice for them, should be the prerequisite to and the minimum of our goals, rather than its full extent. UFFC, 4World Ever, London Campaign Against Police and State Violence, Movement for Justice, Newman Monitoring Project, Metropolitan Police Monitoring Group and countless other campaigns are modest attempts in that direction. These small efforts and much more hold a promise that goes beyond halting state sponsored deaths towards a society that rejects the paternalistic “protection” of the state, and replaces it with their own self-managed collective defence. The Maroons of the Caribbean and the Americas, the pre-wage welfare state trade unions, the Black Panthers, the Zapatistas, Abahlali baseMpondolo and British striking mining communities had to provide what the state could not. It is on their foundations that our social movement is built.
Every civilisation must decide what is, and what is not, valuable. Marxists occasionally speak of a “law of value.” It is not a concept easily translated into everyday politics, or into our histories of capitalism. It sounds quaint, curiously out of step with our times. And yet the essential insight of the Marxist argument on value remains extraordinarily relevant: to how we connect capitalism’s manifold crises, and to how we respond to them.

Let us consider three radical critiques, their assertions of value, and their diagnoses of the present global conjuncture. For the Marxist, value is socially necessary labour-time: abstract social labour. We might think of abstract labour as the average labour-time embedded in the average commodity for the system as a whole. For the feminist, value is produced through the relations of social reproduction every bit as much as the relations of commodity production; neoliberal globalisation cannot, for instance, be understood solely through the “global factory”, it must also be understood through the “global household”. Thirdly, for the environmentalist, Nature is intrinsically valuable, and capitalism destroys it.

These are, of course, stylised. Each tradition, practically and theoretically, has been pursuing synthesis. Each borrows extensively across critiques: eco-feminism, feminist political economy, eco-Marxism, and so forth. But a synthesis of capital, power, and nature in modernity’s relations of production and reproduction has been elusive. My intention is to point towards one possible synthesis. This understands capitalism as a world-ecology, joining the reproduction of everyday life and the reproduction of capital in dialectical unity.

Laws of value – understood as large-scale and long-run patterns that govern the life of a civilisation (e.g. Song China, feudal Europe, capitalism) – lead a double life. One operates in a domain that is usually called “economic,” but in fact much more expansive. This is the domain of surplus production and distribution: who gets what and how do they get it? It’s not really economic for two good reasons. First, the question of surplus always implies power; and second, the production of surplus always pivots on the reproduction of life, from one day, and from one generation, to the next.

Every “mode of production” is at the same time a “mode of reproduction.”

Every “mode of production” is at the same time a “mode of reproduction.” But there’s another, equally significant, dimension of value. This is value as ethicopolitical norm. What do we value? A wetland or an industrial park? “Men’s work” or “women’s work”? In this second domain, the feminist and Green critique of the Marxist – has led the view. But the differences have been viewed in terms of the rise and fall of the factory. The distinction between the first and second “life” of capitalism’s value system has often been confused. Each tradition’s angle of vision has identified – and announced – distinctive values of value as systemic logic and ethicopolitical alternative.

And yet, I think we have reached a conjuncture when clarity – at least greater clarity – is possible. The tremors of systemic crises – financial, climate, food, employment – are translating into a new ontological politics that challenge capitalism at its very core: its law of value. Today’s movements for climate justice, food sovereignty, de-growth, the right to the city – and much beyond – underscore a new set of challenges to capitalism’s value system, understood simultaneously in its ethicopolitical and political-economic dimensions. This new ontological politics has long been implicit in radical politics. But it seems to have reached a new stage today. Entwining distributional demands – the right to food, housing, a safe environment – with calls for fundamental democratisation, justice, gender equity, and sustainable environment-making, these movements have brought capitalism’s “law of value” into question as never before.

How to bring clarity to this exciting – and complex reality? One fact of rethinking must be ontological. We must rethink the essence of modernity’s most sacred divide, Humanity/Nature. Civilisations had long distinguished between humans and the rest of nature. But during the rise of capitalism, something peculiar occurred. Humans were no longer “distinct”; they became, in modernity’s new cosmology, wholly separate. And so did Nature, now with a capital ‘N’. Nature became an object. The point was not only to interpret the world but to control it.

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This had a decided advantage: Nature-as-object could be made cheap. And this Cheap Nature became the foundation for a new law of value. The unpaid work of nature became the pedestal of a new civilisational strategy: appropriate the whole of nature as a way to advance labour productivity within the commodity system. The result was an unprecedented revolution in human-initiated environmental change, as landscapes from Southeast Asia to the Baltic to Brazil were radically transformed, their peoples uprooted and dispossessed in the service of the endless accumulation of capital.

