The End(s) of the End of Poverty

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Cultural Anthropology in the Graduate School of Duke University

2014
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the emergence of Millennium Development and the promise to end poverty by 2015. After exploring the global scale phenomena, the project turns to the implementation of the “end of poverty” in the model Millennium Village of Sauri, Kenya.
Dedication

For Joseph Okang’a Njeri 1967-2012

“This is how I am affected by the death of the Other, this is my relation with his death. It is, in my relation, my deference toward someone who no longer responds, already a guilt of the survivor.”

Jacques Derrida quoting Emmanuel Levinas at his funeral.¹

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Introduction

While flipping absentmindedly through the June 2006 edition of *O, the Oprah Magazine* as I waited in a chilly dentist’s office, an ad captured my attention. Somewhere between an article on “how not to look fat in a bathing suit” and another “doctor prescribed sex toys,” I turned to a full page that was almost entirely blank. In a magazine overflowing with images and text, a white page catches the eye. Five words sat innocently in the center of the page: “Poverty? Never heard of it.” In much smaller lettering, a sentence at the bottom of the page read: “Ensure that ours is the last generation to know poverty.”

The page both intrigued and haunted me. The lack of any other content on the

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Figure 1: Advertisement for Millennium Promise, the NGO that manages the financial side of the Millennium Villages
page invited my imagination to fill the blank with my own dreams of a possible world without poverty and a potential collectivity of “our generation” that could achieve it. On the other hand, the innocent white backdrop effortlessly erased myriad histories of struggle and suffering tied to poverty throughout modern history.

The imagination of a world without poverty was, of course, nothing new. Since Thomas More penned his *Utopia* in 1516, the social dream of a world without poverty had animated countless schemes to imagine and/or create alternatives to the present order, including those that drove communist revolutions in the 20th century. What made the ad strange was its context in a popular magazine for women. The call, after all, was not going out to a proletariat or vanguard of radicals. It was aimed at the middle-American reader of the Oprah magazine who could “ensure that ours is the last generation to know poverty.” Were everyday consumers to become the leaders of a new vanguard?

A few pages later, I encountered the place where the Millennium Promise organization intended to end poverty first—the rural Kenyan village of Sauri, the first Millennium Village. The short column described the basic Millennium Village model and interventions. It read:

In Sauri Kenya, the first Millennium Village, Sachs and his team helped villagers build a medical clinic, extend free school lunches to all children, fight malaria, improve farming and operate new cooking stoves and computers. Bed nets significantly reduced
the number of new malaria cases and a pickup truck served as both ambulance and conveyance for goods to be sold at market. "Sauri shows that the Millennium Development Goals are within reach even in places that seem utterly destitute and hopeless today," says Sachs.1 (Emphasis mine)

The utopian energy created by the ad condensed around this heroic figure of Sachs and the village of Sauri where it seemed utopia was being built. Anyone excited by the ad’s arousal of utopian longings quickly found those desires directed toward practical technological fixes and the Millennium Development Goals as the path to a world without poverty.

The possibility of a universal erasure of poverty diverged significantly from the classic American dream of self-made victory over individualized poverty—the rags-to-riches dream of entrepreneurial triumph which Oprah herself so effectively embodied for her readers and viewers. Oprah’s own mythic triumph over poverty, racial discrimination, sexual abuse, obesity and myriad other sufferings was, arguably, the millennial equivalent of the Horatio Alger story. In both cases the underlying message was: Poverty? I overcame it (and so can you). In contrast, to have never heard of poverty (rather than to have simply overcome it individually) conjures a completely different

1Rachel Bertsche, “To Halve the Have-Not,” O, the Oprah Magazine, June 2006, Vol. 7 Issue 6, 42.
world collectively and *totally* without poverty—a utopia. And, the Millennium Village would show us the way.

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No single rural community in Africa appeared more frequently in the global mediascape in the first decade of the 21st century than this small Kenyan village of just over 5,000 people. In 2005, Sauri rode into the spotlight of global optimism and publicity around the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a framework for an end to global poverty. Between 2005 and 2008, Sauri enjoyed global celebrity status as the flagship Millennium Village designed as “proof-of-concept” that the Millennium Development Goals could be met in just five years by following the prescriptions laid out by the well-known economist Jeffrey Sachs and his UN Millennium Project task forces. *The New York Times, The LA Times, The Financial Times, Vanity Fair, the Oprah Magazine, People Magazine, Time Magazine, Conde Nast Traveller, Harpers Magazine*, in addition to many other smaller publications like the *Standard* and *Daily Nation* of Kenya, carried celebratory articles about accomplishments and possibilities linked to Sauri. Sauri starred in an MTV special with Angelina Jolie in 2005 and appeared again on the channel as a feature during the Obama inauguration in January of 2008. In his 2007 book *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World*, Bill

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2 Claim based on search for “Africa” and “village” OR “rural” OR “community” OR “location” in all major global news sources through Lexis-Nexis data.
Clinton celebrated Sauri as an example of promising new forms of philanthropic aid through which “each of us” could become a world-changer. Likewise, the ethicist Peter Singer used the example of Sauri in the introduction of his book *The Life You Can Save* as his one of his earliest examples of the kind of project that enables “you” to “save lives” (and thereby live ethically) just by donating your pocket change to such worthy development projects.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had redefined the international development project in the wake of the Cold War. In September of 2000, leaders of all 189 UN member-states in the fall of 2000 signed the Millennium Declaration renewing previous commitments and establishing new ones for development. In the Declaration, world leaders pledged, most ambitiously, “to spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.” They also formally recognized the new political-economy of globalization as the “central challenge and opportunity” of the present. Noting that the asymmetrical distribution of power and wealth remained a formidable problem in the 21st century, the Declaration set a new agenda for development to be aimed at making “globalization fully inclusive and

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4 Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save*, (New York: Picador, 2009), 120.

5 United Nations Millennium Declaration, article 11, Available online at http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm [last accessed on April 12, 2014].
equitable”6 by making “the right to development a reality for everyone and free[ing] the entire human race from want.”7

That eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) subsequently translated that abstract aspiration into a set of concrete, time-bound and quantifiable goals that streamlined previous international development resolutions. The first seven goals were pragmatic enough—cut hunger in half; provide clean drinking water; achieve universal primary education; reduce maternal mortality; halt the spread of HIV as well as illnesses like malaria and tuberculosis; and, finally, combat environmental degradation. The eighth goal of creating “global partnerships for development” opened onto a new path toward achieving those basic interventions. Whereas Cold War modes of development had been led by states and multilateral institutions, the new “global partnerships” would include an array of disparate actors—from private donors to multinational corporations to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that proliferated wildly in the 1990s. Building on the eighth MDG, the 2002 Monterrey Consensus officially opened up development to private sector involvement turning development into a field of strange, new bedfellows or “global partnerships.” For example, UNESCO joined forces with McDonald’s and Disney to award Millennium Dreamer awards to encourage children to imagine MDG-based improvements for their communities. Bono’s One Campaign

6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
brought together celebrities and over sixty NGOs to “make poverty history” by raising one dollar per donor per day. Individual consumers could calculate their “impact in healing the world” by the number of (Product) RED American Express credit cards, iPods and Gap sweaters they acquired. And, in Kenya, a Norwegian fertilizer company called Yara partnered with Columbia University’s Earth Institute, the wealthy Lenfest Foundation and the UN special task force on the Millennium Development Goals to create the first model Millennium Village in Sauri in early 2005 as well as privately-funded Millennium Villages in Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Sauri first appeared as an exemplar of rural poverty in Jeffrey Sachs’ bestselling book The End of Poverty. Sachs had become famous for radical economic liberalization programs in countries like Bolivia, Poland and Russia, among others, in the 1990s. With The End of Poverty, he announced his apparent conversion to the cause of the “poorest of the poor” although the same neo-liberal assumptions would be central to his prescriptions for ending poverty, albeit on a different scale. After describing the overlapping challenges of extreme poverty, malnutrition and disease faced by the “hungry, thin, and ill” people in Sauri, Sachs laid out a “simple,” “quick and easy” strategy that he claimed could “save” Sauri and more than one billion “rural poor” with existing technologies and minimal cost. “All of these challenges can be met with known, 

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proven, reliable and appropriate technologies and interventions,” he wrote. “Sauri’s
villages and impoverished villages like them all over the world can be saved and set on
a path of development at a cost that is tiny for the world but too high for the villages
themselves.”

In collaboration with colleagues from the Earth Institute at Columbia University,
Jeffrey Sachs designed the Millennium Villages as “proof-of-concept” sites to
“demonstrate the feasibility of the MDG solution in real time in the most destitute and
hopeless places in the world.” With a budget capped at $110 per person per year to be
invested in what Sachs called “weapons of mass salvation” — mosquito nets, fertilizer,
hybrid seeds, cell phones, electricity, health facilities, etc. — the Millennium Villages were
to achieve the end poverty within five years.

The allure of cheap, simple salvation helped the Millennium Villages Project
attract donors of all sizes — from students on a shoestring who could contribute to the
purchase of an anti-malarial bed net to billionaires like George Soros who could pitch in
$50 million to the Government of Japan, corporations like Monsanto and Sony-Ericsson
and, eventually, the Islamic Development Bank. With that funding and the support of
Columbia University’s Earth Institute, the United Nations Development Program


10 Bertsche, “To Halve the Have-Not,” 42.
(UNDP) took on the role of administering ten additional Millennium Villages scattered around both East and West Africa, strategically located to represent every different agro-ecological zone where poverty existed.

*** ** ***

In June 2009, I found myself on the other side of the looking glass, and in what

turned out to be the upside-down rabbit hole world of the Millennium Villages project. I

had been living for six months in Sauri by then. I had come searching for the end of

poverty and had found a much more complicated, contradictory reality when I arrived.

My feet had memorized the red dirt footpaths that wound through homesteads and

maize fields. By June, those fields had turned brown with shriveled stalks. A massive
drought throughout East Africa had struck hard. And Sauri was no exception.

Many families had eaten through their existing stores of food. Hunger had

settled in. The headmistress at Bar Turo school invited me to witness the fate of the

Millennium Villages school feeding program in that context. The parents could not give

the required tins of beans and maize so the majority of her students had to be sent home

at lunch time. “They know they will find no food there, so they just play near the gates,”
she explained.

Against that backdrop of hunger and thirst, stunted crops and anxiety about the

paltry harvest, a very different Sauri appeared on the global horizon. A leading English-

language newspaper in the Middle East, The National, published a story on June 19, 2009
with detailed descriptions of a flourishing, verdant Sauri as “a thriving community in a sea of poverty.”\textsuperscript{11} The reporter narrates his arrival in the village as if landing in a pastoralist utopia:

Driving through the endless emerald-coloured hills of rural western Kenya, it is obvious where the village of Sauri begins. The bumpy, rutted, red-earth roads suddenly become smooth and graded. The maize stalks are a meter taller than those in the surrounding villages. The mud brick houses have glass in the windows. Power lines crisscross the countryside. The livestock is plump and healthy. The children look well-fed; happy.\textsuperscript{12}

Reading the article at home, just a short three-minute walk from the center of Sauri, I was flabbergasted. The descriptions in article bore little resemblance to the village that had held my attention over the past six months. According to the article’s author, Sauri had somehow transcended the drought and scarcity suffered by the rest of the nation and broader region when, in fact, the village looked a lot like other villages in the region. The maize was the same size and the suffering equaled other villages in Nyanza Province.

Poor rains and rising food prices have left millions of Kenyans hungry and reliant on food handouts. The United Nations is currently feeding more than 15 million people across east Africa. But not the people of Sauri. Year after year of bumper harvests have left this village with a food surplus. In fact, there is so much food that the villagers donate it to schools and sell it to other villages.\textsuperscript{13}

The claim of an over-abundance of food seemed rather cruel in light of the real struggle people were facing each day. When I asked the author, via e-mail, about the sources of


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
his description of Sauri, the Nairobi-based reporter explained that the Millennium Villages Project had provided the paper with a press release. He also claimed to have “driven through Sauri once” with Millennium staff. In other words, he accepted as sufficient, without question, the world presented to him by the developers in a short tour. That hit-and-run mode of journalistic knowledge production would create a spectral Sauri in the global media that had little to do with complex realities on the ground.

I carried the article with me that afternoon to our open bi-weekly discussion-reflection group of elders and community leaders. We were meeting that day in our usual spot, a circle in the grass near the main road and clinic. Hannington, a retired teacher, read passages aloud to the largely illiterate group of elders. When he read the quote about year after year of bumper harvests, the woman sitting next to me leaned over to whisper, “I only got three bags this year.”14 As Hannington looked up after he finished reading, a farmer across the circle began pointing angrily at the space around us: ‘Where is this Sauri?’ He asked. ‘Where is this thriving community?’ Several others shook their heads.

After some debate about harvest yields in previous years, the group members agreed that the average person continued to harvest three to five bags, which was less

14 Conversation with author, public meeting, June 19, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya. All subsequent quotes are from the same meeting.
than average harvest prior to the arrival of Millennium in 2005. “We had one bumper harvest in 2005 when they gave us free fertilizer. The harvest was good in 2006, but, since then, the numbers have gone down, down, down. But they keep saying the same thing while we get hungrier and cannot pay back the loans,” Mama Monica Oketch said. Angeline Owegi, a small plump widow with a pile of palm fronds on her lap for basket weaving, nodded. “The Millennium people just keep using the same numbers from 2005 year after year, no matter what kind of harvest we have.”

One man suggested the group should send a correction to *The National*. The proposition fizzled after someone pointed out that they would have little credibility because they had no way to gather official data and statistics to counter the numbers in the newspaper. Group members reminded the speaker that recently, a delegation of farmers had requested agricultural statistics from local government officials and had been refused with the explanation that the Millennium Villages Project had instructed them not to give out any information. “So, it is impossible,” Angeline, the basket-weaver, said in a matter-of-fact tone. “No one will believe us over the Doctor [referring to Dr. Mutuo, local director of the Millennium Village Project in Sauri].” Another elder added in a voice so soft that we needed to lean in to hear him: “The Sauri you always read about is a garden of Eden. In the Internet somewhere, it says that 200 million dollars per year have been invested in this exact place.” He stamped his food on the ground to emphasize. “Do you see anything that would show it?” He answered his own
question by laughing. “Climb the tallest tree in Sauri and look down. You will see no
difference that they have made except the clinic,” said Martin Onanda, another village
elder.

As he finished his sentence, heads began turning in the direction of a distant
engine sound. Few vehicles ever moved through the village, so the sound often piqued
curiosity and offered potential gossip: A relative living in Nairobi may be returning, one
of the few wealthy residents with a vehicle may be headed to Kisumu, a taxi might have
picked up a woman in labor, a Millennium Village truck might be delivering free
buckets or carrying a team of researchers. In this case, we soon saw a large white matatu
van, the same used for safari in the Maasai Mara. It drove slowly along beside us.
Shadows with cameras and vague features watched us through tinted windows. The
van paused momentarily, then moved on. Leonida, a tall, thin woman with an easy
smile, shook her head and looked in my direction. “Iwinjo? [Dholuo; You understand?]
That’s how they come and go. Never talking with us. We remain crying with nothing,
but you wazungu [non-Africans] go back and say everything is very good in Sauri. Why
is that?”

I take Leonida’s question as a guiding and evidently anthropological query.

From her perspective, the foreigners who tour Sauri present a cultural enigma. What
desires, aspirations, or cultural habits brought the tourists to Sauri? What did they want
to see? Why did the reporters insist on representing an overly idealized version of their
village? Leonida wanted to know what moved these spectatorial Others to see without seeing. In what life world or system of meanings and values would such behavior make sense?

To respond adequately, we would need to explore the complex topography of Millennium Development in which Sauri and the Millennium Villages served as utopian nodes of global aspiration. We would need to understand the meaning of “the end of poverty” that Sauri was supposed to actualize and why people like those tourists and myself would be drawn such distances to witness it. We would need to study the doubling of Sauri into two interconnected but remarkably different realities that exist in and for very different sociocultural constellations. On the one hand, there is the virtual Sauri that circulates in the global mediascape and global flows of desire, knowledge and power. On the other hand, there is the actual Sauri in which ending poverty has become an everyday practice of meetings, trainings and queues. To simply attribute the discrepancies between media representation and lived experiences to poor or deceptive representation of some authentic “reality” of Sauri would ignore how the virtual Sauri became very real in the circuits of global consumer desires and in development policies and practices organized by those representations. It would also underplay the material effects of the dream of Sauri as a utopian exemplar of development in the everyday lives of Sauri community members. The two Sauris are not equally valid and “real.” Such a claim would make invisible the fact that actual lives and struggles are negated,
distorted, flattened and instrumentalized in the representation of the community. We need an account of Sauri and the broader phenomenon of Millennium Development from a multiplicity of angles. This dissertation attempts just such a project.

*** *** ***

A useful comparison that might help us identify those different angles would be the case of the Potemkin Villages as a historical example of a similar spectacle of model villages. In common parlance, the label “Potemkin Village” has been reduced to an insult that carries with it an accusation of fakery. The term “Potemkin Village” has come to signify elaborate, hollow performances of an ideal society that is meant to mask harsh realities and distract outsiders from actual material conditions. And, yet, the Potemkin Villages, viewed in their historical complexity beyond the cliché, actually provide a kind of historical precedent for a unique genre of sociocultural theater.

Despite the common assumption that the term “Potemkin Village” refers to artificial communities constructed by the Soviets as propaganda for the wonders of state socialism during the Cold War, the term actually dates back much further. In January of 1787, on the cusp of modernity, the Russian Empress Catherine the Great undertook an imperial river tour of the recently annexed regions of Crimea and Ukraine, accompanied by an entourage of foreign ambassadors, princes and nobles. The region had been

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economically devastated by war and popular rebellion, but was also rumored to have been rapidly transformed from relative poverty into a flourishing industrial and commercial center by Grigory Potemkin, governor-general of the southern provinces who also happened to be a close friend to Catherine. Potemkin organized the tour to exhibit those accomplishments of development and pacification of the region, which included the introduction of large-scale manufacturing and agricultural initiatives in newly founded towns like the naval port of Sevastopol.

While the endeavors were actually in process, they were far from complete. Potemkin wanted to present the region to the sovereign as having fully realized the promise of modernization as a testament to the good investments the Empress had made in the region. According to a bitter rival-turned-biographer in 1791, Potemkin constructed elaborate facades of entire villages along the three hundred mile shoreline of the Dnieper River to produce “an appearance of bustle and prosperity with which [Catherine] was delighted, but which often kept her ignorant as to the real state of things.” He filled the empty streets and shops by importing peasants from other provinces to “give animation to the landscape.” They would all move at night to the

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17 Ibid., 380.

next place the Empress would pass, keeping fires burning as a sign of economic
prosperity. The maligned biographer coined the term Potemkinsche Dörfer\textsuperscript{19} or Potemkin Village to describe what he characterized as “an artificial spectacle, the most extraordinary and the most original that was ever conceived.”\textsuperscript{20}

The Prince of Ligne, who accompanied the Empress on the southern river tour, investigated the villages on his own. He wrote of discovering “superb establishments in their infancies,” which suggests another way of interpreting the performance. Ligne wrote:

The Empress, who cannot run on foot as we do, is made to believe that the towns for the building of which she had assigned the necessary money, are finished while they are often towns without streets, streets without houses and houses without roofs, doors or windows.\textsuperscript{21} Ligne’s account suggests a more complicated interpretation of the Potemkin Villages.

Instead of mere deception, the spectacle of prosperous villages gave concrete form to a desired future of modernization, which was still only a partly-emergent, in its “infancy.” Potemkin might be reinterpreted as representing the future horizon of a process still unfolding in the present. In that sense, Potemkin’s performance might be read as divulging a different kind of “truth.” He portrayed the future destination of his development of Crimea, the values that shaped his investment decisions and priorities.

\textsuperscript{19} Von Helbig coined this term in 1791, see Montefiore, \textit{Prince of Princes} for a summary.

\textsuperscript{20} Von Helbig, \textit{Memoirs of Prince Potemkin}.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., chapter 9.
The spectacle gives rise to emergent tendencies (houses without roofs, streets without houses) and mobilizing desires in the milieu while affirming the power of the sovereign’s influence and investment. Onto the facade, Potemkin projected the culmination of a process of social and economic transformation that was underway while under threat from the eruptions of peasant rebellions both in Crimea and across Catherine’s Russia. In other words, the Potemkin Villages offered a kind of utopian mirror to the boatload of powerful elite—reflecting their desires for the new modern Russia while obfuscating more complex processes and truths that did not match them.

By paying attention to the various dimensions and dynamics unfolding around the Dnieper trip, an 18th century ethnographer might have learned quite a bit about the configuration of power relations and dominant values in imperial Russia as it was beginning the transition to modern industrialization.

The Potemkin Villages can serve as a particularly useful hermeneutic figure for reading the different dimensions and layers of the contemporary Millennium Villages. They suggest that we approach the Millennium Villages generously as a performance of an envisioned future, of a social dream. In doing so, we can discover how they bring to life certain desires, assumptions, beliefs and values of the dominant global culture. We can also gauge the friction between those aspirations and the actuality of existing forms of life in the community where poverty is to end. At the same time, the Potemkin Villages tale underscores the importance of moving around and between multiple
dimensions and contradictory perspectives that constitute such peculiar sites. Our theoretical 18th century ethnographer would need to view the scene from the boat as well as from the vantage point gained by “running on foot.” Both “truths” would need to co-exist. The wish-fulfilling projection of the elite would indicate the truth of the future horizon shaping the present while the unfinished towns would indicate the distance and obstacles between present reality and desired future.

Reading the Millennium Villages through the lens of the Potemkin Villages suggests the need to take seriously three distinct and interrelated realities that constitute them: 1) the performance itself, its content and its aims, 2) the intermediate dimension of the architects or brokers who configure and create the performance and, finally, 3) the unfinished world behind the facade that is being actively transformed, which is to say the actuality of life behind the facade.

At the level of performance, the model villages serve as utopian mirrors that reflect the social fantasies of the powerful. The appearance of commercial bustle and modern prosperity, for example, fulfilled the Empress’s fantasy of her modernizing realm while affirming her power as sovereign. The spectacle of the model Millennium Villages, in contrast, is aimed at a diffuse global public rather than at a particular sovereign. It is the power of economic globalization itself as a “positive force,” to quote the Millennium Declaration, that is affirmed as capable of ending poverty in Sauri and the Millennium Villages. There is no sovereign or lone state bureaucrat in the boat of
power today. There are many global actors in the boat. The performance is aimed at a diffuse audience that comes to life in its mirrored reflection as a global “we” that includes elite policymakers, celebrities, MTV viewers and rich donors alike.

The structure of the dissertation follows the organization of the Potemkin Villages. Chapters One and Two deal with the dimension of the global performance of the end of poverty. Chapter One lays out the basic coordinates of Millennium Development, which provides the backdrop for the performance of the Millennium Villages and the broader end of poverty drama. In this chapter, I discuss Millennium Development as a set of discourses and practices that emerged as a new regime of global development after a decade of geopolitical reconfiguration in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War. Millennium Development was articulated around an explicitly shared global horizon of possibility with “economic globalization as the foremost challenge and opportunity of the present moment.” The objective of this chapter is to explore how the Millennium Development program altered and re-packaged development in order to reflect the new geopolitical landscape of the first decade of the 21st century. In Chapter Two, I introduce the Millennium Villages into the broader story of development. I look at the popular discourses surrounding the Millennium Villages and the end of poverty promise as they circulate in the global mediascape. I analyze the emergence of a global “we” that can end poverty in the public imagination. It is not an

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22 United Nations, Millennium Declaration.

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empress, state, institution or transnational organization whose investment and faith in
the movement of development must be secured. Instead, the performance of the end of
poverty targets the average global middle-class consumer who reads *Vanity Fair* or
watches MTV. That individual finds herself called forth by the spectacle to be part of an
ethical collective global “we” that can save the world from poverty, a utopian
“generation” invested with the power to become “the last to know poverty.” Chapter
Two deals directly with the utopian mirror of the Millennium Villages as it reflects and
helps produce a global subject who actively participates and perpetuates dominant
flows of knowledge, capital and desire.

Chapter Three moves back and forth between intention of the Millennium
Villages Project and the experiences of community members. Between the idealized
performance and the unfinished processes of ongoing construction, there is a middle
realm of those who move back and forth freely between the performance and the side of
actual enactment. This would be the dimension of Potemkin, and others working with
him, who move between layers of desire, truth and experience in the process of
producing the spectacle. In the contemporary context, the role of Potemkin is taken on
by Jeffrey Sachs and the other elite “development brokers” who move, produce, and
promote the Millennium Villages as global models of the end of poverty while authoring
the policies and the implementation of interventions in actual communities designated
as Millennium Villages. Because the Millennium Villages staff refused to participate in
this study, I draw from their written discourses—books, policy manuals, letter, articles and presentations to piece together the driving concepts and objectives. Through these discourses, we get a sense of the design of the Millennium Villages as “proof-of-concept” sites. At the same time, we enter the community and get a sense of how the interventions jump off the page into actual lives.

Finally, we confront the material and human processes that exceed what is offered to the gaze of the powerful, the partly finished towns behind the facades and the active construction going on within them. At the level of “running on foot,” we can explore how the realities behind the facade relate to or threaten the end of poverty dream. We can detect how the actual community is transformed in relationship to the projected future as well as how they resist. What areas have to be worked on? What living processes have to be changed? In the present context, this layer pertains to everyday life in the model Millennium Village of Sauri as it is in the process of “being transformed” to fulfill the promise of the end of poverty.

Chapters Four and Five deal with the dimension of the world-under-construction as the Sauri community undergoes the process of ending poverty. Chapter Four explores the introduction of a capitalist ethos of profit, debt, individualism and competition by the Millennium Villages Project. We observe a process of capitalist proselytization and active conversion of subsistence farmers into entrepreneurs—efforts that are largely resisted by community members. In particular, the chapter analyzes several of the
development events that lay bare the expectations, values and priorities of an enterprise society. Drawing on insights formed in these events, I reflect on the conflicting cultural values at play. Chapter Five turns to the social impacts of Sauri’s involvement in the Millennium Villages Project. We witness the exacerbation of existing tensions within the community as well as conflicts that develop between the community and the Project itself. The absence of receptive dialogue leads to myriad resentments and misunderstandings as the social fabric deteriorates.

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This project participates in the tradition of the critical anthropology of development. The field owes its emergence to the foundational work of Arturo Escobar’s *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* and James Ferguson’s *The Anti-Politics Machine*. Both works, heavily influenced by Michel Foucault, approached development as an apparatus or *dispositif* of power and knowledge. Foucault defines an apparatus or *dispositif* as

> a resolutely heterogeneous grouping made up of discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, policy decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic, moral and philanthropic propositions; in sum, the said and the not-said, these are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the network that can be established between these elements.\(^{23}\)

Escobar applies a twofold strategy to analyzing the development apparatus as an organizing global imaginary and as a social practice that involved concrete policies and interventions. First, he wants to understand the construction of development as a vast institutional apparatus that effectively transformed economic, cultural and political realities, including the post-World War II reimagination of most of Asia, Africa and Latin America as the “Third World,” which was fundamentally defined by poverty and “underdevelopment.” Second, he wants to illuminate alternate grassroots movements and ideas that challenged and decentered the dominance of that paradigm. In particular, he makes clear certain macro-level aspects of development that remain operative today—the professionalization of development problems like poverty and hunger as objects of “expert” knowledge, the transformation of rural communities through the linking of that knowledge with particular interventions, the exclusion of alternative ways of knowing and being.

Following Escobar, I analyze the global-scale imagination of development economics as a cultural constellation. Escobar situates foundational development theories in a genealogy of economic thought as a cultural constellation of beliefs, assumptions and values that evolved from neoclassical economic theories of the late 19th century, that were modulated in the economic crises of the early 20th century and finally gave way to a period of state-centered economic intervention widely known as Keynesianism for its main proponent John Maynard Keynes, whose policies dominated
development thinking from the 1940s through the 1960s. While he notes a certain shift in
development discourse and practice that began in the 1970s with the introduction of the
“small farmer” and integrated rural development, Escobar fails to recognize the
beginning of an important metamorphosis—a process of neo-liberal transformation that
would lead to the model of development that we would see in Millennium
Development. He portrays the trend toward neoliberalization in the 1980s as a
dismantling of economic development, and characterized development economists’ turn
toward neoliberal deregulation as a “return to realism” after failed adventures with
development dirigisme and planning:

The total opening of the economy—coupled with a new round of privatization of
services and the so-called modernization of the state—has become the order of the
day. What we seem to be witnessing is [development’s] progressive dissolution.24
As we will see in Chapter One, that apparent dissolution through neo-liberal
marketization and privatization would actually prefigure a subsequent resurgence of
development in a new neo-liberal mode reconfigured for the new global economy. The
first part of the dissertation can be read as picking up where Escobar left off. I seek to
understand the neo-liberalism that followed the Keynesian era of development as well
as the first phase of neo-liberalism characterized by the structural adjustment that
Escobar describes.

24 Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (Princeton:
For his part, Ferguson provides a careful historical account of the construction of a developmentalized idea of Lesotho as an “untouched,” isolated island without economic infrastructure or industry (despite contrary evidence of markets and production of goods for trade in the historical record). The representation of Lesotho as having many aspects of modern capitalist economy, however, would not mobilize funds and support for the introduction of development infrastructure like roads, markets and credit. Ferguson’s case study shows how the representation of Lesotho and other “Least-Developed Countries” (LDCs) involved strategic rearrangement of reality to fit neatly into development plans. His most important contribution to the understanding of development is his insight that development operates as an “anti-politics machine” that converts political and social issues (inequality, unemployment, wage disparity, land rights, commons) into technical problems with technical solutions. In project rhetoric, the “people” become “farmers” (even when they have little interest in farming), political parties disappear and systemic issues (like apartheid) become irrelevant. He writes:

   By making the intentional blueprints for ‘development’ so highly visible, a ‘development project’ can end up performing extremely sensitive political operations involving the entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power almost invisibly, under the cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object.  

Ferguson shows how a Canadian development project in Thaba-Tseka neither contributed to the alleviation of poverty, changing production or at extending the

influence of capital. Instead, it “was instrumental in establishing a new district
administration and giving the government a much stronger presence in the area than it
had ever had before.”26 Poverty becomes a privileged domain for the anti-politics
machine of development in Lesotho, which Ferguson emphasizes is
not a machine for eliminating poverty. Rather, it is a machine for reinforcing and
expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes
poverty as its point of entry and justification for launching an intervention that
may have no effect on the poverty but does have other concrete effects.27
Following Ferguson, I examine the anti-political function of development today,
particularly at the level of global representation. What kind of power does it facilitate
after the decline of state power? Instead of the entrenchment of bureaucratic state
power, I argue that poverty is depoliticized to mobilize a diffuse governmentality that
operates by managing aspirations, desires and subjectivities in relationship to dominant
global flows and forms of circulation. As we will see, the anti-politics machine works in
different ways at the global and local levels that are particular to the neo-liberal
moment.

The foundational work of Escobar and Ferguson strongly influences this project.
One might even read it as an update on their work for the context of the new
millennium. Escobar and Ferguson provided their foundational analyses in the early

26 James Ferguson with Larry Lohman, “The Anti-Politics Machine,” The Ecologist 24, no.5
(September/October 2005), 180

27 Ibid., 181
1990s, but their critiques of the development apparatus are still the most frequently cited in subsequent development scholarship. And, yet, so much has changed in the interim. Avram Ziai (2009) writes, for example, that “the postdevelopment critique can be admitted to have been appropriate for the 1970s and 1980s, but overlooks the profound transformations that have taken place in development policy since then.”28 One of the objectives of this project is to take those transformations into account as we try to understand the development apparatus today.

The critical anthropology of development experienced a period of backlash in response to the work of Escobar and others who have been called “post-development theorists.” The primary concern of critiques is the elision of various kinds of specificity, agency and difference in examinations of the macro-logical apparatus of development. Steven Robins voices the common theme: “Like their dependency and underdevelopment theory predecessors, postdevelopment theorists over-emphasize the reach and capacities of both the state and development. They also seriously underestimate the capacity of beneficiaries and citizens to strategically engage with the state and development.”29 In a similar vein, Tania Murray Li (1999) writes: “Despite the promising rubric of "encounter," Escobar’s (1992, 1995) explorations of the techniques of


classification and planning offer little insight into how plans are executed and whether they are imposed coercively or received "on the ground" in the forms or with the effects intended."30 Stuart Corbridge (1998) makes a similar argument regarding the representation of development as a straw man and adds a critique of the romanticized one-dimensional representation of those peasants that supposedly offer alternatives to dominant development. He writes: “Post-development fails to convince because it too often trades in dogma and assertion and too rarely resorts to proper argumentation...[it] makes its case for change with reference to unhelpful and essentialized accounts of the West and the rest...[and] romanticizes the ‘soil cultures’ of social majorities and provides poor empirical documentation for its claims.”31 A second strand of critique complained that the postdevelopment theorists stopped at denouncing development without offering alternatives. For example, Nederveen Pieterse (2000) describes post development discourse analyses as caricatures of complex social institutions and concepts like market, state, production and needs, all of which are all “historically informed but overstate their case and offer no alternatives and, thus, fall flat.” French anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier Sardaan summarizes many critiques by describing the approach as requiring reductive “conflation” of differences into clichés: “It suffices to


31 Corbridge, “Beneath the Pavement only Soil.”
select one public rhetoric or another, one type of cliché or another and to proceed to its
deconstruction…which enables an easy critique of development as a monolithic
enterprise heavily controlled from the top…a single gaze or voice which is all powerful
and beyond influence,” he observed. As anthropologist David Mosse colorfully
characterized the problem, postdevelopment theorists portrayed development as “a
blind instrument of external (Western) power, a kind of agent-less ‘space age juggernaut
on auto-pilot.’” Finally, Michael Watts describes Escobar as portraying “the
claustrophobic closure of the development project—its singular character and its
oppressiveness…not the singular complexities and frequent failure of securing rule,
producing governable subjects and governable spaces.” If one were to condense the
critiques into their common objection, it would be that they approached development as
if it were a homogenous or monolithic entity solely driven through top-down logic
toward Westernization, control and oppression of the Third World and devoid of other
forms of agency. The fear of falling into endless, monolithic critique inspired a turn in
anthropology of development toward intensely ethnographic approaches that would

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concentrate on the many, ever-contingent ways that development actors creatively translate and resignify development policy in actual contexts of development. Sardaan describes anthropology’s privilege as lying in the disciplines capacity for describing what “no economic model in a laboratory can predict”—the social modalities of the many interactions that make up development in practice—“numerous social actors, belonging both to target groups and to development institutions, their norms of action and competence, which vary considerably.” David Mosse argues for anthropologists to take on that task as a priority. He argues:

Anthropology’s business is to focus on the social relations underpinning thought work to show how development’s traveling rationalities are never free from social contexts, how they begin in social relations, in institutions and expert communities, travel with undisclosed baggage, get unraveled as they are unpacked into other social/institutional worlds.35

Likewise, Mosse makes a claim for anthropology’s privilege. “Ethnographic work has the unique potential to show how change is brought about, not through the logic of official policy intentions, or even through its hidden operation as a discourse of power, but through processes of compromise and contingent action of various kinds.”

he writes.\textsuperscript{36} The emphasis on agency is seen by these authors as an “important corrective to a subjectless Foucauldian analysis.”\textsuperscript{37} Such a micrological ethnographic approach, influenced by Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), rejects analyses that posit broad social realities, like “development” or the “social,” as autonomous entities. Development requires endless work of “composition” that ties heterogeneous entities—people, events, ideas, objects (actants), and places—together “by translation of one kind or another into the material and conceptual order of a successful project.”\textsuperscript{38} By paying attention to these compositional networks, Mosse and others influenced by ANT have provided insightful multi-scale ethnographies of development implementation and “interpretive communities” and have effectively cracked open the monolithic facade of development to reveal a living, active, relational web of actors and actants engaged in the ongoing production of development orders that together constitute the apparent order of Development with a capital ‘D’. “The apparent order of development is always parasitic on the other orders it conceals,” Mosse and Lewis write.\textsuperscript{39} In other words, discourses follow rather than precede actors and practices.

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\textsuperscript{36} David Mosse, and David Lewis. “Encountering order and disjuncture: contemporary anthropological perspectives on the organization of development” Oxford Development Studies 34, no. 1: 4.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{39} Mosse and Lewis, “Encountering order,” 5.
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While the ANT trend in the anthropology of development has contributed significantly to a more nuanced understanding of the development processes and networks, it risks its own blindness. It is unclear why the fine-grained ethnographic approach to multiple scales of actor-networks must necessarily be opposed to the more "abstract" work of studying the broad contours of the globally-dominant order of meaning, truth, value, power relations and subject formation that also shapes the possibilities and limits of the actors, their imaginaries and their horizons. To suggest that the global apparatus of development should be reduced to a parasitic composition of actual development projects seems as problematic and reductive as the opposite claim of the postdevelopment theorists. The global apparatus of development is made up of myriad elements, in addition to development practices on the ground like global-scale historical processes (like the Cold War or the diminished power of the nation-state), economic orders (like Keynesianism or neoliberalism) and agendas (like the organization of the post-World War II spatial imaginary in favor of US hegemony, the recuperation of Africa into global circuits of capital or the legitimation of global power through a facade of benevolence and utopian possibility). The apparatus of development may have many global functions, some of which I will discuss earlier in Chapters One and Two, which have nothing to do with development practices on the ground, just as development practices, as Mosse suggests, often have very little (or nothing) to do with global-scale development discourses. Still, both are important parts of a landscape that is
“real” insofar as people from Paris to New York to villages in Peru or Malawi claim “development” as a source of meaning and motivation.

Finally, my work joins recent ethnographic work on the governmentality of development, which takes up another strand of Foucault’s theory in relationship to contemporary development. Lewis and Mosse (2005) point out in their introduction to The Aid Effect: Giving and Governing in International Development that theorists of development have begun drawing on Foucault’s later work on governmentality, 40 which is a “positive power that wins legitimacy and empowers action.”41 Governmentality, Michael Watts (2003) writes, is “about the intersection of the public, private and voluntary, in which there is no clear sovereign authority and in which trust, conventions, networks and non-formal obligations and reciprocities figure centrally.”42 It is a mode of “positive power that wins legitimacy and empowers action.”43 The shift to the study of governmentality in development studies reflects broader trends in the political economy of globalization. The deterioration of state power after the Cold War left open the field for Non-Governmental Organizations and private actors to take over

40 Foucault discusses governmentality as part of the modality of security power, which is the general framework of biopolitical power.


43 Ibid.
the role of development. Governmentality works neither through the extension of bureaucratic state power nor through forms of enclosure and repression. Instead, it operates at the level of subjectivity, enlisting subjects to constitute themselves and their interests “in terms of the norms through which they are governed as ‘free’ social agents.” Watts provides an excellent overview of biopolitical governmentality and describes changes in the 1990s that indicate a “thickening of civil society.”

Tania Murray Li’s *The Will To Improve* has recently returned to the anti-politics machine and Foucauldian theories of governmentality in her study of what she calls “the will to improve” in development. She focuses on World Bank projects in Sulawesi, Indonesia. Like Ferguson, Li studies the anti-political effects that follow from “rendering technical” political problems. She provides ethnographic details of project implementation and effects in the 1990s while staying tuned into the workings of subject formation in “power’s matrices,” focusing specifically on the role of the development “expert” in the conduct of village conduct (which differs importantly from the extension of state power described by Ferguson and reflects broader changes in development in the 1990s). What Murray Li does not do is attempt to provide a broader account of changes in global power matrices that make governmentality, or what Foucault called

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45 Cris Shore and Susan Wright, eds., *Anthropology of Policy: Perspectives on Governance and Power* (Routledge, 1997), 9.
the “conduct of conduct,” central to the development apparatus now in ways that they were not in the 1970s when Ferguson studied in Lesotho.

The present study bridges the two distinct strands in the critical anthropology of development—the ANT trend and the Foucauldian tradition. While I do focus on global discourses and macrological attributes of an updated development apparatus and the operation of power within it, I also look at how development hits the ground in Chapters Three through Five. In those chapters, I take an approach much more aligned with the kind of investigation advocated by Mosse, Sardan and others insofar as I look carefully at the intersections between different embodied actors and things as they co-create the actual experience of ending poverty.

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In 2010, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon visited the Millennium Village in Malawi. Impressed by what he saw on the brief tour, he stated: “Today I call on every country to look at this success. It is a case study in what is possible, even in the poorest places in the world.” In a sense, this project is an answer to that call to really look at the Millennium Villages, though not necessarily in the way the Secretary General intended. The statement raises a number of questions that we will explore in the course of this project. What exactly counts as success? For whom? Of what possibilities are the Millennium Villages case studies? Whose possibilities? What happens when you attempt to turn a human community into a test case for an outside vision of “what is possible”? What do we find if we really look at the Millennium Villages in their multi-dimensionality as exemplars of Millennium Development and simultaneously human communities with their own dreams, ideas of possibility and desires?

To begin, we need to understand what Millennium Development is and the “end of poverty” dream that it mobilizes. Once we understand the global-scale that gives rise to the Millennium Villages along with the cultural assumptions and desires that shape them, we will be in a good position to answer Leonida’s earlier query as to what drives foreigners to her village to gaze without engaging in any kind of conversation. We will

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then be ready to pull back the screen to have the conversations that the tourists in the 
safari bus could not be bothered to have. We will go “on foot” in the village to 
understand the points of friction between the possibilities that the village is intended to 
model and the forms of life that they seek to transform.
1. The End of Poverty 2.0.15

In September of 1999, an alarm sounded for elite economic policy makers in global institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations. “It was a wake up call,” Mark Malloch Brown observes. Brown had recently left his position as Vice-President of External Affairs at the World Bank to head the UN Development Program when anti-globalization protests shut down Seattle and the World Trade Organization meetings, demonstrating widespread discontent with the neoliberal model of globalization that had become dominant after the end of the Cold War. In his 2012 memoir, The Unfinished Global Revolution: The Road to International Cooperation, Malloch Brown recalls the surprising realization he and others had when witnessing the force of a multitude of protesters representing social movements from around the world. He writes:

Trade ministers tried to begin negotiating a new world trade agreement, but violent demonstrations disrupted their meeting...Not everybody, apparently, viewed globalization as a benign force for greater prosperity and international cooperation. Globalization had to be managed better, or the backlash against it would grow. Malloch Brown’s statement suggests that the problems that Seattle brought into focus were not caused by the fundamental operating coordinates of economic globalization. Rather, the protests suggested to Malloch Brown that existing globalization practices

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2 Ibid., 2-3.
had to be *managed* more effectively. The aim became to shape public perception of globalization as a “benign force for greater prosperity and international cooperation.” A more effective organizing narrative was required. “The failure to set up a framework for the fair management of global affairs invited a grassroots rejection of globalization, which seemed to be introducing insecurity into everyone’s life,” Malloch Brown writes.³

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan would soon propose such a framework. In the process, the traditional institutions of development would have to be modified. Economist Jeffrey Sachs, who would join Malloch Brown in this new project, has observed that “before Seattle, the G8, IMF and World Bank meetings were occasions for the unqualified praise of globalization and for the self-serving accolades of bankers and international financiers…Since Seattle, the agenda of ending extreme poverty, extending human rights and addressing environmental degradation has been back on the international agenda.”⁴ Indeed, on a transinstitutional scale, ending extreme poverty would provide a coherent, hopeful horizon in relation to which the processes of globalization and development could be reframed.

³ Ibid., 3.

In the bigger picture, the 1990s had been the decade of “happy globalization” following the end of the Cold War. For a time, rapid globalization seemed to offer unlimited opportunities for growth and new possibilities for prosperity. The opening of markets, the lowering of trade barriers, the compression of time and space and the new technologies of connection dramatically increased transnational flows and circulation, which seemed to mean greater freedom, increased democracy and productive cooperation for those on the privileged side of wealth and power. Characterizing that moment, Sachs writes, “We marveled at the dizzying progress of the new internet age, the new global interconnectivity and the seemingly endless flow of new products, new ways of organizing business and new ways of linking people and production systems around the world.”

For those at the center of global policy and power, the collapse of the Soviet bloc signified the ultimate defeat of alternative socioeconomic orders and the triumph of Western forms of governance and economy. Margaret Thatcher’s famous dictum “There is No Alternative” (TINA) expressed the widely held belief that only one configuration of economic and political possibility remained after the defeat of Soviet socialism. Francis Fukuyama famously articulated the sentiment, writing:

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What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.  

In the absence of apparent opposition, the socioeconomic philosophy that had its roots in Western liberalism could be taken to its extremes and amplified as a set of organizing global principles that privileged individual economic freedom, private enterprise and the rationality of the market. This new liberalism, or “neo-liberalism”, went much further than the classical liberalism of the nineteenth century, which advocated a laissez-faire (hands-off) relationship between governments and markets. Neo-liberalism, as David Harvey defines it, is “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.”  

After the Cold War, neo-liberalism would actively promote and expand the logic of the markets and individual freedom far beyond the realm of production and exchange to organize a more general mode of thinking and being in social and political life as well.

The most obvious or immediate beneficiaries of such policies, of course, were the global elite—those who already held capital and property with which to exercise their

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7 Francis Fukuyama, ”The end of history?” Quadrant 33, no. 8 (1989): 15.

8 David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.
entrepreneurial freedom. The poor, on the other hand, suffered disproportionately, as the market ethos of individual enterprise justified the slashing of public services and social welfare programs. In the Global South, international economic policies known as “structural adjustment” or the “Washington Consensus” would make such broad transformations requirements for international loans throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Markets had to be deregulated, state enterprises privatized, government spending on public goods like education and health care reduced and protections of domestic industries removed and subsidies eliminated, all of which increased poverty, inequality and economic insecurity for the poor. Capital, land and resources were increasingly concentrated in the hands of elite minorities and multinational corporations, leaving vast swaths of national populations impoverished.

However, as economic historian Karl Polanyi had long ago illustrated in his analysis of classical 19th century liberalism, the ideal of the self-regulating market amounted to a “stark utopia…that could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into wilderness.”9 The “backlash” feared by Malloch Brown, which had already gathered significant momentum by 1999, emerged as a grassroots response to that movement. On the underside of the global

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distribution of wealth, not everyone shared in the giddiness of the “happy globalization” of the 1990s. “It is war. A war against humanity. The globalization of those who are above us is nothing more than a global machine that feeds on blood and defecates in dollars,” stated Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico. Animated by the initial Zapatista uprising in 1994 and subsequent “intercontinental” gatherings, a vast transnational network of proliferating grassroots social movements returned to the idea of a social “alternative” to (neo)liberal capitalism. In 2000, collective protest in Cochabamba, Bolivia had succeeded in expelling the multinational corporation Bechtel, which had attempted to privatize water and, shortly thereafter, overthrew the neoliberal president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. In 2001, social movements from around the world began to affirm that “Another World is Possible.” By 2004, major international agreements to extend neoliberal globalization—including the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the Doha round of international economic agreements—had been stalled.

Activist-scholar George Caffentzis has suggested that by the beginning of the new millennium, the proponents of neoliberalism desperately needed a “Plan B.” Caffentzis observes that the “wake up call” from Seattle combined with the Asian

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financial crisis in 1997 and the US terrorist attacks in 2001 to create a crisis of legitimacy for the dominant model of globalization. “The once attractive image of the creative powers of humanity finally being brought together in the process of globalization for the ‘common good’ by borderless transfers of money, capital and labor at the speed of light now seem[ed] to be a nostalgic relic,” he writes.11

The Thatcherite doctrine of “No Alternative” seemed to give policy makers like Sachs and Malloch Brown little room to improve the public image of globalization. To effectively animate the public on behalf of globalization, a more hopeful possibility needed to be imagined. Profit margins, calculations of costs and benefits and technocratic minimalism could not compete effectively with the revolutionary fervor of new social movements chanting “Another World Is Possible.” Neoliberal globalization needed a dose of social hope and moral promise that could mobilize public enthusiasm. To that end, global leaders like Malloch Brown and Secretary General Kofi Annan turned with renewed interest to the older apparatus of international development as an existing constellation of social processes, practices, discourses and actors oriented toward the problem of poverty on a global scale.

The Millennium Development framework that would redefine development between 1999 and 2005 can be partly understood as a significant attempt at creating such

a “Plan B,” an endeavor to “manage” globalization more effectively in the name of the poor. Renewing and retooling the narrative of international development for the global milieu would enable the hopeful projection of a global “end of poverty” as a future horizon that could be reached through “pro-poor” development and “inclusive globalization.”

In an updated version of The History of Development, Gilbert Rist suggests that development, with its history of utopian promises of growth and prosperity, could lend sparkle to the otherwise uninspiring mechanisms of unfettered global capitalism, with its neoliberal ethos of efficiency, individual entrepreneurship and profit margins. The development promises of a better world and the alleviation of suffering and poverty could lend a positive horizon to globalization and catalyze social energy in the void left open by adherence to the Thatcherite dictum of TINA. Rist explains:

No society can do without dream or belief, unattainable utopia or reassuring verity. Globalization could never play this role, being experienced by most people as a brute fact that mainly involves duress and violence. Nor can there be much enthusiasm for the idea that ‘adaptation’ is indispensable, when it is not known to what. Globalization therefore relies upon the vast means of communication to persuade people that there is simply no alternative...Consequently, at the very moment when globalization is achieving hegemony (as both discourse and practice), it is practically impossible to dispense with the legitimacy stemming from ‘development’. For ‘development’ has a meaning, based on an old tradition, whereas globalization has none.12

In other words, we might understand Millennium Development as a new form of
development that could inject a benevolent dimension into globalization.

