View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by University of Maine

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Anthropology Student Scholarship

Anthropology

2020

“Still good life”: On the value of reuse and distributive labor in “depleted” rural Maine

Cindy Isenhour

Brieanne Berry

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/ant_studentpub

Part of the Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthropology Student Scholarship by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

DOI:10.1002/sea2.12176

"Still good life": On the value of reuse and distributive labor in "depleted" rural Maine

Cindy Isenhour[1] & Brieanne Berry[2]

1 Department of Anthropology and Climate Change Institute, University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469, USA
2 Department of Anthropology, University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469, USA
Corresponding author: Cindy Isenhour; e-mail: cynthia.isenhour@maine.edu

This article explores the production of wealth through distributive labor in Maine's secondhand economy. While reuse is often associated with economic disadvantage, our research complicates that perspective. The labor required to reclaim, repair, redistribute, and reuse secondhand goods provides much more than a means of living in places left behind by international capitalism, but the value generated by this work is persistently discounted by dominant economic logics. On the basis of semistructured interviews, participant observation, and statewide surveys with reuse market participants in Maine, we find that the relational value of reuse, produced through caring, flexible, distributive labor, is especially significant. We argue that paying attention to the practices, politics, and value of distribution is critical for understanding wealth in communities perceived to have been left behind by global capitalist systems, particularly as wage labor opportunities and natural resources grow increasingly scarce.

Keywords Distribution; Reuse; Secondhand; Wealth-in-People; Rural Economy; Discards; Value

"Shutting Down Paper Machines"
Sharon Bray (2017, 242)

mill still hums but we all know next week 500 families will tighten trousers,
put guns, camps, 4-wheelers up for sale, cancel winter vacation plans

the work of Bucksport paper machines used to show up
on every page of Life magazine, made from trees cut with chain saws,
hauled in from Road 9 on the airline, put through drum barkers, clanked
along overhead conveyors into steam and noise of the wood room where
shifts of union men wore ear protectors

workers jostled for places on the Sunday list—double time better than church

train cars brought in chemicals, carried out white clay-coated rolls of paper

silence and darkness come on
they sold our mill for scrap metal

© 2020 The Authors. *Economic Anthropology* published by Wiley Periodicals, Inc. on behalf of American Anthropological Association.
This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

Maine is a geographically and economically marginal state, located in the northeasternmost corner of the United States and fairly distant from major economic cores. The state's economy has historically relied on the extraction of natural resources, from agricultural production, fur trapping, and lobstering to mill towns located adjacent to Maine's vast forests (State of Maine 1910). Over the last several decades, however, Maine's productive economy has changed dramatically as mills and factories have closed (Maine Department of Labor 2016). Many young people have moved away in search of better jobs, leaving behind an aging workforce and a shortage of workers to fill the jobs that remain (Maine Center for Economic Policy 2017b). While many parts of Maine enjoy a strong and growing tourist economy, and the state is by no means economically homogeneous, significant economic and demographic contraction in rural Maine has been variously described as a "tailspin" (Maine Center for Economic Policy 2017a), a "disaster," and an "emergency" (Collins 2016).

The recent decline in the paper and pulp industry is not a unique crisis but rather one in a long series of booms and busts that have unfolded over the state's history (Acheson and Acheson 2016), across the region (Sherman 2009), and in postindustrial capitalist societies throughout the world (Harvey 2006). Monica Wood, a novelist who wrote about her childhood in a slowly declining Maine mill town, described the response of audiences to her work. Her fears of telling a story that was too particular, too local, were assuaged when she heard readers from across the country say of their lost industries, "We made paper, too. … We made buttons. We made blankets. We made cars" (Wood 2015, 1).

From Meillassoux (1981) and Stack (1975) to Ong (2010), Bourgois (2003), and Tsing (2015), anthropologists have observed myriad crises of capitalism. Tales of labor alienation and oppression, the erosion of subsistence, exacerbated inequalities, or busted markets and impoverished communities have been told with great ethnographic detail. Scholars have long argued that market booms and busts are an inherent trait of capitalism (Sherman and Sherman 2018). But concerns about uneven development and spatially distinct patterns of accumulation and depletion, particularly in once developed and relatively affluent contexts, have more recently ruptured popular "expectations of modernity" (Ferguson 1999) in America—the expectation of a steady job, of continuous growth, and of a linear path to development. Indeed, mill closings and shuttered factories in communities across the United States have raised populist concerns that demand stronger anthropological engagement (Friedman 2018; Gomberg-Muñoz 2018), particularly as we come to terms with "the imaginative challenge of living without those handrails which once made us think we knew, collectively, where we were going" (Tsing 2015, 66).

As rural communities across the United States work to reinvent themselves, they have attracted the interest of experts eager to impart wisdom about entrepreneurship, community development, and municipal incentive packages designed to lure industries and jobs back to the region (Hitchner, Schelhas, and Brosius 2017). These experts often characterize their postextractive and postindustrial rural subject communities as "depleted," "distressed," or "depressed" (EIG 2018; Johnstone and Lionais 2004; Porter 2018). While we absolutely do not deny the uncertainty, anxiety, and stress produced by rural job losses and economic contraction, we argue that these representations of Maine's rural communities deserve critical anthropological attention.

Community descriptors like *depleted* and *distressed* center their problem conceptualization within the community (e.g., poorly educated or aged workforce, limited infrastructure), neglecting consideration of the structural roots of decline or the capitalist logics that unevenly extract and concentrate resources. More important for our argument here, they also fail to consider the various means by which value and economic potential can be generated. This failure to accurately describe wealth in rural communities, we argue, is underwritten by and actively reproduces a long-standing cultural valorization of production-based and waged labor in capitalist logics. We argue that by focusing on the erosion of particular forms of economic activity, concepts like depletion and distress neglect other forms of wealth and value that are already present and likely to become increasingly important in the future.

Our argument draws inspiration from James Ferguson's (2015) book *Give a Man a Fish*, in which he argues that it is increasingly important to reconsider the value of distributive processes, since "whole regions and populations

find that they have no 'advantage' of any kind and are (in some significant measure) simply left out of the global production regime" (90). Economists have long viewed distributive processes as ancillary to the "primary, structural, and material" world of production (Ferguson 2015, 23). But this perspective reflects and reinforces historical, enlightenment logics that do not make as much sense in contemporary contexts. Today, multiple crises of modernity (unemployment, climate change, growing inequality, and overproduction/consumption) are rapidly shifting the conditions of existence. Dominant capitalist logics emphasize the value of production and prioritize wage-based work, but Ferguson (2015, 101) illustrates that there are other means of generating economic value, including "distributive labor," which "seeks to secure a transfer of resources from those who have them to those who don't."