In practice, both Humanity and Nature were fluid categories, and enabled fluid strategies of accumulation. Humanity did not, in the first instance, include all humans. The rise of early modern materialism – the “scientific revolution” and all that – redefined some humans, most humans, as less-than-human. Women especially. The dualism of Humanity/Nature was the creation not of science alone, but of science, capital, and empire – entwined movements in a world-ecological system. When the Spaniards conquered Peru – a vast zone much larger than the country today – their name for indigenous peoples was nahuatl. The debate over indigenous slavery in the early 16th century – personified by the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas – turned on the meaning of “natural slaves.” From the very beginning, capitalism’s crucial point of fracture was not Humanity/Nature but between two zones with fluid boundaries: the zone of exploitation in commodity production, and the zone of appropriation, comprising the unpaid work of María Mies’ “women, nature, and colonies.”

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Agricultural Research Centres loom large in this history. Since the 1970s, the surveying of world-nature has reached new heights, as dynamism. While Marxist ecology tends to ignore value, it does so extends well beyond the immediate process of production. Here and use-value in a way that form is surely one of capitalism's greatest achievements. The Earth? Yes, but also the unpaid work of human nature. For in capitalism, the crucial divide is between paid and unpaid work – not human and extra-human nature. Managing this unpaid work – not human and extra-human nature. For in capitalism, the crucial divide is between paid and unpaid work, food, energy, and raw materials – the Four Cheaps more expansive than the immediate production of the form is surely one of capitalism's greatest achievements. The Earth? Yes, but also the unpaid work of human nature. For in capitalism, the crucial divide is between paid and unpaid work, food, energy, and raw materials – the Four Cheaps – signals a sea change in capitalism's crisis-fixing strategies. Thus the trinity: abstract social labour, abstract social nature, primitive accumulation. This is the relational core of capitalist world-envy. And the work of this unholy trinity? Produce Cheap Natures. Extend the zone of appropriation. In sum, to deliver labour, food, energy, and raw materials – the Four Cheaps – faster than accumulating the mass of surplus capital derived from the exploitation of labour-power. Why? Because the rate of exploitation of labour-power (within the commodity system) tends to exhaust the life-making capacities that enter into the immediate production of value. Capital is indifferent to the Cartesian divide. As Marx writes: "Capital asks no questions about the length of life of labour-power. What interests it is purely and simply the maximum of labour-power that can be set in motion in a working day. It attains this objective by shortening the life of labour-power, in the same way as a greedy farmer snatches more produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility."
In every struggle today, across the world, "climate change", "global disaster", "ecological devastation" and "the right to the city" are phrases held in common by those who resist. Meanwhile, private property, profit maximization and the mantra of economic growth, "progress" and "prosperity" continue to be promoted by a system and its advocates at the expense of all of our rights - above all, our right to exist and live with dignity. The transformation of lands by and for capital within rural areas is not as visible as in the city, since rural areas haven’t seen the extreme urban enclosure of streets and public space. The rapacious need for raw materials and to widen markets, in the city or in the countryside, locally and globally, demonstrates a crucial imperative to build a resistance on a foundation of mutual support that crosses borders.

One of the biggest moves that neoliberalism has made for development and growth is the commodification of nature through processes of "accumulation by dispossession". Labelled as "developing", states like Turkey, single-minded in their pursuit of expansion and economic growth, exemplify more than anywhere else the massive scale of neoliberal destruction and plunder. These attacks threaten all of nature and all living beings, and by extension they also threaten the destruction of cultures and languages, since the introduction of labour exploitation to new territories and populations forces large-scale migration from the countryside to the cities. Investments in industrialisation, much of it directly linked to the energy market, are increasing rapidly. Meanwhile, local economies, traditional farming, subsistence production and reproduction, nature itself, are being destroyed, as are the social relations and cultures produced by this way of life.

In Turkey, the late 1990s and 2000s signalled the new era of neoliberal development and the accompanying discourse of "progress" and "modernisation". With this discourse, new laws and "reforms" were introduced regarding the commercialisation of water, both underground and overground sources. Simultaneously, processes of dispossession by the state have begun, especially for major energy projects. This includes mega projects like hydroelectric, fossil fuel and nuclear power plants, as well as dams, mining facilities, quarries, the reorganisation of fisheries through industrialisation and the enclosure of rural and mountain lands. From the perspective of capital, the most vital markets (especially when considering the scale of profits to be made) are energy projects and the commodification of water.