**Development 2.0**

Development—as a concept, a set of practices, a dream and a busy industry of experts, knowledge, international institutions and states—had long been a dominant
discourse in framing benevolent international responses to global poverty. Development
had emerged as a formal international endeavor in the 1940s as a way in which the
threat of distant poverty could be defined and managed through the technical
knowledge and capital of Europeans and North Americans. In his 1949 inauguration
address, US President Harry Truman famously introduced development as a “bold new
program for making our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the
improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.”¹³ He observed that “more than half
the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery...Their poverty is a
handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas.”¹⁴ The new program
should be a “cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the
United Nations and its specialized agencies...a worldwide effort for the achievement of

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¹⁴ Ibid.
peace, plenty and freedom.” With those words, Truman launched what would become a complex network of people, capital, policies and things aimed at improving the lives of the portion of the world’s population who qualified as “underdeveloped.”

During the Cold War period, the geopolitical tug-of-war between the “First World” (capitalist nations in Europe and North America aligned with the United States) and the “Second World” (socialist nations aligned with the Soviet Union) unfolded on the proxy battlefield of the “Third World,” conceived as a zone of lack and poverty that encompassed Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. In their respective social imaginaries, the First and Second Worlds played the role of the noble, even messianic, heroes with the capacity to save the Third World from poverty and suffering. Anthropologist Arturo Escobar refers to this messianic macronarrative as a “Tale of Three Worlds” through which global geopolitics was understood and international relations were managed.

Escobar was one leading voice in the criticism of development as a disciplinary technique of power. He showed how poverty, conceived as an “abnormality” or deviation from the norm of Western modernity, was enclosed in a space (the Third World) that became a “field of intervention of power.” A professionalized network of institutions and experts formed to treat and manage the problem of poverty, which was defined quantitatively and measured by per capita national income levels. Within those

\[15\] Ibid.
networks, the social and political dimensions of poverty disappeared to constitute poverty as an object of neutral, scientific knowledge. Development then proceeded through the extensive observation, analysis and treatment of specific “abnormalities” associated with poverty (the “malnourished,” the “illiterate,” the “underdeveloped,” “small farmers,” “landless peasants,” etc.). “Everything was subjected to the eye of the new experts: the poor dwellings of rural masses, the vast agricultural fields, cities, households, factories, hospitals, schools, public offices, towns and regions, and, in the last instance, the world as a whole,” writes Escobar.  

The general prescription for the treatment of poverty in the early Cold War era was the stimulation of national economic growth and processes of modernization. The international institutions and their theories of development reflected the Keynesian macroeconomic philosophy of the post-Second World War period (1945-1973), which generally advocated for governments playing a proactive role in ensuring economic growth through government planning, regulation and investment. Through transfer of capital, knowledge and technology, the First World would effectively provide a “big push” forward on the continuum of Progress, which was presumed to culminate in the technology, wealth, knowledge and comfort already enjoyed by those in the


17 Ibid.
industrialized First World. “From industrialization, through the green revolution, to integrated rural development, policies repeated the basic ‘truth’ that development consisted in achieving conditions characteristic of the already rich societies,” explain development theorists Peet and Hartwick (2009). What would change over time, in other words, were the dominant strategies, priorities and concepts that were related to that basic “truth” as a constant.

The end of the Cold War pulled the geopolitical foundation out from under the network of development institutions, experts, and knowledge although, of course, many of the older institutions in the UN and Bretton Woods systems grappled for a new foothold. The need to combat the spread of the communist menace by fostering capitalist prosperity and production in the Third World disappeared. Official Development Aid dropped by 40% in the wake of the Cold War. To many, the “age of development” seemed to be ending, having stumbled through myriad failures and revisions by the last decades of the 20th century. In the 1970s, the focus on national economic growth had shifted; under the leadership of Robert McNamara, the World Bank began to emphasize “integrated rural development” and the boosting of “smallholders” (subsistence farmers). In the 1980s, the World Bank again changed


course, creating structural adjustment programs, which had fared so poorly that many, even within development institutions, were calling it a “lost decade” by 1990.20 And, as the world entered the period of “happy globalization” in the 1990s, new modes of power and subjectivity quickly decentered state power, which had been central to the definition of development.

In the fall of 1988, a year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, an international group of social theorists and public intellectuals gathered on a porch in Pennsylvania to analyze what they perceived as the imminent end of the “age of development.” While reviewing the previous four decades of development discourse and practice, they speculated on nascent possibilities for combating poverty at the grassroots level or, at least, beyond the massive institutional apparatus of development. In the volume that emerged from that collaboration, *The Development Dictionary* (1992), they wrote with enthusiasm:

> The last forty years can be called the age of development. This epoch is coming to an end. The time is ripe to write its obituary...The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crime have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions that catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. But, above all, the hopes and desires which made the idea fly are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete.”21


The diagnosis seemed justified at the time. Contrary to the expectations or aspirations of
the postdevelopment theorists, development did not vanish from the global landscape,
as its myriad failures and misguided assumptions would have seemed to merit.

Reflecting on the liminal moment of the 1990s, Rist writes:

In 1996, when the first French edition of this book appeared, it was possible to think that development was running out of steam. The future of the planet and its inhabitants, it seemed would from now on be seen in a more pragmatic or realistic manner, far removed from the illusions of the myth of progress…This is not how things turned out.22

Instead of vanishing altogether, development acquired a new form and life during the 1990s. Two decades after publishing their “obituary,” some of the original Dictionary collaborators had to rethink their original diagnosis of the death of development. In a new 2012 preface to Encountering Development, for example, Arturo Escobar notes the reinvigoration of development in the last decade as striking. “Not only does the development project go on,” he writes, “it seems to have become stronger since the mid-1990s.” Similarly, in a new preface written in 2010, Wolfgang Sachs, the Dictionary’s original editor, interpreted the unexpected resurgence of development ideas as an effect of globalization, writing that “as the era of globalization came into being, hopes of increased wealth were unleashed everywhere, providing fresh oxygen for the flagging development creed.”

22 Rist, History of Development, viii.
A Decade of Happy Globalization

What the collaborators in *The Development Dictionary* perceived as the death throes of development in the early 1990s were indeed the signs of *an* end in development if not *the* end of development. As the older institutional and state-led efforts lost their Cold War orientation and funding, new actors, ideas and priorities began multiplying and putting pressure on the traditional apparatus of development, led by states and multilateral institutions. In a 2000 document that would lay the foundation for the emergence of a new development regime, Kofi Annan would characterize the 1990s as a period when the United Nations and other international organizations were “buffeted by the changes of the new era, doing good work in many instances but falling short in others.”²³ At the turn of the millennium, Annan and others saw themselves as fundamentally reshaping international cooperation for “serv[ing] the needs and hopes of people everywhere.”²⁴

The excitement about the potentiality of “globalization for the common good”²⁵ concentrated around new ostensibly democratizing trends as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) from across the political spectrum—from radical left activists to conservative church organizations—became more involved in the development process.

²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ Caffentzis, “Dr. Sachs, Live8 and Neoliberalisms ‘Plan B’.”
UN Secretary General Kofi Annan conceived of the Millennium Declaration and subsequent Goals as instruments through which the new realities of globalization could be integrated into the antiquated structure of the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions. In preparation for the Millennium Summit in 2000, Annan published *We, The Peoples*, which outlined his proposals to fundamentally “reshape the United Nations well into the 21st century.”

His central message was that the world had radically changed since the founding of the UN. “Simply put, our post-war institutions were built for an inter-*national* world, but we now live in a *global* world. Responding effectively to this shift is the core institutional challenge for world leaders today,” he wrote. That shift to the global, he held, required “that we think afresh about how we manage our joint activities and our shared interests, for many challenges that we confront today are beyond the reach of any state...We must form coalitions for change with partners well beyond the precincts of officialdom.” He made a similar observation at the World Economic Forum in 1999, stating:

> The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partners involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society. In today's world, we depend on each other.

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26 Annan, *We, the Peoples*, 6.

The “central challenge of ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people” identified by Annan in *We, the Peoples* and later foregrounded in the Millennium Declaration, would involve harmonizing the visions and priorities of those various partners. Malloch Brown described the shift from his perspective as head of the UN Development Program:

> During my first few years at UNDP, I came to realize that we had trapped ourselves in a statist vision of development. States matter a lot. They provide the infrastructure and services, the security, and the predictability of policies that entrepreneurs require. But unless a private sector and a civil society start to grow, the state is a stage without a play. I began to push hard on behalf of these two vital actors that could partner with states in the fight against poverty.  

In many respects, the Millennium Development framework can be understood as the outcome of that push for partnership between old and new development actors. The “two vital actors” played very different roles in shaping the conditions and expectations to which Millennium Development would eventually respond. We should consider each briefly to understand the distinct forces that Millennium Development would try to bring together in “global partnerships for development.”

The lowering of former trade barriers and increases in transnational capital flows in the 1990s introduced multi-national corporations into global geopolitics in new ways. In assessing these changes in preparation for the Millennium Summit, Kofi Annan


29 United Nations Millennium Development Goals, Goal 8
observed that world exports had increased tenfold since 1950, while sales by multinational firms had, by 2000, exceeded world exports by a growing margin. In *We, the Peoples*, he wrote, “Global companies occupy a critical place in this new constellation. They, more than anyone, have created the single economic space in which we live; their decisions have implications for the economic prospects of people and even nations around the world.” Similarly, the 1999 Human Development Report observed that one of the novelties of contemporary globalization was that multinational corporations possessed more economic power than many states. The 1999 HDR also noted that private financial flows to developing countries had increased from $36 billion to $252 billion between 1988 and 1997. As with the centrifugal trend of NGO proliferation, so also the multiplication of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) escalated. While only 7,000 TNCs existed in 1970, there were 37,000 parent transnational corporations with over 200,000 affiliates worldwide by 1994. Writing for the UNRISD in 1994, Eric Kolodner provides a good map of corporate geopolitics at that time. Summarizing various UN agency reports, he writes:

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30 Annan, *We, the Peoples*, 9.

31 Ibid., 13.


From 1980 to 1992, TNC sales skyrocketed from 2.4 trillion dollars to 5.5 trillion dollars. Currently one third of all global trade is composed merely of financial transactions within the same transnational corporation. TNCs affect 86 percent of the world’s land that is cultivated for export crops, control over 60 percent of aluminum mining and sell 90 percent of the world’s agrochemical products. Some transnational corporations are more financially powerful than national economies: annual sales of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group oil company [1993, 96.2 billion dollars] are twice New Zealand’s gross domestic product (GDP); annual sales of the British tobacco company, BAT Industries [1993, 48.2 billion dollars] are equivalent to the GDP of Hungary; the German electronics firm, Siemens AG, [1993, 50.4 billion dollars] has annual sales that exceed the combined GDP of Chile, Costa Rica and Ecuador; and the annual sales of both General Motors [1993, 133.6 billion dollars] and Mitsubishi [168.4 billion dollars] are more than double the GDP of Hong Kong or Israel.34

Such incredible power had no formal place within the previous international development apparatus. Millennium Development would create space within official development for new “global partnerships” that would span the private and public sector in new ways.

Meanwhile, the wild proliferation of NGOs that were associated with the second “vital actor,” civil society, had added a potpourri of actors, interests, voices and aspirations to the development game. The term Non-Governmental Organization entered the vocabulary of international politics as early as 1949, roughly simultaneous with the formation of the United Nations and Truman’s introduction of the ideas of “underdevelopment” and “development” as a “bold new program” to address it. Article 71 of the original UN Charter as well as the individual charters of the World Health

34 Ibid., 2.
Organization (WHO) and UNESCO made space for the participation of NGOs.\textsuperscript{35}

Development theorist David Hulme (2001) defines NGOs very basically as "peopled organizations [that] are both not part of the state structures, are not primarily motivated by commercial considerations or profit maximization, are largely self-governing, and rely on voluntary contributions (of finance, labour or materials) to a significant degree."\textsuperscript{36}

General public need and political space for such organizations was relatively low during the early Cold War era due to the strongly Keynesian view of the state’s role in providing social services and fostering a strong public sector. As structural adjustment policies forced states to cut back on social services in the 1980s and early 1990s, NGOs began taking up many of those public functions, including education, infrastructural improvements like water, sanitation and roads and health care.\textsuperscript{37} A burgeoning number of NGOs, thus, emerged as alternatives to the centrally led, top-down public sector function of state governments in the earlier Keynesian period of development and


\textsuperscript{36} David Hulme, "Reinventing the Third World State: Service Delivery and the Civic Realm," in W. McCourt and M. Minogue, eds., The Internationalization of Public Management: Reinventing the Third World State (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001), 130.

\textsuperscript{37} Some texts that take up the rise of NGOs in the 1990s include Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Michael Edwards and David Hulme, Non-governmental Organisations: Performance and Accountability Beyond the Magic Bullet (London: Earthscan Publications Limited, 1995); and Jude L. Fernando and Alan W. Heston, The Role of NGOs: Charity and Empowerment (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1997).
international economics. It is not surprising, then, that the peak of structural adjustment during the 1980s would coincide with the early proliferation of NGOs, which were conceived as “alternatives” to existing development institutions. The rise was so noticeable that in addition to being called the “lost decade” for development, the 1980s were also called the “NGO Decade,” according to development theorists Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington (2007). Lewis and Kanji (2009) attribute the rise of NGOs in the late 1980s to frustrations with existing development paradigms of growth and modernization, which had accumulated decades of failure. Conceived as alternatives, NGOs acquired celebrated status as “magic bullets” and soon became the “favored child” of aid donors and agencies that were increasingly recognizing publicly that “official aid donors and governments have not been able to provide all the answers.”

The end of the Cold War further opened the range of opportunities for NGO intervention, as the organizations were no longer limited by national borders or bipolar

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40 Edwards and Hulme, *Non-governmental Organisations*.

geopolitics. For example, the number of NGOs with consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council increased from 724 in 1992 to 2,050 in 2000 and 3,400 in 2010. The retreat of the state from development after 1989 opened up the terrain for NGOs to occupy more political space. Writing from rural Togo, anthropologist Charles Piot describes the 1990s moment as:

"a time in which the money has dried up, the state has pulled back from social and developmental fields, and NGOs and churches have stepped into the void and begun to reorganize the everyday lives and imaginations of those in city and village. It is a time of extreme privation, of wild invention, of dramatic transformation—a moment whose effects are felt to be more far-reaching than any in living memory. It is also a moment whose outcome is still unknown."\(^{42}\)

Malloch Brown similarly observes: “NGOs were occupying ever more political space, particularly in European countries. Equally, NGOs and the business sector both seemed much more adept at addressing new global issues such as land mines, debt, climate change, and corruption; governments seemed to struggle to keep up.”\(^{43}\)

These changes would reach their apex in the series of UN-sponsored global conferences (often surrounded by parallel NGO and social movement conferences and forums) that took place in the early 1990s, which served as global forums in which myriad actors were actively involved in imagining how to orient development practice in the absence of Cold War structures. It was in this bubbling, loosely organized

\(^{42}\) Charles Piot, Nostalgia for the future: West Africa after the Cold War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 5.

cauldron of massive global conferences that the early iterations of global goals began to appear. In fact, global goals would be the chosen instrument through which the transnational, trans-sectoral conferences could articulate their conclusions in ways that were not necessarily tied to any particular institution, state or region. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and broader framework would both reflect and tame the democratic processes and possibilities of the 1990s. Malloch Brown provides an apt metaphor for thinking about the birth of the MDGs out of the goals set in the global conferences of the 1990s. “It was unanticipated nuclear fusion,” he states in a 2012 interview, “[in which] a number of laboratory-like processes came together…although we didn’t know it was nuclear fusion at the time.”

Although other sweeping international-scale goals had been launched prior to the 1990s, the United Nations and its partner institutions had established them with little or no democratic involvement of non-institutional actors. What would differentiate the


45 Goal-setting as a development strategy dates back to that the declaration of the first UN Development Decade in 1960 when the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched its “Freedom from Hunger” campaign to address the problem of hunger, particularly in newly postcolonial nations. Recognizing the magnitude of need, the UN Assembly established the World Food Program (WFP), which was devoted to addressing the problem of hunger alongside the FAO. In 1961, the UN Assembly, at the behest of President John Kennedy, the first “United Nations Development Decade” with a target of minimum annual growth rate of 5 per cent aggregate national income and accelerated measures to eliminate illiteracy, hunger and disease. At the same time, UNESCO set goals for dramatically expanding education in the decade while the WHO set a goal of eradicating smallpox, which would actually be achieved by 1977. In 1974, during the second Development Decade, a UN conference convened in Rome adopted the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, which associated hunger with a violation of
global conferences during the transitional interregnum of the 1990s would be their configuration as open forums for the participation of wider “civil society” NGOs and grassroots social movements. In that sense, the global conferences served a democratic function of opening development up to the public for active debate and reimagination by new and old development actors together. Development theorist David Hulme refers to this aspect of 1990s summitry as a moment of a “global agora,” a public space with no particular leader or agency in control, a moment of “relative disorder and uncertainty” with a high degree of contingency and chance due to the indeterminate nature of the evolving debates. Although skeptical about the extent of genuine democratic involvement, cultural theorist Samir Amin acknowledges that the decade of global conferences did involve an array of new voices and interests. He writes that the preparatory meetings for the global summits did try “something new by organizing assemblies of so-called civil society representatives parallel to official conferences where


only state representatives were seated.”47 While the best seats went to large charitable
NGOs with funding from states and large foundations, the voices of “popular
organizations fighting for social and democratic progress” were “sometimes heard,” he
writes.48 That (semi) populist thrust would give the subsequent Millennium
Development Goals a residual aura of democratic formation despite significant
simplification and selective translation.

Table 1: Global summits that prefigured the MDGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Jomtein</td>
<td>Education for All Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Rio de Janiero</td>
<td>Environment and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Cairo</td>
<td>Population and Development Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>Istanbul</td>
<td>Youth</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Lisbon</td>
<td>Land Mines</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Maputo</td>
<td>Millennium Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Financing for Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>Least Developed Countries</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Monterrey</td>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
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48 Ibid.
The decade opened with the 1990 International World Summit for Children (IWSC), which proposed a set of global goals with measurable targets to be achieved within a ten-year period. The IWSC goals consolidated areas that had previously been managed by separate agencies—education, nutrition, child and female health (See box 2). Significantly, the IWSC goals were not nation or region specific and are presented as the result of collaborative multi-sectoral conversations, thus reflecting a nascent global consciousness. The introduction to the goals on UNICEF’s website reads, “These goals have been formulated through extensive consultation in various international forums attended by virtually all governments, the relevant UN agencies…and a large number of NGOs.”

The next important event, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, produced the Agenda 21 (21 referring to 21st century), which considered social and environmental problems to be intertwined. The event, according to David Hulme, revealed significant North-South divides regarding the management of global environment. The former, led by the US, advocated for technological solutions; the latter called for reduced consumption in the North as well as debt reduction, trade reform and aid.

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which was populated by myriad feminist social

49 http://www.unicef.org/wsc/goals.htm

movements and NGOs from around the world, a new kind of global community could be seen emerging in and around networks of collaboration and debate. The conference culminated with the Beijing Platform, which contained an outline of twelve critical areas of concern necessary for the achievement of full participation, empowerment and equality for women throughout the world. For each of the twelve areas, representatives at the conference outlined specific objectives for each of the different sectors (state, private, NGO and institutional). The 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen established a plan of action that foreshadowed most of the resolutions that would later be made at the UN Millennium Summit. The Copenhagen plan of action established the 2015 horizon for the eradication of global poverty, defined as applying to those falling below $1 a day consumption levels.

An important trend that becomes stronger in each subsequent summit prior to the Millennium Development framework is the centrality of the global. Beginning with the IWSC, there is a sense that positive changes in the political economic climate had

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A good picture of the crucible-like nature of the conferences can be found in anthropologist Annelise Riles’ *The Network Inside-Out* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), in which she looks at the production of self-awareness of protean global society by focusing on a group of Fijian bureaucrats and activists preparing for and participating in the Beijing conference and, in particular, studying the aesthetics of various artifacts related to the Beijing conference, including institutional life-documents, funding proposals, newsletters, organizational charts and other such ubiquitous material of the “information age,” which often goes unnoticed by most observers. Participants in the meeting and the activities surrounding it understood themselves to be "focal points" within intranational, regional, and global "networks."
begun to enable new kinds of commitments and actions for global development. The
IWSC declaration states:

Recent improvements in the international political climate can facilitate this task. Through international co-operation and solidarity, it should now be possible to achieve concrete results in many fields—to revitalize economic growth and development, to protect the environment, to prevent the spread of fatal and crippling diseases and to achieve greater social and economic justice.⁵²

Five years later at the World Summit for Social Development, those “recent improvements” are named as globalization, which is still extolled as a great potential enabler but is also seen as carrying dangers and downsides. The declaration for the 1995 World Summit, thus, states:

Globalization which is a consequence of increased human mobility, enhanced communications, greatly increased trade and capital flows and technological developments, opens new opportunities for sustained economic growth and development of the world economy, particularly in developing countries. Globalization also permits countries to share experiences, to learn from one another’s achievements and difficulties as well as a cross-fertilization of ideals, cultural values and aspirations. At the same time, the rapid processes of change and adjustment have been accompanied by intensified poverty, unemployment and social disintegration.⁵³

By the end of the decade, development would no longer be the same endeavor that it was during the Cold War. The “Tale of Three Worlds” that Escobar illuminated as

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the organizing narrative of Cold War development would be replaced by a tale of global
solidarity through diverse “public-private partnerships,” joined together in the quest to
end poverty. Institutional and state bureaucratic power would join private corporations,
NGOs and DIY (Do It Yourself) developers in relationship to a “shared future”
delineated by the Millennium Development Goals and their overarching promise of an
end to global poverty. Given that the Cold War order of three distinct “worlds” no
longer orients development activities, and that the state is no longer the main
protagonist of development as was the case in the foundational critical analyses of
development, we need to consider new modes of power, subject-formation and
knowledge that have arisen in response to the problematization of poverty if we are to
understand development in its millennial iterations.

**To Free the World From Want**

In September 2000, world leaders gathered at the UN Millennium Summit to
chart a path for international cooperation in the new century. Representatives of all 189
UN member states, including 147 Heads-of-State, signed the Millennium Declaration
(UN 2000 A/Res/55/2). The Declaration renewed previous agreements regarding all
aspects of the original United Nations charter, including security, arms and the
environment while also adding a number of new resolutions that addressed
development in relationship to the new political economy of globalization. The Three-
Worlds geopolitical order of development that lasted from 1945-1989 had expired while
the asymmetrical distribution of power and wealth remained a formidable problem. To address that problem, the Declaration set a new agenda for development as a response to the realities of globalization. Article 5, for example, states:

We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs unevenly distributed. We recognize that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge. Thus, only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable.54

It is interesting to note that the “central challenge” is not poverty, inequality or social injustice per se. It is, rather, the character of globalization itself not being “fully inclusive and equitable.” The shared future of “fully inclusive and equitable globalization” would be the horizon toward which efforts would be directed. According to the basic logic of the resolution as it is stated, the key to ensuring that globalization becomes a positive force is neither the redistribution of wealth and power nor the strengthening of developing countries for overcoming their “special difficulties.” If the central challenge of Millennium Development is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people and if it is only through efforts to create a shared future that globalization can be made equitable and inclusive, then the initial task is to create a shared future, which is what the Millennium Development Goals would eventually do

by outlining the contours of the 2015 horizon. The call to “create a shared future based on our common humanity” implies that we are not already sharing the same world and coeval in our participation in the circulating flows of knowledge, capital and power. To create a shared future, we need to merely recuperate the excluded into the dominant flows of hope and possibility, which is arguably what the MDGs would propose in their drive to systematize one shared future of globalization for all.

The world leaders also agreed in the Declaration to help the countries facing “special difficulties” by “making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.” They also resolved to “create an environment—at the national and global levels alike—which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty.” Creating that enabling milieu would require combining good governance with increased development assistance and “open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading and finance.” The Declaration also included a set of global development objectives with a deadline of 2015—to halve the proportion of the world’s people whose income is less than one dollar a day, to halve the proportion of people unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water, to achieve universal primary schooling, to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, to reduce the rates of maternal mortality, to empower women, to encourage youth
employment and, lastly, to “develop strong partnerships with the private sector and
with civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication.”

A year after the Millennium Summit, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan released
his Road Map Toward the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. With its technocratic, overly-simplistic view of ending injustice, the document presented
the eight Millennium Development Goals or MDGs that derived from the development
objectives laid out and agreed upon in the Declaration. Although the Millennium
Declaration contained the basic seeds that would grow into the MDGs, the actual eight
“quantified and time-bound goals to reduce extreme poverty, disease and deprivation”
reflect the narrower priorities, norms and cultural values prevalent in the institutional
milieu of elite policy makers. During the year that followed the Millennium Summit,
representatives of the major development institutions and agencies, departments, funds
and programs, which had never collaborated in the past, gathered to turn the original
resolutions into eight simple, measurable international objectives. The lofty utopian
promises of the Millennium Declaration—“Freeing the entire human race from want”


57 Sachs, The End of Poverty, 211.

and “poverty eradication”—were distilled into eight goals, eighteen targets and forty-eight indicators. Jan Vandemoortele, who co-chaired the drafting of the MDGs, describes a more deliberate, strategic process of crafting Goals, Targets and Indicators that could be easily measured. “In an age where numbers prevail, it was decided that only those targets with agreed indicators and with robust data were to be included—but not without making some exceptions. This is why the quality of education, the affordability of water, good governance and human rights and several other areas covered in the Millennium Declaration were not included in the MDGs,” he writes.59

The association of the MDGs with the Millennium Summit and its unprecedented number of global leaders as attendees would lend the Goals an aura of

59 Ibid., 4.
global democratic consensus despite their bureaucratic translation. The UN, for example, would define the MDGs as “form[ing] a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions.” Malloch Brown would similarly celebrate them as “a striking, early, little-noticed effort of the world working together in a collaborative way.”

Muhammed Yunnus, the Bangladeshi microfinance guru, would call it the “boldest decision mankind ever took on this planet.” Often, along the same lines, the MDGs are defined as “global promises” made by all world leaders. Development theorist David Hulme accurately echoes the common refrain:

> The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world’s biggest promise – a global agreement to reduce poverty and human deprivation at historically unprecedented rates through collaborative multilateral action. They differ from all other global promises for poverty reduction in their comprehensive nature and the systematic efforts taken to specify, finance, implement, monitor and advocate them.

Entire campaigns, like the “Make Poverty History” campaign in Britain and Bono’s ONE campaign in the United States, would become efforts focused on holding world leaders accountable to their “promises” by funding the Millennium Development Goals.

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The supposedly historical importance of the MDGs would be solemnly underscored time and again by supporters. According to UN historians Weiss, Jolly and Emmerij, the MDGs soon made their mark as one of the most important “UN ideas that changed the world.” The handbook developed for Millennium Village staff echoes this rhetoric:

As the most comprehensive, specific and widely supported poverty reduction targets the world has ever established, the Millennium Development Goals are too important to fail. For the international political system, they are the fulcrum on which development policy is based. For the more than 1 billion people living in extreme poverty worldwide, they represent the means to a productive life. For everyone on Earth, they are the linchpin to the pursuit of a more secure and peaceful world. By 2006, the MDGs and the overarching End-of-Poverty promise had become the dominant frame of reference in development debates and policy decisions across the spectrum of development actors and interests. Fukuda-Parr paints an accurate picture of the eventual scope and influence of the MDGs:

The UN, the World Bank and numerous other international bodies monitor MDG implementation and issue annual reports with detailed data. The staff of the International Monetary Fund systematically include data on MDG targets in their country report, along with key macroeconomic performance indicators. UN meetings to review progress in achieving MDGs have become both frequent and

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high-profile political events that are significant for a country’s prestige and international standing. Political leaders make speeches defending policy initiatives with the warning: without such and such action the MDGs will not be achieved. Economists write research papers on macroeconomic policy choices and evaluate them against the contributions to achieving the MDGs. Local NGOs advocate national budget reforms to ‘achieve the MDGs…Media reports on poverty refer to failure to achieve MDGs as a demonstration of pervasive abject poverty. ⁶⁵

The MDG framework, in other words, provided the organizing coordinates through which global poverty and development work would be understood, measured, treated and managed in the early 21st century, thus configuring the parameters of what could legitimately be said, done, funded and imagined. They would also become the coordinates of that “shared future” promised in the Declaration, which featured an almost purposive historical amnesia about the long history of failed attempts to save the poor.

The following chart is the official UN outline of the MDGs, their targets and indicators. Given their pervasive influence, it is worthwhile to look at them closely and consider the cultural logic through which they operate.

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⁶⁵ Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, “Should global goal setting continue, and how, in the post-2015 era?”

Table 2: The Millennium Development Goals*6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 1.A:</strong> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Poverty gap ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 1.B:</strong> Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Employment-to-population ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Proportion of employed people living below $1 (PPP) per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 1.C:</strong> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 2.A:</strong> Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 3.A:</strong> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Goal 4: Reduce child mortality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 4.A:</strong> Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Under-five mortality rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Infant mortality rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goal 5: Improve maternal health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| **Target 5.A**: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio | 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio  
5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel |
| **Target 5.B**: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health | 5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate  
5.4 Adolescent birth rate  
5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits)  
5.6 Unmet need for family planning |
| **Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases** | **Target 6.A**: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS | 6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years  
6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex  
6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS  
6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years |
| **Target 6.B**: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it | 6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs |
| **Target 6.C**: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases | 6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria  
6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets  
6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs  
6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis  
6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course |
| **Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability** | **Target 7.A**: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources | 7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest  
7.2 CO2 emissions, total, per capita and per $1 GDP (PPP)  
7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances |
| **Target 7.B**: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss | 7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits  
7.5 Proportion of total water resources used  
7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Target 7.C:</strong> Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</th>
<th>7.7</th>
<th>Proportion of species threatened with extinction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target 7.D:</strong> By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.10</strong></td>
<td>Proportion of urban population living in slums&lt;sup&gt;67&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development**

**Target 8.A:** Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system

Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally

**Target 8.B:** Address the special needs of the least developed countries

Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries’ exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction

**Target 8.C:** Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for...)

Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

**Official development assistance (ODA)**

- 8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors’ gross national income
- 8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)
- 8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied
- 8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes
- 8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes

**Market access**

- 8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty
- 8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and

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<sup>67</sup> The actual proportion of people living in slums is measured by a proxy, represented by the urban population living in households with at least one of the four characteristics: (a) lack of access to improved water supply; (b) lack of access to improved sanitation; (c) overcrowding (3 or more persons per room); and (d) dwellings made of non-durable material.
the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly

**Target 8.D:** Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 8.D</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI Initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Target 8.E:** In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 8.E</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Target 8.F:** In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 8.F</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>Fixed telephone lines per 100 inhabitants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>Internet users per 100 inhabitants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can we observe about these Goals and Targets as a cultural constellation of the globalized 21st century milieu? If together they constitute the recipe for ending poverty, what assumptions about the nature of poverty and the potential means to its end are necessary? If the classic ethnographer-alien were given just this set of Goals and Targets, what would it deduce about the values, norms and power relations of the society in which it has meaning?

First, the object of transformation of these goals is not the individual, as was the case when poverty was treated as a disorder or disgrace to be enclosed in the reformatory Dickensian “poorhouses” of the 19th century. Nor do the goals and targets
refer to the territory of a sovereign or a nation. They do not function as a set of laws and prohibitions, as was the case in 16th century Britain when “bloody legislation,” to use Karl Marx’s term, allowed for the detainment or forced exile of the poor and homeless (“idlers” “vagabonds”68). Poverty is addressed at the level of a global population, as a question of averages, percentiles and proportions. Such an understanding of poverty is unique to the mode of power that characterizes the global neoliberal order.

In lectures delivered between 1976 and 1979, Michel Foucault described a mode of power that he considered ascendant at the time in neoliberalism, a mode of power that he calls biopower or biopolitics.69 He begins the 1976 lectures, *Security Territory Population*, by defining biopower as

namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species.”70

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68 Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, Ch. 28, available online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf.htm [last accessed on April 6, 2014].

69 Foucault specifies that biopower is an apparatus of security power. As such, wherever there is biopower at play, it is also security power. I use the terms interchangeably. Another interchangeable term would be governmentality. I use this term less as it has acquired the status of a term (like neoliberalism) that is so overused that it loses its meaning. I am also convinced, by reading Foucault, that there can be many kinds of governmentality if it is understood as the ways governance is integrated into one’s subjectivity. Biopolitical governmentality would be distinct from disciplinary governmentality. 

Foucault traces the emergence of this mode of power to a new understanding of population in the mid-18th century. This new mode of power is applied “not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately, if you like, to man-as-species.”71 Life itself becomes an object of power that concentrates on “making life live”—maximizing, vitalizing the conditions for the production and reproduction of the life of human populations, which he defines as “a multiplicity of men…a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness and so on.”72 What biopower seeks to control are not individuals, bodies or “the people” as legal subjects. Rather, power is exercised through the management of the qualities and conditions of a population in a given milieu—“a multiplicity of individuals who are and fundamentally and essentially only exist biologically bound to the materiality in which they live.”73 “Biopolitics will derive its knowledge from and define its power’s field of intervention in terms of, the birth rate, the mortality rate, various biological disabilities and the effects of the environment,” Foucault writes.74

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72 Ibid., 242.

73 Foucault, Security Territory Population, 21.

Already, with this very basic definition of biopolitics, we can see the MDGs and their targets in a clearer light as part of a broader cultural logic. In the targets for each of the first seven MDGs, the object of management is population as a quantifiable multiplicity, defined simply by their being alive (or dying) on the planet earth at this particular period of measurement (1990-2015). For example, in Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is defined according to the proportion of population below $1 per day, the share of the poorest quintile (of national populations) in national consumption, the employment-to-population ration, the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption, etc. For such targets to determine the meaning of eradicating extreme poverty, they must operate within a cultural milieu in which “population” has meaning as a “technical-political object of management and government.”

The logic is barest in Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. As feminists have pointed out, gender equality and women’s empowerment cannot be considered aside from reproductive rights and roles, or aside from other social and political norms that often restrict female freedoms, including socially-sanctioned violence against women. The more difficult social, legal and political dimensions of

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75 Foucault, Security Territory Population, 70.

76 Peggy Antrobus, “The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Major Distraction Gimmicks or strategic entry points for addressing inequality between people and nations?” Available online at www.ideaonline.ie/sites/default/files/MDG_article_for_IDEA.doc [last accessed on January 20, 2014].

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gender inequality disappear, as the target for realizing Goal 3 is the elimination of
gender disparities in primary and secondary education with indicators of ratios of girls
to boys in school, share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability actually helps us understand the
underlying logic further. Nine of the indicators for Goal 7 begin with the word
“proportion.” Six of those have to do with the more-than-human world: Proportion of
land, of CO2 emissions, of fish stocks, of total water resources used, of protected land, of
endangered species. The remaining three involve population: Proportion of population
using improved drinking water sources, sanitation facilities and living in slums. In Goal
7, population is, like land or water, a material given to be manipulated and managed. It
is not, as in other regimes of power, a collection of individuals, bodies or subjects that
act and make decisions.

According to Foucault, biopolitics is an apparatus of security power, one of three
broad modalities of power that he sees as interacting in different ways across modern
history. In different historical periods, different modalities tend to dominate and
organize the logic of the others. Sovereignty dominated the early modern period while
discipline predominantly organized the matrix of power relations in the 18th and 19th
centuries. Security power and biopolitics characterize the contemporary moment with
the rise of neo-liberalism being the framework of the birth of biopolitics.\textsuperscript{77}

To best understand the MDGs and, later, the Millennium Villages as their living
models, several basic aspects of contemporary biopower (as an apparatus of security
power) should be highlighted, particularly the function of circulation and the
bandwidth of the acceptable. In later chapters, we will add to these foundational
building blocks to eventually achieve a multi-dimensional picture of the contemporary
biopolitical development apparatus.

While sovereignty and disciplinary power each rely on different forms of
enclosure—territorial in the former and normative and institutional in the latter—
security power involves “not so much establishing limits and frontiers, or fixing
locations as, above all and essentially, making possible, guaranteeing and ensuring
circulations: the circulation of people, merchandise and air, etc.”\textsuperscript{78} Foucault identifies an
18\textsuperscript{th} century trend toward the suppression of city walls as the beginning of this new
mode of circulatory power. In response to diseases related to overcrowding as well as
the need to open routes for the undisturbed circulation of goods and people, this new
mode of power would function by opening and proliferating flows while working
within them to maximize positive outcomes (at the level of population). In other words,

\textsuperscript{77} See chart of power modalities that I have included as Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{78} Foucault, \textit{Security Territory Population}, 30 (my emphasis).
while disciplinary mechanisms of enclosure, surveillance and correction were intensifying in many sectors of 18th century European society (prisons, schools, factories, asylums and other institutions), another form of power was opening up and maximizing flows and circulation of people, things, capital and possibilities. Given such logic, it makes sense that Foucault associates the emergence of this new power modality with the birth of liberalism and its laissez-faire economic creed in the late 18th and early 19th century regulation of corn flows and the problem of mass hunger or scarcity. Instead of accepting famine as natural moral punishment on a collective (sovereignty) or micromanaging price, export and selling to avoid periods of scarcity (discipline), circulatory biopower/security power would work within the flows and fluctuations of supply and demand, calculating and anticipating probable scarcity and adjusting accordingly. In general, the new mode of power “stepped back” and let the market play itself out while ensuring an “enabling milieu” for uninterrupted flows. It “stands back sufficiently” and “lets things happen” from an ostensibly laissez-faire position.

The first seven MDGs might seem to have little to do with circulation and flows until we recall that the overarching challenge and objective of development is to “create a shared future” of fully inclusive and equitable globalization.79 When the Declaration discusses “meeting the special needs of Africa,” the leaders resolve to “assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development,

79 United Nations Millennium Declaration, article 5.
thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy.”80 When considered in light of these macrological objectives, the Goals of eradicating extreme poverty, ensuring gender equality, education, sanitation and health all make sense as creating the basic conditions through which those left out of the circuits of globalization and the world economy can be integrated as participants. Those who are hungry, dying or disempowered are less able to participate in the flows and circulations that define contemporary political economy and, to some extent, remain outside the grasp of this mode of power.

Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development is the only goal that articulates the mechanisms (the “how”) through which the first seven Goals can be achieved. It is, thus, the goal that best reveals the centrality of the circulatory security power to the MDG equation. Goal 8, which is the most detailed and extensive of the MDGs, has at least double the number of targets and quadruple the number of indicators of the each of the first six Goals, and is the only MDG with objectives for the Global North to meet. One can read all of the targets and indicators in terms of proliferating and maximizing global flows and circulation—flows of aid (amount of capital flowing from North to South), flows of trade (open, non-discriminatory trading and finance, tariff-quota free access for exports from developing countries, market access, duty-free imports, allocating aid to build “trade capacity”), flows of debt (“make

80 United Nations Millennium Declaration, article 27.
debt sustainable in the long term”) and flows of cooperation with the private sector to enhance flows of Western technologies (pharmaceutical, information and communication technologies). UN officials, including Jan Vandemoortele, have stated that “progress on global commitments for improved aid, fairer trade and steeper debt relief will determine to a large extent, the successful achievement of the first seven MDGs by 2015 in most if not all developing countries.”

By making global partnerships for development central to the achievement of the first seven MDGs, Goal 8 makes space for a restructuring of development that proliferates circulation by opening development up to actors and interests which transcend borders and traditional sectors of society. If circulatory biopower can be traced back to the lowering of city walls, its contemporary form lowers the walls between states, institutions, organizations, corporations and private individuals (or one might say between state and “civil society” in the standard Hegelian order).

The logic of biopower involves maximization, affirmation and management of life by pre-establishing a “bandwidth of the acceptable” in advance of action, based on a normal distribution of probabilities and risks. Foucault explains: “Instead of a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited, one establishes an average


82 See Georg W. F. Hegel, Philosophy of Right.
considered as optimal on the one hand, and, on the other, a bandwidth of the acceptable that must not be exceeded. In this way, a completely different distribution of things and mechanisms takes place.” It is, in that sense, a mode of power that says “yes” while calculatedly managing probabilities, risks and statistical variations. “It is simply a matter of maximizing the positive elements, for which one provides the best possible circulation, and of minimizing what is risky, like theft and disease, while knowing that they will never be completely suppressed…and, since they can never be nullified, one works on probabilities,” he states.

Foucault illustrates these tactics through the example of the treatment and eventual eradication of smallpox. Foucault exemplifies each of the three power modalities by paying attention to the different ways they treat disease. Sovereign-Juridico power in the Middle Ages, for example, operated on a binary division of sick/not sick when it came to lepers. A series of laws, regulations and religious rituals simply excluded lepers from the world of non-lepers. Later, in the 17th century, the treatment of plague revealed a very different logic. Plague regulations dictated “when people could go out, how, what times, what they must do at home, what type of food they must have, prohibiting certain forms of contact, requiring them to present

themselves to inspectors and to open their homes to inspectors.”\textsuperscript{85} Such a discipline-
dominant system micromanaged bodies and behaviors while quarantining those who fell ill (or outside the norms). In the treatment of smallpox, the focus for medical intervention is shifted from the present to the future horizon, determining probabilities, calculating averages and, based on the data, developing inoculation strategies. Biopolitical security power \textit{manages} the disease by first extensively calculating “how many people are infected, at what age, with what effects, with what mortality rate, lesions or after-effects, the risks of inoculation, the probability of an individual dying or being infected by smallpox despite inoculation and the statistical effects on the population in general”\textsuperscript{86} and, then, by working within those variables to maximize the best outcome at the level of population. The objective is not to prevent contact between sick and healthy or, even, to treat and quarantine the disease as it arises in all patients. Rather, biopolitical-security power establishes a normal, acceptable distribution of smallpox cases throughout an entire population. On the basis of that distribution, medical intervention will be able to identify cases, risks, danger rising (if cases begin multiplying toward the threshold of the acceptable) and crisis (extreme deviation of number of cases exceeding the established distribution). Foucault describes this strategy as “finding support in the reality of the phenomenon, and instead of trying to prevent it,


making other elements of reality function in relation to it in such a way that the phenomenon is cancelled out.”

In the treatment of smallpox, the practice of inoculation or “variolization” (injecting a healthy person with material taken from someone infected with smallpox) would be central to the technique. Foucault explains:

Now what was remarkable...is that it did not try to prevent smallpox so much as provoke it in inoculated individuals, but under conditions such that nullification of the disease could take place at the same time as this vaccination, which thus did not result in a total and complete disease. With the support of this kind of first small, artificially inoculated disease, one could prevent other possible attacks of smallpox. Inoculation, in other words, “finds support in the given” and then manages conditions so as to let it happen at a level that remains below the established threshold.

The provocation of a small amount of the disease under controlled conditions actually served to prevent the more serious spread of disease at the level of the population.

In light of this sketch of biopower, important aspects of the MDGs and the broader Millennium Development phenomenon become discernible. Let’s suppose that poverty is akin to disease. One way to approach poverty would be to establish a norm, say X amount of economic growth per year. All those countries or regions falling outside that norm would be subject to rehabilitation, training and institutional intervention. This is akin to system of development described by Escobar in his analysis of Cold War development. Another way to approach poverty would be to find a point of support in

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87 Foucault, Security Territory Population, 63.

88 Foucault, Security Territory Population, 60.
the reality of poverty itself and establish a bandwidth of acceptable poverty rates based on it. We can see this logic at work clearly in Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. As we began to note earlier, when we look at the defining Targets and Indicators that would presumably measure achievement of the goal, we note that poverty, in fact, will not be “eradicated” in the sense usually understood by the term—erased, terminated, ended. Instead, eradicating extreme poverty is equal to “halving between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.” A world in which Goal 1 has been achieved would still be a world in which the majority of the global population lives on less than ten dollars per day and a proportion of people, half the number since 1990, still live on one dollar a day. So, a bandwidth of what counts as extreme poverty is established ($1 a day) despite the fact that living on less than $10 a day means, in many parts of the world, struggling daily to survive. Everything above $10 is within the bandwidth of the acceptable. The task is to minimize what falls outside the bandwidth—those living on less than $1 per day.

Foucault actually discusses the treatment of poverty as a key to understanding the logic of the neoliberal, biopolitical game. The same logic of inoculation and statistical management of the bandwidth of the acceptable, which we see in the treatment of smallpox, applies to poverty. The early neo-liberal effectively divided poverty into two different phenomena—absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty or what Sachs calls “extreme poverty” is poverty that falls below an absolute minimum economic
threshold below which one cannot participate in the dominant economic game of flows and enterprise. Foucault explains:

This is the idea that the economy is basically a game, that it develops as a game between partners, that the whole of society must be permeated by this economic game, and that the essential role of the state is to define the economic rules of the game and to make sure that they are in fact applied. What are these rules? They must be such that the economic game is as active as possible and consequently to the advantage of the greatest possible number of people, with simply a rule—and this is the surface of contact, without real penetration, of the economic and the social—a supplementary and unconditional rule of the game, as it were, which is that it must be impossible for one of the partners of the economic game to lose everything and thus be unable to continue playing. It is, if you like, a safety clause for the player, a limiting rule that changes nothing in the course of the game itself, but which prevents someone from ever dropping totally and definitively out of the game.89

The “safety clause” of the Millennium Development Goals, in other words, would ensure that the poorest of the poor will be brought up just enough to reach what the neo-liberals call a “vital minimum” at which they can ensure their own basic existence.

Relative poverty or inequality, in contrast, involves social distinctions and a conception of inequality that is not simply measured by a minimum threshold. As long as one stays in the “game” just above the threshold, relative poverty is not treated as a problem. In fact, as Foucault notes, inequality actually is a necessary part of the “game” as it fosters competition. “Relative poverty does not figure in any way in the objectives of such a social policy. The only problem is absolute poverty,” Foucault writes. Relative poverty is poverty as a social problem, a problem of a gap between the rich and poor in a

social context. Absolute poverty is an individual, technical problem to be addressed by simple cash (or material) transfer to keep everyone, however marginally, in the game. Poverty, in a milder form, is allowed to persist much like the milder form of cow pox as inoculation against small pox.

The Millennium Development Goals might be seen as the application of that logic on a global scale. The MDGs address the basic needs that must be fulfilled to ensure that everyone is part of the game. They provide for a global minimum threshold above which everyone should be able to participate to some degree in consumption.

Foucault points out that one major drawback of this social policy is that it never works at the level of the causes of poverty. “It is the effects of poverty and only its effects. That is to say, in no way does the negative tax seek to be an action aiming to modify this or that cause of poverty.”\(^9\) The provision of basic needs through the MDGs similarly avoids the causes to focus on providing basic needs. To ask into the causes would be to question the very practices of liberalization advocated in Goal 8. The only problem is whether one is above or below the threshold—in the present case $1.25 per day (purchasing power parity) as established by the World Bank in 2008. The so-called end of poverty as laid out in the MDGs, then, has nothing to do with the transforming the causes of poverty, only the effects.

\(^9\) Ibid., 204
The “end of poverty” packaged in the MDGs also acts as an efficient inoculation against more radical attempts to address poverty. As with small pox, the order lets in an acceptable amount of poverty-ending energy to inoculate itself against the more serious threat of social movements taking up the problem of poverty and demanding systemic change. The MDG “end of poverty” makes just enough space for those dissident tendencies to express themselves while ensuring that they do not disturb the order itself.

To Make Poverty History

The new development project encapsulated in the MDGs was not, it should be emphasized, just a matter of institutions and numbers. It was, as we have already started to see, a cultural project that aimed to naturalize a new way of thinking about poverty, progress and the future in ways that would enlist myriad actors.

Secretary General Annan himself recognized that new tactics were needed to generate the kind of “political will” necessary to mobilize civil society and the private sector in conjunction with more traditional development actors. In addition to creating a platform that could facilitate solidarity, the MDGs also had to serve a mobilizing function. As Jeffrey Sachs defines them, “the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) mark a historic and effective method of global mobilization to achieve a set of important social priorities worldwide.”91 Jan Vandermeertele, one of the MDG authors, evaluates

the “success” of the MDGs in terms of their mobilizing capacity. Reflecting on progress in 2011, he writes, “Nevertheless, it can be argued that the impact of the MDGs have been positive. It has mostly been in terms of mobilizing stakeholders and informing the public about human development, broadly defined.”92 To his mind, the “power” of the MDGs stems from three factors: “1) the charm of simplicity; 2) their integrated and synergetic nature; and 3) their measurability.”93 I disagree. Simple, integrated, measureable objectives may be appealing to some, but are not particularly energizing or animating in themselves.

Ensuring access to clean drinking water, primary education and reductions in rates of hunger, disease and maternal-child mortality are all basic, good, practical aspirations that are universally desirable. As Malloch Brown explained in 2003, “From a sheepherder in Mongolia to a shopkeeper in Mexico, the idea of cutting poverty, putting kids in schools, building a cleaner environment and providing better healthcare for mothers and infants is something that they can relate to in a very tangible way.”94 Development economist Ashwaini Saith observes:

The Millennium Development Goals are here, there and everywhere. They envelop you in a cloud of soft words and good intentions and moral comfort;
they are gentle, there is nothing conflictual in them; they are kind, they offer only good things to the deprived. They give well-meaning persons in the north-west a sense of solidarity and purpose; they provide a mechanical template of targets and monitoring indicators suited to the limits of the bureaucratic mind; they form ready populist seasoning for politicians....No wonder it is the juggernaut of all bandwagons.\textsuperscript{95}

But, the bandwagon, as “mechanical template” of good intentions was just a “wagon” with no “band” for the first four years. For example, Social researchers for the Organization Economic Cooperation in Development (OECD) conducted surveys in the Netherlands and found that, as of 2003, public awareness was low. “Very little awareness about the MDGs could be measured. Only 10 percent of the respondents indicated to have heard of them (yes-eight percent; believe so-two percent),” the report finds.\textsuperscript{96} Those who had heard of them expressed pessimism about their achievability. The OECD report also refers to a 2002 Department for International Development survey in the United Kingdom that had to be stopped due to the negligible amount of public awareness. The MDGs only became juggernauts through a massive, coordinated mobilization of global utopian energy in mass media. Between those early surveys and the mobilizing of millions in the Make Poverty History campaign, Bono’s ONE campaign and Product (RED), the public transcript of Millennium Development as the


\textsuperscript{96} Ida McDonnell, Piet van Harn and Henny Helmich, “The UN Millennium Development Goals: Awareness in the Netherlands and Comparisons from other DAC Member Surveys” (Amsterdam: NCDO, and Paris: OECD Development Centre, June 2003).
End-of-Poverty emerged and began to resonate with social longings for a more just and equitable kind of globalization, as articulated in global social movements like the World Social Forum (WSF), myriad grassroots movements and WTO protests. The banal specificities of the actual MDGs became secondary to the overall promise of the End of Poverty, which they symbolically composed as a whole. To resonate as widely and effectively, as the MDGs eventually would with mainstream desires and investments, a massive public relations campaign was needed to mobilize social hope around a new idea of development as the way to make globalization “inclusive and equitable.”