While Ferguson's book is specifically focused on high levels of unemployment in southern Africa and its implications for basic income programs, his argument that distributive labor is undervalued transfers well into many contexts, particularly as we rethink community prosperity and resilience through the lens of *wealth-in-people*. In an era of postindustrial transitions, capitalist flight, and increasing automation, production-based wage labor is increasingly odd, uncommon, or irrelevant not only in southern Africa but also in "main street" rural America. Indeed, with the decline of the U.S. Fordist model, manufacturing makes up the smallest share of the U.S. economy in the past seventy-two years, at just 11% of gross domestic product, and a great deal of that contraction has been in rural areas (Pickert 2019). It is in this context that distribution provides an increasingly "necessary and valuable social function" that should be "recognized, named, and valued as such" (Ferguson 2015, 101). This is not to say that productive and distributive labor are distinct or mutually exclusive. Indeed, distributive labor, we argue, is *productive* of all sorts of value, even when not associated with the production of new material goods.

While Ferguson's work has reenergized discussions about distribution, he builds on a deep history of engagement with the value of the distributive processes that undergird social and economic systems (Dumont 1977; Gudeman 1978; Sen 1982). In that tradition, and as a means to critically examine the rhetoric of rural "depletion," our work explores the various forms of value generated by distributive labor in rural Maine's secondhand markets.

Background and literature review: Meaning, motive, and value in reuse

Signs of reuse are hard to miss in Maine. We define reuse exchanges, for the purposes of this project, as the redistribution of previously owned material goods, *in their original form*, from one agent to another through a transfer of ownership (sale, swap, barter, gift) or temporary use agreement (borrow, rental, lease, share, loan).[1] We also include consideration of the work required to prepare goods for reuse, including cleaning, restoration, and repair. In summer, it is difficult to drive more than a few miles in Maine without spotting a sign for a flea market, an antiques store, a yard sale, a home-based repair business, or a community swap. Throughout the year, Facebook groups, Craigslist, and charity stores combine with more than six hundred flea markets, antiques stores, scrapyards, vintage shops, and consignment boutiques to support a strong network of secondhand exchange. Observers have long noted Maine's strong culture of reuse dating back to at least the nineteenth century (*New York Times* 1894). Maine historians have also verified dense concentrations of antiques markets (Tuck and Fales 2000) and a supporting sense of self-sufficiency, frugality, and thrift throughout the state (Judd and Beach 2003). Spatial analysis of county-by-county economic data on formal sector reuse establishments and employment across the United States confirms that, relative to other states, Maine has a consistently strong reuse economy, even in periods of economic expansion (Isenhour et al. 2017; Berry, Bonnet, and Isenhour 2019).

As we formulated our ideas for a research project centered on Maine's reuse economy—in discussions with colleagues, in informal conversations with friends, and in academic presentations—we discovered an assumption shared by virtually everyone with whom we spoke. Nearly all presumed that Maine's strong reuse markets are the product of the state's relatively weak economy. In the section to follow, we briefly review the existing literature on

reuse and secondhand economies as a means to complicate this assumption and to build our case for reorienting discussions about depletion and the production of value through the lens of distribution.

Anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists have long studied exchanges of previously owned goods, even if not always referred to as reuse or secondhand. Some of the most foundational writings on the topic clearly demonstrate the highly social and productive nature of previously owned goods, which are often more closely linked to the creation of social ties—advantage, alliance, or reciprocal support—than they are to financial gain or the object of exchange itself (e.g., Appadurai 1988; Malinowski 1922; Mauss 1925). Contemporary studies of secondhand exchange clearly echo these themes (e.g., Appelgren and Bohlin 2015; Halvorson 2012; Isenhour and Reno 2019) but are shaped by a much different context, one in which decades of mass production, floods of cheap imports, and the sheer abundance of surplus items have given rise to new epistemological markers. Though reuse was once the global norm, its redefinition in opposition to new product consumption in affluent contexts and in relation to more recent concerns about sustainability has encouraged a more recent field of study focused specifically on reuse markets (Saunders 2016).

Depressed levels of participation in the United States during the mid-twentieth-century expansion of mass production and consumption led many scholars and observers alike to associate reuse with economic necessity—as a realm for those unable to afford new goods. Secondhand consumption practice was stigmatized and tied to xenophobic and classist stereotypes (Hansen and Le Zotte 2019) that regarded the people who work with and reuse discards with the same disgust and disdain as waste and its contaminated, polluting properties (Gill 2006; Gregson et al. 2014; Reno 2016). It is true that we find ethnographic evidence of strong reuse practices in resource-strapped communities (Nguyen 2016; Trang 2015) and among stigmatized people, including garbage pickers (Medina 2007; Millar 2008) and sanitation workers (Nagle 2014). However, we argue, consistent with our interest in alternative economic logics, that the stigma of reuse goes beyond classism and can also be attributed to dominant economic logics that continue to valorize production as the primary genesis of value. Having emerged in the historical context of the industrial revolution, the contemporary emphasis on production as the primary source of economic value can still be observed in our industrial classification codes (Isenhour et al. 2017) and most referenced indicators of economic health, including gross domestic product, new housing starts, and the purchasing manager's index (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2013).

From this dominant perspective, the "up-stream" segments of the commodity chain are envisioned as the site of value creation. Gudeman (1978) ties these perspectives to the enduring legacy of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political economists who associated value with the labor embodied in goods. Gudeman (1978, 351) writes, "Adam Smith's perspective brought to the forefront relations between [people] and objects rather than between [people themselves]." In so doing, early political economists neglected the relational value produced through processes of distribution. When value creation is envisioned at a single point, when labor is embodied in a good or service during production, then it is easy to understand how discards become associated with entropy, deterioration, contamination, and depreciation, such that the "bottom end" of the commodity chain is relegated to the realm of waste (Crang et al. 2013; Gregson et al. 2010). In many social contexts, however, this linear system is subverted, resisted, or simply dismissed as nonsensical. Gregson and Crewe (2003, 202) write, "The proliferation of these worlds inserts meaning into disposal in a way that insists on the potential for objects' revaluation as they are in the throes of devaluation, and simultaneously questions the essentialist, linear descent to 'rubbish' that is one of the core planks of representations of the consumer society."

The existing research on secondhand or reuse economies clearly demonstrates that used goods take time, energy, and skill to find, acquire, fix, clean, market, and redistribute to those who need them. The stewardship required for repair and reuse certainly exceeds conventional use (Vaughan, Cook, and Trawick 2007). Even if we conceptualize value narrowly, through labor, then we must certainly recognize the value salvaged through the work of distributing used goods. In contrast to the deskilling associated with systematized machine production, the work required to

repair objects for reuse often involves a creativity and ingenuity that are highly generative and productive (Appelgren 2019; Jackson 2014).