And so, with state backing, international capital (along with its local partners) rapidly forced through these projects, often unlawfully, across Turkey - particularly in the Black Sea Region. The only "responsibility" for these transnational companies is to introduce civil society initiatives (termed "social responsibility projects") in order to whitewash their destructive practices. Laws and legal procedures change overnight to remove any barriers that capital faces, meanwhile local people are completely excluded from the process. But the people, those who have been dispossessed of their land, water and other sources of nature, are protecting their way of life by resisting these attacks.

In Turkey today, the late 1990s and 2000s signalled the new era of neoliberal development and the accompanying discourse of "progress" and "modernisation". With this discourse, new laws and "reforms" were introduced regarding the commercialisation of water, both underground and overground sources. Simultaneously, processes of dispossession by the state have begun, especially for major energy projects. This includes mega projects like hydroelectric, fossil fuel and nuclear power plants, as well as dams, mining facilities, quarries, the reorganisation of fisheries through industrialisation and the enclosure of rural and mountain lands. From the perspective of capital, the most vital markets (especially when considering the scale of profits to be made) are energy projects and the commodification of water.

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Museums and galleries weren’t always the grand institutions we experience today. Formerly private collections, visible only to the ruling classes, were projected into the lower echelons of society in grand acts of philanthropy. Establishments like the British Museum and the National Gallery opened their doors to all amidst the formation of a ‘united kingdom’ across the British Isles. Over time, these secular cathedrals to enlightenment values and British imperialism would come to attract millions of visitors, becoming synonymous with the London experience.

Recent additions to the fold include the Tate Modern, a rehousing on the South Bank in one of London’s Victorian era industrial projects that now sits alongside the British Museum, St Paul’s Cathedral and other destinations on the London tourist trail. The gallery today attracts the largest footfall of arts spectators globally with collections that trail. The gallery today attracts the largest footfall of arts spectators globally with collections that appear to inform their configuration. At their centre is the extension of oppression into the present day and the very degree the cultural and aesthetic values tolerated by the state, or for one’s work to have been recuperated. This dual logic of complicit production and recuperation not only underscores the power inherent in the arts institution, it is telling of the broader conditions of class division and labour force that enable its perpetuation. This is revealed by the actions and aesthetic practices undertaken by LibreTe Tate in the drive to free art from oil: performances that opt in and opt out of the gallery and rupturing class confinement. Paradoxically, these acts become a strangely impasse defence of the institution and serve to further enable and perpetuate the class division underpinning the creative industry.

This isn’t to deny the possibility of a genuine critique of the institution from within: Hack was one of the first generation of institutional critics. In a piece titled “hoppality et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1977” Hacke attempted to document, and display real time the representation portfolio of a New York slumlord in the Guggenheim Museum, making visible relations between the slumlord and museum trustees. Naturally, the invitation to show the work was rescinded. Compared to the performed outrage in the various museums across London here is a critique considered threatening enough that its presence in the space simply couldn’t be tolerated. What made this piece more dangerous than the arts activism we critique here is that the relationship between art and dispossession were more critically situated; the capital-labour relation is imminent, proximate and timely.

Activity that takes place within the scope of one’s own encounter with injustice is laudable, but activity that fails to articulate and address the conditions that give rise to these injustices becomes instead a driving force behind a narrative of oppression. It is often said of art that its practice seeks to “make visible”, and yet in the quest to liberate Tate the desire appears to be much the opposite: to instead sweep the visibility of injustice from the sector of one’s labour yet say nothing of this industrial relation. Perhaps contrary to liberating Tate, the very visibility of oil money in these institutions presents an alternative affordance in that it may allow us a shared perspective from which to deliberate, explore and articulate a broader schema of industry and social relations - global extraction, violence, colonialism, class division, cultural industries - and to enable a dialogue that might hope to maintain a sense of the underlying injustice. The development of a less privileged programme around this material content, grounded in an analysis which looks to the broader position in our history that these contested spaces have inhabited, is essential. It may be that we find nothing worth saving.

DELIBERATE TATE

“THIS PIECE IS NO CRITICISM OF ANYONE INVOLVED - RATHER AN ATTEMPT TO INSPIRE SOME THOUGHT ON THE CHALLENGES THAT CONFRONT US IF WE ARE REALLY SERIOUS IN OUR INTENTION”

— GIVE UP ACTIVISM, DOCOR DE PIJ, 2005 —

by Mark Kauri & Jack Dean