If neither their benign qualities nor their simple, measurable neatness are particularly mobilizing, then why did the MDGs become successful? In an early working paper on the Millennium Development Goals, authors Michael Clemens, Charles Kenny and Todd Moss make an interesting observation that points toward an answer. “The MDGs might be better viewed not as realistic targets but as reminders of the stark
contrast between the world we want and the world we have, and a call to redouble our
search to close the gap,” they write. I view that gap as a productive site of intense
sociocultural alchemy rather than as an empty space. Complex practices of
transformation and translation occur in the gap between the “world we want” and the
“world we have.” The MDGs belong fully to neither side. Rather, they occupy the gap
and facilitate numerous kinds of generative transformations within it while appearing to
bridge the distance between the present and the utopian horizon of an end to global
poverty. Between “the world we want” and the “world we have,” a powerful
transformation takes place. The MDGs turn the bitter suffering of global poverty into
pithy slogans that can be ironed onto t-shirts or depicted in cartoons that proudly

Figure 5: UN Millennium Campaign promotion (2008)

celebrate the capacity of “our generation” to “end poverty” by meeting them.

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Michael A. Clemens, Charles J. Kenny and Todd J. Moss. “The trouble with the MDGs: confronting
Only when the basic, benign aspirations of the MDGs were alchemized to signify, together, the path to the utopian horizon of the end of global poverty did the bandwagon really start rolling. On October 1, 2002, the development game entered a new arena—mainstream mass culture. UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown launched the Millennium Campaign as a program charged with “aggressive promotion” of the MDGs. “We are going to take the best elements of successful campaigns like the land mines campaign and the debt campaign,” Malloch Brown said, “and build coalitions at the country and global levels who will fight, organize, demonstrate, write to Congressmen and Members of Parliament to take whatever action is required to meet the goals.”

The Millennium Campaign and the related global campaigns it would spawn, including the Millennium Villages Project, successfully mobilize or channel radical hope by operating creatively in relationship to a slippage at the heart of the MDG framework. The MDG framework constitutes a chain of equivalences in which the abstract “promise” to “free the entire human race from want” would be reduced first to eight slogan-like goals to be met by 2015 and, then, further reduced to a narrow set of spreadsheet-ready parameters. The equation would allow for easy slippage back and forth between the delimited specificity of measurable targets and the more abstract utopian promise of an imminent, easy end to global poverty. In the promotional

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material developed by the UN Millennium Campaign and associated campaigns like the Millennium Villages, the Make Poverty History Campaign in Britain and the ONE campaign in the US, the MDGs are consistently represented as the way “we can end poverty” without any of the narrow specifications of the actual Goals and highly delimited definition of “poverty.”

Development analysts Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and David Hulme conceptualize the MDGs as a cluster of interrelated prescriptive norms that together constitute a unified, coherent framework of ending global poverty that they refer to as an ethical “super-norm.” “We treat the MDGs as a vehicle to communicate and promote the super-norm of ending global poverty,” they explain. A super-norm “seeks to achieve more than the sum of its parts because of the positive feedback interactions between each norm.”

The UNDP encourages such a view of the MDGs. The official MDG list even contains a note that reads: “The goals and targets are interrelated and should be seen as a whole. They represent a partnership between the developed countries and the developing countries “to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty.”


The problem with the chain of equivalences between prescriptive norms and the ethical super-norm, however, is that the limited scope of the individual norms comes to circumscribe the possible interpretations of the more abstract aspirations that they supposedly fulfill. The more complex, qualitative (social and political) factors are pushed to the margins. The above poster provides a good illustration of how meaning and value is distributed between the promise/hope contained in the foregrounded phrase We Can End Poverty 2015 and the much smaller list of MDGs.

A related tactic was to draw on the “charm of simplicity” by reducing the more complicated targets and statistics to more attractive, publicly appealing images and slogans. On the official UNDP website, the Millennium Campaign materials and associated campaigns, the MDGs would be represented in child-like hieroglyphs in which the harsh realities of poverty would disappear into cartoonish innocence.
By any account, the Millennium Campaign would be a wild success on a global scale. For example, the Stand Up to End Poverty initiative, which was one of its core programs, set a 2006 world record in *The Guinness Book of World Records* of 23,542,614 people to “stand up against poverty.”¹⁰¹ According to the Millennium Campaign, in 2007 “more than 43 million people all over the world stood up and spoke out sending a clear and powerful message to governments: Keep your promises to end poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.”¹⁰² In 2008, 116 million people participated in campaign marches, concerts and events. In 2009, 173 million people, or 2.5% of the world population, participated in more than 3,000 events in more than 120 countries, setting the world record again.

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¹⁰² Mass email from UN Millennium Campaign, March 31, 2008.
At the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa, over 300,000 protesters demonstrated against the new world order of neoliberal globalization. At the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles, 200,000 people affirmed the power of the handful of men gathered inside by marching to put pressure on them to “Make Poverty History” by keeping the “promises” of the MDGs through “aid trade and debt cancellation.” Referring to the dramatic change in political energy, activists Ben Trott and Emma Dowling write:

July 2, 2005 will be remembered as the day on which “global civil society” came together, alongside the world of celebrity to ask the G8 to make the world a better place. Whilst Genoa was an important moment of delegitimization for the G8 and the order it represents, Gleneagles was in many ways its opposite.

The mass of white t-shirts and banners that flooded Edinburgh that day was a testament to the success of the MDGs as a mobilizing framework and the End of Poverty promise as what George Caffentzis called “Neoliberalism’s Plan B.” Mark Malloch Brown, Jan Vandemoortele, Kofi Annan, Jeffrey Sachs and a handful of other elite bureaucrats had succeeded in creating that “framework for the fair management of globalization” that

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104 Ibid.
the Seattle “wake-up call” had seemed, to them, to demand. With the MDG framework and the overarching End of Poverty horizon, activists need not necessarily demonstrate against neoliberal globalization as they did in Seattle and Genoa because they could much more easily lobby leaders to fulfill their commitments to achieving the MDGs, which seemed to outline the better world that they desired.

The “Make Poverty History” campaign was merely the British branch of a global alliance of over 1,000 NGOs which were partly or fully dedicated to the MDGs and coordinated by the Global Call to Action against Poverty, which was linked to the celebrity rock star Bono of the Irish band U2.105 In other countries, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) had other forms—the ONE campaign in the US, Plus d’Excuses! in France, Maak Het Waar in the Netherlands, etc.106 The GCAP coalition, which now boasts over five million supporters, including individuals, church groups and trade unions, claims that it is the “world’s largest civil society movement calling for an end to poverty and inequality.” The apparently radical aura of the alliance is strengthened by the fact that it was launched at the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil where a group of radical social movements from around the world, including many that participated in the Seattle protests, gathered to affirm that “Another World Is Possible.” According to the GCAP website, the purpose of the

105 Elsewhere, I discuss these movements in more detail as a trend moving from activism to “factivism.”

106 As of 2012 according to the GCAP website, www.whiteband.org
coalition is to “challenge the structures and institutions that perpetuate poverty and
inequality.” And yet, the range of actions undertaken by GCAP is limited to “awareness,
advocacy and action” with action interpreted narrowly as public demonstrations,
petition signing, and bracelet wearing.

“Challenging” the structures and institutions that perpetuate poverty does not
mean destroying the basic structures and institutions of global capitalism. To
“challenge” appears to mean to “pressure” those structures and institutions from within
to improve, mainly by achieving the Millennium Development Goals. A telling banner
at the Make Poverty History march in 2005 succinctly expressed the general logic. It
read: Make Governments Work (uppercase letters) for the poor (lowercase letters).

The various high-profile campaigns surrounding the MDGs animate intense
public affect—hope, anger at injustice, desires for another world and, even, shame—
while only prescribing “action” of lobbying government leaders to keep promises. A
popular television ad for Bono’s ONE campaign provides a good example of this. In the
ad, a series of celebrities—Brad Pitt, Penelope Cruz, George Clooney, Tom Cruise, Liam
Neeson, Cameron Diaz and, of course, Bono—each snap their fingers once, staring
mournfully or angrily (but always beautifully) into the camera. The only sound is the
snapped fingers every few seconds. The screen then reads:

Every three seconds a child dies of extreme poverty. But last year the G8 made
promises that can save millions of lives. Make promises happen. Tell the G8 that
every move they make, we will be watching.
The affective energy of indignation, which might otherwise lead to the “backlash” so feared by Malloch Brown and the United Nations, is instead channeled back into recognized institutions, states and forms of depoliticized action like wearing a bracelet.

In conclusion, I would like to consider how the various technologies involved in the MDGs and the promise-keeping campaigns constitute new anti-political technologies of development. In his acclaimed book on development in the late-1970s and early-1980s, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, anthropologist James Ferguson defined development as an “anti-politics machine” through which complex political and social issues (inequality, unemployment, wage disparity, land rights, commons) were converted into technical problems with technical solutions to be managed by state bureaucrats. He showed, with rich detail, how a Canadian development project in Thaba-Tseka ultimately failed to contribute to the alleviation of poverty but still had significant influence on local politics and political structures. The anti-politics machine of development in Lesotho, Ferguson emphasized, was

“not a machine for eliminating poverty. Rather, it [was]a machine for reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power, which incidentally takes poverty as its point of entry and justification for launching an intervention that may have no effect on the poverty but does have other concrete effects.”

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While the Thaba-Tseka project ultimately failed to reduce rural poverty or create a commercial cattle industry as planned, by the time the project ended in 1983, it had facilitated unprecedented extension of bureaucratic state power in the area, evidenced by the penetration of numerous bureaucratic state entities that had previously been absent, including a police station, a post office, a health department, an agricultural extension office and other government “services” like the regulation of chiefs by the Ministry of the Interior and a new “food for work” program of the Ministry for Rural Development. In other words, the project “was instrumental in establishing a new district administration and giving the government a much stronger presence in the area than it had ever had before”\(^{108}\) In the meantime, poverty itself was depoliticized—translated into an object of technocratic management. Political questions like gendered land distribution or exploitative wages became moot, along with political action to address poverty, which came to be understood as the purview of development experts instead of engaged citizens. Inside the anti-politics machine, the “people” or “citizens” became “farmers” (even when they had little interest in farming), political parties and their differences disappeared and systemic issues (like apartheid) became irrelevant.

Ferguson explained:

> By making the intentional blueprints for ‘development’ so highly visible, a ‘development project’ can end up performing extremely sensitive political operations involving the

entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power almost invisibly, under the
cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object.\textsuperscript{109}

At the time of Ferguson’s fieldwork in the Cold War context of 1970s and 1980s
development, state power and institutionalized bureaucracy were playing a central role
in development practices and discourses, as outlined by Escobar (1995) and Rist
(1997/2008), among others. As we have seen in this chapter, however, the state is now
one of several actors exercising a diffuse form of power. Even as the Thaba-Tseka project
wound down in the early 1980s, the anti-politics machine had already begun to move in
other directions, as we have seen with the proliferation of NGOs and multinational
corporate power.

We might update the statement above by suggesting that the highly visible
blueprints and campaigns for development end up performing subtle biopolitical
operations that entrench and extend the dominant circuits and flows of capital, bodies,
knowledge and possibility. With such modification, Ferguson’s theory of the anti-
political effects of development has continued relevance, albeit in global contexts and
relational configurations. In light of the discussion of this chapter, I propose that the
following changes in the anti-politics machine are involved in Millennium
Development:

1) In Millennium Development, poverty is depoliticized at the global level by the spectacle of the End-of-Poverty, in which poverty becomes a technical problem that anyone can help “solve” by donating money to non-governmental organizations and supporting their delivery of material goods and expert knowledge to local contexts where the power of corporate “partners” and markets is extended and enhanced;

2) The anti-politics machine of Millennium Development depoliticizes poverty at the global level by: a) reducing it to that which can be measured by a set of narrow statistical indicators confined to the Millennium Development Goals, b) promoting the ease and simplicity of realizing the utopian horizon of a worldwide End-of-Poverty through basic material interventions as modeled in the Millennium Villages, c) by promoting, with spectacular fervor, an anti-political politics like the Make Poverty History campaign that competes with anti-systemic social movements by appearing to offer an opportunity to participate in the “End of Poverty” but lacks the incredible time and energy required for actual grassroots movements.

In these ways, the anti-politics machine of global Millennium Development effectively channels hopes, conducts conduct, circumscribes possibilities and manages circulations of desire, things, bodies and behavior as a way of extending and expanding a form of power that operates through affirmation, an incredibly loud YES, rather than through repression, legislation, punishment or prohibition.
2. “We” can end poverty

On a gray afternoon in November of 2006, I stumbled on a cardboard hut with a thatched roof in the middle of Duke University’s gothic campus. Undergraduates milled around the structure, swaying to a U2 song playing from a boom box. An excited male undergraduate informed me that they had built an “African hut” to raise awareness about extreme poverty, the Millennium Development Goals and the Millennium Village Project. Duke and other local students were raising $750,000 to sponsor a Millennium Village. He handed me a flyer advertising the Friday appearance of Jeffrey Sachs as well as a number of other “Millennium Development Week” events, a “Hunger Lunch” and a “Poverty Dinner.”

“So, what are the Millennium Villages?” I asked.

“They’re these villages in Africa that are showing the world how poverty can be eliminated by empowering people to reach the Millennium Development Goals,” he

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<th>MONDAY, 11/6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Play the “Come of Life” 10am-2pm</td>
<td>Fair Trade Market 10am-2pm</td>
<td>FFP Peanut Shelling Machine 10am-2pm</td>
<td>Goal 7: Environmental Sustainability 10am-2pm</td>
<td>Dr. Jeffrey Sachs Speech 11am-12pm</td>
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<td>Goal 1. and 2. Child Mortality, Mothers and Child Health, and Women’s Empowerment</td>
<td>Goal 2: Extreme Poverty and Hunger</td>
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<td>Goal 6: Global Partnership for Development</td>
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<td>COMPETE Fundraiser 11am-4pm</td>
<td>Food and Drink 11am-4pm</td>
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<td>Do you really know what Food and Drink 6-8pm</td>
<td>Mission Fight 6-8pm</td>
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<td>for hungry kids again, 11:30am</td>
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<td>COMPETE Fundraiser 11am-4pm</td>
<td>Food and Drink 11am-4pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Come together for a great cause!</td>
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<td>Undergraduate Student Life 11am-noon</td>
<td>COMPETE Fundraiser 11am-4pm</td>
<td>Food and Drink 11am-4pm</td>
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Figure 9: Calendar of events for Millennium Development week at Duke University
explained. While the Millennium Villages had been founded at Columbia, he added, the joint North Carolina program would be the first university partner program to actually raise money to sponsor a Village. Could I contribute? I said that I’d rather not.

At the Sachs public lecture, the auditorium buzzed with excitement. “You might have thought we were waiting for a rock star to arrive,” a professor at UNC said. After enthusiastic applause and cheering calmed down, Sachs stood beside a giant screen, showing pictures of impoverished African children and citing harrowing statistics about global poverty, particularly in Africa. The lecture, like so many given by Sachs over the course of the decade, quickly drove to a hopeful point: “We can actually end poverty in our generation.” He painted the project in unequivocally grand terms:

This is a project which can not only capture the best of what we can know and what we can do, but can also shine a light that will be seen everywhere in the world and create a mass movement of change. We don’t need Washington. We need us and our partnership. We need to show the world what Duke, UNC and Bennett College can do.”

In March 2007, the enthusiasm of the students involved in the NC Millennium Villages Project remained high. In the course of that time, in fact, students had mobilized their family and friend networks to raise an astonishing $1.5 million in donations. The Project, as part of the bargain, had promised to send a student each summer as an intern to live in the very same Millennium Village that their money would be sponsoring.

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1 Jeffrey Sachs, lecture, November 10, 2006, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
In a small conference room, ten undergraduates representing the Duke-UNC-Bennett Millennium Villages presented their plans for their future partnership with the program on PowerPoint slides. They wore matching t-shirts, which were printed with the age-worn proverb that had long sustained American enthusiasm for endeavors like the Peace Corps: “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime.”

The anticipated internship would be a key part of a broader global poverty curriculum that the students wanted to develop as part of the Duke-UNC-Bennett collaboration. Joel Negin, a representative from Columbia University’s Earth Institute, which was running the Millennium Villages Project, listened quietly. While he did not refuse their proposal outright, he made a number of qualifications. “It might be difficult to convince the community….The farmers don’t really like so many outside visitors.” Negin, diplomatically, refused to make any firm commitment until a number of issues were considered at Columbia—management of the internship, logistics, cultural impacts, etc. Although the students had thought through many of the contingencies and offered suggestions, they were repeatedly met with a “we’ll see…” The internship and further partnership never happened.

Later that day, I rode with some students to a crowded Millennium Villages event at UNC Chapel Hill. Afternoon sun streamed in through the tall windows, making it uncomfortably warm. Negin presented the Millennium Village
accomplishments in a cluster of villages in western Kenya that the Millennium Villages Project grouped under the name “Sauri Millennium Village.” He explained that the money raised by the students would directly sponsor a sub-village called Marenyo. The students listened intently as he described the dimensions of extreme poverty facing Marenyo—malaria, hunger, isolation.

Then he broke the crowd up into teams to strategize how to deal with the “challenges of extreme poverty” and improve “life as a poor person in Africa,” as if the solutions were somehow just at hand. I found myself in the health group. We stumbled around with vague ideas for solutions to health crises of HIV and malaria. Access to medicine? Improvement of clinics? Given our lack of medical knowledge and/or experience living on the continent, we did not have much to write on the white posterboard we had been given. After that illusory democratic moment, we reconvened to offer suggestions before Negin outlined the “correct” answers to the dilemmas presented to us. Not only had Sachs and the Millennium Villages team solved the problems that seemed intractable to our small group, they had impressive statistics and pictures to show how their prescriptions, applied together or “holistically,” had already succeeded in raising crop yields, lowering malaria rates, and reducing school absence in the original Sauri Millennium Village cluster.

Later, I interviewed several students involved in the project. A female undergraduate from UNC said: “The MVP is about our common humanity and ending
poverty through comprehensive, community-driven development. We are bringing student groups together as catalysts of real change.” A spirit of collectivity animated students as they talked about the project. A student blog post on the NC Millennium Village website articulated this attitude best:

The MVP isn’t about me… and it isn’t about you. The MVP is about US for them; for people living in extreme poverty without any way out. So, don’t ask what YOU can do. Simply understand what WE can do. Who will WE be? … Ensure that our generation is the last to know poverty: A revolution is possible.

(Emphases in original)²

In both student statements, the Millennium Villages Project (MVP) is primarily defined as being foremost “about” some kind of collectivity. For the first student, ending poverty is ethically oriented by “common humanity,” a global “we” that seems to encompass both students and the poor. For the other student, MVP facilitates the becoming of a “we” identified as a collectivity that can do and be together as an “us for them.” That “we” is no empty gesture toward collectivity. For the students, it is an active, even revolutionary, subject with the capacity to “ensure our generation is the last to know poverty.” “Who WE will be” was a question that was actively lived, imagined and affectively processed in relationship to an idea of the Millennium Villages and the End of Poverty.

This illustrates the diverse multiplicity of new actors and partnerships that participate in development in its millennial mode. Like the Duke students, Carleton

²http://www.ncmvp.org/2007/03/ [last accessed on June 17, 2012].

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University students in Canada also responded to a particularly inspiring visit by Sachs by convincing students to add a fee to their annual tuition as a formal gesture of their partnership with the Millennium Villages and the End of Poverty projects. The university students joined together with corporate “partners” like Unilever, Sony-Ericsson, Tommy Hilfiger, and Lenovo as well as “partner” millionaires including George Soros, rock star John Legend, and Bill Gross, a billionaire who sold off his one million dollar stamp collection in order to support the Millennium Villages Project.

In this chapter, I look at how the anti-politics machine of Millennium Development directs potentially disruptive social desires for a better world toward the innocuous possibilities identified with a new, benevolent global collectivity—the “we” that can “end poverty.” In particular, I am interested in how the Millennium Villages function within the anti-politics machine as a node for the condensation of global utopian aspirations in relationship to which that “we” can find itself. As we see with the Duke students, the emergence of the “we” that can end poverty fulfills the students’ longing for a sense of identity (“who WE will be”) that is efficacious and, possibly, revolutionary. While the anti-politics machine of Cold War development served to entrench state bureaucratic structures and practices, this new global anti-politics machine, operating on the logic of circulatory biopower, channels potentially radical desires into the dominant flows of capital, power and subjectivity. The Duke students become a revolutionary “we” simply by raising over a million dollars for a Millennium
Village. The dominant flows and circulation not only remain unquestioned. They also receive an injection of ethical force that they would not otherwise have.

**Tales of a Development “We”**

The anti-politics machine of development has long operated as much through rhetoric and organizing public transcripts, which work on the imagination of those in the “developed” world, as it has through concrete interventions in “developing” areas. A major contribution of Arturo Escobar’s *Encountering Development* was his illustration of the ways in which development facilitated the geopolitical tale that coded the post-World War II political and economic world. What he calls the “Tale of Three Worlds” provided a new way of imagining global relations and obligations, particularly between the First and Third Worlds. “The political and economic order coded by the tale of three worlds and development rests on a traffic of meanings that mapped new domains of being and understanding,” he writes. He calls the foundational economic theories on which policy was based in the 1950s and 1960s “tales of growth and development.” In both cases, he chooses the term “tale” to emphasize these formative narratives as culturally imagined constructions that enable meaningful action in that specific milieu. He suggests that development institutions and actors rely on “setting up the world as a
picture, so that the whole can be grasped in some orderly fashion as forming a structure or system. In the case of the economist, the picture is provided by economic theory.”

For all the shortcomings now attributed to Escobar’s text, it remains a rare map of dominant, or at least significant, coordinates of meaning, social imagination, truth and power that gave form to global social and economic relations after World War II. Like Benedict Anderson, who denaturalized the emergence of “nations” and “national” belonging by showing them to be “imagined communities” constructed through ongoing practices of collective imagination, representation, metaphor and narrative, Escobar showed how “development” relied on techniques of sociocultural imagination through which those in the “First World” could come to understand themselves as benevolent modernizers in relationship to a “Third World” that was conceptualized as impoverished and in need of economic salvation. Efforts to relieve malnutrition, disease and other ravages of poverty could be understood both as concrete interventions and as practices that supported the dominant “tale of development” through which an imagined community of the “First World” came to identify itself and the “other” of the “Third World.”

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4 As discussed in the introduction.
Swiss historian Gilbert Rist adds an interesting dimension to Escobar’s “tales of development” by viewing them as doctrines of faith within development as a kind of secular religion. In *The History of Development*, Rist discusses the evolution of development as an evangelical form of the broader secular religion of modernity, with its unwavering faith in forward progress, economic growth and modern technology as the keys to a utopian world in which abundance can come to all. In theorizing a religious function of development, Rist draws on sociologist Emile Durkheim, who defined religion as “an eminently social thing” which serves to create social cohesion through shared meanings, moral codes, rituals, beliefs, myths and other collective liturgies. In development, secular myths like the tales of growth and capital described by Escobar, alongside practical rituals of aid and donation, help build social cohesion among “believers” — those who pin their hopes for a better world to development concepts and collectively-held truths.

In Rist’s view, understanding development as a key branch of the secular religion of modernity helps explain why the history of accumulated failures has done little to shake the basic faith in the utopian promise of a world without poverty and suffering that can be fulfilled when experts find the right combination of aid modalities — economic, social, technological, epistemological, etc. As doctrines of faith,

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beliefs transcend mere facts and, thus, have incredible resilience among those whose social cohesion and collective identity depends on its indisputable truth. Even internal contradictions rarely shake a religious foundation, as they can always be attributed to faulty interpretation or human failings. Rist compares the faith of development experts to the unshaken faith of Christians who know the history of crimes committed in the name of their religion—slavery, genocide, colonization, imperialism—and still continue to uphold it.

Development faith, however, should not be understood as a merely cognitive or symbolic phenomenon of belief or shared social imaginary. It is, in fact, practiced into being through embodied rituals, spectacles, conducts, affective responses and choices. Anthropologist Talal Asad has thoroughly elaborated this practical, embodied dimension of religion. Asad critiques approaches to religion that overemphasize the “symbolic,” interpretive registers of “faith” while overlooking embodied, practical dimensions—the everyday enactments of belief that shape and produce subjectivities, dispositions and desires. Like Rist, Asad returns briefly to Durkheim’s theory of religion in Genealogies of Religion. He draws out Durkheim’s emphasis on the materiality of “public festivals, ceremonies and rights of all kinds” in actively producing the social cohesion and meaningful conduct that religious faith facilitates. Power may be celebrated in doctrines and symbols of faith at the level of representations or organizing
myths, Asad argues, “but it is not thereby secured.”⁶ “Embodied practices (including language use) form a precondition for varieties of religious experience,” Asad writes.⁷ It is crucial to Asad that we understand those techniques as taught and learned in their performances. Just as religious faith does not simply happen magically in an ether, we must assume that “tales of development” do not secure their subjects by remaining in the realm of rhetoric and cognitive belief. Asad pushes us to ask how development as a secular “religion” that fosters a meaningful global collectivity actually appears and is enacted by its believers.

Within this framework, the activities of the Millennium Villages Project in North Carolina take on new significance. What dispositions or subjectivities are created through the concrete, embodied practices of raising money, building a mud hut on campus, rallying for Sachs, participating in small problem-solving groups, designing and wearing t-shirts or strategizing possible partnerships with a village in Africa? What organizing tale of development is performed into being by the students? Clearly, the faith performed by Duke students differs from the Cold War faith in the tale of three worlds. It is not a faith in the First World or the nation. When they gather in the problem-solving groups or raise money to partner directly with a Millennium Village in

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⁷ Ibid., 33.
Africa, they bring to life and shape the social cohesion of another collectivity that transcends national or geographical borders.

We have seen in Chapter One that the world has entered a new biopolitical mode of development, as Escobar discussed in the early 1990s. As such, one might surmise that new organizing “tales of development” would befit a world of circulatory power that thrives by proliferating flows. As we will discuss throughout this chapter, the emergence of a utopian global “we” – exactly the “we” that I observed with the North Carolina Millennium Villages Project— is central to such new organizing tale of development and the dominant, anti-political flows of capital, commodities and desire that it strengthens. While the “tale of three worlds” served as an effective public transcript in Cold War development (1949-1989), a new tale of global solidarity and common humanity in relationship to the “shared future”8 promised in the Millennium Declaration has taken its place. The differences can be observed in the different collective “we”—subjects that have served as heroes of the development romance.

A particularly noble “we” appeared at the very inception of the Cold War tale of development in President Truman’s 1949 inaugural address. “We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of scientific advances and industrial progress

available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas,” he said.  

That “we” referred to the citizens of the United States, whom he was specifically addressing in his speech. Prior to World War II, European colonialism and imperialism had predominantly organized relationships between prosperous industrial nations in the North and colonies or former colonies in the South, which provided raw materials for industrialization—sugar, cotton, minerals, etc. After Truman’s speech, that relationship became one of development and poverty alleviation in the “underdeveloped areas.” Similarly, in his inauguration speech, President Kennedy proclaimed that “we pledge our best efforts” to “those people in huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery.” Again, the “we” referred to the nation and national action. Kennedy’s speech would usher in the first “Development Decade” devoted to ending hunger.

These early speeches share a number of common assumptions and ways of thinking about development with the contemporary iterations voiced by celebrities. It is the subtle difference between them, however, that gestures toward the emergence of another organizing tale of global possibility.

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10 As described by dependency theorists in the 1970s.

Truman (1949): We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas... For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve suffering of these people... Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens.

Kennedy (1961): To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves... If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

Jolie (2005): Rich nations have seen fit to look away from extreme poverty. But, did you know that we can wipe it off our planet in just twenty years?’

Bono (2005): We can be the generation that no longer accepts that an accident of latitude determines whether a child lives or dies—but will we be that generation? Will we in the West realize our potential or will we sleep in the comfort of our affluence with apathy and indifference murmuring softly in our ears?

Sachs (2006):

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We can actually end poverty in our generation…This is a project which can not only capture the best of what we can know and what we can do, but can also shine a light that will be seen everywhere in the world and create a mass movement of change. We don't need Washington.

All five statements hail a “we” that can save others from poverty and suffering, but the “we” is not the same. The two presidents speak from national podiums to address a “we” of fellow Americans and speak of national action, primarily financial aid. Development is a national project and moral duty, achievable through American leadership and enterprise. In contrast, Jolie speaks on a popular television channel to a predominantly young, middle class audience located anywhere in the world, a “we” loosely united as viewers of a film whether on television, in the DVDs distributed to US teachers or on the Internet—a vague global “we” subject that includes a Hollywood star, an elite economist and a “you” who could, theoretically, be anyone watching MTV or downloading the video from YouTube.

With the rise of global biopower, another “we” begins to take shape in the new globally-circulating flows of bodies, capital, knowledge and possibility. “We don’t need Washington,” Jeffrey Sachs told the Duke University students in 2006. To end global poverty, “we need us and our partnership.” When Jolie tells viewers that “rich nations have seen fit to look away from extreme poverty,” she likewise distinguishes the “we”

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.
that can end poverty from any national collectivity or state institution. The power to end poverty is in the hands of a “generation”—people with no other commonality beyond occupying the planet at the same time. Additionally, while Truman and Kennedy speak within the basic state structures, Bono, Jolie and Sachs all invoke revolutionary tones to animate a “mass movement of change” that seems to challenge, if only slightly, existing structures in order to make room for a new collective subject of possibility. The tale of development becomes a story about us, a global “we” that can achieve a utopian society free of want and the suffering. In the face of a world in which the 85 richest people possess more capital than 3.5 billion of the poorest, a utopian horizon emerges, in which the stark realities of global poverty and inequality disappear and a hopeful “we” forms with the power to alleviate poverty with the social relations, tools, knowledge and skills of the present. This chapter maps some of the practical liturgies, actions and relays through which that imagined global “we” takes shape, accrues cultural capital and becomes embodied. In particular, I explore how the Millennium Villages, and Africa more broadly, offer a utopian mirror in which global audiences find themselves affirmed as collective subjects with a kind of messianic power to save the world from poverty—and the moral duty to do so—in highly circumscribed ways that fit neatly into the bandwidth of acceptable, innocuous practices and discourses.

"We" Can End Poverty

In 2005, accompanied by cameras from MTV, the global television channel for popular music and culture, actress Angelina Jolie, who is known for her interest in global philanthropy, travelled with Jeffrey Sachs to witness the success of Sauri firsthand. Sauri had been inaugurated as a Millennium Village less than a year earlier, but there were plenty of what Sachs would call “quick wins” to put on display. Computers had been donated for the schools, fertilizer had been donated by the multinational fertilizer company Yara International and the maize fields were tall, thick and green.

The film begins abruptly, cutting to Jolie sitting in a field with an unnamed boy in a well-worn school uniform. The boy receives no introduction. The actress needs none. Only she and the boy are visible on camera. The film begins with a question. Jolie asks, “What does he want to be when he grows up?”

“A pilot,” the boy responds.

Jolie lifts her eyebrows in surprise and repeats “pilot” with an interrogative rise in tone. She follows up with another question about the boy’s desires: “Do you have a place you want to go?”

“Switzerland.”

“Switzerland?” Jolie asks with the same cadence of surprise. Then, she asks: “What is your biggest concern?”
“Food.”

This particular conversation seems like an odd place to start. As viewers, we never learn the boy’s name or background story. The boy needs no introduction; he stands in for a poor African boy anywhere in “Africa.” This image has been effectively equated with “poverty” in hundreds of commercials for donations and child sponsorship, media coverage of famines and crisis and other modes of representation. Only after living in Sauri and watching multiple screenings of the film in Sauri with neighbors and acquaintances did I learn that his name was Cecil. I came to know Cecil’s family, none of whom knew that their relative had been a key figure in a globally-circulating documentary from MTV.

Cecil desires the same future as any random boy who has access to a full range of global possibilities and privileges open to him. He aspires, in other words, to enter the world that belongs to Jolie. Conveniently, there she is, the global celebrity, seated with him in the grass, making it seem as if only his poverty, which she narrates in the next frame, stands between him and the global circuit of possibility in which he could become a pilot. That opening scene introduces us to a world of impossibilities by highlighting how hopes that could belong to any boy in the world are cut off by poverty and hunger. Yet it is also a strange world in which the vast inequality between Jolie and the boy evaporates. Here are two people just sitting and chatting together in the grass.
If we read the beginning of the film closely, we can follow an intriguing transfer of creative agency, possibility and hope from the Village (represented in the first scene by Cecil) to Sachs, Jolie and a global “we” whom they repeatedly reference. The film begins with a high level of hope and possibility—a boy’s desire to become a pilot and travel to distant places. Quickly, however, Jolie dampens whatever hope the scene starts to raise by bringing attention to the boy’s hunger and poverty as a limit of impossibility. She pulls the conversation back from the open field of possibilities to the constraints of hunger.

The affective tone continues to darken as Jolie describes the wider context of poverty in which she found the boy. Classic images of poverty accompany her mournful narration: A starving baby stares, barefoot children carry heavy buckets of water up a steep hill, an emaciated woman languishes in an overcrowded row of hospital beds, more sad children pose silently in front of a dilapidated building in the middle of Sauri. Jolie reads her lines slowly, with somber gravitas, as the images flash across the screen:

Extreme poverty means not having enough food to feed your family, walking long distances bare foot to collect safe water to drink. Hospitals overflowing with patients suffering from diseases that should be preventable. Rich nations have seen fit to look away from extreme poverty. But, did you [MTV viewers] know that we [Sachs+Jolie+MTV viewers] can wipe it off our planet in just twenty years?”

The rise in musical affect continues as she informs us that “the situation seems impossible. But now we are going to Sauri and we will be able to see the beginnings of something that could be hopeful.” She then takes us to an airfield to meet the man whose
vision carries the hope to which Jolie alludes. “I traveled to Africa with Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, the world’s leading expert on extreme poverty, to explore how we can solve inconceivable problems with very simple interventions,” she states.

The locus and agency of hope, the “something that could be hopeful” has been fully transferred from the boy whose hopes were cut off by hunger to the economist and the actress at the forefront of a “we” that can wipe poverty off the planet and solve inconceivable problems. Cecil’s particular hopes are replaced with the “something hopeful” that Sachs has envisioned. With this symbolic displacement, the film proceeds with the assumption that the MDG future and the desired future of the community are one and the same. Throughout the rest of the film, Saurians are only allowed to speak to present conditions and challenges (amount of harvest, food, living conditions, etc.) while Sachs and Jolie maintain the exclusive authority to speak of future possibilities, Sauri’s future and the global potential that it embodies. The key actors speak through the community but community members themselves do not speak to any future possibility.

As the film ends, Sachs makes a bold assertion: “What happened in this village can happen in the next village and the next village and the next village and it can happen all over Africa. Jolie adds, “It is possible to end poverty. I really am convinced of it now that I’ve seen this…We can push them as a people, we can absolutely do it.”

Speaking to MTV and Internet viewers around the world, Jolie hails a salvific, agentic “we” that can “solve inconceivable problems with very simple interventions,”
with just an Internet connection through which to donate money. Viewers find themselves interpellated into a global “we” with the capacity to “wipe [poverty] off our planet.” Jolie’s virtual “we” fortifies a virtual “social glue” that holds together a new “we” of development. Throughout the film, the Sauri community serves as a passive, silent backdrop, a “they,” to be saved through the messianic agency of Jolie, Sachs and the amorphous global “we” implicit on the other side of the screen.

_We can end poverty_. The often-repeated refrain reveals a circuit of emergence and co-articulation between each of the terms—between the “we”, practical actions (can) and the utopian horizon of the end of poverty. Each calls forth and strengthens the others while purifying the messy reality of poverty, hunger and suffering, as well as the complexities of the “we.” For example, in the case of the Duke students, practical liturgies like fundraising, building a mud hut on campus, eating a “poverty dinner,” buying a t-shirt, cheering on Sachs as he enters the auditorium, blogging about the experience and problem-solving in small groups all bring a “we” into being with the end of poverty on its horizon. The utopian end of poverty stimulates the emergence of a “we” and the practices that are prescribed for it. That circuit is quotidian but also global in scope and continuous as it involves myriad relays between actors, representations and the material world. The circuit of co-articulation between the global “we,” practices and the utopian horizon produces a new kind of social cohesion that transcends nation, geography, race, gender and class, even as these categories of belonging continue to
exist. Yet for all the utopian spirit associated with this “we,” these actions remain bound to the present order and present technologies. In the circuit, the present is purified and perfected. “We” already have the means to end poverty. Utopia is within the horizons of the present. The Millennium Villages and Africa more broadly serve as silent mirrors in which the drama of the Western fantasy unfolds as “we” act—donate $5 for a bed net, watch a film, attend a benefit concert or sponsor a child.

**Wish Transfer Machine**

In a brief *New York Times* review entitled “Angelina and Jeff’s Excellent Ideas,” Saurians disappear entirely as the author focuses on Jolie’s incredible perseverance in a “dirt-poor, steaming hot, HIV-AIDS infested village smack on the equator.” He extols “Angelina and Jeff’s excellent ideas” on display in Sauri as model of development for “global leaders [who] have a way of making big promises they don’t keep.” “Ms. Jolie is dead right when she says that putting money into village-level programs could do much to alleviate poverty,” the reporter opines. “These are simple smart and effective things: purchasing treated bed nets for battling malaria, providing malnourished children with a meal at school.” He ends the article with a vague call-to-action that he sets apart in its

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own paragraph: “It is time to transfer all those nice wishes at the top of the world food chain to those at the bottom.”

While that call may only have only been intended as a bit of rhetorical flourish, it discloses underlying depths of cultural assumptions, hopes, beliefs, values and configurations of possibility that lie just beneath the surface of innocuous endeavors to send bed nets and feed hungry children. The final sentence opens onto the substratal global social imaginary in which the Millennium Villages and the End-of-Poverty promise facilitate the cohesiveness of the new global “we.” Several questions can be explored from the reporter’s call as point of departure. First, what social imaginary or implicit understanding of social existence is implied by the metaphor of a “world food chain”? What exactly are the “nice wishes” at the top of the food chain? How are they transferred? What function do the “nice wishes” serve in the “world food chain”?

Interrogating these issues may clarify the social imaginary that underpins Millennium Development and the End-of-Poverty vision.

A “food chain” is, by basic biological definition, a hierarchy of predatorial consumption in which “those at the top” depend on those “below” them—weaker, smaller, less intelligent or otherwise disadvantaged—as their source of food. When the Times writer describes the global socioeconomic order as a “world food chain,” he betrays an understanding of the social world as similarly organized. Those at the top

21 Ibid.
may transfer wishes, but their mode of survival requires preying on those at the bottom. The “world food chain” analogy exposes the seemingly banal “ladder of development” metaphor at the heart of Jeffrey Sachs’ economic worldview. While the image changes slightly, the social imaginary of the “ladder of development” is practically identical to the “world food chain.” For Sachs, the problem of extreme poverty is not the ladder organization of the world itself. The problem is that some people have been kept off the ladder entirely—those in Sauri and elsewhere who are plagued by “extreme poverty.” They need to be helped onto the first rung. He explains in *The End of Poverty:*

> Parts of the world are caught in a downward spiral of impoverishment, hunger and disease. It is no good to lecture the dying that they should have done better with their lot in life. Rather, it is our task to help them onto the ladder of development, at least to gain a foothold on the bottom rung, from which they can then proceed to climb on their own... At the most basic level, the key to ending extreme poverty is to enable the poorest of the poor to get their foot on the ladder of development. The development ladder hovers overhead, and the poorest of the poor are stuck beneath it.\(^{23}\)

The End-of-Poverty, as defined by Sachs, means gaining a “foothold on the bottom rung.” What does the bottom rung look like? Sachs provides a paradigm case when he describes sweatshop workers in Bangladesh’s garment sector as a “critical, measurable step up from the villages in Africa.” After reading interviews with young Bangladeshi women who work in the garment factories, he acknowledges their suffering, having to

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\(^{23}\) Ibid., 244.
“work with almost no break at all or perhaps a very short lunch break, with little chance to go to the lavatory.” He puts emphasis, however on the fact that “what was most striking and unexpected about the stories was the repeated affirmation that this work was the greatest opportunity these women could ever have imagined and that their employment had changed their lives for the better.”24 Could ever have imagined. Surely, the women have imagined better lives on a daily basis, though they may not have considered those imaginings possible within the horizon of present material conditions, power configurations and social relations characteristic of the ladder or food chain. Sachs encloses the extent of their imagination within the limited confines of the organization of the world as it is currently organized, a move that neatly aligns global possibilities with the image of a ladder. Without considering how the interviews might have been shaped by the interests of the newspaper, by the incentive to keep their jobs, by fear of the public eye or by any number of other factors, Sachs takes the newspaper narratives at face value. “For these young women, these factories offer not only opportunities for personal freedom, but also the first rung on the ladder of rising skills and income for themselves and, within a few years, for their children,” Sachs concludes.

He goes on to criticize “rich-world protesters” who insist that the Bangladeshi garment workers should be paid higher wages because it would increase wages “beyond worker productivity” and essentially force the factories to close, resulting in “a

24 Ibid., 12.
ticket for these women back to rural misery.” The fact that the average Bangladeshi garment factory worker earns 24 cents an hour, or $2.40 for ten hours of labor, is implicitly accepted by Sachs as a fair reflection of “worker productivity” or the market value of human labor time in Bangladesh. The “ladder of development,” like the “world food chain” is based on a background social imagination in which some lives rank higher in value than others. The possibility that corporations like Walmart, Gap and H&M and, hence, their consumers, might pay more for clothing so that workers might receive living wages does not cross Sachs’ radar because that radar is governed by the lens of a predatory food chain and the wish to sustain daily global habits of cheap consumption that are built into that ladder of predation. Instead of trying to change the coordinates of existing possibility, he argues, “rich-world protesters [against sweatshops]…should support increased numbers of such jobs, albeit under safer working conditions, by protesting trade protectionism in their own countries.”

Sachs’ example of the Bangladeshi garment industry as the first rung on the “ladder of development” is a telling one, particularly in the wake of the 2013 fire and collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory that killed over 1,130 Bangladeshis, who

25 Ibid., 12.
26 Ibid., 12.
will never have the opportunity to evaluate the “opportunities” afforded to them on the bottom rung of the ladder. What the Rana Plaza disaster brings to the foreground is how similar the “ladder of development” is to a “world food chain” insofar as it operates as a hierarchy of predatory consumption that is generally accepted as the natural order of things. We might view the mortal collapse of the building as a metaphor for the actual crushing movement of the ladder and the practices of crushing that sustain it.

When Sachs and Jolie speak about ending poverty, they are not thinking of improving the precarious conditions for workers in Bangladesh and across the Global South. The women represented in the state-run newspaper who celebrated the opportunities provided by low wage factory jobs have already integrated the “nice wishes” of the global social imaginary—the global version of the American dream in which enduring exploitation in sweatshop factories is justified as a natural, universal “step” up the ladder on the way toward economic prosperity and modernity through universalized “stages” of economic growth and development. As Sachs puts it, “These women share the experience of many generations of immigrants to New York City’s garment district…where their migration to toil in garment factories was a step on the path to a future of urban affluence in succeeding generations.”

What we see in Sachs’ interpretation of the Bangladeshi women’s foothold on the ladder is that the wishes and dreams at the top of the ladder have been projected

28 Sachs, End of Poverty, 12.
“down” onto those below, who are expected to fashion themselves in those hopeful images. Then, when “we” look down the ladder, “we” see potential and opportunity rather than a vast gulf of economic inequality and barriers to basic survival with dignity.

The idea of transferring wishes from the top to the bottom raises interesting questions. What might it mean to transfer immaterial “wishes”? Our discussion of the emergence of the global “we” suggests interpreting that transfer of wishes is more complicated than it appears on the surface. I would suggest that Millennium Development operates as an interesting wish-transfer machine through which those at the top project (transfer) their wishes for utopian globalization—a global “we” that is radically hopeful and also fully possible within the confines of present social relations and material givens. In fact, wish-transfer might be understood as part of the operation of the broader anti-politics machine of development in its neo-liberal, global form. As circulatory biopower works through the “conduct of conduct” in flows of capital, knowledge, and subjectivity, it makes sense that the anti-political function would have to do on the mobilizing desires that shape conduct rather than with state bureaucratic power.
The popular myth of the end of poverty portrays enabled individuals at the bottom of the food chain forming a self-concept that positively shapes their choices and actions. The global “we” that can end poverty is not a “we” that is predicated on radically unequal and unjust conditions. It is, instead, full of potential for oneness—if the right choices are made to make globalization a “positive force,” as laid out in the Millennium Declaration. To create that image of globalization’s potential, the wish-transfer machine of Millennium Development alchemizes present realities and transfers the “nice wishes” that result from that process onto the others whose suffering and poverty is necessary for the sustenance of the current order.29

In conceiving of Millennium Development as a wish-transfer machine, I am interpreting the term “transfer” through the lens of psychoanalysis. The classic psychoanalytic concept of transference refers to the redirection of emotional energy from one person or object that is somehow inaccessible or lost onto a present substitute. Freud understood transference as part of the healing process of psychoanalysis. By unconsciously transferring desires, wishes and feelings from childhood toward one’s parents onto the therapist, the patient could eventually let them go.30 Recent psychological research indicates that Freud may have been partly right about the


process of transference, although the phenomenon is much broader than the projection of childhood sentiments alone. Psychologists Susan Andersen and Regina Miranda have carried out interesting clinical research in which they find that emotionally-laden representations, relationships and beliefs developed in one’s past are frequently activated in everyday life when responding to unrelated people, relations and contexts in the present. The process of transference, they observe, produces shifts in “the working self-concept—how we see ourselves at the moment.” The affective resonance with the absent figure or desire brings to life the past relationship in the present and continues to shape one’s own self-identity and present subjectivity.

In their comprehensive review of literature on transference, psychologists Jan Grant and Jim Crawley suggest that transference be understood as “this mirror to the self [that] provides clients with a picture of their internal world and how they organize their experiences of relationships with others.” Although all transference is to some degree mirror transference—finding aspects of the self—desires, dreams and fantasies as

31 Jacques Lacan made transference central to his own psychoanalysis in “Intervention on Transference,” Écrits, trans. B. Fink, (Norton: London, 2006). He defines transference as “the reality of the unconscious.” For Gilles Deleuze transference is a “theatrical and dramatic operation” of repetition, which does not “so much serve to identify events, persons and passions as to authenticate the roles and select the masks” (Difference and Repetition, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 19). I take this to mean that transference should not be interpreted as a mere transposition of the resemblance of the past onto the other so much as it is a creative transfer of the roles and masks that one has willed in the past.


well as memories and beliefs—in the other, psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut uses the term “mirror transference” to refer to a particular kind of transference that mobilizes a grandiose self-image the confirmation of which is projected onto the other. The basic narrative is “I am perfect and you confirm it.”

One might think of the wish-transference machine as doing such projection at a sociocultural level. Those at the bottom become screens onto which the perfection and goodness of those at the top is projected. In that sense, the bottom becomes the site of utopian fantasies in which wishes for globalization as a positive force are fulfilled. When we approach the representations of the Millennium Villages and African poverty more broadly as a wish-transference machine, we begin to perceive how they act as mirrors in which a lost dream of collectivity and solidarity is resurrected and seems to come to life as a force that is capable of ending poverty. The Millennium Villages and Africa enable the projection of a “we” that is, in fact, lost or unavailable to us in the actual order of contemporary globalization in which the poverty of the vast majority is necessary to sustain the inordinate wealth and comfort of the select few.