Indeed, in many societies, past and present, resourcefulness and ingenuity are prized (Greenfield 2009; Reno 2016). But the question remains whether the ability to see value in the discarded is a function of economic marginality. Or, perhaps, the very fact that we assume as much is a marker of the dominance of economic logics that tie value creation to new product production while discounting the possibility that stewarding and redistributing existing goods can provide a means to both salvage existing and produce new value.

The recent focus on secondhand markets as a means to reduce resource use and create more circular economic systems has reshaped research engagements with reuse, drawing attention to alternative rationales among the economically affluent who are seen as *choosing* to engage in reuse activity out of environmental concern or as a means of creative identity performance (as opposed to those who participate out of necessity). Williams and Paddock (2003) urge researchers to abandon dualistic "either/or" debates about reuse as economic necessity or creative choice so that we might better understand participation through a "both/and" approach (see also Gregson and Crewe 2003).

Indeed, participation in alternative, secondhand markets has come to be understood variously as resistance to consumer culture, waste, and the destructive traits of modernity (Albinsson and Perera 2012; Crocker and Chiveralls 2018; Vaughan, Cook, and Trawick 2007); a strategy for "saving" (Herrmann 2019); a creative expression of care (Appelgren 2019); identity performance (Crewe and Gregson 1998); *and* economic necessity (Isenhour and Reno 2019; Nguyen 2016). These research engagements make it clear that reuse practices are shaped by a wide variety of motivators that are highly situational (Bowser et al. 2015) and depend on the product category and form of reuse (Gregson and Crewe 2003; Stokes et al. 2014).

Scholars of discard studies also remind us that there are multiple ways to understand value beyond the labor that goes into making or even distributing goods. Valuation is both a material and a cultural process. Halvorson (2015, 1) writes, "Value is not only an emergent or immediate property of discarded things but materializes in the way it can be created anew, stored, stretched, or slowed across diverse time scales, thereby advancing specific moral and political aims." Hansen's (2000) analysis of the international secondhand clothing trade and Crewe and Gregson's (1998, 46) work on exchange at car-boot sales also remind us that "value is never an inherent property of objects but is rather a judgement made about them … which draws on various evaluations."

Secondhand goods are fluid and ontologically unstable objects in motion (Bennett 2010; Bohlin 2019) that can be adapted to multiple contexts and valued differently in each. Ethnographic studies suggest that many of those who salvage discarded objects are engaging in a "deliberative project of value transformation" (Crocker and Chiveralls 2018, 5) not only as a means for income generation but, often more importantly, as a strategy to build alternative social and economic structures that contribute to individual and community well-being (Albinsson and Perera 2012).

In exemplary ethnographic detail, Kathleen Millar's (2018) work with garbage pickers on the outskirts of Rio counters the dominant assumption that those who reclaim the discarded are, like the objects they collect, wasted. While Millar does not dispute the limited options of the urban poor, she illustrates the highly social forms of living made possible by the flexibility of working in informal and unregulated economic spaces, free of many of the constraints of formal wage labor. Among the discarded, garbage pickers in Rio choose to use materials to help construct wealth through peopled social and economic networks and to create a "life worth living" that is more responsive to their needs (Millar 2018).

If, like Strathern (1988, 131), we understand people as dynamic constructions built through the accumulations of social relations of exchange, then much of the existing literature on reuse suggests that those who buy, sell, gift, and barter in secondhand markets can also be seen as laboring to create diverse forms of value through redistribution—value linked to the wealth associated with people and through means that express care for others,

build relationships, and foster sociality. Halvorson (2015), for example, explores the moral value of discards as they are used to foster bonds of Christian brethren among religious-based American NGOs donating surplus medical equipment and recipient Malagasy communities. While this international example involves complex dynamics of power, class, and race, Halvorson details how donors emphasize the value of the relations that are made through things as well as the potential for social ties into the future.

A great deal of the existing literature thus suggests that the distributive labor at play in secondhand economies is a "crucial social activity that is constitutive of the social and not only the economic order" (Ferguson 2015, 90–91). Secondhand distribution is perhaps primarily a process "tightly woven into other desires—for sociality, intimacy and relations of care" (Millar 2018, 90).

Given these understandings, illustrated through the existing literature, we set out to explore the various meanings, motivators, and values at play in Maine's rural reuse markets as a means to ask whether it makes sense to associate Maine's strong secondhand economy with rural depletion and a lack of alternatives, or if perhaps these analyses miss something important. If we take a look at reuse economies as a form of (re)distribution, how might that change our perspective on value and wealth?

"Still good life": Methods

This work is part of a larger interdisciplinary, five-year, mixed-methods research project designed to explore the environmental, economic, and social elements of reuse as well as the potential pitfalls of the commodification and formalization of discard markets in more circular economic systems. Here we focus on a segment of that project to speak specifically to the value generated through the (re)distribution of used objects in Maine's reuse economy. We draw on results generated by our team, including a statewide survey of households ($n = 612$), a statewide survey of reuse business owners and managers ($n = 75$), interviews with reuse participants and business owners ($n = 150$), and participant observations at Maine reuse establishments, including numerous shops, flea markets, and community exchanges; scheduled meetings of waste management professionals; and volunteer work at several thrift stores.

We draw together the data generated to critically examine productivist logics of depletion, precarity, and scarcity—and to instead explore how Maine's rural communities, like the used goods that circulate within them, hold and produce value and "good life." We take inspiration and our title from one research participant who commented, "I know there is *still good life* in these items, and they shouldn't just go to the landfill" (Reuse Household Survey, July 6, 2018).

Producing value through distributive labor: Research results

We have long understood that economic processes are not separate from the social realm but that the two are "refractions of the same thing" (Graeber 2001, 2). Value has multiple dimensions, from price, embodied energy, and social relations signified to use and emotional value. It is therefore not at all surprising that we found myriad examples of how the distributive work of finding, fixing, bartering, trading, and gifting and selling secondhand items helps to produce value in Maine's rural economies. In many cases, these diverse forms of value cannot be easily disentangled for the purposes of categorization. Economic value and social value may be one and the same. In other cases, value defies categorization. This "indeterminacy" is also important to explore, as it draws our attention to the silences generated by our own "value-making categories" (Alexander and Sanchez 2018, 1). While recognizing these complexities, we organize our findings according to three cases that illustrate how value can variously be produced through redistributive labor. And yet we resist labeling them to emphasize that these three "ideal-type" narratives overlap in multiple ways as we consider the financial, social, and environmental values generated by the redistribution. While markedly different, they share a common refrain, one that rests on the value of

human relations, care for others, and wealth defined as people—all enabled by secondhand distribution in Maine's "depleted" rural communities.

