

Word Work

Cultural Flows: The flow of Ideas and Capital inside a modernity. Generates Capital, Fetishization, Commodification, Hegemony, Markets, Racialization, and Value. It is how societies operate, the end result of Appropriation, Re-externalization, Piracy, Collapse, and more.

Capital: Money and bargaining ability. See Power, Fetishization, Value

Appropriation: The copying of an idea or object for usage by a different community or person. See Internalization, Re-Externalization.

Re-appropriation: A copy of, but spun version of an idea used originally in a different, often discriminatory way. See Re-externalization, Fetishization, Piracy.

Externalization: The outward projection of concepts and ideas from a central Core, which often influences Frontiers or other Markets. Contrast Internalization, See Power, Commodification

Internalization: The adaptation of an originally Externalized idea from a different location, which affects customs or practices in the idea's new environment. Contrast Externalization, See Appropriation

Re-externalization: The projection of an idea originally from one Core, which has been modified by a local Modernity and re-projected. See Re-appropriation, Externalization, Piracy.

Finite: A limited amount. No matter how much you look, there will never be more. In this case, space for Markets, leading to a lack of Frontiers. Contrast Discovery, See Boundaries.

Modernity: The cultural norm, the status quo. A modernity is the culture and laws emanating from a central Core, which grows weaker with distance or obstruction, leading to a Frontier or Boundaries. See Hegemony.

Hegemony: The influence in areas beyond physical Boundaries. Overlaps with Modernity, as a Modernity radiates a Hegemony if the Modernity wields enough Power.

Boundaries: The place where one modernity gives way to another, where one set of rules changes to another, where one Hegemony ends, and the other begins.

Piracy: The Internalization and Re-externalization of an Externalized idea or product. In essence, the unauthorized reproduction of an original idea or device. See Re-appropriation, Commodification, Value, Entrepreneur.

Frontier: The edge of a Hegemony or Modernity, where rules become less enforced, and the Core has less influence. Contrast Core, See Discovery.

Core: The center point of a modernity, where Cultural Flows are generated, and rules are created. Extends a Hegemony, and hosts many Markets.

Markets: Location of Capital exchange, organized by the power of Modernities, Fueled by commodification and Fetishization.

Racialization: The ascribing of a specific identity to a group for the purpose of continued domination of one group over another. Used to create Markets, enforce Hegemonies, and is employed by the Entrepreneurial Wolf.

Discovery: The finding of new spaces, Markets, or resources to Commodify. Often occurs on a Frontier. Discovery finds parts of a Finite space still unused. Discovery cannot last forever, but is the easiest way to satiate infinite Capital. Analogous to new drawers in a filing cabinet.

Commodification: The act of turning a resource into a commodity. Utilizes Fetishization of a resource, invoking Value.

Fetishization: The attribution of arbitrary Value to an object or resource. See Commodification, Racialization

Diversification: The making of new Markets by creating new Niches, allowing greater space efficiency of Markets by allowing 'peaceful' coexistence. A moderate way to accommodate infinite Capital. Analogous to a filing system in a filing cabinet, instead of piled papers.

Niche: A specific cultural Value or Market to occupy. Values of Niches exist due to Fetishization, and Diversification of Commodities. See Boundaries, Piracy

Value: The attribution or worth of an idea or object. Is often arbitrary, and occurs due to Fetishization and commodification. Often represented by Capital.

Collapse: The destruction of an economic system and Markets, a disruption of Cultural Flows, a radical change in a Modernity. Leads to a Rebuild of Markets. The most drastic way to accommodate infinite Capital. Analogous to torching everything in a filing cabinet, then refiling over the ashes.

Moment of Collapse: The point at which a collapse is about to occur, or is occurring. Provides great opportunity for an Entrepreneurial Wolf, who has likely Engineered a Collapse.

Engineered Collapse: Piracy of an economic system and of Cultural Flows. Disrupts Markets, destroys Niches, but benefits an Entrepreneurial Wolf.

Entrepreneur: One who views the system and exploits its vulnerabilities, analogous to a Pirate. One who knows the system, and knows how to benefit from it.

Entrepreneurial Wolf: The logical conclusion of an Entrepreneur. Engages in economic Piracy and exploitation of a system to a high degree, without regard to the integrity of the system, of other people. Likely to trigger an Engineered Collapse.

Rebuild: The reapplication of Diversification and Cultural Flows, after a Collapse. The continuation of infinite Capital.