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34 Grant and Crawley, *Transference and Projection*, 52. Kohut developed the concept in “The Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders” (1968) and in his *Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971). Although taken to pathological extremes in narcissism, mirror transference is particular to the “grandiose sector” of all selves, which he theorizes as being constituted of three sectors. The “grandiose sector” requires “confirming, mirroring and accepting responses and needs to know how important or special he is to significant others.” See Heinz Kohut, “The psychoanalytic treatment of narcissistic personality disorders,” in *The Search for the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1978), vol. 1, 477-509.
The sociocultural operation of the wish-transfer machine is akin to what the American author James Baldwin called an alchemy of “innocence.” Writing in the era of Jim Crow and racial segregation in the United States, Baldwin observed that Americans had a keen capacity for transforming the difficult contradictions and horrors of racism and segregation into “innocent” narratives that could short-circuit public discussion and debate. To Baldwin, the American Dream of opportunity for all, the myth that “in America anyone can do anything,” epitomized this strange capacity (590). The rhetoric of possibility and hope that promoted the American dream functioned as part of a process of transformation that exceeded any one individual. He wrote:

Americans have the most remarkable ability to alchemize bitter truths into an innocuous but piquant confection and to transform their moral contradictions, or public discussion of such contradictions, into proud decoration, such as those given for heroism on the field of battle.35

The alchemizing of bitter truths into piquant confections amounted to a “defense of the dreaming and the dream,” according to Baldwin.36 The rhetoric of possibility amounted to an attempt to distract the public from real limits and inherent impossibilities of a profoundly asymmetrical and unjust socioeconomic order. Baldwin wrote:


36 Baldwin, “Lockridge, the American myth,” in Baldwin Collected Essays, 589.
The gulf between our dream and the realities that we live with is something that we do not understand and do not wish to admit. It is almost as though we were asking that others look at what we want and turn their eyes, away from what we are.\textsuperscript{37}

In the wish-transfer machine’s alchemy of innocence, “what we want”—genuine utopia that obliterates the systemic conditions of poverty— is eviscerated and becomes a one-dimensional image of itself. The gaze of those watching the MTV documentary or drawn into reading an article on the Millennium Villages is not drawn to Sauri and the Millennium Villages in order to see the multi-dimensional, complicated people who live, struggle, squabble, love and die there as they work with real constraints. Rather, they look toward the Villages or to Africa as a kind of mirror in which they may see the best dimensions of themselves reflected back to them. In the wish-transference machine of Millennium Development and the End of Poverty, Sauri and the Millennium Villages (and the more abstract African targets of related campaigns and projects) become utopian mirrors for the projections of social dreams, desires and attachments. A global “we” finds itself in that mirror and forges a fantastic collective identity in relationship to it. I look into the mirror of Sauri or other Millennium Villages or Africa in general and see confirmation of globalization as a beneficent, creative force, see the efficacy of new global partnerships, see the better world that existing knowledge and technology can create. I look to that virtual space of the horizon amidst the chaos and confusion of the

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 593.
present and the mirror of the end of poverty gives me back an innocent world that is ordered, purified and perfected, its contradictions contained, its evils erased, its historical specificity lost.\textsuperscript{38}

It should be noted that the wish-transfer machine of Millennium Development needs “Africa” as the space of death and impoverishment at the bottom of the “world food chain.” The wishes must have a surface onto which they can be projected. Because “Africa” has historically been imagined as the global ghetto where the worst of human suffering, violence and misery manifest, it steps easily into that role.\textsuperscript{39}

The kind of alchemy of innocence that we see at work in the particular wish-transfer machine of Millennium Development can also be grasped as part of a broader anti-political trend within contemporary capitalism. In \textit{First as Tragedy, Second as Farce}, critical theorist Slavoj Zizek sketches the contours of what he sees as a “new spirit of capitalism” emerging in the contemporary globalized milieu. Zizek dubs the dominant trend in consumption within this new spirit of “cultural capitalism,” which is characterized by a shift in the underlying motivation for consumption. “We primarily buy commodities neither on account of their utility nor as status symbols,” Zizek explains. “We buy them to get the experience provided by them, we consume them in

\textsuperscript{38} Image is from www.MillenniumPromise.org [last accessed on June 10, 2010].

\textsuperscript{39} Achebe (1990), Mudimbe (1988) Mbembe (2001) all discuss how Africa has been ghettoized in the Western imagination as a space of lack, poverty and conflict. Need details for these.
order to render our lives pleasurable and meaningful.” Consumption becomes much more than keeping up with the Joneses. As part of that attempt to render our lives “meaningful,” consumption enters the domain of morality. Our purchasing choices become ethical choices. What we consume indicates our degree of goodness. For example, Hilton Hotels promote travel as not only about getting from place A to place B. “It should make us better people,” their ad claims. Zizek discusses how this new spirit of capitalism shows up in a simple stop at Starbucks. The ad at the counter reads: “It’s not just what you’re buying, it’s what you’re buying into...When you buy at Starbucks, whether you realize it or not, you’re buying into something bigger than a cup of coffee. You’re buying into a coffee ethic.” The ad goes on to say how a portion of profits go to the “Starbucks Shared Planet” program to purchase Fair Trade coffee and support the well-being of farmers as well as provide “comfy chairs, good music and the right atmosphere to dream.” As Zizek explains, the price of coffee is higher at Starbucks because you are buying into the “coffee ethic, which includes care for the environment, social responsibility toward producers along with caring for a communal space where dreaming (presumably about the good world you are helping to create) can happen. Zizek identifies another example of “cultural capitalism” in the refrigerated drink section where Starbucks sells Ethos bottled water. Buying a bottle of Ethos will enable the Starbucks foundation to help “an estimated 420,000 people gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.” The act of consumption becomes an apparent act of
participating in a collective project to resolve the fundamental violence of worker and land exploitation by enjoying a white chocolate mocha. By buying into the coffee ethic of apparent worker justice, we purchase an identity of ourselves as conscious, concerned global citizens, unimplicated in the systemic inequality that enables us to drive a car to Starbucks to spend five dollars on a superfluous (nourishment-free) drink.

According to Zizek, this mode of pseudo-activism through consumption enables capitalism to digest and incorporate the legacy of the social movements of the 1960s (the feminist movement, civil rights movement, the radical upheavals of 1968, etc.). He writes, “The true inheritance of 68 is a shift toward this kind of activist consumption as a way to create collectivity and meaning…the ‘spirit of 68’ transposed into a depoliticized pseudo-activity (new lifestyles, etc.), the very form of social passivity.” The dominant ideology of capitalism appears as its opposite, as non-ideology or revolutionary, as in the classic example of a worldwide industry selling Che Guevara t-shirts. In this economy of mystification, the fetishization of good alternative possibilities (worker justice, food for the starving, medicine for HIV patients, clean water, an end to extreme poverty) in commodified forms displaces the bigger problem of a system that requires mass impoverishment to support the lifestyles (and comfy chairs) of a minority. The collective energy that might have been directed toward the imagination and activation of alternative possibilities for deeper social change is invested in non-threatening forms and identities, what Baldwin would call “piquant confections.”
**All Those Nice Wishes**

What can be learned about “what we want” by paying attention to one-dimensional reflections in the utopian mirror of the Millennium Villages and related global projects linked to the MDGs, including the Make Poverty History campaign? What are the “nice wishes” that we find repeated and projected onto the Millennium Villages or Africa more broadly? We can, I suggest, extract four such wishes from the articles, films, ads and commercials that constitute the popular mediascape of Millennium Development. I approach the representations as functioning within the wish-transfer machine and, thus, reflective of a substrate of social desire flowing through the global social imaginary. Of course, we must focus not only on the cognitive dimension of the “nice wishes” but also on how they are practiced into being and become part of a shared cultural constellation of meaning, value and desire. In the popular mediascape surrounding the MDGs and the Millennium Villages, I identify five “nice wishes” transferred (in the psychoanalytic sense) onto the other of the Millennium Villages or Africa generically. Together, I would argue, these constitute key coordinates in the new tale of development for the 21st century. They are:

1A. That a benevolent global “we” exists, that “we” really are in this together and that such solidarity can facilitate the creation of a new and better world.
1B. That the present global “we” has messianic, utopian capacities to end world poverty and suffering and comes into being in relationship to that possibility.
2. That hope and revolutionary possibility for a better world themselves still exist within the horizons of our existing order.
3. That poverty can be resolved through our present objects and practices of consumption.
4. That corporations can also find themselves in the moral “we" and be partners in ending poverty.

1. That a “we" exists and has messianic capacities to end world poverty and suffering.

The “we" invoked by Angelina Jolie in her MTV special about Sauri echoes across myriad mediums and contexts, as we saw with the demonstration hut erected at Duke University. Recall Sachs’ statement in his North Carolina speech: “We can actually end poverty in our generation...This is a project which can not only capture the best of what we can know and what we can do...We need us and our partnership.” In other words, the Millennium Villages and the opportunity to end poverty precipitate the possibility of enacting the best of “we can know and what we can do” can be discovered. A year later, the student blogger made the same kind of statement when she urged her fellow students to discover “who WE will be” in relationship to “people living in extreme poverty without any way out.”

According to Sachs, “The end of poverty will require a global network of cooperation among people who have never met and who do not necessarily trust each other.” The practical unfolding of the end of poverty in the contemporary mediascape hails that “we” into being, as we saw in the Jolie film. The collective “we" that can end poverty repeatedly surfaces in many new campaigns linked to the MDGs. Most obviously, the central organizing slogan of the UN Millennium Campaign was: We Can End Poverty 2015. The “we" of global unity also appears in the childlike drawings that the UN uses to promote the MDG 8. The drawing, interestingly, depicts four bodies
merged into one with four separate heads. The ideal of partnership is represented as a singular collective body.

![Figure 11: The Eighth MDG from UN Millennium Campaign](image)

Likewise, the “we” resonated in the rallies and Live 8 concerts that accompanied the Make Poverty History campaign in 2005, the power of the global “we” had more time in the spotlight than any concrete proposal for action. The American actors Will Smith and Brad Pitt, speaking at two different Live 8 events, exemplify the trend:

*We make a declaration of inter-dependence today that we hold to be a self-evident truth: that we are all in this together.* (Will Smith opening Live 8 in Philadelphia)\(^40\)

*We the fortunate, let us remind each other this is what we stand for, this is who we are.* (Brad Pitt at Live 8 in London)\(^41\)

Again, collective identity—“who we are”—is defined by a relationship of inter-dependence in which “we the fortunate” bear a certain responsibility to others. Of course, “we the fortunate” are not those who seek to create a world without poverty. If

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“we” were, “we” would occupy a radically different world instead of one of rapidly widening inequality and deepening poverty.

One might say that the global “we” emerging in these discourses is aspirational and utopian, one of the central “nice wishes” transferred onto those at the bottom of the world food chain. It is a “we,” a collective subject that does not exist except in relationship to a particular horizon of future possibility. At the same time, this virtuous “we” is also generated and becomes real through myriad practices of those whom the discourse enlists. Bracelets are purchased; donations are made; letters are written; money is raised; videos are watched; websites are visited; marches are marched. All are done or represented with a kind of fervor and excitement that exceeds the manifest action.

Returning to the analogy of development religion, we might say that the “we” that “can solve inconceivable problems” is endowed with a kind of messianism that shores up this new global group identity. In The History of Development, Gilbert Rist discusses such heralding of the imminent solution to the world’s problems in present—“new era rich in promises and eschatological hopes.”—as a particularly messianic tendency in development faith. He gives a clear sociological definition of messianism as:

a form of impatience with an unkept promise, a wish to take the belief literally and to make it come true hic et nunc by foreshortening history, by jumping ahead to a better world formerly promised for the afterlife or for a distant
future... The ‘true believers’ differ from others by their urge to create the new world straight away, instead of prolonging the wait.\textsuperscript{42}

The Duke students, Jeffrey Sachs, Angelina, Jolie, Bono and the many donors who buy into the vision of the end of poverty by buying bracelets or mosquito nets all evince a messianic faith in their collective capacities. The promise of a world of abundance for all need not be deferred any longer or until genuine revolution overturns the actual organization of social relations in the present. Revolution is possible now, the Millennium Villages website tells us. Now, “we” can bring the longed-for future into the present.

The capacity of the imagined “we” to “solve inconceivable problems” and end poverty binds together an actual “we” of those who believe in it and in the imminent end of poverty that “we” can achieve. That almost magical ability provides a sense of global “group charisma,” which actively facilitates the emergence of a new group identity that is global in scope. Sociologist Norbert Elias coined the term “group charisma” to describe the attractive energy that is often associated with “bonds of identification of individuals with their group and their participation by proxy in the collective attributes” (Elias and Scotson, 1994: 103\textsuperscript{43}). Group charisma facilitates investment in a given social group by attributing special qualities or virtues to an inside


group, usually in contrast with those perceived as outsiders. Elias elaborates his notion of group charisma by building on Max Weber’s concept of “gentilcharisma, which has been translated as ‘clan charisma’ and sometimes ‘sib charisma’. In his sociological studies of religion in India, Weber introduces the idea of gentilcharisma with reference to many kinds of groups, from kinship to class. Weber uses the term “charisma” to emphasize a magical quality, extraordinary quality or unique gift attributed to a group as a principle of identity. In India, for example, Weber discussed the magical quality of aristocratic blood to bestowed hereditary prestige on a caste like the Brahmins. The group charisma of Brahmins encouraged “all other groups who claimed for themselves an elevated rank (by comparison with others)…to model themselves on the highest groups.” In considering social belonging and conflict in rural England, Elias expands the notion of group charisma to suggest that groups claim charisma or “special grace” in contemporary societies and not only in those “magical and pre-scientific” or exotic contexts in which Weber articulated the concept.

The messianism of the global “we” insinuates a global ONE-ness that obfuscates the realities of the food chain and promotes a vision of global solidarity in which all can


46 This is laid out in Elias and Scotson, The Established and the Outsiders.
eventually join together in the unity of the “we.” Bono’s ONE campaign in the United States, designed to support the end of poverty and the MDGs, is explicitly about facilitating an idea of all-inclusive solidarity, of everyone being “in this together,” as Will Smith proclaimed. In the commercial breaks during the Jolie film, a commercial pumped the same message. The ad features a generic backdrop of trees with a soft voice that says: “There is tribal wisdom that says we have to collect and become one planet.” The next words on the screen are: “One World. MTV.” The next ad features small stick figure people who begin as individuals and rapidly multiply until they fill the screen. The ad runs through basic statistics of global poverty before asserting “it doesn’t have to be this way. Reflect. Decide. Do. Think.mtv.com.” According to a program blurb, “Think.MTV.com is an online community where young people, their friends and some

Figure 12: Children’s cartoon for End of Poverty
of the biggest names in pop culture come together to effect positive social change.”

A visit to the site offered resources for social action including links to Millennium Promise, the NGO managing funds for the Millennium Villages, and a link on ending extreme poverty that led to Bono’s ONE campaign.

A Nickelodeon children’s campaign in support of the MDGs, for example, concentrated on linking the end of poverty to an all-inclusive global togetherness that could eliminate all differences. “Every minute of every day you’re a part of everybody,” the campaign videos repeated as a refrain. Awards were used as an incentive to increase participation, learning and creative reflections/expressions on the part of children. The theme of the Nick 2015 “Hear My Voice” contest was “aspirations.” Any type of artwork could be submitted, including photographs, poems, essays, paintings, collages, drawings, and so on. The instructions read, “Do something that represents your life today and then something that you want in your life in 2015.” Organizers received over 150 entries. Selected pieces from each country were displayed at the foyer of the United Nations Building in New York early in 2006.

The more frequently featured pieces expressed the aspiration for a horizontal global togetherness, as we can see from the above examples. Like so many other campaigns, the Nickelodeon campaign actually brought together the planetary

47 http://www.unfoundation.org/what-we-do/partners/corporations/thinkmtv.html

48 Figure 12 is from a parallel Downey Public Schools end poverty initiative not Nickelodeon directly.
togetherness that it promoted by calling together children from across the globe to imagine themselves into a “we,” defined in relationship to the future horizon of a world without poverty and without deep division. International celebrities called for kids to talk about development and poverty, including India’s Miss Universe 2000 Lara Dutt, the Philippines’ Kitchie Nadal and Gary Calenciana, and Danish/Swedish actor Shanti Rooney and Nordic VJ Amelia. Nickelodeon’s 26 channels across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia broadcast a series of 30-second original animation shorts (in 18 languages) highlighting how the MDGs affect the lives of kids worldwide and what they can do to “have a voice in their future.”

Figure 13: Cartoon for Millennium Promise by Beatrice Bira
A cartoon drawn by Beatrice Bira for Millennium Promise, the NGO co-founded by Jeffrey Sachs with the explicit mission to “end global poverty,” primarily by managing private donations and fundraising for the Millennium Villages, illustrates quite nicely the multiple dimensions and assumptions that constitute the global “we.” A large figure occupies the center of the cartoon with the words “we can end extreme poverty” constituting its body. “Skills, knowledge, tools and technology” radiate from the figure’s body. “We have all this,” a note reads pointing to the words. “There is no shortage of ideas,” the cartoon tells us. But the “current reality is not acceptable” and is rejected as a “huge waste of potential” because “opportunity is not equally distributed.” We have not yet become the “we” that we can be if we use what we already have. The range of actual action, however, is fairly limited. The only clear actions called for are the formation of partnerships (“There is a powerful role that partnerships can play”) and investment (“Small investments make a big impact./Education is the single biggest investment.”).

Again, in the Bira cartoon, the benevolent relationship to Africa and, specifically the Millennium Villages is important in the constitution of the “we.” “The Millennium Villages give us hope,” the cartoon reads. The Millennium Villages, those places where the “best of what we know and the best of what we can do” are on display, provide a

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glimpse of the “we” reaching its potential by using available skills, knowledge, tools, technology and investment to count the “current reality.”

These statements suggest a very different organizing tale of development than the tale of difference and Third World inferiority that Escobar identified in Cold War development. In the cartoon, the other is not merely poor and in need of development assistance. Instead, assistance as investment enables the other to actualize potential for “saving the world” as well—to join the “we,” in other words.

While colonial tales of global social relations and Cold War tales alike created a sense of what Norbert Elias would call “group disgrace”—the attribution of negative, inferior qualities to those outside the primary charismatic group—another thing is going on in the cartoon and in the broader discourses. Under colonial rule, the messianic efforts of missionaries to deliver primitives from their backwardness, formed an image of the Other as degraded. Nederveen Pieterse characterizes the situation as follows:

The missionary image-building consisted of a Manichean double face, with on the one hand the demonized image of the heathen under the devil’s spell, and on the other the romanticized self-image of the missionary in the role of saviour. These two stereotypes were interdependent: for the missions to justify themselves the heathen had to be perceived and labeled as degraded creatures sunk deep in darkness who needed to be brought to the light. The glory as well as the fund-raising of the missions were in direct proportion to the degradation and diabolism of the heathen.50

While the romanticized self-image of the global “we” remains in the contemporary iteration of such image-building. The cartoon indicates another story being told about the Africans to be saved. If there is any doubt as to who constitutes this salvific “we,” the tiny African huts behind the figure clarify that Africans constitute a “them” that “we” need to drive forward. But, instead of degradation, the image is one of potential. A small girl on the right, also removed from the “we,” pipes up, “Give me a chance. I can save the world.” Another voice of the assisted says, “When I grow up, I promise to help others as I was helped.” There is the potential messiah in all, all can change the world and be part of the “we.” The unlocking of that potential and achieving the genuine utopia of everyone’s potential being met becomes the true task of development. And, yet, as we suggested with the You+Village equation, the “we” remains the central figure occupying the most space in the cartoon. There may be a potential messiah in everyone, but the existing “we” that already has the knowledge, tools, skills and technology is the true agent of change and possibility.

But, how does this “we” come into being as anything more than a cognitive representation? There are the obvious spectacle moments like the events in 2005 linked to the Make Poverty History campaigns and the Live 8 concerts calling for the fulfillment of government aid promises. But are there more common rituals or liturgies through which one participates in the “we”? Consider the individual who goes to the ThinkMTV website, which is advertised on commercial breaks during the Angelina Jolie
special. He identifies himself as part of that “we that can wipe poverty off the planet” through the small gestures he makes there—clicking on a list of “Ways You Can End Poverty” that shows up as a Google sidebar, making a five dollar donation for a bednet, adding a digital signature to a petition for increasing Official Development Aid (ODA), or reading about the Millennium Development Goals. All are various ways he participates in the “we” hailed by Jolie, Sachs and others. All these tiny rituals bring to life the social cohesion of the secular religion of development in its new evangelical form. Consider the Duke students again. Their careful planning for their internship presentation required imagining themselves as part of the forces that could end poverty. Their successful raising of $1.5 million for the Millennium Villages involved a plethora of micropractices that sutured together a collective subject—ending poverty through their donation. The students had to reproduce the vision for their parents and friends and call them to join the “we” by donating to the endeavor. Attending the lecture by Jeffrey Sachs were also rituals like attending a sermon or Sunday school. Participating in the small groups that were charged with imagining solutions to the various challenges faced in Africa was also a way of performing the global “we” into being.

Yet, for all the rhetoric of collectivity, at the level of action, the “we” disintegrates into “you.” Rather than the “we” of the collective body fantasized in the logo for MDG 8, the “we” becomes a loosely bound aggregate of individuals acting separately, except in those rare spectacular moments like the marches and concerts around the 2005 G8
meetings and the Make Poverty History campaign. All those liturgies of performing the “we” ultimately boil down to the individual. Individuals donate, watch MTV, wear bracelets, attend lectures. The Duke student blogger’s call to determine “who WE will be” is worked out on an individual level. Another Millennium Village ad reveals the deeper equation at work. The ad presents an equation, “You+Village=The chance to escape extreme poverty.”

While the ad still promotes an ideal of global togetherness, which now unites Village and affluent citizen of the Global North, the chance to escape poverty belongs to the action of the “you” combined with the collectivity of the village.

Whatever the “You+Village” formula may want to imply, the Western “you,” as we have seen, is the weighted value. The performance of global connection and solidarity with Sauri and Africans hides the hierarchical, one-sided nature of the wish-
transfer machine. The formula be more accurately figured as You>Village where the greater you stands at the top of the “world food chain,” eager to transfer “all those nice wishes” to the village below. Jeffrey Sachs reinforces this individualizing of action and of the “we” itself in the final pages of *The End of Poverty* when he writes: “In the end, however, it comes back to us as individuals. Individuals, working in unison, form and shape societies. Social commitments are the commitments of individuals.”  

The fantasy of a global “we” dances in the rhetoric of the end of poverty, but is actually lived by individuals, in individual actions, commitments and, of course, individual property.

2. *That hope and revolutionary possibility for a better world themselves still exist and are within the horizons of our existing order.*

A cursory glance through the full archive of articles written about Sauri and/or the Millennium Villages between 2005 and 2014 reveals how central the theme of hope is to the global-scale representation. Rather than focus primarily (or at all) on any concrete intervention or set of accomplishments, a large portion of the articles discuss the Villages in terms of hope. A sample of several headlines of articles describing Sauri or the other Millennium Villages provides a telling snapshot. The headlines read:

"Harvest of Hope"  
"Villages of Hope"

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"Seeds of Hope"54
"Bringing hope to Africa"55
“Havens of hope”56

As headlines, they attract readers’ attentions with a promise of hope before the reader knows anything about Millennium Villages or Millennium Development. Within the articles themselves, the Millennium Villages Project appears repeatedly as a distributor of hope prior to any development interventions, material goods or funds. The differences being made in the Villages are often formulated in terms of affective transformation through which, to quote from the Oprah magazine’s piece on Sauri, “places that seem utterly destitute and hopeless today”57 become sites of hope. One article, for example, states that the MVP "brought a new ray of hope to the once hungry and disease-ravaged village where residents used to live from hand to mouth” while another quotes the World Food Programme director describing a “revolution of hope” in the Millennium Village in Uganda. Hope is not simply how journalists describe the


54 Caption for Rob Crilly, “How aid became miracle of maize: To the world it’s just an experiment in economics but in Sauri village, that’s a life-saver,” The Herald (Glasgow) June 28, 2005.

55 Jerome and Green, “Bringing hope to Africa.”


57 In O, the Oprah Magazine, June 2006.
Villages. Project administrators put the program’s accomplishments in terms of an affective movement from hopelessness to hope. The global director of MVP, Pedro Sanchez, states in one article that, due to MVP presence, "the silent resignation that had reigned in these villages has been replaced by hope."\[^{58}\] Another MVP facilitator in Uganda similarly describes the Millennium Village to *Vanity Fair* as having gone from “a typical case of poverty and hopelessness to a community of excitement and hope.”\[^{59}\] In fact, hope is repeatedly given primacy over any other transformation in introductory phrases like “most importantly” and “above all.” For example, a feature on the Millennium Villages in *People Magazine* skipped the details of actual interventions entirely and concluded that “above all, the project offers hope.” Finally, when extolling the leadership of the multinational corporation GE for participating in the Millennium Villages, economist Jeffrey Sachs is quoted as saying: “GE’s unique technological leadership and unrivaled global reputation will draw individuals and businesses from all sectors to the village-based economic development and to the fight against extreme


poverty. *Most importantly, it will bring life and hope to the poorest people in the world today.*”

Whose affective transformation is actually being indexed in the constant invocation of hope? Why is the affective state of distant people living in rural Africa so central to the Millennium Villages discussion? When we see the representations of hope as part of the wish-transfer machine and its alchemy of innocence, however, we can better understand the reversal. Hope is projected onto the Millennium Villages to generate optimism for the global public which consumes their stories. As the Millennium Promise cartoon above states, “the success of the Millennium Villages gives *us* hope.” They give “us” hope because they appear to fulfill, in the present, deeply-held social longings for a better world.

The article in which Sauri made its debut on the global scene can help us begin to reflect on the kind “hope” designated as the most important aspect of the Millennium Villages. The article “Kenyan Village Serves as Test Case in Fight on Poverty” was the first on the Villages in a major global media source and appeared in the April 4, 2005 edition of *The New York Times*. A revealing vignette leads the story:

Patricia Awino Odera had her handmade hoe cocked over her head the other day, her face scrunched up into a scowl, sweat pouring from her brow, her labors the very image of futility. Then hope descended onto her cornfield.

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"No, no, no, no!" cried Herine Okoth, an agricultural expert, as she marched over the freshly tilled land. "Stop!"
Odera, a frail-looking 54-year-old woman who had never had a day of schooling in her life, had thrown fertilizer in with her corn seeds and spaced her holes too closely, both of which would reduce the harvest she and her children would get. "We agreed that you'd put the fertilizer in first, separate from the maize," Okoth said. "It's not so difficult. It's like this. "Fertilizer first. Then cover it with some dirt. Then throw in the seeds. Then cover those. It's not hard at all."

Hope descends onto her cornfield. How? The vignette offers several clues about the kind of hope that accompanies the end of poverty. Hopelessness is a handmade hoe and a woman who, despite her sweat, "is the very image of futility." Hope must mean an end to that futility by becoming productive. But, hope descends, shouting no and stop, in the form of a marching agricultural expert. Hope, whatever it is, is aligned with technoscientific knowledge against the hopelessness of folk knowledge and collective wisdom ("never had a day of schooling in her life"). Hopelessness is devoting 54 years to planting the "wrong way." Hopelessness is whatever disregarded collective wisdom that Patricia and her community had held sacred and passed down through generations — lived, shared knowledge of specific ways seeds and soil interact in this place not just in Sauri generally but in this corner of the plot compared with another closer to the stream, how stalks lean toward the sun after morning tea, how the soil composition changes with the hands and animals that interact with it and angles of light change as weather patterns converge and so forth. We can infer that the kind of hope at

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stake is a form of hope that does not come from within the hoping subject herself. It arrives in the form of an outside subject who introduces an outside set of knowledges and technologies. The dictatorial descent of the expert Okoth's hope cuts off the possibility of engaging in dialogue (or any semi-reciprocal exchange) about the range of planting methods or considerations. It is a static, materially-attached hope rather than a dynamic or dialogical process of cultivating hope. In fact, Odera’s subjectivity seems to have very little, if anything, to do with the hope that descends on her cornfield. The passage suggests that the subject of hope is somewhere else. The image of Odera merely dramatizes a futility and suffering in relation to which that hope can be articulated and affirmed.

Jeffrey Sachs concludes *The End of Poverty* with a utopian flourish. “Let the future say of our generation that we sent forth mighty currents of hope, that we worked together to heal the world.”\(^\text{62}\) If the Odera vignette is any indicator, those “mighty currents of hope” carry with them a highly constrained set of possibilities that have already been determined and materialized in the objects, skills, expert knowledge and tools that the “we” already possesses. Hope is repetitiously conjured up only to be channeled away from the open field of possibility and into the world as it already exists in the Global North.

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But the hope being mobilized is not a modest or reformist variety. It is the hope for revolution itself that the discourses of Millennium Development seek to channel.\textsuperscript{63} When the Duke student blogger encouraged her fellow classmates to determine “who WE will be” by standing up to partner with the Millennium Villages, she ended by iterating lines that she had picked up from representations of the Villages. “Ensure that ours is the last generation to know poverty,” she wrote. “A revolution is possible.” The Millennium Villages themselves used the same slogan as a masthead for its website for a period of time between 2006 and 2009.

\textsuperscript{63} \url{http://www.millenniumvillages.org} [last accessed: June 1, 2007].
The possibility of global revolution as a key “nice wish” that we find as an alchemized form in the utopian mirror of Africa and the end of poverty is also mobilized in rhetoric surrounding the Product (RED) campaign. Product (RED), like the Make Poverty History and ONE campaigns, was co-founded by the rock star Bono as “gateway activism”\textsuperscript{64} to get people involved, through their consumer purchases, in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. (RED) focused specifically on the MDG of halting the spread of HIV. The campaign even has a “manifesto” that, set against a red background, evokes echoes of red communist revolutions of the past. But, this

\textsuperscript{64} Bono on the John Stewart Daily Show, November 30, 2011.
revolution belongs to “first world consumers” who have “tremendous power” because “what we collectively choose to buy or not buy can change the course of life and history on this planet.”

The alchemy of bitter truths—that revolution is not so easy as choosing a particular commodity—effectively creates a new definition of revolution as a simple “upgrade” in consumer choice. Revolution becomes a “business model.”

3. That “we” can end poverty through “our” current objects and practices of consumption.

The power of the utopian global “we” to end poverty manifests in objects and technology. The “you” in the you+village equation is not a human who interacts with villagers. The “you” is materialized in the form of an anti-malarial bed net that “you” purchase for just seven dollars on the Millennium Promise website. You=things purchased or money donated. What was once a mere cellular telephone or mosquito net becomes imbued, in the mirror of innocence, with the capacity to end poverty. Meanwhile, the end of poverty is never figured as a question of social change, social vision, community deliberation, dialogue or any deep changes that would alter deeply-embedded patterns of injustice and inequality. Poverty becomes a problem resolved through things and practices of consumption.

The case of Mary Fanaro, an avid supporter of the Millennium Villages, provides further insight into the actual material practices and objects that come to constitute the

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utopian global “we” and the affective residue of hope that surrounds it When Mary Fanaro read an article about the Sauri Millennium Village in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2007, she felt so inspired that she could hardly contain her enthusiasm. Fanaro told the LAist blog interviewer, she immediately wanted to fly to Sauri to try to join in the effort: “So I [thought] I’m just gonna go to that village that I had just read about, which was his first village in Sauri, Kenya that was self sustainable - the crops were growing, malaria was down…So in my naive mind I figured, ‘OK, I’m gonna land, get a car and drive to the village.” Without any idea for how her presence might benefit the project, she began to make plans and called a friend for advice. “You’re crazy, you can’t just show up at Jeffrey Sachs’ village!” Her friend informed her. While he was talking to her, a woman in the backseat of the car asked about the conversation. She turned out to have been on the film crew for the 2005 Angelina Jolie MTV special set in Sauri. Fanaro took the serendipity as a sign. In the interview, she explains that knew she was on the “right path” because “at that point there had probably been three white people to that village and one of them turned out to be in the backseat of my best friend’s car.”


[68 Ibid.](#)

[69 Ibid.](#)
“When you are doing what you are supposed to be doing, the universe opens up and says, 'yeah I am going to help you out,'” Fanaro explained. The woman in the car offered to connect Fanaro with Jeffrey Sachs himself. After meeting with Sachs, Fanaro decided to start a chocolate bar business to raise proceeds for Sachs’ Millennium Villages. The idea for chocolate turned into t-shirts with special logos that Fanaro would sell to her “celebrity friends” like Naomi Campbell, Jennifer Anniston and Courtney Cox. Soon, the former “Friends” stars began appearing in magazines wearing the t-shirts and talking about their commitment to saving Africans from poverty. For example, a 2011 issue of Longevity Magazine that featured Cox wearing Fanaro’s OmniPeace t-shirt explained in an article entitled “Taking a Stand”: “The shirt Courtney wears on the cover of this issue is more than just a fashion…statement. It’s a step toward ending poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa. It’s a chance for a child to be educated…It’s hope.”

![Image from OmniPeace](image)

**Figure 17: Image from OmniPeace**

Can a t-shirt end poverty? For Fanaro and her celebrity friends, the answer seems to be “yes.” The t-shirt is their buy-in to the utopian promise of the End-of-Poverty that Sauri and the Millennium Villages seem to fulfill, the promise of the End-of-Poverty via the “right path” of the Millennium Development Goals and Jeffrey Sachs. While the t-shirt itself will obviously not end poverty (even in the shallowest of imaginations), purchasing it affirms the “reality” of the End-of-Poverty as a reachable social horizon within the existing ethos of consumption that is inscribed in the t-shirt commodity. The t-shirt itself becomes the material instantiation of hopeful affect. But, again, hope for whom?

The alchemy of innocence at work turns the basic element of a t-shirt into a golden elixir to end poverty. The utopian power of “you” and of the “we” is invested in

Figure 18: A Gap store display for (RED)
commodities. Of the “nice wishes” at the top of the food chain, the wish for commodities to become “weapons of mass salvation,” to use a term introduced by Sachs, is a strong one. By transferring the power to create “what we want” onto what “we” purchase, we successfully deflect public dialogue from the destructive conditions through which those objects are produced. Bangladeshi garment workers may be crushed under the weight of the ladder of development while making Gap clothing, but what we see when we encounter a Product (RED) Gap t-shirt is the chance to save the world.

In the social ecology of Millennium Development partnerships, the strongest examples of this dimension of the alchemy of innocence are provided by the Produce (RED) campaign, which focuses on the health-related MDGs by raising money for the Global Fund to Fight Aids and Malaria.

The Product (RED) campaign links consumers and corporations directly in the project of saving the world. American Express, Apple, Converse, Hallmark, Motorola, Microsoft, Dell, Gap and others have joined the effort by manufacturing special products for purchase with a percentage of the profit being donated to the Global Fund. For example, Gap donates 50% of profits from (RED) merchandise to the Global Fund while Dell donates around $50 per (RED) computer sold.\textsuperscript{71} Choosing the right commodity (RED) over non-(RED) is framed as a choice to save or not save someone’s life. Bono

\textsuperscript{71} See Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte, \textit{Brand aid: shopping well to save the world} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
states, "You buy the jeans, phones, iPods, shoes, sunglasses, and someone—somebody’s mother, father, daughter or son—will live instead of dying in the poorest part of the world. It’s a different kind of fashion statement."2 In other words, all “you” have to do to fulfill your messianic potential and participate in the “we” that ends poverty is buy the right product. Or, as the Product (RED) manifesto puts it, “upgrade your choice.”

A commercial for Starbucks Product (RED) brings together these themes nicely. The commercial begins with an existential question. Red text on a grey screen reads: “What (if) we’re not separated from everyone else, but connected? What (if) just part of our purpose here is not ME but WE?” “It doesn’t take a grand gesture,” the ad states. One need only buy a (Starbucks)RED Exclusive Drink, which will provide five cents per cup to the Global Fund to “save lives in Africa” to ensure one’s fulfillment of her purpose as a member of WE. Through the purchase of that special cup of coffee, one’s self-concept undergoes the alchemy of innocence. The liturgy of buying the right cup of coffee becomes a ritual of social cohesion.

In the ads, the commodity mediates a social relation in a bizarre rendition of the logic of commodity fetishism described by Marx. In the early pages of Capital, Marx observed that commodities may appear to be simple objects but, in fact, possess a kind of transcendental magic through which it appears to have a life of its own separate from

the social relations and labor through which it was produced. “Its analysis shows that [a commodity] is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties,” he writes. Social relations between people assume “the fantastic form of relations between things.”

In the alchemy of Millennium Development wish-transference, that “mysterious” process of commodity fetishism goes even further. Not only are the world food chain conditions of production invisibilized. The t-shirt, magically separated from those conditions, also can end poverty. Relations between people that would be necessary to

Figure 17: Advertisement for (RED) American Express

conditions of production invisibilized. The t-shirt, magically separated from those conditions, also can end poverty. Relations between people that would be necessary to

73 Karl Marx, Capital, vol. 1, Ch. 1, available online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf.htm [last accessed on April 6, 2014].

74 Ibid.
address poverty take on the deceptively simple form of relationships between things. I buy a (RED) iPod and money goes to resolve the problems of disease in Africa. The commodities suture together a new utopian social relation that renders invisible all the conditions of global inequality, exploitation and abuse that go into disease and poverty in Africa. An ad for a Product (RED) American Express card illustrates this new utopian social relation well. A Euro-American model leans joyfully into a stereotypical Maasai warrior, who also beams. Vast gulfs of inequality, privilege and difference disappear. The card, the thing, magically mediates a relationship between people in which the actual adverse configuration of social relations disappears, along with the actual difficult work that would be required in the social realm for such relationships to become possible. Using the credit card stands in for the actual work of social relation.

4. That corporations can also find themselves in the moral “we” and become partners in ending poverty.

In the fetishism of commodities and consumerism, the global corporation finds a special new role in the tale of development as the triumphant narrative of the global “we.” As commodities become “weapons of mass salvation,” corporations find themselves well-positioned to become co-saviors. For example, Bono describes his Product (RED) initiative as “a mutually beneficial alliance among companies, consumers
and Africa.”75 The mirror of the wish-transference machine gives corporations a chance to promote themselves on the world stage as socially-responsible, even activist, organizations that “save lives” in Africa. The alchemy of innocence involved in Millennium Development turns corporations from selfish, profit-oriented entities into noble, justice-oriented entities.

Bono’s various campaigns have done much to reframe the image of corporations in relationship to Africa and Millennium Development. In his myriad public speeches and appearances, he weds “justice” together with entrepreneurial capitalism. For example, at a Georgetown University event in 2012, he proclaimed, “It’s not charity that fires us at the ONE campaign or at RED, it’s justice; that’s what enflames us.” Then, a few minutes later, he clarified what such justice entails: “Aid is just a stop gap. Commerce, entrepreneurial capitalism takes more people out of poverty than aid, of course, we know that.”76 In the meantime, some profits can be invested in private partnerships with development organizations to enable corporations to reframe themselves as the vanguard of justice through entrepreneurial capitalism.


76 Bono, speech, November 12, 2012, Georgetown University. http://www.georgetown.edu/video/bono-enterprise-gallery.html [last accessed on February 1, 2014]. I re-ordered the date and location to match the format used later for interviews.
As a leader in the new ethos and self-image of development as our generation’s quest to end global poverty, the Millennium Villages and Millennium Promise as the NGO managing funds for the Villages, also involve a vast network of corporate partners. Tommy Hilfiger donated $2 million for the Villages in 2010 and launched their “Promise Collection” fashion line for consumers wanting to participate. As Millennium Promise’s first “MDG Global Leader,” Hilfiger would go on to “encourage other corporate leaders and consumers to join him in the movement to end extreme poverty.” Unilever partnered with the Millennium Villages to promote hand washing

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in the villages. General Electric (GE) donated $20 million in medical technology to health clinics. Tyson Foods “donated” six months of labor of a top executive to work for Millennium Promise. Sony-Ericsson built cellular phone technology in the most remote Millennium Villages. Monsanto donated 700 metric tons of hybrid corn seed to the Millennium Village in Malawi, after which they committed to five years of seed support for the project in general. The Kellogg Foundation supported the Millennium Village in Port-a-Piment, Haiti with a grant of $150,798 for monitoring and evaluation. Lenovo also donated $150,000 to go to Internet cafes and computer labs in the Villages. Johnson & Johnson donated $75,000 to help lower infant mortality through the


Millennium Cities Initiative and Millennium Villages in Ethiopia. Nestle pledged $400,000 to support food and nutrition initiatives in the Millennium Villages. Yara International, a fertilizer company, provided fertilizer to the Sauri Millennium Village in its initial start-up phase. JM Eagle donated $800,000 dollars’ worth of PVC water pipe. The list goes on.

When asked why Monsanto was interested in donating to the Millennium Villages, CEO Hugh Grant responded, “I subscribe strongly to the view that you can do good business and do good. Some of the people who are starting these programs will be our customers in the future. A piece of this will be philanthropic, but there’s a piece that’s the ground floor of a whole new generation of customers.”

Similarly, Bob Corcoran, GE’s vice president for corporate citizenship, pointed out to CNN Money that


86 See Appendix B for full list of corporate partners.

efforts like collaborating with Sachs’ Millennium Villages help build “reputational value and trust in places in the world where we aren’t known.” 88

A smaller corporate donor to the Millennium Villages, the toy company Spin Master Ltd., most clearly expressed the wish-transfer function of such corporate engagements in ending poverty. The CEO explained the motivation for raising the money for Millennium Promise: “We started by saying: What can we get the staff really excited about and what initiative can we get everybody to rally around and feel super passionate and spirited about?” 89 After choosing to sponsor a Millennium Village, the enthusiastic response overwhelmed him. 120 of the Toronto office’s 170 employees volunteered to be on the five-person committee to work on the project. “You don’t feel like you’re working for the man. So this is a way that people feel empowered,” Spin Master’s director of global licensing told the newspaper. 90 In other words, raising money for the Millennium Villages facilitates positive self-concept among employees. They feel good about working for a company that helps to save lives in Africa. By participating in that effort, they fulfill wishes for a better world within the corporate structure. We see

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90 Ibid.
alchemy at work again. By “partnering” with the Millennium Villages, corporations can create a benevolent image of themselves that secures employee support and enthusiastic buy-in. One employee at Spin Master brought the operation into relief. His job entails bidding against other toy companies and making licensing deals. In the past he felt a lack of meaning in his routine of deal-making. “But in a way, now, when I pursue a deal and I’m working to make this place a better company, I know the money now is actually going to save lives,” he stated. In other words, contributing to the Millennium Villages through the corporation provides employees with a way of seeing themselves as moral change agents involved in something larger than increasing profit margins.

**Beyond the mirror**

In conclusion, I want to briefly consider the difference between Mary Fanaro and Habil Nyahaya, a Sauri farmer active in many MV Project endeavors, who I came to know well during my three year stay in the village. Both Mary and Habil encounter representations of Sauri’s remarkable transformation as a Millennium Village.

One afternoon, I handed Habil a copy of *Vanity Fair* in which a picture of him is featured prominently alongside an enumeration of the hopeful transformations of Sauri. He shakes his head. “That is not me.” He turns to a friend nearby and asks, “Do you think that’s me?” The friend laughs. “You don’t recognize that shirt of yours?” Habil, despite living his entire life in the profiled village, does not recognize himself or his life
in the article or in similar articles that I have collected. “What they say is Sauri must be some other place,” he tells me.91

Mary Fanaro, thousands of miles away, reads an article about Sauri and instantaneously recognizes myriad possibilities for herself. Mary only has to pick up the phone and tap into her social network to connect directly with project kingpin Jeffrey Sachs, share her ideas and embark on her plan for participating in the end of poverty.

In Sauri, on the other hand, Habil knows Sachs by face, as he has visited the area on various occasions for ceremonies and photo opportunities. He recounts in an interview that only a select few people in Sauri have ever been allowed to get close enough to Sachs for a handshake. None have had a conversation with the professor, he explains.92 Surrounded by project staff, security, media and various wazungu, Sachs has remained elusive despite deliberate attempts to speak with him—writing notes and slipping them to his security guard, writing emails at the Yala Internet cafe, interrupting a public ceremony, all to no avail. In contrast with Fanaro’s world of benevolent forces that conspire to propel her along the “right path,” Saurians do not have a friend on the other side of a telephone call who can easily connect them to the “right path” where the “universe opens up and makes things happen.”93

92 Ibid.
93 Lerman, “PhilAnthropist Interview: Mary Fanaro of OmniPeace.”
While the spectacle of t-shirts and iPods ending poverty played out in the alchemical mirror of the public transcript of Millennium Development, the people whose lives and voices have been used to sanction the new tale of development tell other stories filled with complexity, conflict and frustration with unexpected challenges and social changes. I turn to now to the task of going behind the mirror to explore the unfolding of the end of poverty in the lived experiences of those undergoing the process.
3. The Millennium Begins

Monica Oketch’s tiny sitting room was so crowded with empty chairs and tables that I had to walk sideways to avoid bumping into them. The chairs were often filled by a motley collection of neighbors, local development staff and foreigners like myself, who stopped by, pausing for conversation, milky tea and, sometimes, delicious deep-fried mandazi (akin to doughnuts). At those moments, the sounds of dreams and gestures of disappointment filled the air with all the energy that the crowded room seemed to call forth.

As a widow with a relatively large plot of land to farm and crops to harvest, Monica usually kept busy while engaging with her guests. Sometimes she sat on the floor, shelling groundnuts or shucking maize. But she rarely hesitated to sit down in her large stuffed chair, which was worn down from many years and the weight of many bodies, to tell me, and anyone who asked, the story of how she met the professor Jeffrey Sachs, author of *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*.

She remembers the day in 2004 when she threw her arms around her old friend Pedro Sanchez as he stepped through the rusted gate to enter her compound. Although rotund, he could seem small when enveloped by Monica’s robust frame and broad shoulders. Pedro’s wife Cheryl Palm, who had been renamed Jane Atieno by the villagers, followed him, walking beside an unfamiliar mzungu with shiny shoes, whom Pedro introduced as Professor Jeffrey Sachs (“the little professor,” as Monica calls him).
Several other people piled out of a second vehicle. “They were all somehow related to ICRAF,” she recalls. ICRAF, the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (now the World Agroforestry Center), had been actively conducting research on soil and fallows since the 1990s, under the leadership of Sanchez. During the ICRAF years, Monica had “adopted” Pedro and his organization ICRAF into her “family” as part of what seemed like a cunning kinship strategy that positioned her at the heart of community politics in spite of the fact that, as a widowed second wife with no biological children, she would normally have occupied the lowest rung of the traditional social hierarchy.

In the Luo community of Sauri, the value of a woman and her role in the community depends on her marital status and number of offspring. Without any children of her own, Mama Monica was already in a precarious position. As an “uninherited” widow, she might have been ostracized from community life, like many others who had not been taken on as second (or third) wife by a male in-law or wife-inheritor (called “jalakos” or “jateros” in Dholuo). Yet Monica, who stood taller than most local men and had more robust musculature, had crafted her own position as a community leader by adopting Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and

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technocrats like Pedro who had been arriving to develop the community since the late 1970s. With twinkling eyes and hearty laughter, Monica can tell the entire history of NGOs in Sauri as a kind of family genealogy. “First, I was Mama CARE, then Mama KEFRI, then Mama Africa-Now, then Mama ICRAF and, ultimately, Mama Millennium,” she boasts. While other women might establish themselves as “Mama Henry” or “Mama George,” Monica trumps them all by crafting herself as “Mama NGO.”

Monica had formed a close relationship with Pedro Sanchez in the ICRAF years during the 1990s. She even lobbied successfully, along with several others, for his formal induction as a “ruoth,” or chief, into the Luo tribe—specifically the Kalanyo clan of Monica’s late husband. In the traditional Luo political systems, a “ruoth” occupies the highest political status in a geographically rooted, patrilineal clan.² He, typically, also possesses the most wealth. A ruoth gains his status by using his wealth as a generous benefactor to the rest of the community. All of that took place before I arrived in the village in 2007, but the story had acquired the status of myth, repeated by many as a


“Evans-Pritchard brought out three important aspects of Ruothship which we shall discuss later, and these are: 1) the Ruothship institution must be occupied by the richest member of the tribe; 2) the seat of the Ruothship is the Ruoth’s village; 3) the affairs of the state were discussed at the Ruoth’s seat.” Under British indirect rule, ruoths were appointed by colonial government and no longer by the community. Today, the area “chief” and “assistant chiefs” work for the Kenyan government with appointed elders...
way of explaining the special relationship between of the community to the man who became director of the Millennium Villages.

The Saurians dubbed Sanchez as “Odera Akango,” the name of a famous ruoth known in local lore for having civilized Luoland in the late 19th century by forcing people to wear clothes and attend school. Whatever Sanchez’s own understanding of the significance of his induction as the reincarnated ruoth Odera Akang’o, the Sauri’s Kalanyo clan viewed it as a binding oath of kinship that carried with it an array of lifelong obligations to the community. For Mama Monica that afternoon in 2003, the kinship bond seemed stronger than ever between Pedro-Odera Akang’o and those he called “my people.”

He had brought more wazungu, which inevitably meant, according to Mama Monica, “more projects.” “He loved us very much,” Monica states.

After the visitors had crowded the tiny main room, Monica served “chai,” milky Kenyan tea, and warm groundnuts from her shamba (small farm plot). She also placed several bottles of soda in front of the visitors—a random assortment of Sprite, Coca-Cola and Fanta. One of the Kenyans turned on a camera. The new mzungu began talking. She waited patiently for the translator. He was a professor named Jeffrey Sachs, he said. He had heard very good things about the community of Sauri. He asked about poverty in the community. She talked about widows without homes and the growing numbers

3 Public meeting, November 19, 2008, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

4 Monica Oketch, Interview by Lydiah Madialo and author, August 14, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
of orphans being raised by their grandparents. She recounts that she also spoke about her successes with ICRAF, with planting fallows, and contrasted herself with community people who were “idlers and drunkards even though their soil was fertile.”

After their conversation, the professor promised to take the video footage of the interview directly to Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General. According to Mama Monica, the video would show her success as an example for others to follow. She proudly told me, as she sat up straight:

And, that is how the Millennium came to Sauri. It is because of my hard work that Kofi Annan, after he saw me in the video, made this thing to come here so that people can be like me. Millennium found me in a stable position, I was able to buy my sugar, manure and the rest.

For the first three years, Monica participated vigorously in fulfilling her kinship role as Mama Millennium. She became the self-appointed Chairman of the first Millennium Village committee. When Jeffrey Sachs arrived with a truck to donate to the community, he handed Monica the keys. She proudly displays the photograph in which she sits, beaming, in the driver’s seat.

As Mama Millennium, Monica soon became the self-designated host of the many foreign visitors who began pouring into Sauri. Under her bed, she keeps a guestbook, upgraded from a school composition notebook, with hundreds of signatures

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5 These are some of the things that Monica claimed to have told Sachs in the interview.

6 Monica Oketch, Interview with author, June 21, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
accompanied by little notes. Addresses span the globe—Denmark, France, Britain to Japan to the United States to Ghana, Tanzania and Nigeria. Government ministers, NGO representatives, university students, doctors, reporters, professors and many others have dutifully left their mark in Monica’s notebook. Ero kamano (Luo: Thank you), many foreigners write, showing off their Luo language skill. “Keep up! You are a light to the world,” one scribbles. “Great work! You have convinced us that poverty end,” a one writes in large, swooping letters. “We had a wonderful time. Erokhamano (sic) for showing us what is possible,” another comments. After the guests left, Monica’s brother in-law Henry or Pastor George Oyumba would read the entries out loud, as they faithfully did with any written material that landed in Monica’s hands. Often, after a wazungu visit, Henry, George and Mama Tekla, Monica’s closest friend and neighbor, would laugh over hot cups of chai and mimic the gestures, postures and voices of the strangers.