Reusing, rehoming, and reducing waste

Shannon[2] is married with two young children. She lives in a community that she describes as having "parts that are rural and parts that are really suburban, but … not urban," with a mix of working farms, trailer parks, and "well-to-do suburbs" (interview, January 28, 2019). Shannon and her husband go out of their way to buy and redistribute used goods because of concerns about resource use:

> We do try to buy used in order to, … just like the greater world of resources, it makes sense to buy used rather than to buy new. Unless, you know, there's safety concerns at hand. So yeah, we tend to buy used. We also bought most of our kids' car seats used as well, and that was mostly that we found through Craigslist. So I think just looking at resources, resources. And it's not so much financially constricting as wanting to reuse … and rehome things.

Shannon exhibits great attention to the materiality of her used goods and is focused on the quality and usefulness of objects rather than their exchange value. Her distributive labor is motivated by a desire to make use of items and to reduce waste. Shannon describes her experience purchasing a used car seat: "I was looking and the person said, 'Oh yeah, every piece of plastic that doesn't go to the landfill makes me so happy.' I said, 'Yeah! I agree with that, too!' … the overall resources, the environmental impact, and wise use of resources."

Survey results and other interviews suggest that Shannon is not alone in these sentiments. Research participants responding to the household survey agreed that factors motivating their decision to participate in reuse markets included protecting the environment (80%) and reducing waste (87%). Those who expanded on this in open-ended responses or interviews articulated clear connections between offering and obtaining used goods and generating environmental value. One male interview participant, for example, shared his environmental motivations for rescuing chairs from the side of the road:

> I love the idea of, well you know, there'll be a nice little chair out on the curb because like one of the rungs is out of its slot, or it needs something. And so, I will do that something. … That chair was headed for the landfill, right? And we don't need more stuff rotting away and contributing to greenhouse gases there. (Mario, August 19, 2019)

These statements often focus on the environmental harm of landfills and, less frequently, the natural resources used to produce new consumer goods. One respondent wrote about the landfilling of still usable goods as a "crime," a sentiment echoed by others who understood the effort to salvage discards through the lens of moral value. She stated, "[I] can't stomach knowing my junk is sitting in a landfill. … I hate polluting the Earth" (Reuse Household Survey, July 9, 2018).

Shannon invests significant time and energy in seeking out and redistributing used goods as a means to live consistently with her morals. She also acknowledges the importance of investing time in her distributive labor, to ensure she is able to salvage and reinvent the value she intends. She must evaluate the trustworthiness of her network to determine whether goods are safe and reliable. To do this, Shannon relies on knowledge that she has gained through repeated interactions within secondhand economies:

> It always feels like "oh, you live in the next town" or "oh, you work in that field" and once there's a connection made with the person then you kind of—assess, you know, is this item actually really safe or is this person trying to scam me? And I feel like I have a lot of those conversations and they're all pretty positive.

Figure 1 Reducing waste and recognizing environmental value in discarded hoods. Photograph by Cindy Isenhour and Brieanne Berry.

Shannon's distributive labor is not a "hustle" (Thieme 2018) to generate or save much-needed income, as might be expected if we view her within the context of "depleted" communities and a logic of scarcity. Instead, she frames her work as generative of environmental value through reduced consumption of natural resources and production of less waste (Figure 1).

Shannon's case thus also draws our attention to the value generated by distribution through a labor of care for both the objects and the environment. After she reinsulated her home, Shannon described trying to find a home for her used but still functional front door, stating, "First I listed it on Craigslist for a hundred bucks and I didn't get anything, and then I just relisted it again for free. So hopefully somebody will come and pick it up." She noted that if she didn't find any takers for her free door online, she'd set it on the curb "with a sign that says 'free' when it's going to be clear for a couple of days, so it doesn't get ruined." While she noted that her desire to reinsulate her home was driven by an environmental ethic, she linked her distributive labor to care for materials, the future environment, and for people in her community. While difficult to capture and quantify, this socially grounded environmental value is an important aspect of distributive secondhand economies that is lost when we assume reuse is driven primarily by economic necessity or when we associate value generation with wage-based employment or the production of new goods (Ferguson 2015).

Flexible labor and time for care

For Catelyn, a mother of two who raised her children as a single parent in rural Maine, the distributive labor of finding and selling secondhand goods is about much more than economic necessity. It is a means of maintaining a good life. Catelyn sought out used goods at local thrift stores and yard sales to resell online using platforms, including Facebook, eBay, Craigslist, and Poshmark, that allowed her to reach local and national markets. Although Catelyn spent significant amounts of time going to thrift stores, connecting with buyers, and identifying objects of value, she did so in an effort to create a life for herself that allowed her to spend time with her children. This distributive labor is both a means of getting by—of making ends meet—and a "way of living" that produces a "fuller life project" (Millar 2018, 92). Indeed, her preference for distributive labor in Maine's secondhand economies might be read as a rejection of the rhythms and nine-to-five requirements of full-time wage labor, whose schedule, location, and other demands would remove her from her children and the thrill of finding valuable goods in unexpected places. Catelyn said of her distributive labor, "it really allowed me to stay home with just a part-time, in-school job I worked and then I was able to just sell and be able to stay home with my kids. I was single at that time, a single mom, and so it made the most sense" (interview, January 22, 2019). Catelyn's labor cannot be reduced to a desperate scramble to sell items for much-needed cash in a "depleted" community, nor is she trapped in distributive labor. Instead, this

work is a means of living on her own terms. Other interview participants supported this idea, noting that they had turned down opportunities for wage labor in favor of the flexibility and independence of the redistributive labor of reuse. As one reuse business owner noted of her business, "I can come and go as I please. … You don't make as much. It's not a steady paycheck. You're working for yourself. So, it was a little different there, but it was worth it" (Anna, interview, June 20, 2019). Many research participants also mentioned the enjoyment associated with this type of work. Catelyn described the "thrill of the hunt," while open-ended questions about motivation revealed word frequency counts that suggested that "love" and "community" were mentioned much more frequently than financial factors.

These examples are not to suggest that secondhand economies do not have monetary value. While the financial value of all the goods redistributed is quite difficult to track given that so many exchanges take place outside of formal markets, what little existing research suggests is that the value of the sector is significantly underestimated (Isenhour et al. 2017). One study in Minnesota estimated that the tax revenue generated by the reuse sector was greater than the mining sector's contribution to state coffers (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency 2015). Perhaps even more important for thinking about economic value in "depleted" communities in the future, the study found that the majority of the associated jobs and income generated benefited *local* economies. Our survey of households in Maine asked respondents to estimate the amount of money they spend on used goods each year. If we extrapolate their reports to the larger population, the survey suggests that secondhand exchanges in Maine could account for at least US $530 million in economic activity each year, excluding spending on repair.