Power: Influence, the ability to get people to behave in ways you can predict and which benefit you. To control Cultural Flows. See Hegemony, Modernity.

Dimestoneⁱ

The sedimentary rock limestone is created when successive layers of small aquatic organisms live, then die, leaving their bleached husks behind to be compressed into beautiful white rock. A similar process occurs when the flows of infinite capital generated by humans finds the limits of the finite space it occupies. In this paper we will analyze the number of strategies employed to attempt to fit infinite capital into a finite space. First, we will explore the societal basis of infinite capital in order to understand how it is generated. Secondly we will understand the concept of finite space, and how space is utilized by society. Thirdly, we will begin to look at when infinite capital flows and finite space collide, resulting in three general results. The first of those results is Discovery. In Discovery, local space has been exhausted, and new markets in separate geographical areas are discovered or created. The second response to the collision is the idea of Diversification. In Diversification, new markets are generated in the gaps between old markets, leading to a higher concentration of markets in the same physical space. Finally we come to the third result of a collision between capital and space; Collapse. When Collapse occurs, it makes way for new and more diverse forms of capitalism and markets. However, it comes at a cost of destroying the old ones. The metaphor of a forest will be used to illustrate the effects of such responses. Returning to the concept of limestone, we will also see how after every collapse, the new systems build upon the remains of the previous systems, leading to distinct layers of prosperity and collapse over time, but as a trend, the limestone builds ever thicker and higher. Thus the concept of Dimestone, the limestone of capital. A cycle of successive crashing and rebuilding is inherent to capitalism, but it always seems to build upon the last cycle to reach ever greater heights.

Capital is generated by the fetishization of a resource by the cultural flows of society, and propagated by various cultural mechanisms. A single fetishized resource can be reinterpreted and reformed into many permutations of the original fetish. Let's view a hypothetical situation. A new product is created and fetishized in some random country, and enjoys quite a bit of popularity. The product, being popular, is externalized through media and word of mouth, leading to people in other countries to see the value in such a product. Those countries then seek to appropriate the new idea. However, the appropriation morphs from a simple copy to a new concept: internalization. The native culture of this new market acts upon the fetishization of the original product in order to align it with the local societal flows of the reigning modernity. In this way, the adapted source material has become a new form of cultural capital. This transformation and new popularity due to the cultural adaptation of the original product leads once again to an externalization. However, in this case it is a re-externalization due to being an internalization of an externalization initially. In this way, the initial concept is constantly appropriated, re-appropriated, and re-externalized across the world. The concept may change in all sorts of manners due to forces of local modernities, but will continue to be internalized by new markets, re-externalized outward, and then re-internalized once more to continue the cycle. In practice, this gives fetishized forms of cultural capital near immortality, leading to what we know as infinite capital. As capital feeds new capital, this creates a never-ending, infinite cycle if left unconstrained, and with access to unlimited markets to continuously re-integrate and express ideas.

In stark contrast to the reality of infinite capital, space is finite. Every economic system exerts a modernity, and imposes hegemony in surrounding areas. It does this in order to cultivate new raw resources in order to sustain its cultural flows; the people and physical goods which are fetishized by people. When separate modernities interact, boundaries are created which delineate the rules and customs to abide by in a specific area. The fact that space is finite means only a limited quantity of modernities may exist simultaneously, due to the size required of a modernity. A modernity's power is often correlated with the number of people who fall under its influence, and the number of commoditized resources it has access to. As a modernity grows smaller, its power also decreases, as it has less of a participant base to utilize in the generation of its specific cultural values. This implies that there is a minimum size required for a functional modernity to operate. Whether that is many people is hard to determine, but at the very least, the minimum size of a modernity is one person, operating by his or her internal rules. Even with a small, one person modernity, there is a limit to the number of people who can be supported on the planet, leading to a fundamental point: the space for modernities is limited; meaning the number of possible modernities is limited. And if the number of possible modernities is limited, then infinite capital, upon contacting finite space, has to find some way to fit, as there is neither enough room on the planet to fit all the possible permutations of cultural flows infinite capital has the capability to generate, nor enough resources in such a finite space as to continuously sustain continuous capital flow.