In the wake of the initial visit with Monica and the broader Sauri community in July of 2004, a cascade of changes would begin to unfold in the area as Columbia University’s Earth Institute, the Millennium Promise NGO and private donors conspired to establish Sauri as the pilot Millennium Village. In this chapter, I intertwine village narratives together with the visions, promises, assumptions and actions of the actors and advocates of the Millennium Villages Project. By approaching the “official story” and the narratives of community members together, I develop a multi-dimensional
ethnography of intervention. I also begin to illuminate how the global utopian dreams discussed in the earlier chapters are given form and life as the MV Project unfolds on the ground.

**In the beginning**

Sachs does not mention his meeting with Mama Monica in his version of the Millennium Village Project origin story. Instead, he describes generic “hungry, thin, and ill” people with whom he meets.\(^7\) He introduces Sauri and the surrounding areas as a “region beset by hunger, AIDS and malaria.” “The situation is far more grim than is described in official documents. The situation is also salvageable,” he writes.\(^8\) Salvaging Sauri, on Sachs account, would only involve the “simple,” “quick and easy” application of “weapons of mass salvation”—mosquito nets, medicine, fertilizers, computers, etc. “All of these challenges can be met with *known, proven, reliable and appropriate* technologies and interventions,” he writes.\(^9\) “Sauri’s villages and impoverished villages like them all over the world can be saved and set on a path of development at a cost that is tiny for the world but too high for the villages themselves.”\(^10\)


\(^8\) Ibid., 227.

\(^9\) Ibid, 232, his emphasis.

\(^10\) Ibid, 232.
After the initial 2004 meeting in Sauri, Sachs and his colleagues from the Earth Institute at Columbia University set out to bring his vision of the end of poverty to life. The team designed the Millennium Villages as “proof-of-concept” sites to “demonstrate the feasibility of the MDG solution in real time in the most destitute and hopeless places in the world.” With a budget capped at $110 dollars per person per year, the Millennium Villages were to achieve the end poverty within five years.

“What we’re trying to show is that with just a few interventions and not a lot of money, lives can be transformed...It’s what MTV would call Extreme Village Makeover,” Sachs tells journalist Nina Munk in an interview documented in her book on

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Sachs and the Millennium Villages, *The Idealist*. The allure of cheap, simple “weapons of mass salvation” made the Millennium Villages Project attractive to donors of all sizes—from students on a shoestring who could contribute to the purchase of an antimalarial bed net to billionaires like George Soros who could pitch in $50 million to the Government of Japan, corporations like Monsanto and Sony-Ericsson and, eventually, the Islamic Development Bank, which all contributed significant capital to the experiment.

The original idea to create model villages arose among the various academics working together in the task forces of the Millennium Project, headed by Jeffrey Sachs. The objective of the Millennium Project, between 2002 and 2005, was developing “a specific global plan to meet the Millennium Development Goals” by convening several problem-centered task forces to determine the best practices for reaching the MDGs.

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13 According to the original Millennium Villages Handbook, which was distributed to the local site teams at all Millennium Villages eventually constructed across Sub-Saharan Africa. The original version of this handbook was available on the MVP website until 2008. It was also distributed to all MVP sites as the basis of early construction of the MVs. It contains much more information than the publicly released version that became available in 2008. I will refer to the works as the original or unpublished Handbook and the public Handbook when distinguishing between the two. Although the former was not meant for circulation, it was an important founding document and is, therefore, considered a legitimate source in its own right. The two citations are:


particularly in Africa, as it was identified by the task forces as unlikely to reach the MDGs by 2015.\textsuperscript{14} The diagnosis for Africa was stark. According to the original Millennium Villages Handbook, “These Task Force Reports indicate that while the MDGs are attainable everywhere in the world, in Africa a business-as-usual scenario would not be sufficient.”\textsuperscript{15}

In March 2004, scientists at Columbia University’s Earth Institute, who were all involved in the various Millennium Project task forces, hit upon an exciting idea: “What if all the UN Millennium Project’s recommendations were applied at the village level within the hunger hotspots in Africa?” They conceived the Millennium Villages Project as “a proof of concept that the poverty trap can be overcome and the MDGs achieved by 2015 at the village-scale in rural Africa by applying the United Nations Millennium Project’s recommended interventions in multiple sectors at the investment level of $110 per capita per year.”\textsuperscript{16}

The next step was that in July 2004, “a Columbia University Trustee provided a grant to test the concept.”\textsuperscript{17} In Munk’s book, the inner workings of that moment gain some flesh through an interview with Sachs that provides insight into the incredible

\textsuperscript{14} Jeffrey Sachs et. al., \textit{Investing in Development}, Millennium Project Report UN publication.

\textsuperscript{15} Konecky and Palm, Unpublished \textit{Millennium Villages Handbook} (2007), 1.


\textsuperscript{17} Konecky and Palm, eds. Unpublished \textit{Millennium Villages Handbook} (Unpublished draft, 2007).
informal power of private capital in development and in the Millennium Villages in particular. Sachs describes the moment of conception as happening in a casual conversation with millionaire Gerry Lenfest, an owner of a cable company sold to Comcast in 2000 for $6 billion. Sachs explains to Munk: “It all started with a conversation I had with Gerry Lenfest about ending poverty in Africa…We spoke for a long time. The he asked, How much would it cost? Gerry just took out his checkbook and said, Here’s five million dollars. Go for it.”

Josh Ruxin, the eventual “team leader” for the Millennium Village in Rwanda, also describes a foundational moment based in the incredible informal power of wealthy individuals involving themselves directly in development. One “pretty evening in 2005,” Ruxin found himself at a rooftop dinner party talking with Stephen Lewis “about his recent visit to the new Millennium Village in Kenya.” Lewis had been inspired by Sauri but wondered why the MVP hadn’t established a model village in Rwanda. “Now, there’s a country that has an AIDS epidemic and could benefit from a comprehensive approach to poverty,” he said to Ruxin, who had served on Sachs’ Millennium Project task force on HIV/AIDS and had been invited to follow him to Columbia University’s

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18 Munk, The Idealist, 37.

Earth Institute where the Millennium Villages Project was based. Ruxin responded, “Rwanda didn’t make the cut. There’s not enough money for an extra location.” Lewis paused, then proposed that his foundation would put up the money for a Millennium Village in Rwanda if Ruxin himself would run it. And, so the third privately funded Millennium Village in Mayange, Rwanda (the location subsequently picked by the Rwandan government) was born.

Before support for a more widespread program could be secured from donors and the UN Development Program, the task force collaborators needed a pilot community that could simultaneously exemplify “the most destitute and hopeless places in the world” while also possessing a solid pre-existing infrastructure and experience with development that would allow developers to achieve many basic improvements fast enough that they could begin claiming success of the model within just a few months. For such a solid foundation, they turned to a community where the newly-minted director of the Millennium Villages, Pedro Sanchez, had a long-term relationship and had previously been ceremoniously initiated into the local tribe as an honorary village elder.

In an article somewhat strangely entitled “What I did on my summer vacation: I went to Africa,” Sachs recalls that Sanchez proposed Sauri as the first Millennium

20 Ibid., Kindle location 498.
21 Ibid., Kindle location 512.
Village because Sanchez “felt strongly that there was an opportunity for quick development there.”

Sachs writes, “[Sanchez] told me that the soil simply lacked the nutrients to grow a proper crop... He said to me, ‘You know, this situation could turn around quite quickly.’” Because of its existing experience with development and with Sanchez, the Millennium Villages Project could also leapfrog the difficult work of establishing relationships with community members and gathering basic knowledge of the area. In later Millennium Villages, it took over a year just to get basic relationships established in place and to begin basic interventions like bed nets, according to MV Project staff. In July 2004—the same month in which Lenfest made his spontaneous donation to Sachs—Sachs, Sanchez and other Earth Institute staff travelled to Sauri, held the famous town meeting and kicked off survey data collection in preparation for the project launch in December.

For Sachs as well as Lenfest, Lewis, Sanchez and other donors like George Soros, the places that would become Millennium Villages served as blank slates where their dreams of a better world and the end of poverty could be brought to life. In the global circulation of hope and possibilities mobilized by Millennium Development, Sauri and the other Millennium Villages would serve an important role as living models of the

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23 Ibid.

possible end-of-poverty future in the present. As such, we might study the unfolding of the Millennium Villages Project as something more than the sum of individual interventions. They serve as utopian nodes in which global aspirations are given form in concrete material reality. As opposed to an abstract ideal or unrealistic fiction, I understand “utopia” here as both the articulation of an ideal future horizon in which the present is wholly transformed and as the lived practices involved in attempting to transform present social, political and cultural conditions to realize that vision. Of course, the places that would become Millennium Villages were not empty. Each one teemed with existing life or, rather, lives with desires and dreams of their own, specific histories, practices, meanings, values, beliefs and nodes of aspiration. To study the Millennium Villages as living utopian sites, then, is to study how the MV Project endeavored to enlist and transform existing individuals and communities to fit into the global vision of the end of poverty.

When King Utopus—the founder of Utopia in Thomas More’s classic work—arrived in the area that would become Utopia, his first tasks were to create the milieu that would become Utopia. First, he first ordered a deep channel to be dug around a slice of land to create an island that he separated from the original continent. The area, which had been previously called Abraxa, acquired its new identity as Utopia. Meanwhile, he also endeavored to bring “the rude and uncivilized inhabitants into such
a good government...that they now far excel the rest of mankind.” The conception of Utopia, then, involved a severing of the future society from the existing present and the past. Creating an exceptional space of newness, ordered according to a set of ideals, defined utopian social practice.

Unlike milder social reform, the traditional utopian approach is to shape a whole new world ex nihilo. The deeper “how” of utopia concerns the way in which, ultimately, the interventions are a generic concept applied to the world, regardless of circumstances, history, traditions, peoples’ own visions, etc. That ex nihilo quality is the “nowhere” of More’s neologism (utopia as a paradoxical conjunction of the Latin ou-topos, no place, and eu-topos, good place). Place does not matter. Sauri could be any rural village in Africa to be shaped by an outside set of values and concepts. The impulse to render the existing place a no-place by applying interventions as if dealing with a blank slate is a dangerous tendency of utopian imagination.

**The Sweetness of the Project**

Edwina Owegi, a woman with smiling eyes and a quick laugh, has the uncanny ability to hear the sound of a truck or a motorbike fifteen minutes before it clamors along the main road that passed a few meters from the tree where she keeps her

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chapati26 stand. Even when only the faint twittering of birds or the buzz of flies could be heard by others, myself included, Edwina will suddenly perk up, lean into the silence and say, “Millennium is coming.”

One quiet day in 2009, I ask her to tell me about the beginning of the Millennium Village experience. “To you, I will tell the full truth,” she responds.

It was I who brought the Millennium [as most locals refer to the MV Project]. I saw the people who were so hungry so I started praying: These people are hungry, Nyasaye (God), do something. This poverty cannot happen, Nyasaye, do something. Not even a month later, the Millennium arrived. Even the old ones say we have not seen a miracle like this since any were born.27

A tall Community Health Worker (CHW) joins us from the clinic. She orders a chapati after greeting us cordially. When she leaves, Edwina returns to her story.

It happened before midday on a Jumapili (Sunday) in 2004. We came direct from the church. Children were called out of homes. Come and see the wazungu.28 Many great words were spoken.

She stokes her small fire and rolls melted fat around her cast iron skillet. I wipe sweat off my face and swat at flies from a cut in my knee as I listen. A young girl called Maggie runs up to wrap herself around my leg. Edwina laughs as I pretend to try to walk with the thin child clinging to my leg. Maggie’s mother, Ruth, and two other women, both widows, join us as Edwina continues her story.

26 Round flatbread similar to Mexican tortillas but thicker, somewhat like pita bread but moister.


28 Wazungu, plural of Mzungu, is a word used for foreigners, usually white Europeans and Americans.
Professor Sachs stood in the middle of the field and promised so many things. A cow for every household. A Sauri that would glitter like ice. We thought, yes, surely, Nyasaye has smiled on us. Nyasaye had sent us our own Yesu Cristo (Jesus Christ) and everyone would be rich. Our prayers had been answered.

She explains that Sachs planted a small tree in the school yard that bright day in 2004.

That traditional ceremonial gesture symbolized the beginning of an intense journey. She laughs as she celebrates the bounty of the next two years.

Then, oh, soon, I became so rich selling chapatis to the people who came to take surveys. It was like a census. Smart [well-dressed] people from far, going to all the homes asking so many questions. That was before the clinic was open again. When they opened the new clinic, people began to come from far and I became like McDonalds in America.

Ruth shakes her head, then says to Edwina. “You are one of the lucky ones.” She strokes Maggie’s head absentmindedly as she reflects:

When Sachs stood in the field, he promised we would all be like America. But, so far, Sauri is not New York. Anyone who was there when Jeffrey Sachs stood in the field outside the school will tell you that he promised we would all be rich. But, now the Millennium staffs say it was only a goal. A goal seems to be a promise that one doesn’t have to keep. Where are the cows they promised? Where is the sweetness of Millennium? Me, I have never felt the sweetness of the Millennium Project. Bingo iro ok e tedo [A lot of smoke is not the same as cooking]29. Now we are choking on that smoke.

Edwina frowns. “It is true,” she says. “So many promises were made. There was to be electricity, paved roads and those things have not happened. Still, I am not hungry because of Millennium.”

29 Anne Omollo and Phillipa Ochido, interview with author, September 17, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
One of the other women listening chimes in. I recognize her, but have not been introduced. She wears a wig and a freshly pressed traditional kitenge cloth dress with poofy shoulders, which makes me suspect she is passing on her way to church or some other important venue. She says:

“Okay, we are not hungry now. And, me, I have learned many things as a member of the water and sanitation committee. I think what Ruth is saying is that they promised to take us out of the dust and the dust remains. The clinic over there is full everyday with sick mamas and we still have funerals every week. So, people are disappointed and asking, why has the Millennium just left us only part of the way.”

“And, I am still waiting for a cow,” Edwina says, looking across the yard to the clinic where a Millennium truck is parked.

**Proof of concept**

What the “clinical economist” Sachs prescribed for Sauri “and impoverished villages like them all over the world” were “the Big Five development interventions.” He borrowed the term “Big Five” from contemporary expensive safari tours and earlier colonial hunting expeditions in the Maasai Mara that aim to track down the top five animals in the park: Lions, elephants, water buffalos, leopards and rhinoceroses. Like the first seven MDGs, the Big Five seem benign and generally desirable when considered alone apart from the enabling conditions and practices through which they are to be achieved. In short, Sachs’ Big Five are:

1. Agricultural inputs (fertilizer, improved fallows, improved seeds, irrigation, storage facilities)
2. Investments in basic health (clinic, paid doctor, medicines, expansion of basic services, antimalarial bed nets)
3. Investments in education (school meals, vocational training, computers, adult training)
4. Power, transport and communications services (electricity, a community truck, community mobile phones)
5. Safe drinking water and sanitation. (Protected springs, latrines, pumping station)

Sachs claims that these interventions, applied together, constitute a more holistic, scalable model than previous development programs. “The world is filled with pilot projects showing that one intervention or another has proven successful time and again,” he writes. The approach of the MV Project would be “holistic [apply investments and interventions in agriculture, health, education and infrastructure together], time-bound [for five years] and budget-based [at $110 per person, per year].”

That standardization would allow the program to be scaled up easily to district, national and international levels. For Sachs, the application of the Big Five in Sauri would be a model for worldwide change. “The main challenge now is not to show what works in a single village or district…but rather to scale up what works to encompass a whole country and even the world.”

In a 2012 defense of the Millennium Village Concept in the scientific journal The Lancet, Dr. Grace Malenga and Malcolm Molyneux write, “The Millennium Villages

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31 Sachs, End of Poverty, 259.
project was devised as a proof-of-concept intervention, implying first that the consequences of the intervention can be measured (proof), and second that the intervention, once proven, has the potential to be applied where the same problems require attention (concept).”

The lens of utopia can help us see this claim in its sociocultural and political dimensions. Proof-of-concept may mean many things in a research lab or when dealing with inanimate objects like soil and seeds or phenomena like diseases. One manipulates the variables in particular ways to achieve a particular outcome that proves the concept behind the arrangement of variables. When such activity takes place in a social or political realm, with the objective of achieving an ideal arrangement of living, relational variables, we have a utopian experiment. Even though the interventions are all neutral, technological improvements without apparent social or political dimensions, when they are arranged to achieve a sociopolitical outcome—the end of poverty—in a living milieu, they take on utopian characteristics as variables intended to introduce dramatic, intentional rearrangement of the coordinates of the possible.

One might object that we are talking about provision of basic human needs that are by no means utopian in terms of creating an ideal society. In fact, as Jeffrey Sachs points out, “most people in the world, with a little bit of prodding, would accept the fact

that schools, clinics, roads, electricity, ports, soil nutrients, clean drinking water, and the like are the basic necessities not only for a life of dignity and health, but also for economic productivity.” It is a matter of fundamental justice that all people be able to live lives of dignity and health with access to food, medicine, clean water, shelter and education. In a world where such basic justice is denied, utopian imagination is the process through which visions of a better collective future enter the realm of present discourse and practice. Utopia does not only refer to a picture of an ideal world of justice and dignity for all. Every utopian vision or experiment involves another layer—the prescriptive layer of how such a world can be brought into being. It is that layer that concerns us here insofar as the how involves changes, effects, consequences and outcomes in social arrangements, subjectivities and institutions. Thus, a neoliberal and a Marxist can agree on the basic coordinates of justice, even as their utopian processes of bringing the better world to life would be utterly opposed. The former would arrange the coordinates of possibility in favor of privatization, entrepreneurship, individualism and markets. The latter would move in the direction of restoring the commons, collective ownership and radical redistribution of wealth. By focusing on the Millennium Villages Project as a utopian endeavor, we focus not only on the ultimate ends of the end of poverty recipe but, more importantly, on the social, political and cultural mechanisms mobilized for fulfilling it.

So, if the Millennium Villages are designed as “proof-of-concept,” what is the concept or set of concepts that they are designed to prove? According to project administrators, “the Millennium Villages aim to establish the ground-level evidence showing that the UN Millennium Project’s recommended interventions for rural Africa can lift villages out of the poverty trap and achieve economic viability through community empowerment backed up with adequate resources.”34 But, that definition is less a concept itself than the application of a concept through a set of interventions. We need, in other words, to dig deeper.

In an article entitled “The African Millennium Villages,” Pedro Sanchez and colleagues lay out the basic coordinates of the Millennium Villages Project quite clearly. They write:

The underlying hypothesis of the UN Millennium Project is that the multifaceted nature of poverty in rural Africa can be overcome through targeted public-sector investments to raise rural productivity, leading to increased private-sector savings and investments. By significantly augmenting the capital stock of households and the community in several dimensions, the poverty trap can be escaped. Several kinds of capital need to be increased: natural (soil nutrients), infrastructure (roads, power, telecoms), human (skills and health), and financial (household assets, collateral, microfinance). The key is to raise the capital stock above a threshold level, above which the village can move towards self-sustaining economic growth.35


The concept behind the interventions, then, is that an increase in capital (human capital, natural capital, infrastructural capital and financial capital) leads to self-sustaining growth; in essence, it’s the same “big push” theory that governed development aid and policies in the 1950s. The only apparent difference between the earlier practice of injecting capital into national economies is the scale of the village. The concept has appealing mechanistic simplicity. Invest in the Big Five, raise capital stock to threshold level and end poverty through self-sustaining economic growth.

Economists immediately begin asking about the MVP’s monitoring and evaluation methods. How can the MVP rigorously "prove" or "measure" the degree to which the projected outcomes are actually met? They sift through data sets and MVP reports to draw conclusions about quantitative measures of poverty decline. To the anthropologist, the underlying hypothesis raises very different questions. My interests are situated in the interstitial spaces between the on-the-ground material change and changes in the meaning systems that animate those changes. What does “escaping the poverty trap” look like when embodied in actual lives, relationships and cultural meanings? How does the influx of capital impact community structures, practices and values? How do humans change as their “human capital” is increased? What does the

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increase in human capital look like in everyday life? The human dimensions of the equation are conspicuously missing.

The internal Millennium Villages Handbook of 2007 does point obliquely toward the human dimension, although change is still situated within a mechanistic equation in which a “positive dynamic of savings and growth” is unleashed by the rise in capital through public investments. The project coordinators at The Earth Institute write:

Backed by rigorous measurement, the villages will demonstrate _how_ sub-subsistence livelihoods _can be transformed into_ small-scale commercial entrepreneurship and be empowered to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015...The underlying hypothesis of the UN Millennium Project is that the interacting crises of agriculture, health, and infrastructure in rural Africa can be overcome through targeted public-sector investments to raise rural productivity and thereby to increase private-sector saving and investments. The public investments will unleash a positive dynamic of saving and growth emanating from the private sector. The initial economic takeoff is envisioned to occur in agriculture. _The early public-sector investments aim to help transform sub-subsistence farming communities into commercial farming communities which are able to save, engage in off-farm work and invest for the future_.

The italicized phrases begin to point toward the deeper sociocultural transformation that the MV Project must undertake in order to end poverty. Individual livelihoods must be transformed from subsistence to small-scale commercial entrepreneurship. But shifting from subsistence to commercial entrepreneurship is not merely mechanical. It involves cultivating different values, desires, norms, expectations and nodes of aspiration. The implicit “concept” that makes the Millennium Villages hypothesis possible is that the

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sociocultural transition from subsistence livelihood to entrepreneurship will happen with minimal effort when capital stock is raised. In between the lines about raising capital stock to reach a threshold of self-sustaining growth, the MVP wagers that it can create “commercial farming communities” and an ethos of entrepreneurship simply by investing in agriculture, health, education and infrastructure.

The project coordinators imagined a clear path into the desired future, precipitated by the Big Five interventions. “First, household incomes rise above subsistence, so that household-based capital accumulation and micro finance become feasible. Second the existence of good roads, power and telecoms encourages the inflow of capital from outside investors,” Sanchez, Palm, Sachs and other project leaders write.38 The initial attention to provision of basic needs actually lays the foundation for the subsequent creation of enterprise or commercial society.

It is that transformative dimension that enlists basic material objects like fertilizer and a truck into utopian practices. On their own, there is nothing particularly utopian about providing drinking water, health, food and education. It is only when these enter into the service of broader social transformation to fit a pre-conceived concept that they become part of a utopian drama.

Constituting Community

Hannington Okida and Habil Nyahaya never seem to leave each other’s side. I see them together daily, on their way to this or that training by Millennium or a meeting of elders. They wear time in their resting facial expressions differently, though. Deep creases at the sides of Hannington’s eyes and around his mouth show years of cheerful countenance while the sides of Habil’s mouth turn down and a groove is worn between his eyebrows.

One day, I agreed to buy them both sodas at the kiosk near the clinic so we could talk about the early days of the Project. As promised, they brought me a copy of the Sauri Millennium Village constitution.39

“This is how it all began,” Hannington said as he handed the constitution to me in a tattered brown envelope. “We had first to create a new structure apart from the village elders and chief.”

The pre-existing political structure in Kenya is a bureaucratic hierarchy that begins at the level of “villages,” known at the census level as Enumeration Areas, overseen by a “village elder” or “jogweng” who is traditionally male in the Luo province of Nyanza. A cluster of villages form a “sublocation” headed by an area Assistant Chief who appoints the village elders and meets regularly with them in “barazas” or community meetings. A cluster of sublocations form a “location” overseen

by a Chief, who is also a political appointee and career bureaucrat. A cluster of locations for a Division overseen by an appointed Division Officer (D.O.), who is overseen at the District level by a District Commissioner (D.C.), who is ultimately overseen at the provincial level by the Provincial Commissioner (P.C.), who reports to the President and legislative representative.

“We started this thing under the leadership of the Assistant Chief in 2004. He had the responsibility of conveying meetings before Millennium really started going. When it reached January 2005, we were instructed to make committees in our various villages. There would be a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer from each village to work with the project. Me, I was Secretary of Luero village by then,” Hannington explained.

“Some twenty of us were taken to Yala Guesthouse where we were trained for writing constitutions with a woman, Rafaela, from New York. She brought us samples of constitution of other country and instructed us on how to write ours,” Habil said.

“Soon after that, they took 100 people for training on leadership. We formed sectors first. So, eight sectors with representatives from each of the eleven villages. Each village would send three members to each sector. So, each village would have 24 people representing in sectors. The sectors were Agriculture, which is ours, then Education, Health, Water-Sanitation, Energy, Roads, Gender, Enterprise and Environment. These, I think, are the eight MDGs,” Hannington explained.
“Gender wasn’t a sector. I think that eighth one was Cereal Bank,” Habil interjects.

“Cereal Bank was under Agriculture Sector, you know. It was something else, then, if not Gender.”

“So, we have 33 people, 3 per village, on the Agriculture Sector Committee, including the two of us,” Habil added.

“We also met severally with the community facilitator from Millennium, Jared Oule, down at the Ober tree that is no longer around since the construction of the CLRC [Community Learning and Resource Center] began. We proposed very many things and they started to get worried that there were too many voices. That was when they proposed we form an umbrella committee that is the Executive Committee” Hannington said.

“So, they wanted to have a few individuals in an executive committee to represent the whole sublocation. They were to be the mouthpiece of the community. Each village would have one representative on the Executive. Plus, a representative from each of the eight sectors. Plus, a representative of churches, youth and the disabled,” Habil elaborated. “Then, they took everyone on the Executive for training and capacity building that lasted for one week,” Habil continued.

“That one was strange.” Hannington said, cutting Habil off. “They told us to get together in sectors then tied us up with ropes and pushed us up against a wall. Imagine!
There were some wazungu and some Kenyans tying us up together. We thought, now, this has become serious.”

“Actually, they wanted us to learn how to be a team so we could work together and organize our communities. I think that was the later executive training, anyway,” Habil stated.

“No, it was that leadership training. It is too strange to tie people together with rope. How did we learn to be a team from that?” Hannington shook his head.

“During that training, we finalized the constitution and designed a Community Action Plan together with Millennium. They taught us how to set goals and gave us indicators so that we could know if we were close to them. This idea of setting goals and indicators was new for us. We thought, this is truly development,” Habil said.

“That was the last time they asked us what we wanted or let us design any action plan. If it were up to me, I would say to them that we must go back to the CAP [Community Action Plan] of 2005, but instead they go away to Busia and make their own plans without us. They should ask now what we want,” Hannington said.

We had finished our sodas. Hannington waved his bottle back and forth over the dirt, making a small rut.

**Carving out a Millennium Village**

While the MV Project did not carve out a physical island to actualize their ideal vision, like King Utopus did, they did redraw the map of the area to create a new entity
called Sauri Millennium Village, which had never existed before, an island of development—“a thriving community in a sea of poverty.” That new entity would have its own parallel forms of decision-making, hierarchy, governance and social organization, which would become unique to the twelve Millennium Village sites across Sub-Saharan Africa. Through the new community constitution, the MV Project would set up its own social organization alongside traditional forms of governance. In the process of bringing the community into the good life of commercial society, traditional lifeways would be pushed aside, with Saurians expected to fulfill the Project vision of a neat and easy transition to new ways of being in the world.

Before providing seeds, fertilizer, bed nets or a health clinic, the MV Project undertook more fundamental sociocultural interventions. As Hannington and Habil begin to suggest, the first stage in the “community-based approach” of the Millennium Villages was to organize a “community” and a political structure that fit project needs, ideals and visions. In the 2008 Handbook, the Millennium Village Project administrators describe such basic changes as “enhancing an enabling environment that is conducive to community development…[which] involves facilitating attitudes, norms, and practices that stimulate people to take collective action, include marginalized groups and women in decision-making and enable them to successfully take control of institutions and

decision-making processes that govern their lives.” Of course, the community already had forms of collective action, institutions and decision-making processes. To create a scalable model of development applicable across Africa and the many different political systems that would be encountered, the Project could not be muddled with idiosyncrasies of local custom. In each of the twelve sites across Africa, a standardized, parallel political structure needed to be established in order to facilitate the Project’s interventions in a scalable way. In this section, I will map the different coordinates and structures of the new “community” that developers have created as Sauri Millennium Village.

*Redrawing the map*

Before Millennium arrived, the name “Sauri” referred to a specific village within a broader administrative cluster of villages called a “sublocation” that bore the same name (see above map). Eleven small villages comprised Sauri, the sublocation, and were gathered under the political administration of an Assistant Chief. Together, the eleven villages have a population between 5,000 and 6,000 people. According the UNDP Millennium Villages summary, Sauri sublocation covers eight square kilometers of “undulating” topography with “streams, rivers and wetlands meandering through the

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42 The official Kenyan census of 2009 has the population number at 5696 while the Millennium Villages claims the population is 5,000.
rounded hills." In the early stages of the MV Project, only Sauri sublocation comprised Sauri Millennium Village. Within a year, that changed and the MV Project expanded to other sublocations in the district. All of them would be counted statistically and for reporting purposes as “Sauri Millennium Village.”

While the romantic term “village” implies a small, closely interconnected community, the Sauri Millennium Village actually spans the expanse of Gem District in

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Siaya County, Nyanza Province on the western spine of Kenya. The MV Project staff who trickle into the field office each day from the city of Kisumu, 90 kilometers away, fan out across an expanse of 132 kilometers, facilitating workshops or “trainings,” checking on construction, meeting with committees, or eating and drinking at the nearby “Yala Resort,” a cement block enclosure that hardly lives up to its name. Approximately 55,000 people living in nearby sublocations of Ramula, Marenyo, Uranga, Jina, Anyiko, Lihanda, Nyamninia, Nyawara, Nyandiwa and Gongo would all become part of Sauri Millennium Villages, for the purposes of the Project administration, self-representation, statistical calculation and reporting of results. Residents of the original Sauri sublocation would, thus, have the uncanny experience of seeing the successes of Sauri reported in the media, alongside pictures of people and places elsewhere in the district. The impressive façade of the Sauri Millennium Village (as a cluster of clusters) would be effectively superimposed on the entire regional map, such that most of the Gem District constituency would be effectively counted as Sauri Millennium Village.

In the order of the MV Project, the original Sauri sublocation would be designated as a Millennium Research Village or MV-1. In all subsequent Millennium Villages, the MV-1 village would lend its name to the entire cluster. The Project defines a “Millennium Research Village” or MV-1 as a community or set of communities with a population of approximately 5,000 and a shared structure of governance located in a
“hunger hotspot.” The budget for an MV-1 is $250,000 per year for interventions ($50 per capita) and $250,000 for operations and research. The Millennium Village Project process begins with baseline assessments, surveys and data collection, followed by an initial phase of interventions. The MV-1 Villages, which lend their name to the overall broader “Millennium Village” assemblage, are designated as the sites where “intensive data are collected on all sectors to monitor progress.” The MV-1 of Sauri sublocation consists of 645 homesteads, 970 households and a total of 5,521 people. Out of the 970 households, 385 are headed by females. According the MV Project surveys, 94.6% of inhabitants belong to the Luo ethnic group, which is broken down into a number of clans for which data is unavailable.

Proximate to the original Millennium Research Village, a cluster of MV-2 communities are also founded. MV-2s are sites where only a “condensed dataset” is collected. There is no limit to the number of MV-2s that can be formed as part of the Millennium Village. The MV-2 villages are financed and managed by Millennium

46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
Promise, the NGO partner of the Millennium Villages (Jeffrey Sachs is co-founder and president). In the Sauri Millennium Village, MV-2 Villages began one year after initial data had come in and problems identified in the first round have been managed and resolved.

In the space-time configuration of the global scale, a perspective from Google Maps or the window of an airplane from New York, the MV-1 and MV-2 Villages practically overlap. Putting them together as a new unit serves a basic administrative function. The local office can coordinate activities throughout the region, covering a large population. Similarly, from within the SUVs that transport the local MVP staff 90 minutes each way, every day from Kisumu, an MV-2 located within a half hour’s driving distance may still feel “geographically close.” However, for most residents living in the MV-1 and MV-2 villages, disposable income for public transportation is rare. Walking is by far their primary means of transportation. The world experienced at the scale of one’s own body and energy has much more distance than the world experienced at the scale of a vehicle or airplane. At the body scale, the MV-2 of Gongo or Lihanda is an entire day’s journey away. The main forum for interaction with people outside one’s village is the bi-weekly Market Day, when villagers converge with their surplus crops, crafts and livestock to sell. Because each MV-2 has its own market, which is far from the Yala market attended by those living in the MV-1, the people in Sauri
Millennium Village cluster interact very little and have no other significant ties between them beyond their common involvement in the Project.

Because of poor communication between staff and community members, basic misunderstandings about the other villages tend to morph into commonly-held truths that generate mistrust and confusion. To residents of the original Sauri, the cluster villages seem to have siphoned off resources that they believe were intended to be invested in the place they know as “Sauri” and not for others. As they perceived the transfer of development energy and attention onto the MV-2s, many community members claimed they had been abandoned by the project, which had only used them as research objects. “They come to make mistakes here so that they can make the clusters perfect,” one resident commented. Saurians see statistics in the media about the large amounts of aid going to the “Sauri Millennium Village” and assume it has been “stolen” for the clusters. “What the donors meant for Sauri has just been taken for Gongo and those people in Ramula,” another person stated. Compounding negative feelings, project administrators repeatedly invoke the MV-2 villages as negative comparisons in meetings. For example, in one meeting, a project administrator told Sauri residents that

“Lihanda [an MV-2] finished their Community Research and Learning Center months ago, but you people [Saurians] can’t even contribute wood.”\textsuperscript{52}

The misunderstanding flows the other way as well. Outside of Sauri sublocation, the village is reputed to be full of wealthy people who have no problems. Since few people travel to Sauri sublocation, myths of progress and success that travel with MV Project staff go unchallenged. A woman in Ramula (a village in an MV-2 cluster), for example, said to me at a market in nearby Luanda, “We all know of Sauri because we are told everyone there is rich.” Similarly, the assistant chief in Gongo (another MV-2 village) said, “That Sauri has gone far. We have only now to reach them.”\textsuperscript{53}

The difference between the “place” as seen and occupied by the MV Project and the places as seen and lived by villagers themselves can reach comical extremes. One striking example occurred during Jeffrey Sachs’ visit to the area with UN AIDS director Michael Sidibe. After visiting a school in Sauri proper, the entourage of SUVs travelled the bumpy half hour to Marenyo, where villagers had set up displays of their products and the MV Project had erected a tent for speeches. Dignitaries and project staff gathered under the tent while Marenyo community members assembled outside as Professor Sachs stood up to speak. “Sauri, you are a shining light for the world. I bring

\textsuperscript{52} Herine Okoth, All-Sector Meeting, May 1, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

\textsuperscript{53} Gongo assistant chief, Interview with George Oyumba and author, June, 22, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
you greetings from the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.”

The Marenyo farmers began whispering among themselves. “The mzungu is confused,” one elderly lady whispered in Dholuo to her neighbor. “He thinks he is in Sauri.” And, yet, Sachs was in Sauri, along with everyone else under the tent who had constructed the new “place” of Sauri Millennium Village out of the existing places and spaces that they initially encountered.

*Political transformations*

When King Utopus undertook bringing the “rude and uncivilized inhabitants into such a good government,” the process involved organizing the people into sociopolitical units and devising modes of representation and rule. He carved out 54 cities that would each send three of their “wisest senators” to “consult about common concerns.” He also established a system at the city level in which thirty families would choose a magistrate called a Syphogrant. Two hundred Syphogrants at the city level would choose the Prince out of a list of four named by the people.

The order introduced by the MV Project, as we began to see with Hannington and Habil, would be similar. In Sauri, each sub-village would have three representatives—a Development Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. In addition, each sub-village would send three representatives to each of eight sector committees—

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Agriculture, Enterprise, Education, Health, Environment, Water and Sanitation, Infrastructure and Community Development. In total, 264 people would be designated as “stakeholders” with whom the project would work most closely. From among these, an “executive committee” of 26 people was established, consisting of the chairman of each sector committee, the Development Chairman of each village and a representative of youth, of churches and of the disabled. The organization would be known among community members as, simply, “the structure.”

In the early stages of the MV project in 2005, 19 people were trained on constitution writing at the Yala Guest House, while 93 people were trained on community empowerment and organization. A constitution, it should be noted, is itself a utopian form. It establishes the ideal conditions of a polity, institutional forms, norms, general modes of conduct, moral codes and collective ideals.

The Sauri Millennium Village constitution was true to form. The document begins with a lofty preamble in which the signatories emphasize their basic rationale and values. The preamble reads:

We, the persons whose names and signatures are contained in this Constitution; Being aware that we need to improve our economic welfare for the sake of our community at large and for the sustenance of present and future generations; Aware that each of us may not single-handedly achieve this goal in isolation and alive to the fact that the goal would be best achieved through collective effort; Conscious of the responsibility that we have to ourselves, the community, and

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56 These would later be reduced to five sector committees—Agriculture and Environment, Health, Water, Infrastructure, Education—in all subsequent Millennium Villages.
future generations/posterity and the mistakes that have been made in the past; Appreciative of the fact that in exploiting our talents in a fair and transparent manner we can attain the highest common good for ourselves; Have resolved to establish a self-help group to achieve our aims and objectives, to act always in the general interest of the members of our group in accordance with our collective policy.\textsuperscript{57}

The purpose of the social form created through the Constitution would be, in other words, improvement of economic welfare as a goal to be achieved through a collective effort. Establishing themselves as a self-help group enabled registration with the Kenyan government as a recognizable entity. Every member of Sauri sublocation would be considered a member. The remainder of the Constitution outlines the roles and responsibilities of each officeholder and sector committee member, and the rules for the election of officeholders in the Executive committee.

By stipulating that development representatives be elected by their respective villages, the constitution was designed to introduce a new level of democracy into the administration of everyday village life. Little space for democratic participation existed in the hierarchical political structure of government appointees. The existing political structure in Kenya moves from “villages,” known at the census level as Enumeration Areas, that consist of approximately 150 households, overseen by a “village elder,” who is traditionally male within the Luo province of Nyanza. At the sublocation level, an area Assistant Chief appoints the village elder and meets regularly with him. A cluster

\textsuperscript{57} Sauri Millennium Development Constitution. Unpublished.
of sublocations form a location overseen by a Chief, who is also a political appointee and career bureaucrat. A cluster of locations for a Division overseen by an appointed Division Officer (D.O.), who is overseen at the District level by a District Commissioner (D.C.), who is ultimately overseen at the provincial level by the Provincial Commissioner (P.C.), who reports to the President and legislative representative. All of these positions are occupied by career bureaucrats appointed by those above them in the hierarchy. The only democratically elected representative is a Councillor at the location level. The new constitution did not do away with the traditional structure. It simply disregarded it for all purposes of development. Most of the Chief’s village elders secured positions for themselves in the sector committees and, thereby, hybridized the structure.

Those most in favor of the new political structure were women who had been traditionally marginalized in community politics in general. As the Constitution stipulated that women be included in every sector, women found new political agency and power. The inclusion of women on committees and as leaders represented a radical change in social dynamics. Mama Millennium (Monica), for example, became the first “Chairman” of the Executive Committee. A female participant in a separate study reflected on the positive changes:

As an official in the agricultural committee, I get to attend field days and two or other places. What I learned in the field days I share with my fellow villagers during public meetings and this has increased my confidence and self-esteem. I
feel confident that I can answer questions particularly from men. I am no longer intimidated by men and other women have told me that I am brave.\textsuperscript{58}

Another woman made a similar comment, “by holding a position at the village committees, we make ourselves visible and our voices heard.”\textsuperscript{59}

I witnessed the new dynamic at play at a community baraza in 2007. At the top of a grassy field, the Village Elder sat in a chair alongside several other older men, representing the traditional structure. The remainder of the people sat in the grass, with women on one side of the field and men on the other. Not long into the meeting, however, Monica took the floor. For an hour, she fielded questions and complaints about development activities. The Elder sat quietly for the remainder of the meeting, all attention directed to the tall, dynamic woman standing at the opposite end of the field.

\textit{Stakeholders}

A new identity also emerged in the early stages of the MV Project. Certain individuals would be known and come to know themselves as “stakeholders.” While community-wide meetings were rarely called, one frequently heard calls for “stakeholders.” “Stakeholders” included the 264 people involved in the sector committees, who included those officeholders at the village level and within the


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
executive committee, comprised those who would benefit directly from project interventions. Eighty of their households would be designated “demonstration households” and would receive a disproportionate amount of project attention and support. Demonstration irrigation would be set up in their farms, cash crops would be grown there, pit latrines would be built for them, new farm machinery would be given to them. The idea would be that they would share their newfound knowledge and technologies with their neighbors and fellow villagers.

A good example of a “stakeholder” is Edward Oyier, who was the first Chairman of the Agriculture Sector Committee. In 2010, I visited Oyier’s home with my research assistants Lydiah, Joseph and Jethro on the occasion of the arrival of the Provincial Commissioner—the highest authority in Nyanza Province. We knew that the PC would be visiting, so we gathered at Oyier’s farm. While we waited, Oyier showed us around his home. He had a grove of banana trees grown with MV Project starter tissues, a hand-pushed plow, a dairy cow, and cassava crops from Millennium. I had seen no other homes that had so many inputs from the Project, but this was the house that the PC would be shown as evidence of the MV Project’s success. I asked Oyier whether he thought it strange that he had received so much while others had not received anything. He responded, “We, as stakeholders, were told that we should be an example. People will see that we are doing well so then they will go and buy the same as what we have.” I asked about the hand-pushed plow, a useful technology for easing the work of tilling
that is usually done with hoes. “We are supposed to share it out. If someone wants to use it, they just come,” he explained. Had anyone come to use it? “No,” he said, “they just prefer to use their jembes [hoes].” Later, as I walked home after the dust had cleared from the PC’s visit, a woman approached me. “I saw you looking at those bananas of Oyier,” she said. “The Millennium puts so much into a few houses, but just nearby we are hungry. Those bananas should have been given out to all. But, they are just there.”

The creation of an elite sub-group actually fits within Sachs’ original vision of the ideal program. In The End of Poverty, Sachs writes that rapid economic development requires that “technical capacity suffuse the entire society, from the bottom-up.”

“The trick” for achieving that objective “is to train very large numbers of people at the village level in creative and targeted ways, specifically for the tasks at hand. For example, every village should aim to have a group of village experts.” In the 2008 Handbook for the Millennium Villages, the authors echo that objective. “A critical mass of community-based workers will be necessary for achieving the local action to meet the MDGs and facilitating processes that lead to change,” the Handbook states. Such “internal community change agents” would be the vanguard of transition into the new society. In the everyday unfolding of the Project, however, the creation of the 264 “change agents”


[61] Sachs, End of Poverty, 257.

[62] Ibid.
meant that the majority simply remained outside the Project purview. “If you take 264 people, the rest of the 6,000 and more are left in the village and are not participating. To have them to participate is to have them in a meeting. But, you only see the stakeholders in meetings,” Paul Omoro pointed out.63

The term “stakeholders” as the significant term of belonging reveals an important dimension of the kind of community that the MV Project sought to create. A “stakeholder,” after all, is not a citizen, a participant, a partner or a collaborator—all terms that might also make sense in another cultural configuration. A “stakeholder” is a person with a significant interest in an enterprise or corporation. “Stakeholders” often participate in and are affected by the enterprises in which they hold a stake. “Stakeholders” populate what Foucault called an “enterprise society”—a society thoroughly penetrated by a commercial ethos.

**Becoming Data**

“When the Project first came, they measured everything. They took our blood for measurement. They measured our land with Internet [GPS]. They came to our households and noted down our property, whether we had latrine, how we store food, how many children we have, if they attend school. Everything about us is now in a computer somewhere. But, they never give us back anything. We want to know, what

63 Paul Omoro, interview with author, February 1, 2010.
do they do with our information,” Aggrey Ranyondo says as he walks Lydiah and me through his yard.64

We sidestep chickens and dogs. At an Agriculture Committee meeting earlier in the week, Aggrey had invited us to come by his house to meet his family and to see some documents that he wanted to show us. His wife, Lillian, beams from the doorway of the house ahead of us at the top of the hill.

“Karibu, karibu [Welcome, welcome],” she says. Then, she disappears into another room. We sit on a hard sofa with lace doilies on its arms.

“So, you were saying that the project started with taking information. Can you say more?” Lydiah asks as she opens her notebook. Aggrey nods.

“In the beginning, there were many outsiders during that time taking surveys of households. More than at the time of the census, which is also coming soon, you know. The village committees were also trained on using GPS computers to map the size of every shamba [small farming plot] and boma [family compound]. We walked so much. And, no one was paid,” he says.

Lillian returns with a bowl of freshly roasted groundnuts and cups for chai. She pours water over our hands into a large plastic bowl. Then, she pours out the milky tea and sits down beside her husband. Aggrey continues.

“They wanted to know the size of the shamba for the distribution of seeds and fertilizers. You had to have at least 1/4 acre to receive inputs.”

“What about people who own no land and work on the farms of others?” I ask. I had spoken with several women in that situation as they worked on a farm plot near my home.

“Those received no inputs. There had to be land to receive inputs. The first year, one was given two bags of 50kg of DAP fertilizer for each acre. The second year, they gave us half that amount. So, if you had one acre, then you received 50kg bag and seeds.”

“We also had to go around the village with the village development chairman to do wealth rankings,” Aggrey says.

“We were given criteria for wealth rankings. The Project asked who lives in a permanent house, what lighting do they use, do they own transport. Do they have a television and things like that. What kind of food do they eat, do they employ others, do they have security guards, do they have income sources. If they do, then they are Class A. The next class, Class B, is most villagers with semi-permanent houses, meaning they have iron sheets for roof but use soil to build the walls and floor not cement. Then, Class C has only grass thatch for roof and soil for floors and walls. The last class is D, those who cannot even have a grass thatch roof and require support to survive.”
Lillian moves forward in her seat. “The Project truly helps the first and second man most [Class A and B] because they have land already. The third man who works on other people’s land or leases cannot be helped, but may be given assistance by Project if he is put on the list of vulnerables, but each village can choose only five vulnerables for the Project. The fourth man can only be helped by his family and eat the fruit that grows on trees,” she clarifies.

“And, women?” Lydia asks.

“And, women?” Lydia asks.

“You know, the women are just put with the household of the man. Except for two or three, I would put the widows with the fourth man. It is hard for them,” Aggrey responds.

“Had you thought of people in classes before the Millennium?” I ask.

“We have always known who is rich and who had bad chira [bad luck and curses from ancestors] because they had nothing. But we never measured people according to their house like that or made lists of vulnerables.”

**The Big Five**

Having exhaustively surveyed, categorized and organized what would become the “Sauri Millennium Village” and its selected “stakeholders,” the next step on the path to creating an enterprise society on the statistical island was to propel Sauri out of the poverty trap. One can hardly cultivate the conditions for commercial society if people cannot feed themselves and their families, or are often sick with malaria, water-borne
illnesses or AIDS. According to the Project architects, the areas of agriculture and health would provide the initial “big bang” “breakthrough that would make it possible for the community to take its first steps out of the poverty trap.” Alongside the “big bang,” the simultaneous interventions in education, infrastructure and water-sanitation would deepen and sustain the transformation. The utopian picture of Sauri as a development wonder would include change in all five areas.

As suggested earlier, the Big Five are essentially designed to lay the foundation for the subsequent emergence of commercial or enterprise society. Foucault explains in *Birth of Biopolitics* that basic biopolitical governmentality favors a kind of intervention that brings up those who have fallen below the threshold at which they can play the basic economic game. Foundational neoliberal thinkers like Milton Friedman theorized such intervention as a “negative tax.” The negative tax was to be “a cash benefit [to] guarantee supplementary resources to those and only those who either definitively or provisionally fail to reach a sufficient threshold…a category of individuals in society who…cannot reach what society considers to be the proper level of consumption.” Friedman himself proposed a “negative tax” combined with a flat tax that would provide income to the poor, ensuring a basic minimum wage to those who fell below a

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66 Ibid.

certain threshold of poverty. Likewise, French neoliberals like Giscard in 1972 argued that we must ensure that it never happens that someone loses everything.

In a sense, by calling for public and private investments in the Big Five, Sachs has devised a non-cash equivalent global negative tax that would channel a small portion of global wealth into basic material interventions that were expected to raise the extremely poor up to the basic threshold at which they can become participants in the dominant economic game rather than subsistence drop-outs. The actual amount of the global “tax” would be minimal, Sachs claimed. Using Sauri and the Big Five interventions as his example, he calculated that the combined costs of all five improvements would “total around $350,000 per year or roughly $70 per person per year in Sauri, for at least the next few years.” As such, Sachs advocates for “the international donor community” to be “thinking round the clock about one question: how can the Big Five interventions be scaled up in rural areas like Sauri.” The strategy, he argues, “will require much greater development assistance and deeper debt cancellation from the rich world to enable

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69 Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics, 202-203.

70 Sachs, End of Poverty, 235.

71 Ibid., 236.
Kenya to invest in the Big Five—agriculture, health and education, electricity, transport and communications and safe drinking water—across rural Kenya. ”72

What each of the Big Five shares is its utopianizing of Western technologies and objects. The “end of poverty” is reached not through human action, but through things—fertilizer, medicine, automobile, increased crops. It is that mechanistic vision of possibility that distinguishes the utopian imagination of Millennium Development.