And while Catelyn may not contribute to a productive economy through wage labor, her distributive work is highly skilled and productive of both economic and social value. Her network of buyers ranges from the local to the national, and Catelyn invests time and energy in identifying items and determining the most profitable markets for the goods she finds. She described the complex system of valuation that she used to identify markets:

> Well, … a North Face jacket, it won't sell for a ton unless it's a premier North Face jacket on eBay—but I know that to people in Maine it's still, it's their kind of thing. They have a higher worth associated with it. So, it's easier for me to get—not a lot more, but more—but maybe the same amount without having to ship it or pay fees. So, a really nice L.L. Bean item, which doesn't really resell well, unfortunately, I can sell locally because Maine people like L.L. Bean stuff. … You know, something that's just really useful to the people of Maine, not something that somebody [from away] bought to go to a party that no one in Maine really wears.

Relying on her own experiences distributing used goods, as well as the advice she obtained from a digital network of seasoned resellers, much of Catelyn's work revolved around carefully curating her selections and finding deals. While she relied on networks to help her market used goods, she also frequented local thrift stores that she knew undervalue used items. Catelyn described the stores saying, "Two of them are church-based thrift stores. One's a community one. So just really localized. They don't advertise. You know, no one really knows what's there or they think it's junk." Catelyn's skill lay in her ability to locate goods that were undervalued and redistribute them to those who understood their value and would purchase them, either in the local community or across the nation, and yet Catelyn was all too aware that many people in Maine lacked access to needed items. Indeed, she saw her distributive labor as something that helped her community. She helped to facilitate sales in many small and local reuse shops by essentially purchasing the items and finding an appropriate buyer, who also got a good deal. It was not always easy, and it took a lot of time and skill, but in the process, she generated monetary value for the thrift shop as well as her family and enabled the flexibility of good life and time well spent with her children.

Catelyn's is not a "wasted life" (Bauman 2004) that has been cast aside by a global capitalist system, nor is she selflessly sharing goods to improve her community and rebuild eroded social capital (Botsman and Rogers 2010; Putnam 2000). Just as the garbage pickers featured in Kathleen Millar's (2018) book *Reclaiming the Discarded* draw heavily on social networks to exhume the value of discarded recyclables, Catelyn's distributive labor relies on social

networks to maintain a good life for herself and her family. She prioritizes a wealth-in-people, rich with social relationships.

Catelyn's distributive labor consists of finding, giving, and selling used goods—practices that cross lines of gift, exchange, and sale. Yet, as Ferguson (2015, 128) notes, "participation in a cash economy and participation in social relations of care, dependence, and obligation are in practice not contradictory 'logics' but mutually enabling practices." Selling items for profit, then, does not reduce the social value of exchange but instead enables the generation of social value. Indeed, Catelyn saw her work as the "Maine way," where

> people needing something but living rurally … have to find it. You call your neighbors or ask your neighbor if they have it before you would go and buy it. Or they give it to you or it's on the side of the road. Just everybody's—like that's the first thing they would do is look for it in their community, I think.

Having weathered any number of economic booms and busts, distributive secondhand economies in Maine are not just a form of emergency relief for recently impacted communities but a long-term way of maintaining good life for people and objects.

An asset to the community

Social and monetary value are often intertwined in participants' descriptions of the value generated through the exchange of used goods. Respondents noted that they offer used items to others because they are "too good to throw away … can sell cheap or give to someone who needs it" (Reuse Household Survey, June, 26, 2018), while others hoped to help charities realize financial gain by donating used goods that could be sold to people in need. For many participants, these social benefits were the primary motivator for redistributing used goods.

Beth, a mother of three who lives in rural Maine, discussed her participation in terms of its social outcomes. Beth selectively redistributed used goods, mostly by donating items to charities or by giving them to friends. She framed her distributive labor as helpful to others. She gave some of her daughter's clothing to friends who could use it, stating, "I mean when you have four children under the age of ten then you definitely are spending serious money on clothes. So just trying to help somebody out" (interview, January 22, 2019). She also received significant satisfaction from giving away these items:

> I used to do it because she was my youngest and I hated the thought of her moving on from all of these clothes. So, giving it to somebody that I knew and that I was going to see the kids wearing, it was definitely, I mean—I would have given it to her anyway, but that definitely was a nice bonus. To see pictures and see one of her girls wearing one of the dresses or something like that was cool.

For Beth, the items were meaningful—full of good life that connected to memories of her child—and the act of giving them to others and seeing them used gave her comfort while also helping another family (Figure 2).

Beth volunteered with her daughter at a local clothing supply closet, where community members could drop off used items for others to take at no cost. She helped with the tremendous job of sorting donations and helping to remerchandise them in ways that began their transformation from discard to desirable item. She saw this facility as an important asset in the community and described it as a way to "help people in need." Beth was not alone in her desire to contribute to the redistribution of existing goods as a means to help those who need them. Other interview participants made their houses and garages into storage spaces for used goods in order to serve as a resource to others. When asked what his saved stuff does for the people who receive it, one interview participant turned the question around with some emotion: "what does a coat mean to a mother when she has to have her child walk to school and all they have is a T-shirt? What does somebody caring mean to somebody that's never had anybody care

Figure 2 Making goods available to others. Photograph by Cindy Isenhour and Brieanne Berry.

for them?" (Lucas, interview, September 24, 2019). Another interview participant situated her work saving stuff as a way of showing care and building community when she noted that "my ability or willingness to hoard these items for other people helps to make them feel more connected because they can put out a call for help or call me for help and it can be answered" (Jane, interview, September 19, 2019). Many research participants spoke of the networks of people and the wealth of relationships that are formed through the exchange of secondhand goods. At the Buxton transfer station, where residents can leave still usable items for others to take home, the staff keeps a white board with the names and telephone numbers of people who are looking for specific items. Prompted by the board, the station manager told our research team story after story about the community members they call when particular goods come in. Several of the names on the board belonged to people who restore and repair items like old gaming systems or remote-controlled toys. One man fixes toys and donates them to organizations that serve children with disabilities.

These stories of care and social network support are well supported by our household survey, where more than 80% of respondents agreed that a desire to "help people in need" plays a part in their decisions to buy and sell used goods, and in an open-ended question about their reasons for donating or selling used goods, over 40% of those who responded mentioned something about wanting to help other people.[3] Some of those comments were explicitly linked to a lack of available wage labor. As one respondent wrote, "mills went down, we don't have a lot with good paying jobs, so everything to help someone" (Reuse Household Survey, June 28 2018). Business owners also connected their labor to helping people, with one thrift store owner writing that "I just wanted to help people.