The first response to the presence of limited space is the act of Discovery. In this case, Discovery is finding new space to generate new markets in. Discovery occurs in a few ways; one of the most common ways is the Frontier. Upon discovery of new land, a frontier is generated. In essence, the Frontier is a region where the hegemony of the core grows thin due to distance or other forms of obstruction, leading to looser and less enforceable rules. However, this freedom is often useful for enticing migrants and entrepreneurs to the area due to the promise of 'striking it rich'. Migration produces new markets on the frontier, and due to partial isolation from the core, allows for new cultural flows to be generated and new forms of capital to flow, being internalized from the core, and re-externalized as a specific, local brand of culture and capital. Unfortunately for some, the frontier is often not uninhabited, leading to oppression and exploitation, or in some cases, the migrants to a frontier are marginalized by the core of their parent modernity. This process, racialization, is method by which the core sustains the capital flows of their core modernity due to an influx of new resources from the frontier, often effectively colonies. However, in either method, the end result is clear: somewhere, the raw materials needed for infinite capital flow have been received, and thus capital has propagated. In a metaphor of a forest, the method of Discovery is the continuous expansion of the forest edge over a landscape, as seeds find new ground to cover, sprout, and then reproduce again. As long as more land exists, a forest can spread indefinitely. However, with forests, as with capitalism, eventually the land runs out, or becomes insufficient for proper growth. In both capitalism and forests, there are ways to improve the suitability of land, be it nitrogen-fixing pioneer plants or clearing of actual forests to make room for houses. But even then, land eventually runs out altogether, and there is no more to find. Discovery has historically been the easiest way to sustain capitalism, as a new influx of resources is the easiest way to allow for externalization, internalization, and the subsequent re-externalization of new ideas. Finding and using resources is much more efficient than generating

resources ourselves through a greater reliance on cultural capital, and thus is the most preferential option. But alas, the strategy of Discovery only works to a limited extent, as the planet itself is a very difficult spatial barrier to pass, and virtually all regions on earth have been discovered. Our resource production has now turned to being more efficient in extraction and usage, or to utilize land previously uninhabitable, such as rainforests or deserts. But eventually, we will run out, and that is where other strategies must be adopted.

The next method capitalism tends to employ to contain its infinite flows is the idea of Diversification. The basic tenet behind this design is to improve the density of markets rather than simply the amount of land a market requires. Enter the concept of niches. A niche, both in Capitalism and in nature, is a specific specialization of a product or in nature, an animal, which allows it to not compete directly for resources used by larger entities. Returning to the metaphor of the forest, niches can be very commonly found. Trees, the dominant organisms of a forest, occupy the canopy, and are specialized to capture large quantities of sun. Ferns, on the other hand, take up the forest floor. If they were to employ the same strategies as trees, they would be outcompeted, and die off. However, ferns are specialized to use the sunlight that trees do not use, and to use the physical space on the forest floor which trees only sparingly use. This is just one example, but animals, with different animals eating separate foods such as nuts, berries, or fruit, provide other examples. In the case of capitalism, niches are created by markets which cater to specific targets, diversifying a once big market into several small ones, by making certain products hold specific advantages over other similar products. The advantages, of course, are fueled by the concepts of fetishization and commodification. Markets could operate by having only a single variety of a service or product, such as a single train service in a remote town. However, having niche Markets, such as more comfortable luxury trains, fuels capital flows by allowing a greater variety of products, and a greater density of markets in the same amount of space. Fetishization allows for these niche markets to be formed in the first place, by attributing value to slightly different alternatives, or by commodifying certain resources which were previously ignored in order to appeal to niche markets. The practice of piracy is a common result from such diversification in markets. Often, if a service is expensive and fancy, piracy will endeavor to make cheaper or more available alternatives for such products, to sell to a different market, thus finding a niche. As an example, during the days of record players, pirates capitalized on the niche demand for out of print opera. In remarking about the niche market of opera in comparison to a similar trend in jazz, the line, "As with jazz, moreover, the market was made up of cognoscenti who prized every performance and every pressing, and the pirate enterprise build on that fact"ⁱⁱⁱ exemplifies how piracy fills niches typical manufactures may neglect. The density increasing effect of economic niches extends the viability of finding new markets, as markets are able to be generated in pre-existing space, thus allowing infinite capital to continue without requiring new space. However, this does not completely solve the problems inherent with constantly increasing flows of capital. Eventually, all the available niches will be exhausted; the saturation of available space with markets will be found. The point at which this occurs is variable, as some niches become more defined than others, even if most niches could be further subdivided. However, once the available space has been fully exhausted, and fully saturated with markets, the only option left is the most serious one: collapse.