1. *Agricultural inputs* (*fertilizer, improved fallows, improved seeds, irrigation*)

For the architects of the Millennium Villages Project, the fulcrum of the program lay in the agricultural sector. “The initial economic takeoff usually occurs in agriculture with the transformation of sub-subsistence communities into commercial farming communities which are able to save, invest and diversify into productive non-farm work,” the project leaders write.73 In fact, the Millennium Village coordinators publicly envision the prescribed agricultural interventions as the key to “a uniquely African Green Revolution for the 21st Century.”74 A 2005 article quotes Sanchez speaking about Sauri, saying: “We want to quick-start an African Green Revolution.”75 By catalyzing an African Green Revolution, the leaders seek to mimic the transformation in agricultural

72 Ibid., 237.


productivity seen by India in the 1960s due to the introduction of high yield hybrid seed varieties in 1965. “We now know that it was actually the beginning of India’s surge out of extreme poverty…The key to that was the ability to grow more food,” Sachs stated in a 2006 speech for the Center on Global Development.\textsuperscript{76} Growing more food in the Green Revolution paradigm involves the use of farm inputs—chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds. “And the basic point in Africa is that farmers do not use inputs. They do not use improved inputs, I should say. They use rain and they use open pollinated variety seeds and they use almost no mechanization,” Sachs states.\textsuperscript{77}

There was a strong emphasis on converting poor soil into fertile and ideal soil through chemical fertilizers. The objective would be to get a majority of farmers to use “improved inputs” over organic farming methods. “With fertilizers, improved fallows (with ICRAF’s proven technologies, green manures and cover crops, water harvesting and small-scale irrigation and improved seeds, Sauri’s farmers could triple the food yields per hectare and quickly end chronic hunger,” said Sachs.

For the long rainy season of 2005, farmers were provided with fertilizer and hybrid maize seed (Western Seed varieties 502 and 505).\textsuperscript{78} Upon receiving the inputs,


\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{78} Western Seed is a subsidiary of the Monsanto Corporation. Hence, in the village, the maize is referred most frequently as Monsanto 505.
farmers signed a contract in which they agreed to contribute 10% of their harvest to the school feeding program. A total of about 81 tons of chemical fertilizer DAP, 40 tons of urea and 8 tons of maize seeds were issued to the farmers in the eleven villages of Sauri sublocation. Inputs were allocated according the size of one’s farmable land. The Agriculture Committee had previously tasked with measuring plot sizes with GPS devices. For every acre, a farmer would receive 100kg of DAP and 50kg of urea. For every 50kgs of DAP, a farmer would receive 20kgs of Western Seed variety 502 maize.

When maize was harvested in July and August 2005, total production in the area increased 3.5 times, from 1.95 tons per hectare to 4.85 tons per hectare. The harvest festival in August 2005 was overflowing with excitement and optimism. Jeffrey Sachs timed his summer vacation to coincide with Sauri celebrating “the biggest harvest it ever had.” “And, it’s stunning how easy it was,” he writes in his excitement about the outcome.

Putting in some basic fertilizer and helping the farmers use some improved seed varieties led to the doubling of their yields. Just like that, in one growing season. Very low cost, a few bucks per person in the village. And, we’re not talking about just a few people being lifted out of poverty. We’re talking about five thousand people. And that cluster of villages is already serving as the model for dozens of other villages for miles around. It’s exponential. It’s viral. This is how the world is changed.

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80 Information provided by Herrine Okoth, Millennium Villages Agriculture Facilitator.

In other words, a tremendous amount of global hope was invested in the maize harvested that August in Sauri. At the UN General Assembly in November of 2006, Sachs used the harvest as an example of the “tremendous achievement” of relatively small amounts of aid, indicating that Sauri’s success meant that the end of poverty and meeting the MDGs was only a problem of political will and aid commitment.

The global news media relished the moment by bringing a parade of Sauri farmers into the spotlight. The voices and faces (in photographs that accompany the article) of Sauri residents authenticated and animated the success of the Project in the global media:

- “Smarter farmer: Aggrey Ranyondo in Sauri, Kenya quintupled his corn crop. Now he’s planting other crops.”

- “Smiling in her small green forest of cornstalks, Adhola, the mother of seven, said he expected to harvest as many as 10 bags of corn this season, up from the usual three or four.”

- “Andrew Apollolutta stands in his maize field and grasps a young cord cob from an 8ft plant. “This is very much good,” the young farmer said. “It’s going to be a bumper harvest.”

- “For a small-scale farmer like Beatrice Okumu, the little maize she harvested from her two acre farm supplemented income from her husband’s employment at a supermarket in Kisumu... “Our small pieces of land now produce enough food to feed the family and take to the market. We attend to other duties without worrying about what to eat,” said Mrs. Okumu.

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84 Xan Rice, “From dirt poor to soil rich in just five years,” *The Australian*, July 1, 2005.

85 “Farmers reap benefits of improved fertilizer use” *Business Daily* e-paper.
“Edwina Odit, for example, declares herself very happy... Mrs. Odit had grown 10 bags of maize, compared to three the year before... “The Project gave us fertilizer and that was the biggest factor in the high yield,” she said. 86

"I would like Prof. Sachs to look at the faces of Sauri people. They are shining because they are not hungry any more," Monica Oketch [sic], an imposing woman who is the chair of the local council, boomed in Kiswahili."87

“Standing in a massive storage warehouse surrounded by thousands of 90kg bags of maize, Mary Asiko, 65, beams with pride.”88

What “concept” do Ranyondo, Adhola, Apollolutta, Okumu, Odit and Oketch prove? It is not simply that any investment in farms produces the good life. Rather, they prove that chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds are key to creating the rural African utopia.

Bringing Saurians into the commercial flows of fertilizer and seeds is what frees them from the poverty trap. It should come as no surprise, then, that the agricultural inputs in the Millennium Villages were subsidized, at different points, by multinational agribusinesses including the Monsanto Corporation and Yara, a Norwegian multinational fertilizer corporation.

After the first year of achieving food security through bumper harvest, the next project objective would be to transition from subsistence to commercial farming.

According to Sanchez, after being liberated from “the hunger/disease trap,” the

87 Ibid.
community would begin to “sell crop surpluses, enter the market and do the economic transformation.”

In other words, from the second year onwards, the focus was to be on “agriculture as a business,” as farmers were expected to produce not only surplus maize for basic income but also a diversity of crops and livestock for further income generation. As we will discuss in the next chapter, that transition would be much more difficult than anyone in the MV Project imagined.

2. Investments in basic health (clinic, medicines, expansion of basic services)

Of all the interventions discussed with community members in formal and informal interviews, by far the most popular and least controversial were those made in the health sector. The one stop that every tour makes when it visits Sauri is the health clinic. Tour guides celebrate the dramatic decline in malaria, the availability of drugs, the well-staffed care. Video cameras abound. Nothing can be ambiguous about providing basic healthcare. When Michael Sidibe, the director of the UN AIDS Program, visited Sauri in 2010, a throng of foreign visitors with cameras filled the clinic compound interspersed with villagers. Sidibe congratulated Sachs on the model program and vowed funds and partnership to create similar clinics and programs across Africa.

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Horrified at the lack of adequate healthcare in Sauri and across rural Africa, Sachs had set out in 2005 to ensure that his model villages would all have a village clinic with at least one doctor and one nurse, something that most towns and villages in rural Africa lack. The MV Project also undertook training hundreds of Community Health Workers who could provide first-response care and close tracking of patients at the village level. Construction of the new community health Center began with groundbreaking on January 17, 2005 and opened on July 14, 2005. The community provided land, non-technical labor, water, bricks and timber. The MV Project provided cement, bedrock, iron sheets, doors, windows and technical labor force. The facility has five rooms, including a nurse’s station, consulting room, laboratory, pharmacy and storage room. According to Sanchez, the Sauri clinic was built in less than six weeks for less than $10,000.\textsuperscript{91} In addition to paying for the majority of clinic staff with the idea that the Government of Kenya would eventually take on the cost, the MV Project also trained village-level Community Health Workers (CHW) to encourage prevention, monitor cases and administer basic health interventions. For most villagers, the only contact with the MV Project is through the clinic or their village Community Health Worker on whom they rely for basic medical care.

In an interview, the head nurse Violet Apondi shared the clinic history with me. Apondi began working for Millennium in March of 2005 before the clinic opened. The

\textsuperscript{91} Sanchez, “The Transformation from Sub-subsistence Farmers into Small-scale Entrepreneurs.”
first stage of health interventions involved random sampling the blood of 1,000 people in the village to determine the prevalence of malaria. At that time, according to Violet, they determined the malaria rate to be 43%. When they did another round of sampling in 2007, the rate had dropped to 13%. When the clinic opened in mid-2005, it became a hive of activity, with 250-300 patients a day coming from Sauri sublocation and far beyond. According to the 2005-2006 annual report, the clinic saw a total of 11,818 patients between July and December of 2005.\textsuperscript{92} Between January and June 2006, 22,658 patients arrived for medical treatment at the clinic. 37\% were from outside Sauri.\textsuperscript{93}

The initial health interventions also included distribution of Long-Lasting Insecticide Treated Bed-Nets (LLITNs) to all households in the first year of the Project. Sanchez claims that malaria cases decreased by 75\% after the introduction of bed nets.\textsuperscript{94} Other reports claim that the rate went down from 55\% to 13\% of the total population.\textsuperscript{95} Community members concur that the nets have made significant positive changes. In a focus group discussion on health interventions, the bed nets ranked high in popularity as life-changing, not only for their anti-malarial benefits.

\textsuperscript{92} Millennium Villages Project, Annual Report for Sauri (New York: Earth Institute at Columbia University, 2005-2006), 23.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 24

\textsuperscript{94} Sanchez, “The Transformation from Sub-subsistence Farmers into Small-scale Entrepreneurs.”

“I no longer suffer from malaria. Parents are happy since the coming of bed nets,” Ainea Ogutu said.

“People give birth a lot because mosquitoes are not interfering with sex at night,” another participant, Tom Ochido, added.

“Yes, a man does not need interference when doing sex because you are doing a very important work of creating a person. Uzazi umeongezeka [birth has increased],” said another.

“When I was married,” one widow piped in, “we used to do it during day time to avoid mosquitoes at night. Now I see my married son with rough elbows in the morning which show he is doing sex a lot in the night.”

“Before nets, children used to wake up late because mosquitoes disturbed them at night. But, now the children are clever. They do not get sick from time to time,” Wilbert Rachielo said.

“Malaria is past tense in Sauri village,” Tom Ochido declared.

What worried the participants in the focus group was that by 2008 the nets had begun to tear. Many had been burnt by candles and kerosene lamps used at night.

“Sauri people should be careful,” one of the focus group participants observed. “Some have ruined their nets already.” The expectation of Sachs and the MV Project is that, having experienced the benefits of bed nets, community members will purchase their own when the originals wear out. In the focus group, most people expressed skepticism
about that shift. “These pre-treated nets cost 2000ksh. No one can pay that amount,”
Tecla Odalo pointed out. “If we were rich by now, as they promised, then we could be
like wazungu and buy nets, but I do not even have money for school fees. I cannot buy a
net. Soon, they will be telling us to take loans,” said Rachielo.

3. Investments in education (school meals, vocational training, computers)

One of the things that impressed Jeffrey Sachs on his initial visit to Sauri in 2004
was an existing school feeding program that had been established in 1999 by Anne
Omollo, the headmistress of Bar Sauri Primary. According to the current head teacher,
Joseph Alanyo, Omollo had noticed in the late 1990s that students performed worse in
the afternoon, when they were hungry. She created the school feeding program in
response. Each student would contribute twelve gorogoros (2kg tins) of maize and seven
gorogoros of beans per year. The year the school feeding program started, Bar Sauri
went from a ranking of #158 in the district to #68, moving a year later to #4 and
remaining in the top ten ever since, a record of success unmentioned by Sachs when he
describes the students at Bar Sauri as “hundreds of hungry and impoverished
schoolchildren.”

At the time of Sachs’ visit, only the upper classes (250 out of 500 students)
participated in the feeding program and the school relied on volunteers to cook. The MV
Project scaled up the program to the whole school, expanding it to the other two
primary schools in Sauri sublocation, Bar Turo Primary and Nyamninia Primary, as well
as the schools in all the neighboring MV-2 villages. Part of the community contribution to the Project indicated that 10% of the harvest would help support the school feeding programs. For the first two years, the MV Project rounded out the nutritional balance of the traditional maize and beans meal called nyonyo with tomatoes, onions, omena (small fish) and, twice weekly, beef. Children who rarely had meat in their diets suddenly had a bi-weekly infusion. School performance and attendance shot up as a result. With the MVP subsidies, the feeding programs could include orphans and those whose parents could not make any contribution to the program. When the program had been established in all 31 schools in the broader “Sauri Millennium Village” (across Gem district), a total of 19,500 students were receiving at least one balanced meal per day. As such, the school feeding program would often be counted as one of the “quick wins” that could be scaled up from the Millennium Villages to all of Africa. “The simple extension of a school feeding program has improved students’ performance and could serve as a model for schools across Africa,” one article claims.

Millennium broke the cost down as follows:

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[last accessed: February 15, 2014]. This number is also cited in Standard article of 2011.

### Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Contribution</th>
<th>Contributions</th>
<th>Ksh</th>
<th>USD($)(*)</th>
<th>18kg maize per child</th>
<th>12kg beans per child</th>
<th>370 of 90kg bags of maize#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>2,204,893</td>
<td>30,624</td>
<td>Cash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>432,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>18kg maize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>576,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>12kg beans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest Contributions</td>
<td>444,000</td>
<td>6,167</td>
<td>370 of 90kg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,656,893</strong></td>
<td><strong>50,790</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cash</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*1 USD = 72 Ksh

\# one 90 kg bag = Ksh 1200

Over the course of the five years, the burden of cost would be shifted onto parents and, ideally, the broader community. The continuation of the program would hinge on several factors—namely, continued bumper harvests and continued community investment in the program.

The initial flurry of activity in the first year also included the construction of new classrooms, including designated computer labs. Nyamninia and Bar Sauri received computers donated by Lenovo. Latrines and water tanks for rain harvesting were also built by the Water and Sanitation Committee. The MV Project chose fifteen students to sponsor for secondary school (which many students cannot afford). The Project provided transportation costs and school fees to the selected students.

4. Power, transport and communications services (roads, electricity, a community truck, mobile phones)

In the area of infrastructure, Sachs and his colleagues envisioned mobility and connection with the world beyond the village. Sachs described the "isolation" of Sauri as "stunning" in The End of Poverty. "There are no cars or trucks owned or even used within
Sauri…[also] only three or four of the two hundred or so [people] said they get to the regional city of Kisumu each month and about the same number said that they had been to Nairobi, Kenya’s commercial and political capital,” Sachs claims. Setting aside the fact that a significant village elite did, indeed, own vehicles and did travel, some quite extensively, the statement reveals the assumption that mobility and connectivity are essential for reaching that basic threshold of the economic game. If one cannot move in the flows of capital, bodies, knowledge and possibility, one is left behind.

In Sauri, even at the ambitious outset, interventions in power, transport and communications would test the MV Project’s partnership with the slower-moving machine of bureaucratic state government agencies. As late as 2011, promised power lines had not been installed. Roads had not been paved. The Project did succeed in grading the main dirt roads to provide smoother transportation. One line of electricity was installed to power the Clinic. In other Millennium Villages like the remote village of Dertu in Northeastern Kenya, the MV Project would collaborate with Sony-Ericsson to install cell phone towers. Sauri already had wireless connectivity via towers in nearby Yala.

For Sauri community members, the most exciting intervention in this area would be the donation of the “community truck.” At the celebratory 2005 harvest festival, after the first bumper harvest in the Sauri MV-1, Sachs made a grand show of gifting a “community truck” to Sauri. Mama Monica sat in the driver’s seat beaming for cameras.
In *The End of Poverty*, Sachs places much hope on the provision of such a community vehicle. He imagines:

A village truck could bring in fertilizers, other farm inputs, and modern cooking fuels... and take out harvests to the market, transport perishable goods and milk for sale in Kisumu, and increase opportunities for off-farm employment for youth. The truck could rush women with childbirth complications in children with acute complications of anemia to the hospital.98

That vision rests on a rather utopian notion of shared community property. To function as Sachs intended, the truck would need to be accessible to all as a kind of common good, which would seem to be at odds with the objective of bringing community members into entrepreneurial, commercial flows. Thus, in reality, the MV Project would try to accomplish the above community services while also running the truck as a small business, an endeavor that would ultimately backfire in ways we will examine later.

5. Safe drinking water and sanitation

In the area of water, Sauri had an advantage over other Millennium Villages like Koraro in Ethiopia or Mbola in Tanzania, where natural springs were non-existent. Natural springs and, typically, regular rainfall provided an advantage in the area. Additionally, in the MV-1, twelve protected water points had already been built by a previous NGO, Africa Now. In the MV-1, then, work in the water and sanitation sector concentrated on building latrines at the schools, setting up water tanks for rain harvesting and repairing existing water points. Proctor & Gamble donated PUR water

sanitation packets to the program. MVP trained the community for using the packets and distributed 200 clay pots with taps to households. The PUR sachets were then available at local food kiosks at a subsidized rate.

Additionally, in several of the MV-2 villages, the MV Project undertook building “water kiosks” where protected water would be available at a cost. A villager could run the station, keeping it clean while charging a small amount for water usage. The kiosks, however, proved unpopular as community members were accustomed to free water. As of 2011, the kiosks in Marenyo, Gongo and Lihanda remained empty.

**Doing Rounds**

In late 2009, Lydiah and I accompany Mary Wasonga, a Community Health Worker, on her local rounds. As we walk, I find myself scurrying to keep up with her long strides as we weave in and out of barely-worn trails that link hut to hut. As we walk, the bottoms of our skirts becoming wet with dew, I ask about her work as a CHW, 99

“The Millennium found me doing this job,” Mary says. “I have been a CHW in this community since 1993. Previously, I was trained by Maendeleo ya Wanawake [Women in Development]. Then, I was just volunteering. When Millennium goes, I will continue to volunteer. But, as for now, they give us a small supplement of 4,000 [Kenyan Shillings] per month. But, much of that money, I put into supporting the community to buy soap or medicine or transport to the clinic,” Mary explains. “As CHWs, we do a lot of tracking of health of people in the community. We do follow-up of the sick, measure

99 Mary Wasonga, Interview with Lydia Madialo and author, August 10, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
nutrition status of children, follow children’s vaccinations, follow status of
women who are pregnant, track the status of HIV patients. We can also do blood
tests for malaria. In my area, I am following 268 people. 48 are HIV positive that
we know. ”

She drops her voice. She says that she struggles a lot with the family that we are about to
see as they are not good with taking their ARVs (Anti-Retroviral drugs) regularly.

“They can be very stubborn,” she says. An empty cardboard packet of ARV medication
lies discarded near the entrance gate, trampled in the dirt.

We arrive at the mud hut, which has a new tin roof and words painted on the
front that read: “With God all things are possible.” Inside an old man lies on a mat on
the floor, curled in fetal position. He shows no interest or awareness of us. Mary
introduces me to his wife, Elizabeth, then takes the arm measurements of a quiet baby
on the floor. The family has seven living children, with two having already died. A small
child standing in the doorway begins vomiting. We step out with Elizabeth after she
gives the girl some water and wipes her face with the hem of her skirt.

“How do you support your family now that your husband is sick?” Lydiah asks.

“I make charcoal and sell. I work in somebody’s shamba when they need help
with weeding or splitting firewood,” she says.

“Tell us about your experiences with the Millennium Villages,” I ask.

“The only good I can say is that they help us with nets. Mary has come with
medicine when my children are ill.”

“Do you feel your life has improved since Millennium came?” Lydiah asks.
“Things are just the same,” Elizabeth replies. “The first year, they gave us fertilizer and seeds so I got eight bags [of maize] that year. Usually, I get two. The next year, they gave us half the amount, but I still did well. After that, they made us go for loans so I just went back to farming as I had done before. This year, I had only one bag. The rains did not come, you know.”

“Do your children receive lunch in the school feeding program?” Lydiah asks

“That one you see is too sick for school. For the others, the school requires two tins of maize and one of beans if they want to eat. I don’t have that much. So, they are just sent home. Even when Millennium was giving meat, I could not contribute, so they did not eat,” Elizabeth explains.

We talk about the lack of rain and the bad harvest while Mary makes some notes and examines the sick girl. When she joins us outside the compound, she looks sad.

“I will come back later with Coartem for the child. I’m sure she has malaria,” she says.

On our way to the next household, we cut through an empty compound with six houses, all boarded up and locked. Mary says that the entire family had died of AIDS. I feel a mixture of deep sadness, rage and impotency. We wind through the fields and through a banana grove to reach the next house, a hut with thatched roof.

Maize is spread out on a tarp in front of the house, drying in the sun. James and Patricia Onyinjo, a couple who had eight children (four of whom had died), greet us
warmly, smiling at Mary. Patricia holds a pair of tiny twin girls with little pink knitted caps and gloves, despite the ninety-degree day. While the twins look like premature newborns, Mary says they are already two months old.

“We think she is God,” Patricia says. “She has brought us much goodness.”

James nods and hands a skeletal twin to Mary. “These children are alive because of Mary.”

“For a time, the Project gave us Plumpy-Nut for the children with malnutrition,” Mary says. “But, they seem to have run out or something because there is no more to give. It was very helpful for the ones who got it.”

“What other benefits of Millennium have you experienced?” Lydiah asks.

“There were project people in the early days doing survey and they wrote down the names of the people who should benefit from the project. Since then, it is only Mary who pays us a visit.”

“They were among those promised houses in 2005, but you can see that never happened,” Mary says. She points up at spots in the thatch where the sun and rain stream in.

“I am in great need of a house,” John says. “The only son who could have helped me died and the remaining ones are too young to help with building.”
“Are they on the list of “vulnerables”?” I ask. The infamous list has been a frequent topic of conversation as the “vulnerables” received ongoing inputs after the Project required everyone else to take loans in the third year.

“The “vulnerables” are just those who have connections. We have no connections,” Patricia says. “We would like to plant beans, but we cannot afford the seeds. Yet, Jogweng [Luo term for Village Elder] has been given seeds for onions and pili pili hoho [chilies].”

“You received something the first year, no?” Lydiah asks.

“We have no land, but we managed to get something for the plot that we lease. That was the first year. We only received in the first year,” John responds. “Now I am working on other people’s shambas to get some income.”

“In the clinic, though, there is much help. We get medicine after paying ten shillings for a registration booklet. God has blessed us. We appreciate,” Patricia adds.

After we bid the family goodbye and set off again along the winding footpaths, Lydiah asks Mary for her thoughts on Millennium. I walk-jog just behind them, listening.

Millennium is unreliable. The project gives the community so many promises that make people have high expectations. Then, they feel disappointed because the promises are not fulfilled or only fulfilled for some people. I think the promises are sincere for the donors, the problem is in the implementation. For example, they promised us VIP latrines in every home and went ahead and trained us on how to build them by ourselves. To date, there are holes waiting for slabs in most households. The project was to bring materials for building the toilets, but they never came. More springs were supposed to be protected, but we
still only have those that had already been done before. I think intentions are good, but people cannot eat intentions.”

She deviates from the path to show us a deep latrine pit surrounded by twigs that are woven together with black plastic. “This is what I mean. The widow here was told that they would build her a VIP latrine, so she went ahead and dug the hole. They never came. It’s very dangerous to have such a hole just open. Children and cows just fall in and die.”
4. Becoming Entrepreneurs

Siprose Odongo had a problem. She showed up at my house early one morning, before seven, with a scrawny goat tied to the end of a frayed rope. I had just begun eating breakfast so I asked her inside. She softly shook her head.¹

“You must take my goat today,” she said while I stared at the animal, bewildered. It seemed unlikely that she needed someone to watch the goat for security purposes. Across Sauri, goats tethered to stakes usually spent their days outside without anyone looking over them.

“I have to go to the meeting with the bank representatives,” I said.

“It’s okay. They won’t be coming here,” she said.

“Who?” I asked.

“The people from Equity [bank] have come to take the things that belong to those who did not repay the loans. I could not pay the loan. My sister came with her five children from Busia and I had my grandchildren to feed also,” she said.

“I don’t think they’ll take your goat,” I said.

“It’s like we brought in a hyena. When Millennium linked us to SAGA, they wrote down everything that we owned so now the bank can just take whatever it can sell to pay the loan,” she said. “At first, I had a debt of 4,000 shillings to pay to SAGA

after they gave me a loan of 20kg fertilizers, 2 maize seed packets and 10kg of urea.

Now, they say I owe a total of 5,000 shillings. The loan when not paid in time attracts interest. I paid 1,000, but now I am told I still owe more than when I began. Since I am not paying, they will come and sophisticate my goat.”

“Sophisticate?” I asked.

“Yes, they will come to take her, you see. Borrowing that loan was the beginning of all my woes,” she responded.

After I had cleared the plan to hold the goat with Pamela, the owner of the compound, we tied the goat to a stake beside my house where she could eat the shriveled remains of some basil plants that I had left too long without water. As we walked together toward the church where the meeting with the bankers was to be held, Siprose pulled leaves off bushes and shredded the leaves nervously, leaving a trail of green flecks behind us in the deep red dirt.

_Transforming Farmers into Entrepreneurs_

Like the majority of Saurians, Siprose had taken her first loan in 2008 on the instructions of MV Project facilitators. After the first year of free inputs, in 2006, the Project had distributed half the previous amount of seed and fertilizer for free as a kind of weaning mechanism to shift costs slowly onto farmers.² Despite the reduction in

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² Those with one acre or more received 50kg of DAP and 50kg of Urea with 10kg of seed per acre.
inputs, yields further increased in the second year, rising from 4.85 tons per hectare to 6.2 tons per hectare. The harvests not only met the MV Project aspirations; they exceeded them. Having raised the average harvest above the hunger threshold, the MV Project could move to its next phase of socioeconomic transformation. The contentious introduction of money, banks and loans would be at the heart of that effort.

A PowerPoint presentation entitled “The Transformation of Sub-subsistence Farmers into Small-Scale Entrepreneurs,” delivered by Pedro Sanchez on November 2, 2006 to the UK Department For International Development (DFID) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), outlined the general two-step process that would define the unfolding of Millennium Villages. First, one must raise the community “out of the hunger/disease trap.” Second, the community must begin to “sell crop surpluses, enter the market and do the economic transformation.” From the second year onwards, the focus would to be on “agriculture as a business.” As outlined in Sanchez’s presentation, the farmer was expected to produce not only surplus maize for basic income but also to diversify into different crops and livestock to generate further revenues. After the

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3 Information provided by Herrine Okoth, Millennium Villages Agriculture Facilitator.


application of the Big Five, in other words, the next phase of the Millennium Villages Project would be oriented toward proving the underlying hypothesis ("proof-of-concept") that "sub-subsistence livelihoods can be transformed into small-scale commercial entrepreneurship and be empowered to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015." While not acknowledging the significance of the sociocultural changes involved, the MV Project did recognize that such transformation would involve fundamental change in village life. In an instruction manual for a UNDP-partnered Millennium Village in Liberia, project administrators write:

"The most important step toward MV sustainability...will be the conversion of agriculture from subsistence to cash crops, with all of the attendant commercialization of village life that will accompany this transformation (e.g. Active use of micro-saving and micro-credits). This commercialization will not only obviate the need for the MVP cash infusion into agriculture, but will also provide the economic motor for further development."

A number of unaddressed questions linger just beneath the surface of these claims and objectives. What does the "attendant commercialization of village life" entail? What shared meanings, practices, relationships, values, and norms define a "commercial farming community" in contrast with a subsistence farming community? What changes does such transformation involve? How is the transformation facilitated, cultivated or

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7 Liberia MVP handbook

imposed in everyday life? Who counts as a “small-scale entrepreneur”? What habits, desires and motivations define his or her subjectivity? How are such subjects created, nurtured and trained?

At a minimum, we can start with the Millennium Villages’ definition of “commercial farming communities” as those that “are able to save, engage in off-farm work and invest for the future.” Commercialization of village life, they also tell us, means “active use of micro-savings and micro-credits.” All the activities involve ways of acting in relationship toward money and toward the future—saving, investing, borrowing, taking up non-subsistence wage labor. Such practices do not happen in the abstract. They unfold through the actions of living, embodied selves making decisions and taking actions on themselves and on others. For that to happen, a sociocultural apparatus in which saving, working for money, investing for the future and borrowing on credit are meaningful and desirable must be present. In the absence of a pre-existing framework, significant sociocultural reconfiguration must take place. Social, moral and cultural codes must become conducive to financial and commercial flows. Individuals must become competitive and invested in their personal interests and profit in such a way that they are driven beyond subsistence farming. The difficult work of cultivating conducive desires, values, habits and social practices to foster an active private sector of entrepreneurial, self-interested subjects primed for profit-making, saving, investing and

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market competition would be the deeper, generally unacknowledged labor of the
Millennium Villages Project staff.

Agricultural Field Day

“Hurry up! You’re late for the tour,” my research assistant Joseph calls from
several hundred yards ahead. It is a bright morning in June 2010 and I am late to the
annual “Agricultural Field Day” at the compound of the area councillor. I scamper up to
Joseph, then he points down a steep hill. At the bottom, near a rectangular fish pond, a
crowd of people—including several foreigners—listen intently to the MV Project
facilitator. I stumble down the hill, grasping at tall, thin trees along the path to stabilize
myself.

“This one is just raw bone. The bone of a cow,” says the female facilitator,
holding up a plastic bag with what looks like dust. “Raw bone, unburnt, for tilapia and
catfish, even omens (sardines). You can add chicken feed and feed it to chickens also.
Dry it and then grind it together.” She tosses the dust out into the pond. Little bubbles
surface as sleek fish bodies come into view under the surface.

Two blonde women smile and nod. One giggles with delight when she sees the
fish.

“Amazing!” the other exclaims.

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9 All the following events, speeches, dialogues took place June 10, 2010 in Sauri sublocation, Kenya. Event
was audio recorded.
“It is some form of a business for the community,” the MV Project agriculture facilitator, Herrine Okoth, says.

“That’s innovation,” the taller blonde woman says.

We climb back up the hill in a long single-file line. Joseph meets me at the top and whispers that the strangers are students, some from Columbia and others from a program in England. We enter Councillor Ochido’s compound, where a series of displays have been set up. I scan the well-known faces of people that the Millennium staff refer to as “stakeholders,” each seated on a plastic chair with samples of his or her crop or livestock. Samuel Otoyo is there with his “European” cow, Adhiambo. Jenifa Olunga has a table of leafy greens. Aggrey Ranyondo has built a makeshift, temporary chicken coop for his hens. A young boy that I do not recognize holds a plump goat at the end of a rope. Closest to us, Leonida Okoth sits beside a tin bucket full of fish in shallow water. She holds one up, thrashing, as she beams.

“These are tilapias that we are just now harvesting. You can see, we have improved on the sizes. They used to be small, but now we get two hundred and fifty grams at least. This is more favorable in the market,” Herrine states.

Leonida holds out a fried fish, with eyes staring blankly up, to one of the visitors, a tall young man in jeans and a baseball cap.

“She wants you to buy from her and eat,” Herrine explains.
The young man shakes his head apologetically. At the next station, Paul Obara sits with a bunch of bananas. He stands to show the crowd a heavy bunch of green bananas.

“These are not your local bananas that ripen quickly and get spoilt in a week,” Herrine explains. “These are improved bananas that take some time to ripen so they can travel more easily to markets. And, these are also resistant to disease.”

“Ina bei na pesa mzuri,” Obara says.

“He says that it gets good price and money,” Herrine translates.

“Basically, we are encouraging farmers to get tissue culture for improved bananas as the quality is better in size, taste and also appearance,” another MV facilitator explains. “How they are appearing is what can really hinder your market.”

“Even if I am far away, I will see that shining one,” Herrine says, pointing to Oyier’s banana bunch. “So, we want farmers to produce the tissue culture bananas because we know they have gone through certain procedures and have proven to be the best variety.”

As we move to the next station where Rosemary Opiyo has onions and tomatoes, I notice that the crowd has multiplied significantly since we left the fish pond, as many locals have joined the procession. We pass each station slowly, taking in the different crops and livestock. Then the guests gather under a large tent while the rest of us find plastic chairs in the sun. After formalities of welcome, a “vote of thanks” to the guests
from England and New York, and introductions, the Millennium Villages deputy team leader, Jessica Masira, stands to take the microphone.

“Karibu, karibu tena,” she calls out. “We are showing our guests how we are doing diversification by doing farming in other areas that can bring us money. Cash crops. So, you see something like bananas. From just fifty seedlings, you can get cash monthly if you do good banana management. They need a lot of care. Even if you have a lower stock of five seedlings, five seedlings in one hole, the bananas should grow at different stages so there are those growing and those you can still take to market. But, if Yala market is full of bananas, there are still organizations like Millennium that can link you to markets. Or, you go to Kisumu. The lesson we are learning from here, at least, is that we can all practice something for money. In everything you do, let’s look on food as money. Here, we eat food to be healthy and get energy to find ways of making money.”

“Mnafurahi? [Are you happy?]” She calls out to the crowd.

“Ndiyo! [Yes!]” Several call back.

“Because now we don’t focus on food to eat, we are looking at commercializing agriculture. That is why we do diversification, cash crops, which is how we make money, money in the pocket. Now, that is what we are working on. How to make more what?”

“Pesa! [Money],” the crowd responds.

“You, Saurians, you have a very big basket. And, in the basket, are what? Choices. Choices are in the basket. The farmers you see here are those that have started choosing and you can see improvement. So, today, now you come here and see what they are doing so you can go home and decide. Will you choose to start keeping chickens?”

“Ndiyo!” The crowd responds.

“Will you go home and build fish ponds?”
“Ndiyo!”

“To make what? To make…”

“Pesa,” the crowd chants.

“Ndiyo. We want these foods to be turned to be what?

“Pesa,” the crowd responds.

“To become what?”

“Pesa,” the crowd calls out again, in unison.

“Pesa. And so if we are to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals, we have to see how we can improve on individual income. Don’t hide behind others. Individual development in every house. My prayer is, may you be one of those people who would be benefitting from the Project not as a group but as an individual, nikweli [it is true]. We don’t work with groups. We work with you as individuals. Does a neighbor come to run your house? A neighbor does not come to decide for you what you want to prepare for your family, what you want to eat, what you want to put on the table. The choice is yours and you have many choices. Ndiyo? Maybe if you have hens or even one cow for milk. If you can’t afford a cow, buy a dairy goat. Do you understand?

“Ndiyo,” the crowd responds.

**Liturgies of Entrepreneurship**

The Agricultural Field Day brought to life the utopian vision of the Millennium Villages: An array of individual entrepreneurs, units of enterprise, all engaged in their own income-generating activities. In their speeches, the Millennium Villages staff members articulated the contours of the ideal subject for such a society: An individual with a sense of the market and a “basket” full of choices, who makes calculated choices that are oriented toward maximizing his or her own monetary profit, “money in the
pocket.” The event of the Field Day might be understood as a pedagogical liturgy—a public performance for basic instruction about the basic values and beliefs of entrepreneurial capitalist society. Such events abounded during the Millennium Villages Project tenure in the community. There were regular Health Days, Education Days, Harvest Festivals and Exhibitions around the cluster, each one performing the desired ideals and holding up the ideal subjects who had achieved the kind of success that the MV Project hoped to actualize broadly.

We might see these events as liturgies of the new world that the Millennium Villages wanted to create, based on the basic beliefs of an entrepreneurial capitalist society. As Talal Asad teaches with regard to religion, the public performance of repetitive liturgies and public rituals can serve to shape the subjectivities of those involved through concrete embodied practices and experiences. The liturgy can also carve out space for the emergence of new kinds of subjectivities. In the various events, the already-converted farmers performed their prosperity as a way of pulling in new believers, converts from subsistence life to entrepreneurship. As Leonida showcased her fish and Paul Obara lifted up his “improved” bananas, they performed as entrepreneurs embodying the new standard of goodness, as measured by their ability to make a monetary profit and stretch beyond traditional farming practices into the commercial realm.
Such events show how the “commercialization of village life” happens slowly, through repetitive pedagogies and rituals that instantiate particular dispositions, what Asad, alongside anthropologist Marcel Mauss and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, would call a particular habitus. The notion of habitus refers to embodied, acquired, socially trained dispositions or abilities that are conditioned by one’s social context. Habitus consists of “historically constituted practical knowledge” and “practice-generating principles” that are deeply ingrained in bodily dispositions, inclinations and abilities. These embodied schemes enable humans to make sense of their worlds, orient themselves and make appropriate decisions in a given sociocultural milieu. The notion of habitus is most clearly captured by Bourdieu as a “feel for the game.” He writes that habitus is what is “produced by experience of the game, and therefore of the objective structures within which it is played out, the feel for the game is what gives the game a subjective sense—a meaning and the raison d’être, but also direction, and orientation, and impending outcome, for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake.”10 Another useful way of putting the concept of habitus is as “the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinant ways.”11


11 Wacquant 2005: 316. Couldn’t find this directly, but found refs to it as being cited in Navarro, In search of a cultural interpretation of power, 2006.
For Asad, embodied liturgies and rituals serve to train and affirm the habitus of a given community. He gives the example of Christian sacraments as exercises that are “parts of a Christian program for creating in its performers, by means of regulated practice, the mental and moral dispositions appropriate to Christians.”\textsuperscript{12} We might think of the Agricultural Field Day and similar events as secular liturgies in which a new entrepreneurial ethos is rehearsed, affirmed and taught as a necessary subjective dimension of the “commercialization of village life.”

The liturgy of the Agricultural Field Day celebrates a particular kind of subject, oriented toward the world in particular ways. First, we see acute individualization in the organization of the displays. Only one farmer sits at each distinct display promoting his or her individual enterprise. They are approached as successful individuals rather than successful members of a community. In her sermon, Jessica insists that the MV Project is about “individual development” and warns against more collectivist dispositions. “May you be one of those people who would be benefitting from the Project not as a group but as an individual...We don’t work with groups. We work with you as individuals,” she stresses before cautioning the audience not to rely on their neighbors.\textsuperscript{13} The individual becomes responsible for his or her own development.

\textsuperscript{12} Talal Asad, \textit{Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reason of Power in Christianity and Islam} (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins, 1993) 78.

\textsuperscript{13} Jessica Masira, speech given on June 10, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya, Kenya.
At every turn in the tour of enterprises at both the Agricultural Field Day, the MV Project facilitators encourage the farmers to consider their choices, actions and investments in relationship to what would be “favorable to the market.” The market is no longer the specific place in Yala that fills every Wednesday with makeshift stalls and blankets spread on the ground. The market became an abstract principle in relationship to which all things should be measured. The shining banana that will catch a distant eye, the fat fish that will sell for a higher price, the bigger animal, the greener kale become “better,” are “improved” because the “market” determines the truth that then shapes the “best practices” of individuals in relationship to it. Repeatedly, the farmers are being coaxed to see their produce, choices and actions through market eyes to discern the most profitable choices to select from the “basket of choices.”

But, as Jessica seems to sense, a collection of individuals, a guiding idea of a market and a range of enterprises do not alone make a commercialized society. A more fundamental disposition has to be cultivated, without which none of the other components of the game make sense. The new entrepreneurial individual begins to emerge through a particular relationship to money and monetary accumulation. One might even say that, above all, the main sermon enlisted the audience in a call-and-
response affirmation of a set of beliefs and values in relationship to what Karl Marx once called the “worldly god”\textsuperscript{14} of the modern economic system—money.

Of course, money did circulate in Sauri and a local market did exist prior to the arrival of the Millennium Villages. However, what the Field Day speeches indicate is that the community members had to be taught and learn new ways of being in relationship to both. In general, subsistence living requires very little money and is, by definition, not focused on the objective of endlessly accumulating money. One eats what is grown in the family shamba [small farm plot]. When money is needed for small commodities like sugar, one sells some produce or livestock in the local market or on the side of the road. “If I needed to pay school fees or buy clothes, I might sell a chicken or some bananas. I never had to buy seeds because we just used the seeds from the last harvest and boma manure for fertilizer. So, truly, I did not need so much money,” the widow Magdaline Omwombo once explained. Similarly, the market in Yala served as a place where anyone went to sell any surplus produce or livestock needed to fulfill basic needs like school and health fees. While some entrepreneurial farmers created niches for themselves—like the woman who sewed clothes or the man who sold mattresses made in Kisumu—the vast majority of people considered the market to be ancillary to their primary objective of feeding and raising their families. Those with keener interest in

money and profit quickly moved to Kisumu or Nairobi. Thus, a few “rich” members of the community maintained houses in the village while living elsewhere.

At the Field Day, we encounter Jessica and Herrine actively inculcating basic capitalist values necessary for the “commercialization of village life.” Most fundamentally, we witness the attempt to shift desires and values toward the accumulation of money as an end in itself. Karl Marx can be helpful here as he traces the emergence of commerce, “a more developed form of [commodity] circulation,” to a change in the general subjective relationship to money. In the early pages of *Capital*, Marx describes two formulas for the circulation of commodities, which he notes is the “starting point of capital.” The first starts with a commodity like corn, which is sold for money, which is then exchanged for another commodity like sugar. In that circuit, money is more like another commodity and is not yet capital. Marx uses the shorthand C-M-C (commodity-money-commodity) to describe this circuit. Money becomes capital when it circulates in such a way that it produces more money, or what Marx calls “surplus value.” Money begets more money. Marx outlines that circuit as M-C-M’ (money-commodity-money primed). “The circulation of money as capital is, on the contrary, an end in itself…as the conscious representative of this movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point
from which the money starts and to which it returns,” Marx writes. The “subjective aim” of the person in the C-M-C circuit is simple exchange of commodities, whereas the “subjective aim” of the new capitalist becomes the limitless accumulation of more money. “The restless never-ending process of profit-making alone is what he aims at. This boundless greed after riches, this passionate chase after exchange-value.” The proto-capitalist’s view of things changes at that point. One begins to see things as money. “The capitalist knows that all commodities, however scurvy they may look, or however badly they may smell are in faith and truth money…a wonderful means whereby out of money to make more money,” Marx writes.

What Marx indicates, in other words, is that the shift from basic commodity circulation to a capitalist economy involves more than a mere infusion of money. The “subjective aim” of individuals in that economy must be changed. Their basic desires and values in relationship to money must shift so that they are fundamentally disposed toward money-making, not just to facilitate exchange of commodities but as an end in itself. Such a disposition is at the core of what Max Weber calls the “spirit of capitalism.” Weber affirms that it is not simply an influx of money that leads to a commercial farming society; it is the subjective transformation in relationship to money that matters.

“The question of the motive forces behind the development of capitalism is not

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15 Tucker, Marx-Engels Reader, 333.
16 Ibid., 334.
primarily a question of the origin of the money reserves to be used, but a question of the
development of the capitalist spirit…The capitalist economic order needs this
uncompromising devotion to the “vocation” [Beruf] of moneymaking,” Weber writes in
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.\textsuperscript{17} It is not simply the acquisitive desire that
characterizes the capitalist spirit, Weber clarifies. Greed, after all, exists in any mode of
production. It is when profit-making becomes an end in itself, a calling or vocation in
itself, that the capitalist spirit emerges. However, the transition to the capitalist spirit,
Weber observes, is never easy. “The early progress of such new ‘ideas’ is, however, beset
by many more obstacles than the theoreticians of the ‘superstructure’ assume; they do
not blossom like a flower,” Weber writes.\textsuperscript{18}

Blossoming like a flower, however, was precisely what the Millennium Villages
Project expected to happen as the average level of income rose. Farmers would naturally
look to invest their surplus in further income-generating activities to “unleash the
dynamic of savings and growth”\textsuperscript{19} predicted in the Millennium Villages concept. Sachs
built his model for ending poverty on that assumption. The sustainability of the Project
beyond the period of aid relied on the assumption that “capital per person” would

\textsuperscript{17} Max Weber, \textit{The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: and Other Writings} (London: Penguin

\textsuperscript{18} Weber, \textit{The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism}, Kindle Locations 1596-1599.

\textsuperscript{19} Pedro Sanchez, et al, “The African Millennium Villages,” \textit{Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of
accumulate and be saved or invested. In *The End of Poverty*, Jeffrey Sachs uses two figures to compare the basic economic model of the poverty trap with the economic model he envisions for ending poverty.

The Poverty Trap

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Breaking the Poverty Trap

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“Voilà. With the same economic structure as the first economy, but starting with twice the capital stock, the economy grows rather than declines,” Sachs concludes.21

The difference between the poverty trap and the end-of-poverty model is not only the addition of Official Development Assistance. The second model requires change in basic practices of dealing with money—household savings and microfinance as keys to increasing capital per person and fostering economic growth. In other words, the success of the project relied on a set of dispositions toward money, toward others and toward the future.

Tacitly assumed in the second model is that the “subjective aim” of community members will be to increase their capital by acting in particular ways toward money, toward themselves, toward others and, significantly, toward the future. To save money and to use loans in a way that increases one’s individual capital requires relating to the future in a particular way—the future as the realm of potential capital accumulation. One saves money in a bank because of the promise of future interest accruing. One takes a loan to invest in some enterprise that has the potential to generate more profit than the original loan amount plus interest to be repaid. The “vocation” of moneymaking must orient one’s basic choices as one creates his or her future.

Sachs and the Millennium Villages team faced one of the oldest problems of capitalism—how to jumpstart and sustain a cycle of capital accumulation and economic growth. In the earliest stages of the emergence of capitalism in Europe, the

21 Sachs, End of Poverty, 249.
transformation of subsistence farmers into factory labor involved legal and social maneuvering to divorce farmers from the land and free up a population that could become workers in the new factories. Under the feudal mode of production, peasant farmers cultivated crops and livestock with the primary objective of providing subsistence to their households, exchanging only whatever surplus remained. As long the direct link between peasant farmer and goods produced remained intact, Marx explains, those goods did not become capital. “They become capital only under circumstances in which they serve at the same time as means of exploitation and subjection of the laborer,” he writes. For capitalism to emerge, then, the peasant farmer had to become a laborer who could be motivated to submit himself to exploitation and subjection. While the farmer had access to common land and the means of subsistence, he had no such motivation. According to Marx, then, “the expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant from the soil, is the basis of the whole process” of the emergence of capitalism. The peasant subsistence farmer had to be converted into the proletarian for capitalism to develop. In the context of England, Marx describes the enclosure of common land to make it private property through various political and legal maneuvers, including the expulsion of subsistence farmers and the criminalization

22 Karl Marx, Capital, vol. 1, Ch. 33, available online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch33.htm [last accessed on April 4, 2014].

of the very poverty and homelessness that resulted from that displacement. With no access to the soil to support his household, the farmer became the laborer trailing behind the capitalist with only his skin to sell. In other words, the rise of capitalism is predicated on the conversion of the subsistence farmer into waged labor.

Marx refers to this foundational process as “primitive accumulation,” which somewhat misleadingly implies that it happened and finished long ago. A better term, suggests David Harvey, might be “accumulation by dispossession,” defined as “the continuation and proliferation of accretion practices that Marx had designated as ‘primitive’ or ‘original’ during the rise of capitalism.” Unlike early modern industrial production, biopolitical production today does not need to rely primarily on overt dispossession, enclosure or “bloody legislation” to create the subjects that it needs.

“Accumulation by dispossession entails a very different set of practices from accumulation through the expansion of wage labour in industry and agriculture,” Harvey writes. The contemporary neo-liberal mode of dispossession is fragmented and slippery as it functions within the flows of circulatory biopower: “a privatization here, an environmental degradation there, a financial crisis of indebtedness somewhere else.”


25 Of course, clear instances of accumulation by dispossession abound across the planet. Arundhati Roy, for example, gives a vivid account of the eviction of communities in India to facilitate development of dams that would support the skyrocketing consumption of energy on the subcontinent. Arundhati Roy. “The Greater Common Good.” Available at: http://www.narmada.org/gcg/gcg.html [Last accessed April 4, 2014].
Dispossession may even be immaterial—as in the dispossession of cultural traditions, knowledges, and rights.

In developing places like Sauri, instead of driving subsistence farmers from the soils, developers offer technologies that will improve the soil and increase crop yields, enable the production of cash crops and cultivate small, individual enterprises. Support, improve, enhance the lives of small farmers: Should such organizing imperatives be seen as the opposite of accumulation by dispossession? After all, the rich world is investing in the people in Sauri, not taking from them. Before drawing that conclusion, we need to look very carefully at precisely what is going on in the “commercialization of village life.” While farmers may not be displaced physically from the soil, the “commercialization of village life” requires other kinds of displacement and dispossession as they are brought into the flows of corporate capital, money, debt and individualist entrepreneurial subjectivity.

Let us take the example of inculcating the market and money ethos as a kind of subjective dispossession. The possibility of other “subjective aims” is not necessarily precluded from the basket of choices. However, as befits the strategies of biopolitical power, the game is arranged such that other choices become difficult to sustain. As we began to discuss in earlier chapters, biopolitical or security power does not, in general, act directly on present bodies to enclose or discipline them. Rather, it acts in advance of
action, establishing the ideal conditions that will lead to conducive realities, circulation and flows.

The original moment of accumulation by dispossession occurred when the sovereign-juridical mode of power was dominant. As such, the primary means through which the end of creating new subjects of labor was through what Marx called “bloody legislation.” Laws forced people off newly enclosed land, then made homelessness, vagrancy and idleness into crimes. Biopower or security power, as we have suggested, works differently. Let us review briefly.

In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault illustrates the three modes of power by likening each to the organization of three different towns. When the mode of sovereignty-juridicality dominated the logic of organization, the capital city formed the center of the territory ruled by the sovereign. All that was morally good would be modeled and dictated in the capital, the seat of the sovereign, and be “diffuse[d] throughout the territory all that is necessary to command people with regard to their conduct and ways of doing things.” The town constructed in the disciplinary mode is “a town built where previously there was nothing.”

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26 The three power modalities are outlined in Appendix A.


28 Ibid., 15.
divided and subdivided in manageable squares or rectangles. Instead of “capitalizing” a territory, the disciplinary mode “structures a space. Discipline belongs to the order of construction (in the broad sense of construction).”  