Thrift stores are helpful" (Reuse Business Survey, March 9, 2016). Maine's secondhand economy links people with objects in ways that generate wealth-in-people and multiple forms of community support.

The distributive labor at work in Maine's secondhand economy has important social impacts for local communities, and yet the value of this labor is obscured when we focus on the absence of industry or the depletion of the manufacturing sector jobs. By paying attention to the often-overlooked distributive labor involved in secondhand economies, we can see how they provide not only a means for economic resilience but also a pathway for people to participate in the social lives of their communities through redistributive exchange. The social value of this labor remains poorly understood, and yet it is clearly significant for those who participate in Maine's rural reuse markets.

Whose good life? Boundaries and barriers to consider

These case studies hint at some of the diverse forms of value generated through the distributive labor of secondhand economies. Each of the individuals featured here lives in what might be characterized as a "depleted" rural community. Yet our work suggests that vibrant networks of distribution in these communities are generative of overlapping forms of environmental, economic, and social value. Neglecting the value produced through distribution not only shortchanges these communities but, and perhaps more importantly, also suggests development solutions for postindustrial communities that are reliant on a return to productive labor rather than supporting the "forms of cooperation, mutual aid, solidarity, and care that are already in play" (Ferguson 2015, 140).

While we argue for the importance of studying and recognizing the value of distributive networks like Maine's secondhand economies, we also acknowledge that reuse is not a panacea and that any effort to support or incentivize reuse should be carefully designed to consider potential barriers and risks. Our research to date has shown that distributive labor may be patchy and temporally bounded in specific segments of people's lives, becoming most active when people have children, retire, or move.

We also recognize moral tensions in our research, including the potential for reuse to reinforce moralistic narratives related to who is deserving of help, such as when some of our survey respondents and interviewees noted their willingness to help those who are "truly in need," often elaborated as a very specific segment of the population, including fire victims, the extreme poor, and women who have recently been divorced. While many people seek to help others through their distributive labor, questions remain about who receives that assistance, if there are people gaming the system, and in what ways. Furthermore, in the context of overconsumption and growing waste streams, it is possible that generosity in reuse markets can serve as a consciousness soother for those who seek a moral identity while simultaneously making space for new product consumption.

While we see strong evidence that participation in reuse is not just limited to those with no economic alternatives—as narratives of depletion would suggest—we do recognize some class-based patterns in our data. Wealthy summer residents are more likely to participate in high-end antiques markets. Conversely, cash-strapped families are more likely to look for deals in thrift stores and on the Facebook marketplace. We recognize that these various forms of reuse are uneven in their appeal across categories of class and that some forms of reuse have more potential to generate social value and relations of mutual support than others. Indeed, as interest in reuse grows with concerns about sustainability, it will be essential that researchers start to differentiate between forms of reuse with strong social benefits and those that might emphasize the economic or ecological values generated by these practices without attention to the social impacts. A significant body of research has already documented too many sustainability initiatives, based narrowly on the assumptions of the environmentally progressive or economic elite, that have contributed to exclusion and the reproduction of social inequalities (Isenhour, McDonogh, and Checker 2015).

Existing research also cautions us to recognize that there are "multiple regimes of value" that can operate simultaneously and that exchanges can take place in the context of "asymmetrical value conversions" (Guyer 1993), which are not as firmly rooted in commensurability or equivalence as economists might lead us to believe (Halvorson 2015). In this context, it may certainly be the case that reuse exchanges, as with any exchange, can result in immoral profiteering or confer significant advantage to one participant.

Next, although distributive labor in secondhand economies can generate monetary value that is important to individuals and communities, this work is often inconsistent and precarious. Those who invest significant time and work in secondhand markets don't have benefits or steady wages or any guarantee of adequate supply or demand. Their labor is often uncompensated, despite its value in a system that relies on this work to serve a variety of functions ranging from waste reduction to emergency provisioning in the wake of crises. This highly gendered work, very often performed by women within the household or by the "thrift store ladies" who volunteer to sort donations, echoes feminist literatures that outline how unpaid care work reproduces the labor force necessary to maintain capitalist relations (Duffy 2007; Moore 1988).

Finally, we also note that while we argue for increased attention to the value that is produced through localized networks of secondhand distribution, we by no means suggest that Maine's rural communities do not need additional resources or that patterns of uneven accumulation are justified. Rather, we argue that we should begin to seriously consider the localized, social, monetary, and environmental values associated with secondhand distribution. Doing so might help us to anticipate and prevent some of the inequalities and forms of exclusion that have already been observed as the push toward more "circular economies" has encouraged the formalization of reuse practices and the commodification and gentrification of discard markets (Gidwani and Reddy 2011; Moore 2009).

Conclusion: Postindustrial futures and secondhand economies

What is missing in Maine's rural communities is not necessarily economic activity but forms of economic activity that have long been prized and prioritized (e.g., wage-based labor, industrial manufacturing, extractive industry) by the capitalist system and economists trained to focus on these means to promote economic growth. While the return of extractive industries and manufacturing would certainly be welcomed by some people in rural communities, it is by no means universally desired. Indeed, where some communities have experienced a decades-long process of industrial decline and resurgence, there is acknowledgment of the need for an alternative economic future—one in which externally owned *productive* industry is not the sole, or even primary, source of value generation. One interview participant and former rural mill worker commented that "some people have really tried to hold out and struggle and wait until the mill reopens. It's like, you know, you need to move on" (Karen, interview, June 23, 2019). While the loss of one form of productive work has indeed devastated many communities, it is evident that there is still good life in these places that have been "left behind" by uneven development and global capitalist systems. This good life is energized by the distributive labor in secondhand economies, within which people swap, sell, barter, trade, fix, and gift used goods in an effort to maintain a way of living in the absence of production-based labor. How do we imagine futures for rural places that have lost their productive economic centers and that seem unlikely to attract and retain future industrial development in the foreseeable future? These "places that don't matter" (Rodríguez-Pose 2018) and "economies of abandonment" (Povinelli 2011) present challenges to policymakers and scholars alike, who wonder how to build a positive future in the face of persistent economic decline. Yet we have argued here that ideas of "depletion" and decline are too narrowly focused on the productive economy, which makes it "difficult … to see those outside of productive labor as anything other than a proletariat-in-waiting … or else a kind of social refuse, of neither economic nor political value" (Ferguson 2015, 92). Many participants in Maine's secondhand distributive economy are not waiting for productive wage labor and instead are generating all sorts of value for themselves and their communities, yet their labor—and the generated value—is ignored. As we seek solutions to

the real economic challenges facing many rural communities across the United States, we suggest that attention to distributive economies—like Maine's reuse economies—can illuminate potential pathways for postindustrial and postextractive futures.