Collapse occurs after most other options have been exhausted. What occurs is generally a reset of the market system in order to recapitalize on new markets later and ideally to create better structured, longer lasting market ecosystem in the next capital cycle. The analogy which comes to mind is that of a forest fire. A forest fire blazes through a forest, destroying everything in its wake. The animals run, the plants are burned, and everything turns to a layer of ash. However, shortly after, life begins to re-emerge from the ashes. The seeds of the previous plants which were hidden from the fire's wrath are able to begin to grow. The first plants, the nitrogen fixers, will begin to resupply vital nutrients into the forest system. More plants follow, with ferns and trees and flowers and moss slowly building up to a new, yet familiar ecosystem. As the plants grow, the animals return. All the while, the newly leveled playing field allows for some plants and animals to establish footholds they previously did not occupy, leading to a new brand of diversity, and many new niches to use and exploit. The same is true for capitalism. Every collapse brings new revitalization of markets and niches, and allows infinite capital flow to work to rebuild and improve upon old systems. Though, like with plants, some will benefit more than others. The entrepreneurial wolvesⁱⁱⁱ of the system have waited for this collapse, and some may have even hastened its coming, profiting on the moment of collapse, anticipating its occurrence. But those same wolves may be the victims of the next collapse, e they did not see coming. When collapse happens, it resets the playing field back to a lower level. It is the destruction of capital flows in order to make room for new ones. Collapse is the true consequence of the collision between infinite capital and finite space, all the other methods are stopgap measures in order to delay the coming collapse, because the true concept of the collapse is that to deal with infinite capital flows, there must be a culling of old flows to make room for new ones. Much like the wildfire, a collapse allows new life to spring forth from the remains of the old way.

We have now seen the consequences of infinite capital and finite space, and found it to be analogous to nature itself. Nature colonizes new frontiers to find new resources. Nature spreads its modernity, its specific mix of plants and animals, across the terrain, ever growing. Nature fills its space with a near endless variety of species and habitats, and exemplifies the niches these animals inhabit to survive, and continue growth. However, Nature also has its collapses. The forest fire, the volcanic eruption, the asteroid impact, each event shatters the previous modernity of life and requires starting fresh. Wipe out the old forms and bring in the new, ever growing, and ever changing. Capitalism is no different. It finds new ways to exploit resources, new frontiers to colonize, new markets to find. It diversifies its markets in order to efficiently utilize every resource available to it. And when eventually every new market is found, and every space is diversified, it collapses, and makes way for new forms of capital to replace the old. This is why the concept of Dimestone is so apt. It is the capitalistic equivalent of nature's limestone; a meticulous recording of many layers of growth and collapse, with the new markets and capital flows continuously forming on the remains of the flows below it, only to collapse and become another layer to be built upon, forming the limestone of capital, Dimestone. In many ways, Dimestone is history, our recording of these collapses and periods of prosperity. As to what our layer will look like, it's hard to tell. We may collapse like all the others, doomed by the finite space found on Earth. But reread that sentence, and find the quantifier used. On Earth. Trees never invented starships. The Universe itself is infinite, unlike Earth. The question is will we survive long enough to get there?^{ivvvi}

ⁱ Dimestone™ because Capitalism ;)

ⁱⁱ Adrian Johns, "Piracy" pg 442

ⁱⁱⁱ Clarke Speed, Sp14'

^{iv} I really feel I have covered everything I want to say in the paper, and cannot really find anywhere an endnote is deserved, but I'll have some more 'general' end notes.

^v Space Capitalism will be a very interesting prospect. There are a number of ways it could go. It could be similar to what we have now, where only the most elite and wealthy of society go to space, or we could see colonization on other planets leading to regulated space-trade. A regression to early modern or even medieval farming communities might be in the cards, with technology being the new forms of magic, with the world of earth long since forgotten. Or perhaps we will transcend capitalism as we download ourselves into a computer mainframe encircling the sun. Who needs capitalism then? Or we could go the Firefly route and have space cowboys. That could be fun. Or perhaps robots will take over, and do away with capitalism altogether. Or we might never get to space to try, as we will collapse first. Where do you think capitalism will go?

^{vi} Thank you for this great spring quarter. I loved the class, and it really made me think a lot about the world and what goes on in it. I really enjoyed the pragmatism inherent in the class conversations. I didn't feel like anyone was too much of an idealist or proponent of how the world should work. I like that everyone accepted the world how it is, but still has the will to try to do something. I will defiantly remember this class fondly going forward, and will look out for another Clarke Speed™ Class to take. Thanks for the great time.