Foucault traces biopower to a different movement— the lowering of walls, widening streets, cutting routes and, generally, the opening of space for circulation. “We can see that the problem was circulation, that is to say, for the town to be a perfect agent of circulation.” But circulation is not anarchy. Town architects worked to “maximize the positive elements, for which one provides the best possible circulation, and minimiz[e] what is risky and inconvenient.” Two movements are important. First, biopower does not try to construct from scratch to fit a particular design for micromanagement and surveillance. Instead, biopower works on the given milieu to maximize positive flows, circulations and probabilities. Foucault explains, “Security will rely on a number of material givens. It will, of course work on site with the flows of water, islands, air and so forth. Thus, it works on a given.” One works on what is already given, but manipulates the variables to maximize the best probabilities in advance. As one lowers walls and cuts routes, one strategizes and calculates to manipulate variables in advance to maintain and proliferate

29 Ibid., 17.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 19.
32 Ibid.
circulation. This is the second important movement. Biopower or security operates on future dimension, on probabilities. “One works on the future, that is to say, the town will not be conceived or planned according to a static perception…but will open onto a future that is not exactly controllable, not precisely measured or measurable…The specific space of security refers then to a series of possible events; it refers to the temporal and the uncertain, which have to be inserted into a given space,” Foucault writes. Biopower “stands back sufficiently and lets things happen,” having already organized an “enabling milieu” in advance.

Let us consider that the “given” in this case of accumulation by dispossession is the subject herself and her life world. While disciplinary power tries to construct subjects from the outset, shuffling them from enclosure to enclosure, institution to institution, school to factory to prison, biopower manipulates interests to produce conducive choices and, thus, desired future outcomes that maximize the positive (at the level of population) and minimize uncertainty and risk. One need not physically or legally displace the subsistence farmer to achieve the outcome of creating a subject for capital if mechanisms can be devised to calculate and manipulate subjective probabilities. Just as city planners work strategically with material givens like islands and bodies of water, so also one could work on subjective “givens”—desires, needs, aspirations, interests—to conduct dispositions in directions that will be conducive to the

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33 Ibid., 20.
further production of capitalist subjectivities that will deepen and proliferate dominant flows of capital, knowledge and bodies. Various kinds of dispossession becomes subjective choices, like money-making becoming a “subjective aim” to the exclusion of other ways of being in relationship to oneself, others and the broader world.

A mode of power that operates by proliferating circulation has only one challenge: How to penetrate those areas without flows. Pockets of subsistence farming communities in a world of global flows present such an obstacle. If they remain largely outside the flows of capital, they remain outside the reach of this mode of power. It is not necessarily their material wealth that must be accumulated (as this is minuscule) and their labor is not needed in factories. Rather, their very lives and forms of life must be brought into circulation with markets and money through the “commercialization of village life.” To do that, the Millennium Villages had to manipulate the variables of the given subsistence milieu to maximize commercial flows and probabilities. They would attempt to do this in two ways: Through the multiplication of enterprise forms (and, thereby, entrepreneurial subjectivities) and through the mechanism of debt.

**Lihanda Exhibition**

The “improved” goat stands several inches higher and heavier than the local goat that stands beside her. A paper sign that reads “improved” hangs around her neck, while the local goat has no sign. The farmer holding the ropes introduces the
“improved” goat as Jessica, named after the MV Project’s Deputy Team Leader. A crowd of farmers have gathered around Jessica, marveling at her size.

Joseph, Lydiah and I have arrived at the annual MV Project exhibition in Lihanda, one of the MV-2 village clusters. The grounds of the primary school have been turned into a massive celebration of the interventions of the Millennium Villages. A few hundred yards from the goat display, the Sauri Theater for Development group beats drums, waiting for their performance time.

Eight classrooms have been turned into sector displays. In the health classroom, a mosquito net hangs next to a table covered in various drugs for HIV and malaria. In the agriculture classroom, neatly organized displays of vegetables are arranged on tables, labelled “improved,” from hybrid seeds, or “local,” from traditional heirloom seeds. The advantages of the former are obvious—deeper green in the spinach leaves, deeper yellows in the maize, larger sizes in general.

But few people pass through the display rooms. The majority of attendees gather in the shade across the field near the tent for special guests and MV staff. After wandering through the exhibits, I make my way to the same area, finding a seat among a group of women in the grass close to the base of a large tree. Soon, the staff and guests of honor begin to fill the chairs under the tent.

A male MV staff member with a protruding belly carries in several shiny new shovels, which he leans on the plastic table where the microphone sits.
Jessica Masira, the goat’s namesake, stands to welcome the audience and special guests under the tent. She wears one of the uniform white collared shirts with the Millennium Villages Logo. She faces the guests under the tent, rather than the crowd spread out in the grass behind her. The back of her shirt reads: “Let there be no poverty.” After welcoming the guests, she turns to the audience.

Today we had the resources to buy each of you a gift depending on how hard you worked, so that if we are to come tomorrow then you will give us gifts instead. Thus as the years go by the gifts should be coming from you. But if it’s only a few people who performed the best then we cannot give the remaining gifts? We will take them to a different area where people have performed better.34

The pot-bellied staff member stands and moves toward the shovels. He holds them up, then moves toward the MV Project truck parked nearby.

“These are the gifts? John, will you put them in the car? We will take them back. Ukweli? [Can it be true?],” Jessica says.

“Hapana! [No!]” Some audience members cry out.

Who wants these gifts? Why aren’t you the best performer in this category? The most important lesson that I want you to take from here is, even if you do not get a present from us, ask yourself, what more you should do. We are investing in you people. So, what shall you do in return?

John pulls several of the shovels back out of the truck bed. A small pile remains behind.

“Now, I want to present the awards for best farmer. You should all look to see how you can be more like these farmers,” Jessica says. As she reads five names, people

34 Audio recorded speeches from Lihanda exhibition, August 27, 2009.
rise from the audience one-by-one to receive their shovel. A few who remain sitting eye the extra shovels sitting in the truck.

“And, now, we have the award for best community member. James [MV community facilitator] has said that no one has performed well enough so we are going not with number one but with the runners up.” She reads off another list of names.

Then, Jessica says, flashing a broad smile:

This means that people should work harder so that you may also get a gift for your performance. So, we have gotten to a point where we urge every one of you to work harder. Exhibitions are good, they enable us to know where we went wrong and where we are progressing as well.

Let’s tell the truth. Is that okay? What I will say is that we are living in an era in which things are changing so fast globally. We should not be left behind. Many Kenyans and other Africans in general suffer because we are scared of getting into debt. We should not be scared of debts.”

Jessica turns to look intently at the audience. “Why do we fear debt so much?” she asks.

Without waiting for response, she forges ahead. “Because we don’t…”

She waits a moment.

No one fills in the blank so she continues. “Because we don’t pay back. If we are scared of debt, it means that we don’t want to pay back debt, eh? Is that true?” She asks.

No one responds.

“But, if we can pay the debt, then we should not be afraid of it. Loans enhance development. For example, I have heard an old man here say that he wants two hundred shillings to buy beans to plant. I was very impressed because he shows that he
has hopes. He will harvest seven tins. If he was afraid of taking the two hundred shillings loan and couldn’t get it from anywhere else, does it help him?” She asks.

“Hapana! [No!]” Audience members respond.

“Misigope loan, misigope deni. [Do not fear loans, do not fear debt.] Let’s join the table banking units. It is very good. Let us work harder and have multiple revenues,” she calls out.

Another MV Project staffer approaches the microphone to introduce the guest of honor, Richard Ogallo from the government’s Ministry of Agricultural branch for Gem District. He leads the audience members in clapping as Ogallo takes the stage.

“Esteemed citizens and stakeholders, I want to talk about development,” Ogallo begins.

Things are changing so fast, when we look at the world economic trends, things have changed globally due to the introduction of free markets. Market liberalization has enabled anybody who is able to reach that market to sell and get money. Another factor in world economic trends is privatization of resources. Governments the world over have stopped controlling markets. It has given the citizens the power to decide for themselves. …Only you will ensure that you will produce and sell to your sister who will in turn sell or use the produce.

The past era of doing things is no longer applicable, when the government had control of all commodity prices is gone. For this reason the government is keen on encouraging its own citizens to run their own businesses. Things have really changed positively in Kenya since the year 2002. If you look at the transport system, you will not see any vehicles belonging to the government. Everything has been left to the esteemed, noble citizens; Buses, matatus and everything else. If you look at other things as well as water, bottled water is produced by private companies. When you look at the hospitals and schools, it’s the same thing, as an individual if you have the financial ability to start a school or hospital, or an agricultural industry, nobody is going to stop you from doing it.

We encourage commercialization with emphasis on value addition for maximum profit returns. Please ensure that whatever you are doing, you get
more money from your product than you had planned for. If you are a dairy goat farmer take good care of the goat so that it gives you more than enough milk. Try other methods. Also increase the price of your milk. You can try making ice cream or sour milk and much more. …That is modern agriculture. We can practice it here.

I have been to different areas here today. I saw the product displays in the stalls, but I did not see any information regarding marketing. I mean, marketing of produce in this area is not aggressive at all. You must go to find markets. Do not just stay in the village waiting.

I can see from your faces that the villagers here are well fed, but I don’t think you have enough money in your pockets. Let’s all consider agribusiness as a source of income. Let’s have both enough food on our tables and money in our pockets…Let’s look at where the markets are, produce good products, then make money. Thank you very much and God bless you all.

Figure 20: T-shirt at the Lihanda Exhibition (2009)
After the speeches, I wander for a while, greeting acquaintances and meeting new people. Just before I leave, I bump into a teacher from the Lihanda primary school, herding a group of uniformed students toward the kitchen for food. He wears an orange t-shirt with a simple phrase on the back. “My Future, My Responsibility,” it reads.

**Enterprise Society**

At Lihanda, Ogallo, the guest of honor, is acutely aware of the global socioeconomic changes that are the context of the commercial transformation being celebrated. “The past era of doing things is no longer applicable,” he observes. “The government is keen on encouraging its own citizens to run their own businesses… everything has been left to the esteemed, noble citizens.” He describes an emergent society in which everything from transportation to education to health services are run by those private citizens as businesses. He senses great freedom and opportunity in that new order in contrast with the dictatorship prior to 2002—“anybody who can reach that market [can] sell and get money.” That freedom brings certain responsibilities, which are framed as choices. The government has “given citizens the power to decide for themselves…only you will ensure that you will produce or sell,” Ogallo tells the crowd.

In essence, the society Ogallo describes is the basic “enterprise society” that characterizes the neoliberal order, which achieved global hegemony after the Cold War globally and after the end of the Moi dictatorship in Kenya in 2002. In *The Birth of Biopolitics* lectures, Foucault pulls into focus the significant socio-economic and
subjective transformations that underlie the changes observed by Ogallo. He traces the emergence of biopolitics through the evolution of liberalism into neo-liberalism in the late 20th century. Liberalism, he claims, is the “general framework of biopolitics”35 and should be understood as a specific art of governing human beings and human society rather than as a mere economic theory or political ideology. In particular, he focuses on how the renewal, revision and intensification of liberalism as neo-liberalism involved significant reconfiguration of civil society, social policy, subjectivity and modes of governance. While such changes took place over the span of half a century in the richer areas of the world, the Millennium Villages Project sought to actualize them within a brief five-year period (later extended to ten years).

Enterprise society, in contrast with earlier liberal social forms, is not primarily organized on the regulatory principle of commodity exchange and does not situate the market as the foremost site of exchange. Rather, the organizing principle is competition—with the market as the site of competition. The reorganization of society in the biopolitical or neo-liberal mode can be understood most fundamentally as the effort to build society and arts of governance around the principle of free competition between individuals and enterprises. “This means that what is sought is not a society subject to the commodity effect, but a society subject to the dynamic of competition. Not a super-

35 Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics, 23.
market society but an enterprise society,” Foucault writes.\(^\text{36}\) What is competition? “It is, as it were, a formal game of inequalities” that, for neo-liberals, is not natural or a “primitive given.” It is an eidos that must be cultivated through “certain conditions which have to be carefully and artificially constructed…It can only be the result of lengthy efforts.”\(^\text{37}\) In it, “inequality is the same for all.”\(^\text{38}\)

The “game of inequalities” was sewn into the fabric of the Millennium Village endeavor from the beginning. The “lengthy efforts” to cultivate competition would start from the first planting season. What would not be evident in the highly positive aggregate data for the initial bumper harvest of 2005 was that it did not “lift everyone out of poverty” equally. The inputs of seed and fertilizer had been allocated according to the size of one’s farming plot. If one had no plot, one had no inputs. In one season, then, the wealth of the wealthiest in the Village tripled while the poorest, those without at least .25 acres of land already, remained at the same level. In other words, the global drama of increasing inequality played out on a micro-scale amidst all the celebration of the “maize miracle.”\(^\text{39}\) The owners of capital could multiply their capital while those without property could not. “The project only has eyes for the first and second man,”

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 147.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 121.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 143.

\(^{39}\) Rob Crilly, “How aid became miracle of the maize. To the world it’s just an experiment in economics, but in Sauri village, that’s a life-saver,” heraldscotland.com, June 28, 2005.
Pastor George Oyumba informed me one morning over tea. “Their trucks do drive faster when they pass the home of the third man. The visitors only see the shamba of the first and second man. This is why jealousy has now become a big problem.”

In the Lihanda Exhibition, one can note how the Project actively cultivated the “game of inequalities” and competition. Jessica shows the attendees shovels that they might have “won” if they had worked harder. Then she proceeds to give a select few out as awards for “best farmer” and “best community member,” all the while calling for everyone else to step up their efforts so they might be the next awardee. But, instead of inspiring healthy competition, the spectacle led to jealousy and resentment. “The Project just gives to whomever they feel. They should give everyone a prize. We are all working hard,” an elderly woman sitting next to me explained.

To foster competition as a “game of inequalities,” one must manage social conditions in favor of inequality such that the “fragile competitive mechanisms” function with little or no inhibition. It is a matter of inciting and unblocking competition throughout the social body. How is this done? According to early neo-liberals, one needed a centrifugal “policy of society” that would multiply and diffuse small enterprises, which means proliferating flexible “non-proletarian industries, that is to say

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40 George Oyumba, conversation with author, April 2, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

41 Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics, 240.
craft industries and small businesses,” including “small farms in the countryside.”

Foucault claims that “this multiplication of the “enterprise” form within the social body is at stake in neoliberal policy. It is a matter of making the market, competition and so the enterprise into what could be called the formative power of society.”

After the initial step of raising staple crop production in the first year, the MV Project was ready to move in the direction of “agriculture as business” or as Herrine, the agriculture facilitator for the MV Project put it clearly in a public meeting, “agriculture with aims of making money.” At that point, the MV Project began its efforts to proliferate enterprises and, thereby, create entrepreneurial subjects.

Again, the Project assumed that an ideal process would unfold from its interventions. First, it would provide start-up seeds, tissue-cultures and training to select farmers who could demonstrate the benefits of growing cash crops and crop diversification. Once other farmers witnessed the success of those demonstration households, they would be expected to invest their surplus income or take out loans to engage in the new profit-generating enterprises. “The concept we have,” explained MV

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42 Ibid., 147.
43 Ibid.
44 Sanchez, “The Transformation from Sub Sub-subsistence Farmers into Small-scale Entrepreneurs.”
45 All-sector public meeting, August 9, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
Project facilitator Herrine Okoth in 2009, “is that the first farmer will join us and succeed, then even those who pass by will desire to join and will join so as to succeed also.” The multiplication and proliferation of enterprises, then, should have happened as a natural consequence of the initial creation of a select few.

The first step was to form “Producer Groups” to be trained in enterprise and diversification as demonstration households. At a meeting on diversification, the Millennium Villages Project facilitator Samuel Owino, described the process of diversification in a meeting with farmers in 2010:

Diversification is the promotion of a high-value crop... When we were first doing diversification, we started with demonstration households. There were farmers who got seeds such as onion seeds. Isn’t that right? There are those who are given pepper seeds, parsley and other different seeds. I hope you saw that, yes? After that, we went through another thing known as scale up. The best-performing farmers in demonstration were informed that they should try to find more farmers that they thought could do this work and join hands together to reach the demand of the market, which you did, and we started the loan scheme so you would not have to wait until you saved up enough to buy seeds.

For selection of initial participating farmers, the MV Project relied on the members of the Agriculture Committee to recruit people to join the Producer Groups, including themselves. As a result, the original Groups were dominated by “stakeholders” who were already involved with Millennium. In many cases, a person installed themselves in all four Producer Groups. The first four Producer Groups were

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dedicated to the husbandry of dairy cows, bananas, tomatoes or onions. 47 387 people (137 men and 250 women) were trained to grow bananas from tissue-culture plantlets. 159 farmers were trained for growing onions and provided with starter seedlings. Finally, a total of 58 farmers were trained and provided supplies for growing tomatoes. After the first year, Producer Groups were formed for kale, fish ponds, dairy goats, poultry, bees and other cash-generating activities.

The diversification scheme exacerbated inequalities that had already increased due to the initial approach of the MV Project. The creation of enterprises worsened the problem created by the uneven distribution of seeds and fertilizer, as one needed to own enough land to grow both food for subsistence and crops for income generation. For example, Owino informed the farmers of the land requirements for diversification crops in the loan phase of the program: “If you want to do kales, you must have at least half an acre. If you want to do banana, you must have at least an eighth of an acre. If you want to do tomatoes, you have one quarter of an acre available if you feel that this year all your farmland is engaged, the program will pass you by.” 48 To be eligible, farmers also had to agree and be able to purchase necessary chemicals to spray for pests and diseases. In the case of the fruit trees, a farmer had to have enough land to allot a portion of it to a


48 Ibid.
crop that would not produce significant returns immediately. It is significant to note that I never encountered a household that only had one of these income-generating enterprises. Either a household had none (the majority) or it had multiple enterprises. In other words, the privilege of the already (relatively) privileged increased as the community moved in the direction of commercialization. Those with very little land, who had already gotten the short end of the stick with regard to fertilizer and seed inputs, found themselves left behind again. In other words, the diversification scheme functioned on a basic level to cultivate a new commercial class of farmers.

Both inequality and a kind of competition did exist in the community prior to the Millennium Villages Project. Richer households could be discerned by their tin roofs and permanent walls, in contrast with the mud huts with thatched roofs of the poorer households. Most often, the richer households benefitted from remittances from relatives who had moved to Kisumu or Nairobi. Competition also existed at the level of the clan or libamba—“a person’s agnatic descent group from the house of a common mother four to seven generations in genealogical depth and the members of which cooperatively share agricultural land.”

Clans were traditionally so antagonistic that the relationship had its own term, nyieko—meaning jealousy or rivalry between two groups.

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49 A.B.C. Ocholla-Ayayo, Traditional Ideology and Ethics Among the Southern Luo (Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 1976), 121.
What did not exist in any widespread form was an economic “game” of individualized inequalities driving individualized competition.

In a society with an established *habitus* of individualized accumulation and competition, the diversification scheme might have unfolded as the MV Project envisioned. The selective distribution of inputs and possibilities would stimulate a competitive individual to take out a loan in order to surpass the new standard set by his neighbor. But, as we started to see earlier, the Sauri community members had a feel for a different game—generalized reciprocity as a collective strategy for survival. What that meant concretely was that those individuals whom the Project privileged with inputs and training had an obligation to share any profit they garnered. “People say that I am rich, but they do not see that, since Millennium, I have to feed and pay school fees for my sister’s family,” explained Leonida Okoth. Instead of accumulating surplus that could be reinvested in one’s enterprise, the wealth dissipated quickly among family and clan members.

There were other basic dispositions for enterprise and entrepreneurialism that the majority of Saurians did not develop as hoped. The feel for the market, its risks and possibilities, did not emerge spontaneously. Growing cash crops involves taking a gamble and assuming a level of risk with which many farmers felt uncomfortable. Using their land to grow staple crops ensured, in most cases, some degree of food security. To use part of that land to grow a crop that may or may not do well on the market could
mean losing some of that stability. The potential of more future gain did not entice many. “If I grow tomatoes and many people grow tomatoes at the same time, then the prices will be too low,” said Pastor George one afternoon as he perused my own humble tomato plants.50 “If I grow maize and beans, then I know my family can be eating. So, I prefer to stay with what I know.”

At the same time, a feel for the game of finding markets beyond the immediate local context was generally lacking. Millennium initially introduced thirteen new cash crops into the area. Some, like dhania (coriander) and pili pili hoho (peppers), however, would not sell on the local market or nearby markets. An entrepreneurial habitus might have driven people to find markets further afield and to assume the costs and risks of paying for transport with the potential for profit in mind. Instead, the crops ended up rotting at home. “They made us plant things that could never sell,” one widow complained.51

At first, the MV Project offered to minimize the risk involved by providing “market linkages” for farmers. Such linkages were especially crucial for the crops that the Millennium introduced—peppers, watermelon, coriander—that were not part of the local diet and would not sell locally at Yala. Jane Owegi exclaimed with frustration: “They told us to plant pili pili hoho and said they would find markets. No one eats pili

50 George Oyumba, conversation with author, August 2, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

pili hoho here. Where were they going to sell it? Mombasa? It was all just a waste.” At one point, the Project attempted to create a liaison with the multinational corporation Unilever, which agreed to buy peppers, fennel and coriander. For unknown reasons, after harvest, the company never came to claim the produce. “I have a room full of this fennel, which I cannot sell anywhere. What do you people even do with fennel,” Mama Patricia Ochido once asked me.

Serving as a middleman quickly became too much for the Project. “We would talk to a buyer who wants watermelon. So, we say to you [farmers], go plant watermelons. But the crops are not ready at the same time. We have to leave the buyer waiting because we see only Oyier has planted his nursery on time and this mother over here is still preparing her land,” Owino said. The ambitious introduction of exotic crops for export was pared down to the four crops that were actually consumed by locals—onions, kale, tomatoes and cabbage.” At the peak, we had thirteen crop varieties. Isn’t that right? Now, we have four species of crops. It was with the markets that we encountered the problems,”52 Owino explained.

Multiplying enterprise forms failed in all but the richest households. One could maximize the social conditions of inequality and foster hundreds of protean enterprises without achieving the desired enterprise society. What was missing was the entrepreneurial subject primed for market competition and risk, able to take a long-term

perspective on the prospect of potential income, willing to take on risk to get there—a neo-liberal homo economicus.

From the two events, we can identify a prototype of the model subject for the MV Project. An ideal individual would be an entrepreneur able to rationally calculate how to maximize profit by relating effectively to the “market.” The ideal banana entrepreneur would seek to grow the best-looking, most “shining” hybrid banana so as not to “hinder [her] market.” She would even go out and find markets beyond Yala, highly motivated by the promise of future profit. The ideal fish farmer will feed the fish the best food to get the size “favorable on the market.” The ideal farmer, responsible for himself and his own “individual development,” is able to strategically navigate the “basket of choices” to maximize profit through his enterprise, which extends beyond this or that business endeavor to a whole way of living.

For enterprise society to take hold, the individual must become a subject whose interest is bound up with the choices in the basket that support and proliferate enterprise and market forms. As I have suggested elsewhere, neo-liberal biopower is a power that says “yes,” that allows subjects freedom to choose between an array of possibilities within a bandwidth of acceptable choices and flows. It is also a power modality that, as Foucault puts it, “is a question of shifting the center of gravity of
governmental action downwards.”

Instead of being manipulated or governed directly by institutions acting on one’s body and subjectivity, the entrepreneur takes on the role of self-governance, or a mentality of self-governance that Foucault calls governmentality. Power acts by inducing particular choices and interests that are conducive to the ever-proliferating flows of capital, knowledge and bodies. Instead of micromanaging subjects at every turn, biopolitical governmentality (which is elsewhere referred to as security power), stands back and lets things happen within a milieu that has been pre-organized to maximize life at the level of population. By acting to narrow the “field of possibilities” in advance, biopolitical governmentality effectively controls uncertainty as it “conducts the conduct” of “free” subjects toward themselves and others as they strategize for themselves amidst the array of social, political and economic options—a basket of pre-given, substitutable choices that ultimately boil down to individual interests.

The t-shirt that I photographed at the end of the Lihanda event captured the spirit of that entrepreneurial individual that the Project needed, wanted and sought to cultivate: My future, My responsibility. The “good” neoliberal individual manages and maximizes her interests by investing in herself and her future (through education, self-care, nourishment, etc.) while strategically avoiding or overcoming impediments to her prosperity. In other words, she manages herself as human capital in neoliberal

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53 Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics, 148.
terminology. She becomes an entrepreneur not only of tomatoes and bananas, but of herself. To become an entrepreneur of oneself means taking responsibility for poverty, precariousness, hunger, as if these were matters of self-management, of financial responsibility and a function of good (or bad) investments of capital, including one’s own skills, knowledge and capacities as “human capital.” The self becomes capital that can produce more capital through effective investment.

The Millennium Villages set out specifically to raise the “human capital” in Sauri by making significant investments in health and education. The real question was how to “conduct the conduct” of community members so that they would act toward themselves as “human capital.” In the transition from feudalism, it took violent displacement, enclosure of common land and “bloody legislation” to force subsistence farmers to take on the appropriate subjectivity for emergent capitalism. In the neo-liberal era, the tactic would be more subtle because it would work on future possibilities and possible actions. The MV Project would attempt to effect its own kind of enclosure—enclosure of possibility—through the mechanism of debt.

**Equity Bank Baraza**

When Siprose and I arrived at the Equity Bank baraza, the meeting had just started. The official due date for loan repayment had passed a week earlier. The benches from the Seventh Day Adventist church had been pulled and arranged in rows under a small tree nearby. A man with polished shoes stood in front of thirty-three members of
the community. We sat down in the grass as the bench space had been taken. A woman in her sixties or seventies leaned down to tell us that the man at the front was from the Equity Bank. He spoke with clearly enunciated English that matched his starched white shirt. Later, after the meeting, Aggrey Ranyondo, the secretary of the Executive Committee, gave me his name.

*Alfred Wabure, Equity Bank:* We gave you people of Gem [district] good condition. I think the bank loves you a lot. It’s only in Gem the fertilizers were brought to the community. It’s only Gem people who did their loan applications within their areas and only you who are going to be paying the loan from within the community while others have to travel to the bank themselves. This means that the bank loves Gem people and we would like to maintain this relationship. How many people know that we’ve been coming to Yala to collect loan money? [Five people raise their hands.] We are doing that because we want to reduce the burden of loan to you people. It becomes a burden when one wakes up one day and has to pay a loan of 7000. It’s much easier to be paying it slowly by slowly even if it is only 50 shillings. Imagine if you were paying 50 shillings in a week, in a month you will have paid 200, multiply this by 10 months, it will be a lot of money… Let’s say you are engaged in other businesses like selling sugarcane or omena [sardines]. It’s out of such businesses that you should be able to pay your loan. There are people here that have cows that are milked. Sell the milk and bring the money. Learn to sacrifice, then bring that money to Yala. You will see its importance at the end of it…The account that you opened was not just for taking fertilizer loan. This is your account and even after paying your loan, you can continue using that account. You can use it as a savings account so as to expand your business. For instance, if you are doing fish business or your farmer growing cabbages, onions or tomatoes.

*Wilson Malasare, community member:* I have a question…I’m worried because I took fertilizer and seeds late and my maize have dried up. I am disturbed on what to do. I am having sleepless nights because I took the loan. What should I do? That’s my question.

*Elisha Owiyo, MV Project facilitator:* They will answer you. Another person?
Wilfred Ogutu, community member: Thank you. My question is similar to that of the old man. Again, we are not God. For one month, it never rained, at the time when the maize was to start yielding. Personally, I have come up with nothing from the farm, but there was no agreement about what to do if one’s fate was bad. How will you people assist us?

Alfred Wabure, Equity Bank: Old man, how much have you paid back as per now?

Wilson Malasare, community member: I’ve never paid anything, not even a shilling.

Alfred Wabure, Equity Bank: You see, this is what we are trying to say. Now you have the whole load on your back which you never tried to reduce and this will be hard on you. I know that whatever you will harvest will be enough for both consumption and paying of the loan. Struggle with all means to reduce the burden. To end a journey means that you must have started it from somewhere. For us to assist you, it is a must that you start the journey. This is like sitting down and wanting to be in Mumias without an initiative. Do not just sit down seeking for help without trying. We will only assist those who tried to service the loan.

Antonina Obado, community member: Please, we ask you to consider our situation and waive for us some part of the loan. None of us was given cash only maize seeds and these have been scorched. If the maize is scorched, the loan should be scorched also. Please go back and sincerely consider waiving.

Alfred Wabure, Equity Bank: The loan was taken individually and not as a village. Each individual signed his form alone. Each person must come if there is a problem. There will be no blanket approach and each individual will be treated differently. It’s like when you are sick with malaria. Do you start mobilizing everyone in the village to go to the hospital?

Elisha Owiyo, MV Project facilitator: With all those skills that you have gained from the Project, you should not only depend on farming. It is advisable that when you are crop farming you do other businesses alongside like poultry, sardines and other crops. I would wish that you would invest much on this so that you do not depend too much on crop farming.
Alfred Wabure, Equity Bank: If you buy milk, then spill it on the way home, do you go back to the store for your money back? What we are saying is that you must practice financial responsibility.  

At the end of the meeting, the group stood for closing prayers, as with any meeting in the community. An older woman prayed aloud, “God, we have planted and the crops have not done well. Please let this not prevent us from paying the loan.”

**Misigope Loan**

*Misigope loan, misigope deni. Do not fear loans, do not fear debt,* Jessica exhorted the community members at the Lihanda Exhibition. By the time that exhibition was held in 2010, the word “loan” had become a familiar theme in everyday conversations. After the first year of the Project, when inputs were distributed for free, the transition to “agriculture as business” began with the introduction of credit. As we saw in Jeffrey Sachs’ diagram of the economic vision of the Project, loans and microfinance were a cornerstone to the increase in capital that would break the community out of the poverty trap. In fact, the Project actually defined “commercialization of village life” as “active use of micro-saving and micro-credit.” As the MV Project stated in its 2010 Annual Report, “Access to loans and savings was essential for farmers to make the needed investments for farm diversification into cash crops, such as irrigation and agro-processing equipment, and also to save the income generated through these activities…

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54 Public meeting, July 20, 2009, Sauri Sublocation, Kenya.
Linking farmers and farm cooperatives to such institutions remains a key intervention in the transition to commercial farming.”

In The End of Poverty, Sachs had called for “fertilizers and improved fallows to be given largely for free to the villagers to boost their own nutrition and health and to build a small financial cushion” in the first few years. He estimated that “perhaps in a decade,” inputs could be provided on a full commercial basis. In the early meetings, the MV Project gave the impression that they would sustain free inputs for the first five years. “When Millennium came to our village, we were so happy because they promised to give us fertilizer and seeds for five years. But they only gave us fertilizer once. One time, free. After that, we were to take the rest on loan and pay back with interest. I took 50 kgs of fertilizer, but I did not get a good harvest and I am not paid them up to now,” a middle-aged widow named Helida Lanyo explained.

The strategy had changed once the Project was on the ground. As journalist Nina Munk reports, by 2008 Sachs and his team had begun to realize the need to intensify their emphasis on enterprise. “Sachs no longer seemed convinced that the project’s original plan of interventions — the ‘quick wins’ he had anticipated in agriculture, health, and education — would be enough to lift people up and out of extreme poverty.

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55 2010 MVP Annual Report online Looked for this on MV website but it was either temporarily unavailable or has been removed.

56 Sachs, End of Poverty, 236.
Increasingly, he concerned himself with business development,“ she writes.57 In an interview with Munk, Sachs described the shift in strategy:

“We’ve realized that we need much more of a business arm to this,” he said, speaking to me by cell phone on his way to catch another international flight, this time from New York to Addis Ababa. “Staple crops and tomatoes and sweet potatoes and all that stuff is fine— but it ain’t going to make you rich. What we need is commercial agriculture...Going forward, the big difference, technically, is that we’d make loans or equity investments, as opposed to aid, to get the villages up and running.”58

Debt appears in Sachs’ statement as the fulcrum for launching commercial agriculture.

Why would debt be the main thing that would make “the big difference, technically”? How would debt facilitate the transition to commercial agriculture and entrepreneurship? What could debt do that aid could not? In short, the new creditor-debtor relationship would serve a governmental function. Those in debt would be required to shape themselves, their futures and their choices in relation to a horizon defined by their debt. In the process, one would expect that subjects motivated to reduce the “burden” of debt would cultivate entrepreneurial drive and dispositions in themselves.

The transcript of Alfred Wabure’s meeting with Saurians brings such mechanisms to the surface. Saurians, as debtors, are instructed to manage their lives and choices in relationship to loan repayment. Instead of milking the cow for home


58 Ibid.
consumption, “sell the milk and bring the money.” In other words, the debt drives the farmers toward entrepreneurship since they must make cash to repay the loans. Elisha, the MV facilitator, makes that clear when he says that “it is advisable that when you are crop farming, you do other businesses alongside like poultry, sardines and other crops.” The future an individual can or should choose is enclosed within the possibilities that “service the loan.” If the first dispossession, which we see in the Equity Bank meeting, separated individuals from dense networks of reciprocity, the second dispossession takes away the open horizon of possibility.

How did the unhappy community members end up under the “burden” of loans? Beginning in the third year, 2007, free agriculture subsidies were not offered to 80% of households in the area.\(^{59}\) Instead, the MV Project linked them with a local microfinance institution from Kisumu called SAGA to purchase the same inputs with loans. According to the MV Project, the remaining 20% of households were categorized as “vulnerable” and given continued free inputs.\(^{60}\) According to community members, each village development chairman was instructed to choose five households to be counted as “vulnerables,” which meant that, in actual practice, those who continued to

\(^{59}\) Herrine Okoth, Unpublished Master’s thesis. University of Nairobi. Okoth was a Millennium Villages Project Agriculture Facilitator and provided her thesis to author.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
receive inputs were those with strong personal or financial ties with the development chairmen.

En masse, community members rejected the loan requirement and reverted to previous subsistence farming practices. With the 2007 shift from subsidy to farmer purchase on loans, 30% of households were able to purchase inputs with their savings or with profit from previous harvests. Only 208 farmers took inputs through loans, with the remaining 63% of the community reverting to planting local seeds without using fertilizer or using organic “boma” manure (cow dung). As a result, overall yields declined significantly due to drought and widespread abandonment of Millennium methods when inputs were no longer provided for free.

When asked why people resisted taking loans in 2007, Irene Ogwayo said:

“When they did appraisal, they were noting one’s assets. This made us fear because they started counting how many cows, bicycles, chairs a person had. Will they come take this, my chair?” Seline Akinyi answered that she preferred selling her only cow for 4,000 shillings rather than take the loan. “The bank can take the little land that I have if I

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61 Ibid

62 Mary Nyasimi and Joseph Okang’a. Unpublished study provided to author. After the loan debacle, the Millennium Villages office in New York assigned Nyasimi and Okang’a to do a qualitative assessment of the reasons for failure to repay loans. I am using quotes cited in that study and discussed with me by the co-author Joseph Okang’a.

63 A 2007 annual report was unavailable. Based on community member accounts.

64 Irene Ogwayo, interview with author, August 13, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
default,” she said. Another farmer characterized the broad situation of resistance in terms of fear: “Many people avoided loans, for fear of auction. Some have braved on and took loans, while others got scared and refused to partner.” Most Saurians preferred the security of continuing with subsistence farming over the risk inherent in taking a loan. Shadrack Ajode, a former member of the Executive Committee, explained:

It’s not that the Project was wrong. They wanted people to know how to assist themselves through loans because the Project is not here forever. But, many have never gone to a bank. They prefer to persevere hunger than have the stress of paying back the loan and face the hard conditions of the bank.

The widespread resistance to loans threatened the viability of the overall Millennium Village experiment. If more than half the community simply reverted to traditional farming methods when inputs were no longer free, the Project would become just one more example of unsustainable development.

The MV Project also started “table banking” cooperative lending groups to encourage micro-savings and micro-credit. In these groups, a person would buy a share at 100 ksh. The group would, then, give someone a micro-loan out of the shares. The loan would be paid back with interest and all the shares would gain in value. At the annual harvest festival in Yala in 2010, a group demonstrated the concept. Ten people

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66 Focus Group Discussion, July 9, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya

sat in a circle. They passed 100 ksh to the center. One person happily gathered up the total and pretended to walk away and come back to return the money and adding 50 ksh. In other words, the “table banking” should have given people who contributed regular profits. Unfortunately, within a year, the MV Project had to report that all the “table banking” units had failed.\(^68\) The loans had simply not been repaid.

For the growing season of 2008, the MV Project began aggressively promoting loans to the extent that many felt coerced. “In the fourth year, they came persuading people to take loan,” John Okello explained.\(^69\) His wife Patricia added in Dholuo, “Koro manyochni kro eket ni nyaka wahol. [That recent one forced us to take loan].”\(^70\) Mama Monica also stated: “Millennium really encouraged us to take the loans with SAGA even though I told Pedro it was a bad idea.”\(^71\)

The Project also changed tactics with regard to loans. Instead of requiring any form of collateral or guarantor, which had been requisite in 2007, they had a universal credit policy in 2008 that allowed anyone to receive inputs on loan, with only their signature as a guarantee. Martin Onanda, a key community leader, criticized that shift in the Project directly in a meeting with MV Project staff, saying “at first you started well.

\(^{68}\) Millennium Villages Project, Annual Report for Sauri (New York: The Earth Institute at Columbia University, 2008).

\(^{69}\) John Okello and family, interview with author, October, 1, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

\(^{71}\) Monica Oketch, interview with author, June 21, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
You are really keen on who you are giving loans in the first year. But then you reached a time when you are too kind, that you could give anybody passing by a loan. That was the beginning of all these problems.”

Aggrey Ranyondo, a member of the Agriculture Committee, explained further the how the loan scheme unfolded:

We took SAGA loans twice. The first year, the cereal bank acted as guarantor. The cereal bank would only sign for those that we knew could make enough to pay off the loan. That is why repayment in the first year was almost 100%. The Project then told us that Sauri people had not taken loans so in the second year, there were no guarantors required. So long as one had an identification card, they could take loan. There was much confusion, then. People were looking for any identity card and with that ID some were even taking 100kgs. People were stealing other people’s documents, even those of the deceased, to obtain loans. Surely, they did not understand that banks are no joke and the loan had to be paid back.

To Mama Monica, who faithfully repaid her loan, the lack of repayment reflected corruption in the community as well as lack of lending standards. When asked what happened in 2008, she replied:

The Project said everyone should take loans, even those who had no land. Many came and took more than they were supposed to take according to their acreage. So, to say the truth, many who took the fertilizers and seeds from SAGA where those who would never pay back their loans. They are hopeless in life, so they were each taking three bags of fertilizer that they sold out all and got drunk off

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73 Aggrey Ranyondo, Focus group discussion, July 9, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
the money from sales. They took them to sell at 2000 shillings even though they had been loaned at 3,500 shillings per sack.74

The loosely controlled, widely available loans led to a small-scale debt crisis in Sauri concurrent with the 2008 global financial crisis, which had been precipitated by similar practices on a global scale. In a community whose average population is consistently between 5,000 and 6,000 people, in both MV Project and Kenyan government census reports, 7,389 people took loans in 2008, which means that some of those taking loans were dead, from other areas or fictional.75 The mechanisms for monitoring loan-taking had essentially been foregone. Everyone who produced an Identification Card (or two) was eligible. By October of 2008, Sauri sublocation ranked eleventh among the eleven various village clusters counting as Sauri Millennium Village. Only 10.8% of people had repaid the loan. Out of 4.9 million shillings leant, only .5 million had been repaid. As happened on the global scale with big banks, SAGA folded, transferring the debt and accounts to the larger Equity Bank. According to Nina Munk, who had access to global sources, the credit story played out across the Millennium Villages. In Mbola, Tanzania, 99% of those given loans defaulted.76

74 Monica Oketch, interview with author, June 21, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

75 Nyasimi and Okang’a. Unpublished study.

76 Munk, Idealist, 178.
Pay now or perish

Heads hung low. Rain pounded on the tin ceiling of the old church building, which now doubled as both a preschool classroom and a meeting hall since the new church had been built behind it. Thirty-four people sat close together on the low wooden pews. At the front of the room, the speaker raised his voice to compete with the clattering rain on the roof. He spoke in that nasal American English that the children often enjoyed imitating by holding their noses and slurring their words together. No one laughed that day, though. No one looked up at the speaker or into the stern faces of the small group of people seated behind him at the front of the church.

“Evil men borrow, but do not repay their debt,” the speaker roared, quoting from Psalms 37:21.

Despite the biblical reference, the speaker was not a pastor, a zealous missionary or a religious figure. He was Pedro Sanchez, director of the Millennium Villages Project at Columbia University’s Earth Institute. The people gathered in the room knew him as Odera Akang’o, an honorific name that the elders had given him a decade earlier when he was director of the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF, now the World Agroforestry Center).

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77 All details of the meeting, including speeches, were recorded by Joseph Okang’a who attended the public meeting on November 20, 2008 in ACK Church in Sauri. The transcription of the recording and description of the event are all done by Okang’a at that time and all details are taken directly from his notes and from conversations with him in 2009. As such, the events and statements reflect one person’s account.
Sanchez had begun his speech earlier by invoking the gravity of legendary Luo chief, Odera Akang’o, whose name he now bore. “How dare you abuse your elder?” He asked the gathered crowd. Those in the pews registered no response—eyes remained focused on the ground, backs hunched.

First, Sanchez praised the local development staff for their “tactical maneuvers which ensured that you got the fertilizers and seeds for this year despite the civil strife that hit Kenya after the election.” “Please appreciate this by clapping for them,” he said with pride. Writing about the event in his notebook, Joseph Okang’a remarked on the tepid response in parentheses: “(Few moments of silence and, eventually… Clap…Clap).”

Sanchez forged ahead. He complained of having been forced to make such an “unplanned,” untimely trip to Sauri because the community had collectively refused to pay back the loans that the Millennium Villages Project had required them to take to buy the chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds that had tripled their harvests in 2005, when the inputs had been distributed for free. Only 10.9% of those who had taken the loans had repaid them by the stipulated deadline,\(^78\) which meant that the original pilot “village” of Sauri ranked last, eleventh among the eleven “village”-clusters in the region that were being developed as part of the Sauri Millennium Villages Project.

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\(^78\) Project statistic as per Millennium Villages document provided by Joseph Okang’a.
“Let me tell you that you have taken my important time...for I was now to be in Chicago where Obama lives and discuss our future with him before he moves to the White House on January 20, 2009,” he said.

He proceeded to explain that even he, Odera Akang’o, had to pay debts. “I have a house and loan in New York, but I pay monthly on the loan because I know failure will lead to me being evacuated from the house and my family will suffer. So why not pay the loan?”

After reading the damning verse from Psalms, he concluded that the community members had 24 hours to repay their loans:

There is no more deadline. You have to pay now so that as I leave the country by evening tomorrow, I have a clear report of "they have all cleared their loans" to give to Jeffrey Sachs who is seriously waiting for that statement when I meet him on my arrival in New York. Thank you.

Bodies in the pews silently spoke shame and remorse as he sat down.

Patrick Mutuo, the Sauri MV “Team Leader,” stood to add his own bit to the general scolding. Dr. Mutuo, a Kenyan soil scientist serving as head of the Sauri Millennium Villages Project, was generally unpopular among Saurians, many of whom attributed his large round belly to his “eating” funds that had been intended for them. As he began to speak, the rain hammered harder on the roof.

“Amosi duto. [Greetings to all],” he said in awkward Luo before switching to English. Being from a distant eastern tribe had not gained Mutuo any favor in Sauri and
his attempts to speak the local language never progressed beyond basic greetings. Like Sanchez, he colored his statement with moralizing Christian tones.

“Today I have brought you the owner of the vineyard for I was only taking care,” he declared, invoking a gospel parable told by Jesus of a wealthy landowner who leaves his vineyard in the care of tenants who refuse to pay rent after they have harvested grapes and subsequently kill the owner’s son who comes to collect (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). Given the strongly Christian majority in Sauri, the reference would not have been misunderstood by those in the meeting. The owner, God, has leased the world to humans, who nonetheless will kill his only son and show no gratitude for all they have been given. In the most detailed version in the Book of Matthew, Jesus asks: “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers?” The Pharisees respond: “He will totally destroy those wicked farmers and rent the vineyard to other tenant farmers who will give him the fruit when it’s ready.” By introducing Sanchez as the owner of the vineyard, he not only equated him with God; he also delivered a severe reprimand and implicit warning by associating the Sauri community with the “wicked farmers” of the parable. “The issue is simple,” Mutuo concluded, “pay now or perish.”

Table 3: Loan payback percentages and rankings for sublocations in Sauri Millennium Village

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### Debt morality

The overt religious moralizing in Sanchez’s speech may seem incongruous with secular economic development. One would not expect to find a Columbia University professor quoting from the bible to broadly condemn as evil "those who borrow and do not pay." But the massive loan default in Sauri pushed Sanchez and the Millennium Villages Project to articulate explicitly what they had assumed could go unsaid. What we see in Sanchez’s sermon is an effort to find culturally relevant terms through which he might pull Saurians into a moral order that he takes for granted when even he pays his

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80 List provided by Millennium Villages staff to the Executive Committee.
monthly mortgage in New York. When the Millennium Villages Project administrators required that all community members take out loans, they tacitly assumed that the globally dominant secular moral code of debt and financial responsibility either pre-existed or would develop naturally as a result of establishing the creditor-debtor relationship. The moral outrage comes from the shock that the community could and would refuse to become subject to that power relation.

When we understand the moral function of debt, it will be much clearer what the Saurians refused in defaulting on their loans and why Sanchez would be so upset. Saurians themselves had many explanations for refusing to pay the 2008 loan, many of which reveal a competing moral *habitus*.

As anthropologist David Graeber\(^1\) and critical theorist Maurizio Lazzarato\(^2\) have most recently argued, debt and morality are intimately intertwined in the history of modern capitalism and beyond (5,000 years for Graeber). Both return to Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, to discuss the fundamental link between morality and debt. There, Nietzsche reminds us that the German word for guilt (schuld) is derived from the word for debts (schulden). The relationship between creditor and debtor, for Nietzsche, is the “oldest and most primitive personal relationship,” wherein one person measures herself in relationship to another. Debt is formative training in what Nietzsche


considers to be the distinguishing characteristic of humans— their ability to promise, to combine memory with anticipation as a self in relationship to others and the world. Commercial or monetized debt, unlike myriad forms of non-monetary debt that are central to social life, erases the difference between the moral and economic realms by transferring commercial values, logic and contractual rationality onto that oldest of human relationships. Morality, what is deemed “good,” becomes a subject of rational cost-benefit analysis and money. As such, monetary debt serves a critical function in the neo-liberal endeavor to expand economic logic to all dimensions of human life.

Lazzarato illuminates debt as a core dimension of neo-liberal biopower that Foucault neglected in his biopolitics lectures. First, still following Nietzsche, Lazzarato focuses on the subjectifying function of debt in the post-millennial. “Debt breeds, subdues, manufactures, adapts and shapes subjectivity,” he writes. In other words, debt requires self-discipline or work on oneself and on one’s way of life. It is, in other words, a key technology of governmentality. Credit does not so much exploit labor in the traditional sense. Rather, it exploits “ethical action and the work of self-constitution at both an individual and collective level.”

The dimension of the future is central in debt subjectivity and its mode of dispossession. “What is credit? A promise to pay a debt, a promise to repay in a more or

83 Ibid., 38.
84 Ibid., 55.
less distant and unpredictable future...to ‘view the future as the present and anticipate it’ so that [one] is answerable for his own future,” Lazzarato explains. Building on that point, he quotes from Jean-Joseph Goux, who writes that “a society dominated by banking activity and therefore by credit, uses time and expectation, uses the future as if all these activities were overwhelmingly calculated in advance, ahead of society itself, through anticipation and deduction.” Lazzarato sums up the underlying logic of that colonization of the future through debt:

By training the governed to promise (to honor their debt), capitalism exercises control over the future since debt ablations allow one to foresee, calculate, measure, and establish equivalences between current and future behavior. The effects of the power of debt on subjectivity (guilt and responsibility) allow capitalism to bridge the gap between present and future.

It is precisely this vision of the future to which Saurians object in the Equity Bank baraza when they protest that they could not know that the crops would fail. Antonina complains that the contingency of drought should affect the loan just as it did the crops. “If the maize is scorched, the loans should be scorched also,” she argues. Wilfred Ogutu makes a similar argument when he points out that “again, we are not God,” meaning that the community members should not have to take responsibility for a future that turned out poor. “There was no agreement about what to do if one’s fate was bad,” he

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85 Ibid., 45.
86 Ibid., 44, quoting from Goux “Cash, check or charge.”
87 Ibid., 46.
states. For the bank representative, such arguments hold no sway. After all, “each individual signed his form.” When signing the form, then, the community members forfeited (or were dispossessed of) the open horizon of the future as well as the time between that moment and the future moment of repayment. They put their future in pawn. From that point forward, they would be responsible for fulfilling a particular set of possibilities regardless of external circumstances. The bank representative puts the perspective of capitalism succinctly when he counters with the question: “If you buy milk, then spill it on the way home, do you go back to the store for your money back?”

Entering into the debt relationship puts the responsibility for future risks onto the individual while denying her an open range of possibilities for action. Her “basket of choices” only contains those actions proper to the repayment of the loan if she wants to remain on the side of “good.” If she chooses differently, then she becomes one of the “evil [people] who borrow and do not pay back.”

But, as we began to suggest earlier, another order of futurity and morality has a much longer history of organizing the basic cultural habitus of the people living in Sauri. The main reasons given, in various forms, for the loan default had to do with competing non-monetary debts, obligations and norms of reciprocity.