Distributive secondhand economies are also likely to become increasingly important as we consider the value embedded within material goods. Our participant's comment that there is "still good life" left in the objects turns our attention not only to the rural communities where these goods circulate but also toward the materials themselves. With the coming "end of cheap nature" (Moore 2014), the act of redistribution may become ever more critical as an effort to conserve the still-valuable resources and energy embodied in material goods. Recognizing both the value of distributive labor and that of secondhand materials, our research highlights the need to preserve the "still good life" in places and in things.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the National Science Foundation Cultural Anthropology Program (Grant 1756933). We wish to thank Dr. Andrew Crawley for his partnership on this project as well as members of the reuse community in Maine for sharing their insights and expertise. Our gratitude also extends to Sharon Bray, who permitted us to reproduce her poem in this article. Finally, we would like to thank Brandon D. Lundy, Sibel Kusimba, and several anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

Notes

1 Please note that in this project, we do not consider the repurposing of existing objects for new uses (old tires as flower planters) or by the same owner (multiple uses of a disposable plastic cup). We also differentiate reuse (goods used for their original purpose through an extension of product lifetime) and recycling (the process of breaking products into component parts to feed back into production processes, with additional inputs of resources and energy).

2 All participants have been assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

3 Please note that both the income and education levels of our sample were higher than state averages, which may skew these data if higher-income people seek to display their morality through donations. However, interviews with businesses and individuals across a range of socioeconomic positions suggest that an interest in helping others is fairly consistent, regardless of income.

References

Acheson, James M., and Ann W. Acheson. 2016. "Offshore Wind Power Development in Maine: A Rational Choice Perspective." *Economic Anthropology* 3(1): 161–73.

Albinsson, Pia A., and B. Yasanthi Perera. 2012. "Alternative Marketplaces in the 21st Century: Building Community through Sharing Events: Alternative Marketplaces in the 21st Century." *Journal of Consumer Behavior* 11(4): 303–15.

Alexander, Catherine, and Andrew Sanchez, eds. 2018. *Indeterminacy: Waste, Value, and the Imagination*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1988. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Appelgren, Staffan. 2019. "Building Castles out of Debris: Reuse Interior Design as a Design of the Concrete." *Worldwide Waste: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2(1): Article 2.

Appelgren, Staffan, and Anna Bohlin. 2015. "Growing in Motion: The Circulation of Used Things on Second-hand Markets." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 7(1): 143–68.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2004. *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Berry, Brieanne, Jennifer Bonnet, and Cindy Isenhour. 2019. "Rummaging through the Attic of New England." *Worldwide Waste: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2(1): Article 6.

Bohlin, Anna. 2019. " 'It Will Keep Circulating': Loving and Letting Go of Things in Swedish Second-hand Markets." *Worldwide Waste: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2(1): Article 3.

Botsman, Rachel, and Roo Rogers. 2010. *What's Mine Is Yours*. New York: Harper Business.

Bourgois, Philippe. 2003. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bowser, Anne, Oliver Haimson, Edward Melcer, and Elizabeth Churchill. 2015. "On Vintage Values: The Experience of Secondhand Fashion Reacquisition." Paper presented at the 33rd annual ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Seoul, South Korea.

Bray, Sharon. 2017. "Shutting Down Paper Machines." In *Still Mill,* edited by Patricia Smith Ranzoni, 242. Unity, ME: North Country Press.

Collins, Susan. 2016. “Commerce Department to Establish Economic Development Team to Strengthen Maine’s Forest Economy and Assist Rural Communities Impacted by Mill Closures.” https://www.collins.senate.gov/newsroom/commerce-department-establish-economic-development-team-strengthen-maines-forest-economy.

Crang, Mike, Alex Hughes, Nicky Gregson, Lucy Norris, and Farid Ahamed. 2013. “Rethinking Governance and Value in Commodity Chains through Global Recycling Networks.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38(1): 12–24.

Crewe, Louise, and Nicky Gregson. 1998. “Tales of the Unexpected: Exploring Car Boot Sales as Marginal Spaces of Contemporary Consumption.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 23(1): 39–53.

Crocker, Robert, and Keri Chiveralls. 2018. *Subverting Consumerism: Reuse in an Accelerated World*. New York: Routledge.

Duffy, Mignon. 2007. “Doing the Dirty Work: Gender, Race, and Reproductive Labor in Historical Perspective.” *Gender and Society* 21(3): 313–36.

Dumont, Louis. 1977. *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

EIG. 2018. “Distressed Communities Index.” Economic Innovation Group. https://eig.org/dci.

Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 2015. *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Friedman, Jonathan. 2018. “A Note on Populism and Global Economic Crisis.” *Economic Anthropology* 5(1): 135–37.

Gidwani, Vinay, and Rajyashree N. N. Reddy. 2011. “The Afterlives of ‘Waste’: Notes from India for a Minor History of Capitalist Surplus.” *Antipode* 43(5): 1625–58.

Gill, Kaveri. 2006. *Of Poverty and Plastic: Scavenging and Scrap Trading Entrepreneurs in India’s Urban Informal Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gomberg-Muñoz, Ruth. 2018. “Populism Is Not the Problem, Capitalism Is.” *Economic Anthropology* 5(1): 141–43.

Graeber, David. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave.

Greenfield, Briann G. 2009. *Out of the Attic: Inventing Antiques in Twentieth Century New England*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press.

Gregson, Nicky, Mike Crang, Farid Ahamed, Nargis Akhtar, and Raihana Ferdous. 2010. “Following Things of Rubbish Value: End-of-Life Ships, ‘Chock-Chocky’ Furniture and the Bangladeshi Middle Class Consumer.” *Geoforum* 41(1): 846–54.

Gregson, Nicky, Mike Crang, Julie Botticello, Melania Calestani, and Anna Krzywoszynska. 2014. “Doing the ‘Dirty Work’ of the Green Economy: Resource Recovery and Migrant Labour in the EU.” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23(4): 541–55.

Gregson, Nicky, and Louise Crewe. 2003. *Second-Hand Cultures*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gudeman, Stephen. 1978. “Anthropological Economics: The Question of Distribution.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7: 347–77.

Guyer, Jane I. 1993. “Wealth in People and Self-Realization in Equatorial Africa.” *Man* 28(2): 243–65.

Halvorson, Britt. 2012. “ ‘No Junk for Jesus’: Redemptive Economies and Value Conversions in Lutheran Medical Aid.” In *Economies of Recycling: The Global Transformation of Materials, Values and Social Relations*, edited by Catherine Alexander and Josh Reno, 207–33. London: Zed Books.

———. 2015. “The Value of Time and the Temporality of Value in Socialities of Waste.” *Discard Studies*, September 21. https://discardstudies.com/2015/09/21/the-value-of-time-and-the-temporality-of-value-in-socialities-of-waste/.

Hansen, Karen Tranberg. 2000. *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hansen, Karen Tranberg, and Jennifer Le Zotte. 2019. “Changing Secondhand Economies.” *Business History* 16(1): 1–16.

Harvey, David. 2006. *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. New York: Verso.

Herrmann, Gretchen. 2019. “Reminiscence and Recompense: Reuse and the Garage Sale.” *Worldwide Waste: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2(1): Article 4.

Hitchner, Sara, John Schelhas, and Peter Brosius. 2017. “‘Even Our Dairy Queen Shut Down’: Risk and Resilience in Bioenergy Development in Forest Dependent Communities in the US South.” *Economic Anthropology* 4(2): 186–99.

Isenhour, Cindy, Andrew Crawley, Brieanne Berry and Jennifer Bonnet. 2017. “Maine’s Culture of Reuse and Its Potential to Advance Environmental and Economic Policy Objectives.” *Maine Policy Review* 26(1): 36–46.

Isenhour, Cindy, Gary McDonogh, and Melissa Checker, eds. 2015. *Sustainability in the Global City: Myth and Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Isenhour, Cindy, and Josh Reno. 2019. “On Materiality and Meaning: Ethnographic Engagements with Reuse, Repair and Care.” *Worldwide Waste: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 2(1): Article 1.

Jackson, Steven. 2014. “Rethinking Repair.” In *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality and Society*, edited by Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo Boczkowski, and Kirsten Foot, 221–40. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Johnstone, Harvey, and Doug Lionais. 2004. “Depleted Communities and Community Business Entrepreneurship: Revaluing Space through Place.” *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 16(3): 217–33.

Judd, Richard W., and Christopher Beach. 2003. *Natural States: The Environmental Imagination in Maine, Oregon, and the Nation.* Washington, DC: Resources for the Future.

Maine Center for Economic Policy. 2017a. “A New Great Depression in Rural Maine.” https://www.mecep.org/a-new-great-depression-in-rural-maine/.

———. 2017b. “State of Working Maine 2017.” https://www.mecep.org/sowm2017/#III.

Maine Department of Labor. 2016. “Industry Employment and Wages.” Center for Workforce Research and Information. https://www1.maine.gov/labor/cwri/qcew.html.

Malinowski, Bronisław. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge.

Mauss, Marcell. 1925. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies.* Paris: L’Année Sociologique.

Medina, Martin. 2007. *The World’s Scavengers: Salvaging for Sustainable Consumption and Production.* Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Meillassoux, Claude. 1981. *Maidens, Meal, and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Millar, Kathleen M. 2018. *Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rio's Garbage Dump*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. 2015. "Resource Management: Helping Providers and Consumers of Waste Management Services Improve Profitability and Conserve Resources." https://www.pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/resource-management.

Moore, Henrietta. 1988. *Feminism and Anthropology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Moore, Jason. 2014. "The End of Cheap Nature; or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying about 'the' Environment and Love the Crisis of Capitalism." In *Structures of the World: Political Economy and the Future of Global Conflict and Cooperation*, edited by Christian Suter and Christopher Chase-Dunn, 285–314. Berlin: LIT.

Moore, Sarah A. 2009. "The Excess of Modernity: Garbage Politics in Oaxaca, Mexico." *The Professional Geographer* 61(1): 426–37.

Nagle, Robin. 2014. *Picking Up: On the Streets and behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

New York Times. 1894. "Old Furniture: How Some of the Simple Folks of Maine Are Imposed Upon." July 23. https://www.nytimes.com/1894/07/23/archives/old-furniture-how-some-of-the-simple-folks-of-maine-are-imposed.html.

Nguyen, Minh. 2016. "Trading in Broken Things: Gendered Performances and Spatial Practices in a Northern Vietnamese Rural–Urban Waste Economy." *American Ethnologist* 43(1): 116–29.

Ong, Aihwa, and Carla Freeman. 2010. *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia*. 2nd ed. New York: State University of New York Press.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2013. *Indicators for Measuring and Maximizing Economic Value Added and Job Creation Arising from Private Sector Investment in Value Chains*. Brussels: OECD.

Pickert, Reade. 2019. "Manufacturing Is Now Smallest Share of U.S. Economy in 72 Years." *Bloomberg*, October 29. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-10-29/manufacturing-is-now-smallest-share-of-u-s-economy-in-72-years.

Porter, Eduardo. 2018. "The Hard Truths of Trying to 'Save' the Rural Economy." *New York Times*, December 8. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/12/14/opinion/rural-america-trump-decline.html.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 2011. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Reno, Joshua. 2016. *Waste Away: Working and Living with a North American Landfill*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Rodríguez-Pose, Andrés. 2018. "The Revenge of the Places That Don't Matter (and What to Do about It)." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy, and Society* 11(1): 189–209.

Saunders, Tara. 2016. "Basking in Secondhand Glory: Resale Consumerism in the Twentieth-Century United States." PhD diss., Indiana University.

Sen, Amartya. 1982. *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sherman, Howard J., and Paul D. Sherman. 2018. *Inequality, Boom, and Bust: From Billionaire Capitalism to Equality and Full Employment*. London: Routledge.

Sherman, Jennifer. 2009. *Those Who Work, Those Who Don't*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stack, Carol. 1975. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper.

State of Maine. 1910. *Annual Report of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics*. http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000065033.

Stokes, Kathleen, Emma Clarence, Lauren Anderson, and April Rinne. 2014. "Making Sense of the UK Collaborative Economy." NESTA and Collaborative Lab. https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/making_sense_of_the_uk_collaborative_economy_14.pdf.

Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thieme, Tatiana Adeline. 2018. "The Hustle Economy: Informality, Uncertainty and the Geographies of Getting By." *Progress in Human Geography* 42(4): 529–48.

Trang, Ta. 2015. "Trading on Obsolescence on the Streets of Hong Kong." *Discard Studies*. https://discardstudies.com/2015/09/23/trading-on-obsolescence-on-the-streets-of-hong-kong/.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tuck, Fred Bishop, and Dean A. Fales. 2000. *Antiqueman's Diary: The Memoirs of Fred Bishop Tuck*. Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House.

Vaughan, Paul, Matthew Cook, and Paul Trawick. 2007. "A Sociology of Reuse: Deconstructing the Milk Bottle." *Sociologia Ruralis* 47(1): 120–34.

Williams, Colin C., and Christopher Paddock. 2003. "The Meaning of Alternative Consumption Practices." *Cities,* 20(5): 311–19.

Wood, Monica. 2015. "We Made Paper Too." *Down East*. https://downeast.com/we-made-paper-too/.