Here, at the level of social organization, we encounter another dispossession involved in the accumulation of subjects to form the enterprise society. If competition, market and enterprise are to become “the formative power of society,” competing forms
of life and social dispositions must be marginalized or destroyed. In Sauri, the
privileging of market, individualized competition and monetized debt would clash with
the existing *habitus* of kinship obligations and reciprocity.\(^88\) To survive in extreme
scarcity, communities often depend on what anthropologists call generalized
reciprocity. When one has a surplus, one is expected to give to others with the belief
that, when one finds himself lacking again, others will give to him. In traditional Luo
culture, norms of generalized reciprocity within families and clans dictate how one
approaches wealth. “No matter how educated or where a person lives, whatever he has,
he must be giving back to his family. He cannot just keep the extra for himself,” Pastor
George Oyomba explained. Oscar Oure, one of the key “stakeholders” in the MV Project
order further explained:

> Before Millennium, we could only combat hunger. Now, we have moved to the
next step. We know how to create money, but how to save it is something we
have not mastered. If I have cash, then I must give to my family. If I do not, then
there will be a curse [*chira*] so either me or my child will get sick. If I want peace,
then I just share out whatever little I have.\(^89\)

According to Esau Ogonyo, an elder with a flair for philosophizing, the essence of these
strong social ties can be understood through the cultural proverb “I am because we are

\(^{88}\) There are no pure, cultural wholes, particularly in today’s globalized society. Culture is an ongoing
process of change, exchange, travel and dialogue that all occur in different ways in different contexts.
Myriad competing ethico-political influences and struggle over the coordinates of “culture” are very
present. Nonetheless, traditional cultural practices and values do continue to shape the basic dispositions
and embodied reality of many people living in Sauri. We might call this a general consensus, riddled with
dissensus, change and friction, that plays an important role in the *habitus* of Saurians.

\(^{89}\) Oscar Oure, interview with author, September 3, 2010.
and since we are, therefore I am.” That “we” extends from one’s family household to clan members, both alive and dead. Concretely, this meant that money flowed out as quickly as it flowed in. Often, the surplus ended up in distant regions. One woman who spoke with Joseph said:

If I am eating three meals a day, then I have plenty and I have to start sharing food with my family members in South Nyanza. I cannot sit here enjoying the meals and my parents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters are not having food in Migori.”

In other cases, the money stayed in the household, which became bloated with kin who returned to Sauri when their relatives began to have a surplus. Another woman who spoke with Joseph said:

My household size has increased from 6 to 11. My sister moved in with her two children and my brother who lives in Butere sent his two children 8 and 9 years to live with me. He said that I have enough maize every year and I should help him feed his children. I got very good maize last year, but it did not last for three months. By December, all the maize was gone.

In the majority of cases of loan default, obligation to kin trumped the new moral code of monetized, individualized debt.

The Luo ethnographer A.B.C. Ocholla-Ayayo confirms that, traditionally, “kinsmen always expect support and assistance from kinsmen in higher position, who must respect their obligation and duty to support since they are commanded as


91 Ibid.
normative values.” He also stresses the deeply ingrained importance of generosity in Luo cultural values. “In terms of wealth a man may be told that ‘un jomoko moko manguony karing abulagi,’ which means, ‘though you are rich you are worth nothing because of your meanness’; the man is lacking ‘generosity and hospitality’ which are basic requirements of any normal Luo,” Ocholla-Ayayo writes. Value, in other words, is not traditionally calculated in monetary terms. What one is “worth” has to do with how much he or she shares with kin.

As Oscar Oure indicates above, the norms of generosity were enforced by the powerful mechanism of witchcraft or, in the Luo belief system, chira. For many Luos, including young progressives like my assistant Lydiah, the threat of chira looms large. Chira is known to cause illness, a general wasting away and, eventually, death. The fear of chira drives moral choices, including the choice of which debts to pay with one’s limited resources—bank debt or non-monetary obligation of generalized reciprocity. The massive loan default indicates the direction that the majority of Saurians chose.

The moral code of monetary debt also had to compete with another futurity organized around death. For many Luos, how and where one is buried determines how one will “live” in the afterlife. Myriad traditions are constructed around death, funerals

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92 Ocholla-Ayayo, Traditional Ideology, 39.

93 Ibid.
and burials, and the concern for the care one will receive after death is strongly motivating for many. One man explained:

I know I took loan last year and got good yields. But I had to share food with my extended family and hence I do not have any to sell and pay back the loan. I am more scared of the curse that my people will impose on me if I do not give them food than the curse from Dr. Mutuo (Sauri MV Team Leader) or Jaduong Odera Kang’o (Pedro Sanchez). Both Mutuo and Odera cannot come to bury me and even if they curse me because I have refused to pay the loan, I know the curse cannot stick. How many funerals has Mutuo or Odera attended in our village? How many burial grounds have they dug? None! I have shared my food with people who will bury me and now I don’t have anything to pay the loan.”

What the statement indicates is that, for this particular farmer, debt was one of two “curses.” The curse of bank debt “cannot stick” because Sanchez and Mutuo (from Eastern Kenya) are not part of the long-term social fabric of Sauri. In contrast, the curse of relatives can determine one’s fate in death and afterlife. Such kinship obligations alongside norms of generosity created a moral habitus that inclined community members not to see themselves and others as “human capital.” Others hold one’s future fate in their hands, whether in life through chira or in death and burial.

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94 There is a famous case of a lawyer who died in Nairobi and caused months of wrangling between his Kikuyu wife and his family over his body. The case became emblematic of the clash between traditional values and modern forms of life. David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo (Eds). Burying S.M.: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann: 1992).

95 Nyasimi and Okang’a, unpublished paper.

Finally, Saurians had a competing analysis of the moral rightness of charging interest and service fees. “Millennium came to end poverty. But, then they liked us to SAGA and Equity which charge interest and fees, which leaves us owing more money than we started with. That is not ending poverty,” said Esau Ogonyo in recounting his history of the Millennium Villages Project. The SAGA loan charged a flat 10% interest plus 200 shillings in service fees, while Equity Bank charged quarterly interest of 15%. “It is wrong to charge interest on those who are hungry,” said Leah Ogwayo. “That loan is now creating its own babies that have to be fed. But, I have to feed my children before I feed the loan.”

The MV Project staff reacted to the competing moral order with the same attitude that they had toward “local” varieties of plants in comparison with “improved” varieties introduced by the project. “Culture” came to mean an obstacle to be overcome or discarded. For example, in one meeting about loan repayment, an MV Project facilitator exhorted community members: “Please, if it is culture that is a problem [keeping people from paying the loan]; chop it off. Jesus said that if the eye makes you sin then remove it.” They even advocated for people to cultivate the bodily dispositions toward

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99 Elisha Owiyo, public meeting with Millennium Villages Project staff, April 14, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
monetary debt that would be more appropriate. For example, at another meeting, the MV Project facilitator actually instructed community members on how they should feel toward debt:

You know, when you have the loan that you have not repaid, you can’t even sleep sometimes. Maybe others are more incompetent with debt and have no feelings. But, me, when I owe somebody, I can wake up in the middle of the night to reflect on how I can repay the debt. This is the only step that will enable us to take bolder steps to repay the loans.100

In other words, becoming good subjects of the new neo-liberal order would require the “bolder steps” of changing deeply ingrained feelings of guilt and responsibility.

In fact, when sociocultural change did not happen smoothly or easily and existing cultural attitudes, norms and practices ultimately disrupted the program, MV Project staff quickly grew frustrated and began publicly accusing the community of being “foolish,” “slow,” and “conflictual.” The 2005-2006 Annual Report on Sauri already reveals some of these tensions. The Report describes a 2006 training of the executive committee meant to help leaders realize “that the speed at which the implementation of the interventions were moving was so slow due to their personal differences, greed for power and lack of coordination...[the training was] inclined towards the transformation of Sauri in terms of attitudes and practices.”101 As the Project

100 Herrine Okoth, public meeting with Millennium Villages Project staff, April 14, 2010, Sauri sublocation.

would learn as it met community resistance and breakdown of efforts like the loan schemes, creating the enabling milieu for the emergence of a commercial society involves significant rewiring of social structures and cultural values, practices and meanings, none of which happen easily or fit into the Sachsian category of “quick wins.”

**We shall pay the loan**

At the loan meeting with Pedro Sanchez, after the harsh injunction to repay the loans, community leaders stood, in their turn, to make the following statements:102

*Monica Okech (Sauri B):* Thanks for the chance and please Odera Akang’o, don’t have stress the way you are having now. You are a polygamist. A polygamist’s wives can never be the same, we have sharp ones and others are sluggish, but love them all and give time for improvement. We shall pay the loan.

*Martin Onanda (Luero):* Thanks bwana Odera Akang’o and please don’t be annoyed (as he pointed to the list of outstanding loans put on the wall). You see, I am happy that Gongo (MV-2) is leading and Sauri (MV-1) is last. This is a marathon race and in marathon you cannot judge early as we the Sauri people will bypass all other cluster villages come tomorrow or in a week’s time. We are surely going to pay; no worry bwana Odera Akang’o.

*Edward Oyier (Silula):* Thanks very much. Bwana Odera Akang’o, let me remind you that in the same bible you have read to us it is said, “forgive those who repent and do good.” We have repented and we are going to pay the loans, just some little time and we fulfill.

*Councilor Sauri/Anyiko Ward:* Odera Akang’o let me tell you the chief whom we named you after for your life saving initiatives in Luo land here also had bigger challenges. He used to force people to put on clothes. This he did for a long time but he did not succeed quickly as many people preferred to walk half naked or fully naked but by now NO single Kenyan community can dress smartly or better than Luos. (Laughter

102 As recorded by Joseph Okang’a, public meeting, November 20, 2008, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
and claps from the community members) The Luos were also forced to take tea (he continued) with sugar but as usual Odera Akang’o did not find it easy until in the later years. As at now let one visit Gem or Sauri for that matter, Luos love tea with sugar and cannot afford to miss sugar in their tea. Therefore a Luo man needs time although this is no case for time as the project has its life span that dictates the pace.

In these short speeches, we see that, despite the massive default, the morality of monetized debt has, to some degree, begun to take hold. The speakers do not object to loans as such. They repeatedly “repent” within Sanchez’s moral terms and promise to pay. Whether or not they did pay, and many did not, the future of the community had already been enclosed by those promises. The final comment by the area councillor is interesting in that regard, as he informs Sanchez that, though it may take more time and even coercion, the preferences, desires and motivating dispositions—the basic habitus—of the Luo community will change as they had in the past. The people who did not like tea with sugar or wearing clothes soon came to love and need them both. In effect, he is admitting that the horizon organized by money, enterprise and debt already outlines, in many cases, the possibilities for Sauri’s future. Enterprises, “market linkages” and bank “partnerships” have been established for a crucial, powerful elite, if not for the majority of community members. Just as the beginning of the rise of biopower in the 18th century involved the suppression of city walls, the barriers to capital flows have been lowered and Sauri no longer remains largely outside the dominant flows of capital.

To date, no one from the bank has come for Siprose’s goat. Although no property or land was taken in the effort to transition Sauri to neo-liberal enterprise society, other
forms of dispossession occurred or were meant to occur. I have suggested several subjective disposessions that the MV Project cultivated in the “commercialization of village life.” The most obvious, standard case of accumulation by dispossession is the credit scheme, which underlies all of the MV Project interventions. Credit, as David Harvey has pointed out, is itself “a radical means of accumulation by dispossession.”

For the many in Sauri now locked into debt peonage facing ever-accumulating interest on their original small loans, that kind of dispossession is clear. But I have also tried to suggest the alienation of alternative, non-profit-oriented forms of life based on reciprocity and shared well-being as well as the dispossession of alternative future horizons. While these may be immaterial, they are no less a form of loss. As Siprose said when she brought me her goat, “It is like we brought in a hyena.”

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5. Evasions of Dialogue

The massive Ober tree once defined life in Sauri. It dominated the center of the community with its majestic presence and sprawling shade taking in an array of formal and informal community meetings, gatherings, celebrations and interactions. The branches reached out so far that they cast a long cool shadow broad enough that hundreds could sit in the grass around it and be protected from the sun.

The oldest man in the village, John Okoth, remembered gathering under the tree for barazas as a child in the 1930s. He could recall the names of all the chiefs in Sauri, dating back to the late 1800s, all of which had met with elders and made important political decisions underneath the Ober tree. Disputes were taken up by “kangaroo courts” under the tree along with resolution of conflicts, marriages and general gatherings to decide on issues relevant to the community as a whole.

Three years after the start of the Millennium Villages Project, on October 27, 2008, an outside construction crew hired by the MV Project revved up chainsaws and spent an entire week tearing down the Ober tree, limb by limb, to haul it away. In its place, the Project promised to build a new “Community Learning and Resource Center” (CLRC) as a site in which community members could take an active role in their own development. The structure was to have electricity, computers, fans and meeting space. The area Assistant Chief would have offices upstairs, while community events could be held in rooms on the first floor. At first, the community, including the elders, supported
the destruction of the tree and its traditional meeting grounds. “We imagined the first two-story building in Sauri and thought, surely, this will be progress,” said Edward Oginga.¹

Figure 21: The Ober tree prior to removal (2007)

Two years passed. The place once occupied by the Ober tree remained an open wound, a vast hole in the ground with no community center. Community meetings shuffled between churches and alternative outdoor spaces that offered some shade.

According to the MV Project facilitators, the building process had been stalled by conflicts over the amount of community contribution (timber) expected. Community members complained that they wanted some input in the design of the building rather than just supplying raw materials. Some claimed that timber had been donated and stolen. Others simply blamed the local MV Project staff for “eating” the money that had been intended for the CLRC.

Finally, in November of 2009, a hundred people stood around the gaping hole for the “inauguration” of the CLRC site. Pastors said prayers and expressed hope. Community leaders thanked developers from the MV Project and encouraged their fellow community members to contribute wood. In November of 2010, some cement had been piled near the site, but no other construction had taken place. In early 2011, construction finally began, but by then, community frustration and animosity toward the project had peaked. Many complained when the laborers working on the building were hired from outside the community, despite the preponderance of local unemployed youth.

Slowly, a stark rectangular structure of grey cement blocks rose out of the place where the Ober tree once stood. As of early 2012, the CLRC remained unfinished. The raw cement facade with its unfinished windows had a foreboding feel. “It looks like a military barracks or a European concentration camp,” said a young man who had returned home on university break. Since then, the facade has been painted and shrubs
have been planted. Most of the doors still remain locked on any given day, with a few keys in the hands of designated elders. The two public meeting rooms on the first floor have only enough space for about fifty people each, far fewer than the numbers of people who had attended barazas in the open space around the Ober tree.

![The CLRC under construction (2011)](image)

**Figure 22: The CLRC under construction (2011)**

The contrast between the vibrant Ober tree and the cold, empty Millennium facility reflects two very different understandings of the community for which they created space. The receptive space under the Ober tree had been an open, multi-use commons in which a wide variety of community events and interactions took place—
from prosecution of petty crimes to informal news sharing to basic conversations about
the weather that happened over a makeshift stand where Edwina pounded out dough to
make and sell chapatis. The CLRC building, on the other hand, enshrined hierarchy and
deafness in cement. The building controlled, by virtue of its organization of space, who
and what counted in community life. Not many people were invited in.

The Ober tree’s fate mirrored the Millennium Development experience in Sauri.
As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the MV Project arrived with a very clear set
of objectives and strategies, which had been finalized long before the project designers
had met with those whose lives were to be transformed. As with the CLRC, the MV
Project had a vision of what the ideal “developed” structures would be. They arrived
with plans in hand. Without engaging community members to try to understand
existing collective structures, practices and histories, they set about actualizing their
vision, even when it meant destroying shared forms of life and meaning—often the very
ones they unknowingly depended on for success. From the beginning, there was a
complete lack of receptivity and dialogue in the organization of the project, a fact that
would breed resentment and conflict between the community and the Project, as well as
among community members themselves. Like the CLRC, the whole structure of the
project was built without significant input or debate with the community. As with the
Ober tree, the MV Project effectively dismembered the community itself through such
monological practices and visions. By marginalizing existing political traditions and
structures, the MV Project created a void that it tried to fill with its own vision of democracy and “participation.” But, having destroyed the living public forum provided by the Ober Tree, they left the community floundering in conflicts and confusion without tools or space for navigating their differences and tensions. The cement CLRC building reflects a more general style of deafness and lack of receptivity that characterized the Millennium Villages Project at multiple levels. Ironically, the CLRC was constructed—like so many other MV efforts—in the name of empowering the community while its walls and organization actually undermined existing collectivity and commonality.

The destruction of the Ober tree and the building of the CLRC should not be completely reduced to a metaphor for broader processes. It was the very real demolition of public space, the agora of community politics in Sauri where conflicts could be negotiated and collective life navigated dialogically. In that sense, the Millennium Villages functioned as an anti-politics machine that was very different from the older model elaborated by James Ferguson. Instead of destroying collective forms of life by entrenching them in bureaucratic state power, the neo-liberal anti-politics machine systematically dismembered the public realm in favor of the “individual development” and the self-governing individual entrepreneur.

Political theorist Hannah Arendt writes that public spaces like the Ober Tree sustain and make possible the cultivation of human capacities for political action. For
Arendt, “public” refers to the realm of society that is commonly shared, the world seen and heard in common. The public realm is a “space of appearance” where people disclose themselves to others in the process of co-constituting a shared reality. It is the space of “being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves.”\(^2\) It is the birthplace of common reality as it exists between individualized selves and others or, in Arendtian terms, \textit{inter homines esse}, being in-between humans. Arendt further clarifies:

Public signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it…To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it.”\(^3\)

Comparing public space to a shared table between people enables Arendt to illustrate how the public realm both brings people together and prevents them from collapsing into an undifferentiated one-ness in which otherness or difference could not be perceived, divulged and, thereby, lead dialogically to new insights and possibilities.

The old Ober tree should not be romanticized as some harmonious space. Conflicts, particularly between rival clans, had abounded as long as community members could recall. The public space of the Ober tree had also been repeatedly colonized by colonial or state-appointed bureaucrats like the current Assistant Chief. Nonetheless, the place still had a history as a space of public dialogue and the sharing of


\(^3\) Arendt, \textit{Human Condition}, 52.
a common world, which was a resource whenever conflict did arise. To destroy it for the sake of building a community center was to demolish, in the name of community, a crucial node where “community” happened and came into being.

For Arendt, the public world is never a given. When people fail to create and sustain the space for speaking with and hearing others, the table disappears. Arendt considers those to be “dark times.” She writes:

It is the function of the public realm to throw light on the affairs of men by providing a space of appearances in which they can show in deed and word, for better and worse, who they are and what they can do. Darkness has come when this light is extinguished by "credibility gaps" and "invisible government," by speech that does not disclose what is but sweeps it under the carpet, by exhortations, moral and otherwise, that, under the pretext of upholding old truths, degrade all truth to meaningless triviality.4

In the Arendtian sense, then, the abolishment of the public space of the Ober tree could be seen as the beginning of such dark times or, we might say, darkening times in Sauri. Light and dark are, perhaps, too starkly divided. It might be more accurate to talk about lightening and darkening while recognizing the interpenetration of both. Long before Millennium, Sauri had its darkening tendencies to grapple with—deep clanism, sexism, age hierarchies. The Ober tree space, then, also had its foreclosures and darkness even as it fostered the light of public realm. Its destruction, like many of the MV Project’s actions

in the name of community, intensified the darkness. “We cannot even talk to each other anymore,” said Magdaline Omwombo.⁵

As that darkening happened, the Millennium Villages staff became increasingly frustrated. One MV Project facilitator commented at the end of an exhausting day, “We cannot work with these people. Sauri has descended into politics.”⁶ One might say, rather, that the community had descended out of politics, in its ancient Aristotelian meaning, as the negotiation of a common world by citizens of a polis who deliberate openly and take action on behalf of the common good. By “descending” out of politics in that original sense, they floundered in disagreements, resentments, rumors and misunderstandings with dwindling light of the public realm to illuminate possible pathways through them.

**Community-led**

The Millennium Villages Project distinguished itself from previous forms of development by claiming that the core difference in the approach is that it is "community-led." The Project’s self-definition on its website read: “The Millennium Villages are proving that by fighting poverty at the village level through community-led development, rural Africa can achieve the Millennium Development Goals.”⁷ The

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⁵ Magdaline Omwombo, interview with author, October 28, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

⁶ Herrine Okoth, comment to author in the MV truck, October 12, 2010.

⁷ www.millenniumvillages.org/the-villages/ [last accessed on April 7, 2014].
partner website for the Millennium Promise NGO claims that the “Millennium Villages address the root causes of extreme poverty by taking a holistic, community-led approach to sustainable development.”

In the FAQ for the Millennium Villages, the Project’s administrators similarly claimed: “Critical to the success of the Millennium Villages is the principle that communities must be empowered to lead their own development.”

In the 2008 public handbook for other organizations wanting to start a Millennium Village, the project administrators stated:

Many past rural development programs hindered their potential for success when local stakeholders did not participate adequately in the development process…The process of localizing the MDGs refers not only to making the goals relevant according to local realities, but also encompasses a partnership approach to achieving MDG-based strategies that enhances the capacity of communities to plan, act, participate in, monitor and effectively manage the development process.

The verbs "participate," "act," and "plan" suggest that the community will have proactive collective agency in determining project directions. The word "partnership" indicates that said collective agency will be exercised as part of a joint venture undertaken by equals.

Reading such claims, one would expect to find a vibrant democratic community planning, acting, participating and managing the development process as a community.

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8 www.millenniumpromise.org/about/overview/ [last accessed on April 7, 2014].

9 http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/mv/mv_faq.htm [last accessed April 7, 2014].

As we will discuss shortly, no such thing ever even began to exist in Sauri. Moreover, it
*could not* exist given the basic function of the Project as creating “proof-of-concept” sites
designed to be “scaled-up” across Africa. How could community members, now “local
stakeholders,” actually plan and manage the development process if the actions to be
taken in that process and their outcomes are already outlined and systematized by
scientists in New York? Of course, if genuine community leadership *was* at the heart of
the concept to be proven, then one could imagine a very interesting unfolding of
democracy, receptivity and dialogue. But, as we have already seen, the concept to be
proved had to do with the pre-designed blueprint of the Big Five interventions and the
“commercialization of village life,” all of which were designed far from the village and
its “community.” “Community,” then, is an empty placeholder that provides legitimacy.
In fact, we might say that *community* is the core utopian abstraction at the paradoxical
heart of the Millennium Villages Project—both the site of what is ideal, good and, thus,
legitimating (eutopos) and non-existent (outopos). I mean abstraction as an active
imperative as well as the abstraction inherent in any concept. “Community,” as we will
discuss in this chapter, would be perpetually obfuscated and not allowed to materialize
in contrast with the material specificity of the Big Five and commercialization. In fact,
when the community did appear with all the messiness, friction and difficulty of actual
human community, the Project would react by finding ways to push them aside. While
the usual movement of utopian imagination is to strive toward reaching the eutopos,
creatively moving in the direction of the good, the MV Project actually moved repeatedly in the opposite direction of necessity, systematically destroying—rendering impossible—forms of community and the common in the name of empowering “the community.”

What did “community-led” mean to the Millennium Villages Project? First, in the project literature, “community” becomes a singular, univocal agent.\(^\text{11}\) Take the following two general statements from the Millennium Villages Handbook.

- *Communities* perform needs assessments, planning, implementation and monitoring of development plans.\(^\text{12}\)
- *Communities* are active information managers who make use of existing knowledge systems.\(^\text{13}\)

On the one hand, the statements simply reveal a certain perspectival distance that enables the Project to make general claims. As a rhetorical strategy, such distance is often necessary. However, as a basic standpoint from which to approach a dynamic, living group of people, it can lead to fundamental blindesses. The abstract understanding of “community” as a functional whole that manages information or monitors development allowed Project facilitators and administrators to overlook

\(^{11}\) I acknowledge that the same argument can be made about my treatment of the Millennium Villages Project as a whole when in fact, as anthropologist David Mosse would point out, there is difference, contestation, creative manipulation and inventiveness that happens within the Project. One would have to have had access to the internal workings of the MV Project to do justice to such complexity, as Mosse did as an insider working in development. As I was blocked from doing such research, I approach the MV Project through its effects, its discourses and its interactions with members of the Sauri community.


\(^{13}\) Ibid., 11.
internal differences, ongoing processes of social fission and fusion and areas of friction and dissent. The lack of complexity in the MV Project’s conception of “community” led them to set up generic committee structures and new forms of governance without any knowledge of how power might play out in them. By not paying attention to existing social inequalities, tensions and political structures in their conception of “the community,” the MV Project would unwittingly exacerbate and escalate divisions.

The new “structure” outlined in the Constitution of the MV Project, designed with a handful of community members, envisioned an ideal of collective action through elected representatives based on a Western liberal model of democracy and an idealized imagination of peaceful village politics. In The End of Poverty, for example, Sachs imagines an idyllic scene of public debate and democracy that will unfold in his model villages. “Villages of several hundred to a few thousand people have an added advantage: the ability to gather together on the village green for discussions of village issues,” he writes.14 But the ideal of collective action envisioned in both the Constitution and in the Millennium Villages Handbook of 2008 did not take into account local forms of power, exclusion, difference and rivalry, or past modes of collective agency through which community capacities had been cultivated.

“That is what happens when you put soil scientists in charge of community development,” my research assistant Joseph often said as we confronted the social mess

14 Sachs, End of Poverty, 258.
that Sauri had become. Indeed, the Millennium Villages were run by soil scientists (Pedro Sanchez and Cheryl Palm) in New York and in Sauri (Team Leader Patrick Mutuo). What Joseph noted was that the soil scientists treated “community” as an object like soil or plants and, in so doing, created generic structures without seeing the complex heterogeneity of living, ongoing social processes and power relations. Of course, soil itself is living, dynamic and complex in its organic state. But, these soil scientists reduced it, like the community, to the object of interventions like chemical fertilizer that actually destroys that living complexity.

“Millennium facilitators lit the issue of clanism and made it hot. Now it is so bitter unlike before,” Joyce Mbuya said.15 As it turned out, the Sauri “community” only existed as a bureaucratic entity organized artificially by the Kenyan government as a sublocation with eleven sub-villages. Internally, for those living in Sauri, the primary meaningful group affiliation was the clan or libamba—“a person’s agnatic descent group from the house of a common mother four to seven generations in genealogical depth.”16 Eight rival clans—Kalanyo, Kathomo Alego, Sirotha, Jakawino, Kanybwoth, Ugungu, Kager—occupy the area. The two main clans, Kalanyo and Kathomo, were bitter enemies who cursed each other in funeral ceremonies and rarely cooperated. “We do

15 Joyce Mbuya, interview with author, June 20, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

things according to Kalanyoism or Kathomoism and this is killing us,” a youth, Collins Yiembe, observed. The Kalanyo majority had long dominated local politics: During the tenure of the MV Project, the Assistant Chief was Kalanyo and the majority of his Village Elders were as well. After the organization of committees under the Millennium Villages scheme, the Kalanyo would also head every sector committee. As John Okello, the head teacher at Bar Turo Primary School explained, “You know, the big clan called Kalanyo wanted to own everything…everything that came out of the Project. They were finishing us!” The smaller clans were effectively blocked from the project, which led to resentment and eventually outright conflict.

Because the Project had no sense of cultural differences within “the community,” it did not address the asymmetry or consider how their selective distribution of inputs might intensify existing tensions. “The Millennium did not know of this problem so we have Kathomo, Sirotha, Kanyibwoth who could never enter the Project,” the elder Martin Onanda explained. Jethro Moyi further elaborated on the problem inherent in the oversight: “When you take a small section or a particular clan to work with and you leave out the others, the relationship is going to sour and there is going to be hatred.”

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17 Collins Yiembe, interview with author, October 9, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
19 Martin Onanda, interview with author, April 12, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
“Clanism was here before Millennium, but it not in the way it is now with people not talking to one another. Before, if there was conflict, we would meet, talk and resolve these things under the tree. Now, people just move around each other,” Moyi stated.21 Joyce Mbuya further clarified, “Before Millennium, we could say we are all from Sauri community even if we felt our clan first. But, now it is clan first. They have made us not to love each other.”22 In other words, working naively in the name of “community,” without taking living dynamics into consideration, actually broke down broader forms of collectivity that previously stretched, however tenuously, across clan differences.

The intensification of clanism is not surprising, given that a scramble for scarce resources creates a situation in which rival groups and individuals have to compete for them. In fact, as suggested in the previous chapter, the MV Project actively cultivated such competition by limiting their inputs to a select few while expecting others to be inspired to take on loans in order to build up their enterprises as well.

One could object that any outside project entering a situation of scarcity with limited and highly desirable resources is bound to inflame existing tensions and ignite competition. For that very reason, care should have been taken from the beginning when dealing with existing community structures and power relations. Instead of instituting a brand new, generic structure of liberal governance, one might have taken the time to do

21 Ibid.

22 Joyce Mbuya, interview with author, June 20, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
the slow work of dialoguing with the community to understand differences, tensions, public forms and forms of collective governance.

Instead, as I discussed in Chapter Three, the MV Project sidelined existing governing structures in favor of the new structure of committees and stakeholders. Without a habitus of collectivity in the committee form—a feel for the game—the community members played the game poorly. “Conflicts started from the formation of the executive during elections of the first committee. That is where the war started from,” said Shadrack Ajode, a member of the first executive committee. The elder Esau Ogonyo further explained what happened:

Each sector committee had its own constitution and office bearers with their own authority which rendered the Executive committee powerless with its constitution. Each sector committee tended to have its own aims and objectives under its constitution. There was no clause in the constitutions indicating the power of the executive in connection with the department. So, war started happening between the sectors and the Executive. Disagreements were perpetual. The Executive had to rely on the sectors to feed it with what was transpiring in each area and, so, lost control. Also, the sectors had no source of income but only relied on dish out from the Millennium. There was no participation of committees in planning or deciding on budgets. 23

The disagreements were often petty. Members of the Kathomo clan accused Mama Monica and the Kalanyo clan of “eating” (meaning corruptly taking goods or funds for themselves). Others spread rumors that the Kalanyo held “night meetings” (secret meetings associated with witchcraft). On the Kalanyo side, Mama Monica and others

spread the rumor that the Project had been brought for them because Pedro Sanchez was an elder of the Kalanyo clan. Threats of “chira” curses abounded on both sides.

The MV Project managers quickly became frustrated. By June 2006, they noted in their annual report that they held a community development training for the executive committee, ten men and four women, at which “the [community] leaders realized that the speed at which the implementation of the interventions were [sic] moving was so slow due to their personal differences, greed for power and lack of coordination of the project’s activities…On the closing date they agreed on principles to ceremoniously bury their differences.”24 At that meeting, according to several attendees, the MV Project lectured them on the problem of differences and conflict, but no one took time to understand the deeper history behind them. As such, they believed they could simply be “buried.” They applied Western team-building activities to facilitate “community-building.” “They tied us up with ropes. Why would the wazungu want us tied us up with ropes?” Mama Monica exclaimed when describing the workshop. The idea, another leader explained, was to help them understand how to get out of a difficult situation together. While surely well-meaning, choosing such an activity over careful dialogue revealed the extent of the Project’s deafness or inability to engage with the complexities and difficulties of an actual community—a living tangle of relationships, histories and differences in constant negotiation.

The “war” in Sauri peaked after national elections in December of 2007—the same time that violent ethnic conflict broke out between Luos and the nationally dominant tribe of Kikuyus. Within two months, at the national level, over 1,000 people had been killed and over 100,000 had been displaced.\(^{25}\) While the broader conflict did not affect Sauri, as only a handful of Kikuyus lived in the area, Sauri had its own conflictual, contested election and fallout that soon made forward movement practically impossible.

Under the Constitution designed by Millennium Villages staff in conjunction with the handful of community members, the term for the first executive committee expired in 2007. The members of the existing executive committee decided to hold elections to coincide with those happening at the national level. The smaller clans, fed up with the exclusion, banded together to oust the officers of the first executive committee. “Kalanyo is a bigger clan here and one cannot beat them when they hold onto anything! It took the smaller clans to unite together and vote them out,” Paul Shisia said.\(^{26}\)

Community members themselves admitted that the actual process of “election” of representatives was less than ideal. Voting took place in public with people lining up

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\(^{26}\) Paul Shisia, interview with author, November 14, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
physically on the side of a chosen candidate, which intimidated many into not participating. “Very few people even went to do elections, because of threats and clanism,” Mama Jenifa Oule told me. “There were many Kalanyo who said that the Project is for them. They said chira [curse, witchcraft] would come to those who voted against them.” 27

Rumor also had it that many votes were bought on both sides. You could only stand for election if you already had money to buy votes,” Oscar Okwako said. 28 The village elder of Luero village, Martin Onanda, also described the election process as rigged by bribery. He explained:

Let me tell you, the elections could have been done better than what happened. Monica campaigned by using money at night. If it were a secret ballot, Monica could have gotten zero votes. But, the women to whom she had given money were too shy to leave her line because it was daytime. 29

Meanwhile, Monica held that her opponent Hosea had given drinking money to all the unemployed youths in exchange for their votes. “He even paid people who were not from here,” she said. 30

Those favoring an overhaul of the executive committee had a number of complaints. First, they held that Monica, being illiterate and uneducated, was being used

30 Monica Oketch, interview with author, June 10, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
as a puppet of the Millennium Villages Project, willing to sign anything without knowing what the document said. “We wanted an executive committee, which would be focused, knowledgeable and educated,” Martin Onanda said.\(^{31}\) Second, many felt that the traditional leadership had been wrongly excluded in the new “structure” that Millennium instituted. “Monica’s executive used to fight with local administration, which made development go down, “Onanda explained.\(^{32}\) “They differed with the Chief and Assistant Chiefs and tried to keep us, Village Elders, aside.” Other issues enumerated by different community members included: Not passing information on to the villages, greed and corruption, incompetence and lack of focus.

Monica, running for reelection as Chairman, took the campaign against Hosea personally. She mobilized her close relationship with Pedro by claiming that he had said, “No Monica, no Project.” The rumor circulated throughout the eleven villages of Sauri sublocation that if Monica were not re-elected, the Project would withdraw.

When the day of the election came, community members encountered a scene of noise and chaos. Several people stood singing in loud voices, “No Hosea, No Peace.” Ultimately, 208 people lined up behind Hosea while 203 lined up behind Monica. “That was when this war really began,” said Samuel Otoyo.\(^{33}\) Monica insisted that the “new


\(^{32}\) Ibid.

“executive” was illegitimate and refused to work with them. She also strongly urged members of her Kalanyo clan to boycott anything done by the new executive committee.

As the Millennium Villages Project had devised the new structure and constitution, one might have expected them to facilitate conflict resolution between the two committees. Instead, the tensions simmered. General participation in barazas (public meetings) plummeted, both for barazas run by the Assistant Chief and those run by the Millennium Villages. “Since the election change in the Sauri executive board last year, very few people attend barazas,” said Joyce Mbuya.

The new executive committee consisted of Hosea Owiti, the former Assistant Chief, and several of the current Assistant Chief’s elders. Among them, several men had retired from work outside the village in a range of jobs from factory labor to the postal service. In general, the level of education rose, and with it, the level of antagonism toward the MV Project, which would eventually erupt in the scandal of the community-owned truck.

Before turning to the “war” around the community truck, we should consider the other half of the term “community-led.” I have discussed the complex, frictional and heterogeneous nature of the “community.” I now turn to the issue of leadership. Were there ways that the Project allowed the community, even if fractured and narrowed

down to only 264 “stakeholders,” to lead? After all, 264 out of 6,000 is far more representative than most Western democracies.

“Only once, in the first year, did they ask for our help in planning,” said Aggrey Ranyondo, a member of the agriculture committee."35 After that, they just show up and go through a list of activities that they have already planned.” In a focus group, another community member had a similar story: “We did the first plan in this school in 2004. From then, nothing. We just hear that the project has gone to Kericho for planning, planning! It could not work as they gave us what was not in our minds!”36 Samuel Ougo further explained,

Those people [MV staff] do the planning. Each year they go some place like Kericho, Eldoret or Busia and they plan how they will allocate funds and what activities they will do. They don’t involve the community, they do it by themselves. When they come to us, they tell us what to do. Now we are feeling just like free labor, their laborers. Not part of the thing. Some leaders from the community, at least, should be taken with them to the planning. And, we should know what the allocation is.37

“They could have asked us what we wanted, but decisions are made by the Project and we are only brought on board for implementation,” Aggrey stated.38 “We know nothing.

35 Aggrey Ranyondo, Focus group discussion, January 9, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya
36 Ibid.
37 Samuel Ougo, conversation with author before the audit baraza on October 2, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
38 Aggrey Ranyondo, Focus group discussion, January 9, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya
It should be up to us to plan not them to plan for us. How can we know how to carry on after they are gone?”

Millicent Okinyi, the headmistress of Nyamninia Primary School, provided a good example of the lack of community involvement in basic strategizing. As we were talking in her office, Okinyi tossed a purple terrycloth sanitary pad at me. According to Millicent, the MV Project had showered the students in such washable sanitary pads in an effort to keep older girls in school during menstruation. Traditionally, girls stayed at home during their periods. Millicent said:

They cannot include the voices of the community when they make their plans. It is a mess. Take the sanitary towel project. They made some pads, but they did not come down to us or ask the girls what would be comfortable for them. You know, these children are creative. They could even design their own towels. After all, before the towel project, they were surviving. Why not ask how were they surviving? Girls could have come with ideas and then the project could have combined them with their plans to come up with something acceptable to all. Instead, one day they just woke up and came to the school with these towels. I told them, it won’t work. Look at it [pointing to the purple terrycloth in my hand] this thing has so many problems. It is bulky and thick so it cannot fit young girls, which means they can’t play with the others. It is also meant to be reusable but there is no place for the girl to put the soiled ones to take home. They do not use them. You can keep it….Let me tell you this. If they were listening to the ideas of the community and acting on them, we would be in a completely different place now. Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches.39

The pads appeared, on paper, to be a good idea. Without dialogue, the Project could not know that few of the girls would ever use the novel pad. “They sit up there somewhere,

thinking these pads are just fine because they never talk to us to find out,” Millicent sighed.

In its defense, the Project did attempt to incorporate community desires in the first year. When they asked the members of the executive committee what should be the first priority of the Project, they heard nothing about agriculture, health or education. Rather, what the committee members wanted were houses for widows, often the poorest members of the community. Mama Monica spoke directly to Sanchez about the issue. “I said that what we needed were houses for widows and he did listen,” she said. In response, Sanchez and his Project agreed to build four houses per sub-village for those widows or disabled persons whose houses were leaking or too small. For the 44 people who got new, spacious houses, life improved dramatically. The problem was that thousands of people had homes that were too small and had leaky thatch roofs. Mama Monica tried to advocate for more houses to be built, but the Project had reached its limit.

The widows’ houses appear, on the surface, to be a good example of community leadership and project response. And, indeed, they are a good step further in the direction of dialogue than any of the other activities. As would happen repeatedly, though, the MV Project relied on their “stakeholders” to choose who would receive benefits. They assumed that such decisions would be made fairly. But fairness is a difficult virtue to maintain in the scramble for scarce resources. As a result, bribes,
witchcraft, coercion and simple nepotism ensured who received houses. How else would four people be chosen from among the many widows and indigents in each sub-village? Resentments and rumors proliferated. Accusations began to float about the executive committee stealing the funds for the houses. Further complicating the matter, the community members did not understand why the MV Project refused to build more houses after stating that shelter was a top priority. As late as 2007, I witnessed a meeting in which community members berated Mama Monica with questions about the houses. In 2009, I found myself sitting in the thatch-roofed, one-room hut of a widow with seven children. “I am still waiting for the house they promised me,” she said.40

The MV Project would argue that these issues resulted from the community’s inability to work together. But the saga of the widows’ houses also reveals how, at their most dialogical moment, the MV Project fomented resentment and misunderstanding by not finding ways to engage in a reciprocal exchange of ideas and information. Opacity, scarcity and limited resources are a dangerous combination. Knowing that they were giving a highly valuable good to a very limited number of people in a situation of extreme scarcity, the MV Project might have looked for ways to minimize conflict by having a transparent process of selection. In that case, “community-led” would not only refer to the select handful of privileged stakeholders but to a wider, informed population. For example, instead of handing the responsibility of selection to the few

“stakeholders,” they might have met with a broader swath of the community to discuss fair methods of choosing who most needed houses.

**Evasions of Dialogue**

In his book *Hope and Other Impediments*, the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe provides a good lens for understanding the kind of “partnership” that the Saurians depict. Achebe notes that the history of Africa’s relationship with white people has been characterized by a consistent inability of the latter to enter into genuine dialogue or co-eval partnership with Africans. He writes:

> The key word in the topic proposed to me is “partnership”; it is also the source of the impediment, because no definition of partnership can evade the notion of equality. And, equality is the one thing which Europeans are conspicuously incapable of extending to others....anyone who is in any doubt about its meaning in that context need only be reminded that a British governor of Rhodesia in the 1950s defined the partnership between black and white in his territory, apparently without intending any sarcasm, as the partnership between the horse and its rider!

The image effectively captures the kind of “partnership” that Saurians described when they complained of being “free labor” and used only for “implementation.” Achebe continues: “Let there be no mistake about it. In confronting the black man, the white man has a simple choice: either to accept the black man’s humanity and the equality that flows from it, or to reject it and see him as a beast of burden.” What characterizes the relationship for Achebe is the “evasion of dialogue.” Dialogue requires two people

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willing to listen and be transformed by what they hear. “What we are talking about here is dialogue which requires two people and cannot be replaced by even the most brilliant monologue,” Achebe emphasizes.\(^{42}\) If one conceives of the other as an equal partner, then one must be able to enter into dialogue, listen and be willing to be changed by what one hears. “You may talk to a horse but you don’t wait for a reply!” he writes.\(^{43}\)

In Sauri, the problem of the “evasion of dialogue” is not so simply or starkly racialized. After all, the MV Project staffers were all Kenyan, although most were not Luo. Still, the monological style predominated as the mode of relationship between the Project and community members. “Those people [referring to MV staff] say that we Sauri people are just ignorant, but we are not. We are not,” said Samuel Ougo. “But they have to know how to talk with us first.”\(^{44}\)

The monological mode of engagement is sewn deeply into the fabric of the MV Project. One can already see the style emerging in Sachs’ presentation of Sauri in *The End of Poverty*. The subtle choices Sachs makes in his introduction of Sauri imply basic relational assumptions and practices that would come to define the interactions between the MV Project and the community. As he introduces the town meeting, Sachs writes

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., 409–410.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 388.

\(^{44}\) Samuel Ougo, conversation with author, October 2, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
that “the situation is best understood through the voices of Sauri’s struggling citizens.”

The line seems to indicate that Sachs is going to let us “hear” those crucial voices of struggle. But, the entire chapter on Sauri lacks even a single quote from an actual resident of Sauri or Kenya more broadly. Sachs describes the three-hour “town meeting” at the primary school with two hundred community members, but he does not share any of their words, ideas or suggestions. Instead, he summarizes the wretched conditions himself without making any space for the nuance, complexity, contradiction and multiplicity that anyone attending any meeting in Sauri sees within a few minutes.

The only speech act that Saurians make in Sachs’ representation of the meeting is raising their hands when asked about fertilizer, AIDS and bed nets:

How many farmers had used fertilizer in the past? Every hand in the room went up…I asked how many households were home to one or more orphaned children left behind by the [AIDS] pandemic. Virtually every hand in the room shot up…How many used antimalarial bed nets? Two out of two hundred hands went up. How many knew about bed nets? All hands.

Sachs’ reduction of the "voices of Sauri's struggling residents" to a calculus of raised hands is an early symptom of a constitutive deafness at the paradoxical heart of a project that claims to be “community-led” but is also, simultaneously, designed in advance to demonstrate the success of a predetermined set of interventions. As we will see in this and later chapters, Sachs and his project bring the “community” into the equation only


46 Ibid., 227.
to be silenced and reduced to charts, data and statistics. Sachs himself admits his own
deafness in his description of that first meeting in Sauri. “In my mind I started the
calculations as the conversation progressed. Scaling up an appropriate combination of
agroforestry…” Rather than listening receptively to the actual conversation, Sachs was
already doing calculations for scale-up in his mind. He knows the problems of the
community—“as this village dies of hunger, AIDS and malaria”—and he has the known,
proven solutions to apply. Listening to the community members is a formality
performed to secure legitimacy, but not a genuine dialogue in which both sides
participate reciprocally in the conversation.

The “evasion of dialogue” as a style of engagement perpetuated itself beyond
that initial meeting into a pattern or style of relationship between Project and Saurians.
At a typical “all-sector meeting” at which monthly “planning” was supposed to take
place, the community members always arrived first. Only those active in the sectors and
invited by Millennium would be attending. “It’s not that we don’t want to go. But, we
are not invited,” said Agneta Ochido.47 On a good day, attendance might reach thirty but
normally hovers in the upper teens. The early arrivals would pull some benches out of
the Seventh Day Adventist church and position themselves in rows. The Millennium
staff would arrive, almost always late, and position themselves in front, standing. They
would speak in English or Swahili, as most facilitators did not speak Luo. Since many

47 Agneta Ochido, interview with author, December 1, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
community members only speak rudimentary English and Swahili, the language barrier was high for most. After formalities like an opening prayer, the Millennium staffers would begin to read off lists for the activities of each sector. They might ask a particular sector head if such-and-such activity had been performed in the previous month. Someone might ask a question. Attendance might be too low for quorum, which often happened. But, the basic structure remained generally constant. The Millennium staff spoke, read their lists, often chastised those gathered for not paying loans or for other infractions. The community members listened.

Such a style of engagement goes beyond mere evasion of dialogue; it works against its very possibility. The anti-dialogical style has been well described in the realm of education by Paolo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire discusses what he calls the “banking concept” in which education becomes a matter of “depositing” knowledge in passive students whose “scope of action…extends only so far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits.” Freire outlines the anti-dialogical assumptions and characteristics of banking education. If we adapt his list to development by simply switching out the terms “education,” “teacher” and “student” for “development,” “developer” and “community member,” we can see the same mode of relationship at play in the development experience.

1. The developer develops and the community members are developed.

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2. The developer knows everything and the community members know nothing.
3. The developer thinks and the community members are thought about.
4. The developer talks and the community members listen—meekly.
5. The developer chooses and enforces his choice, the community members comply.
6. The developer acts and the community members have the illusion of acting through the action of the developer.
7. The developer chooses the program content and the community members (who were not consulted) adapt to it.
8. The developer is the Subject of the development process while the community members are mere objects.49

The anti-dialogical “banking” style of development shapes passive subjects, alienated from the process of which they are a part. As depositories of development wealth and knowledge, their job is to individually manage their new assets well—become entrepreneurs, make money, proliferate enterprises, win a shovel for being deemed “best farmer.”

Freire’s critique of the “banking” mode is that it cultivates a habitus of passivity and silence beyond the classroom. Students are not given opportunities to develop critical thinking skills or ways of actively engaging with the problems of their worlds. In the realm of development, the common critique is that such practices create cultures of dependency. For example, I asked 200 people in Sauri what they would do after the MV Project ended. 164 responded, in different ways, that they would have to find another developer. Expectations had been so strongly projected by outside developers that community members had become less confident in their ability to create their own

49 Ibid., 73.
future. But dependency on outside development is only one effect of the “banking” model. I would suggest that another, less obvious effect can be observed in the darkening of the public realm. As the deposits to be made in the community already existed as known, proven and feasible solutions in advance of their arrival in Sauri, there was very little space for public debate or co-construction of possibilities. As Aggrey pointed out, “we were only brought on board for implementation.”

In meetings where lists were read, lectures delivered and checklists marked, community members had little or no opportunity to speak or act together in a transformative or creative way. Hannah Arendt defines speech and action as the disclosure of distinct uniqueness of individuals. Newness comes into the world through such disclosure in human togetherness as a plurality of unique beings. Such appearance is fostered by the public realm and dialogue. The disclosure of uniqueness of individuals in dialogue is the condition of possibility for natality, the birth of the new and unexpected. When speech does not or is not permitted to disclose the unique “who” of the speaker, it becomes “mere talk, simply one more means to an end.”50 In the “banking” model of development, the revelation and sharing of the unique “who” of participants through speech and action could be a liability insofar as any genuine natality would disrupt the established plan or take things in unexpected directions. After all, “the fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be

expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable," Arendt writes. Such contingency would disrupt the experiment and the smooth, predictable flow of variables and investments.

The Project saturated the lives of Saurians in the “mere talk” of instrumental ends and technical dialogue. On any given day, one could find an MV Project-related meeting or training in progress. Sector committees were supposed to meet weekly with each other and monthly with the Project for the all-sector “planning” meetings. But, as we have started to see, from the set-up of the meetings to the content, the space for community members to speak and act was highly limited. In the banking mode of development, what appeared to be public activity actually functioned to defer the deeper function and potential of the public realm.

Another anti-dialogical tactic that Freire exposes is the strategy of social division. In particular, he points to the community development practice of “leadership training courses” as a divisive, anti-dialogical practice. By singling out and separating “leaders” from their context and community, the developers create a rift in which an elevated few are alienated from the many. “In order not to lose their leadership status, they will probably tend to continue manipulating the community, but in a more efficient manner,” Freire speculates. We have seen Millennium excelling in this art of division—from appointing their privileged 264 “stakeholders” to be the effective “community”

51 Ibid., 178.
with whom they would work to awarding prizes for “best farmer” and “best community member” to selectively distributing inputs. These practices went beyond the obfuscation of the public realm to actively work against human togetherness, which Arendt defines as different people being *with* others instead of for or against them.

Another form of division had to do with categorizing a small portion of the community as “vulnerables,” a word pronounced as “venerables” by most people. The “vulnerables” were supposed to be the poorest of the poor, who would continue to receive inputs while others had to take loans. As with the widows’ houses, the MV Project left the designation of “vulnerables” to the village-level development committees while restricting the number of “vulnerables” in any village to ten or fewer. The development chairman for each sub-village was charged with making the lists. The lists could have contained hundreds, so choosing any ten people was bound to inspire complaints and resentments. The list makers and the lucky few designated as “vulnerables” soon found themselves at odds with their neighbors. Rumors spread that those on the lists had paid bribes or that the list makers only chose members of their close relatives.

The most extreme anti-dialogical tactic was the “shame list.” According to many community members, the MV Project kept a “shame list” of all those who criticized the project. “The shame list is a list of people who do not want to follow the project’s line,”
Joshua Olunga said.\textsuperscript{52} “Those who speak their minds are put on the shame list,”

Hannington Okida explained in a focus group discussion.\textsuperscript{53} In a meeting with the MV Project in July of 2009, Martin Onanda confronted the MV facilitator, Elisha, on the issue.

“It is your accountant Solomon Waiganjo who said that there is a list of shame where some of the Sauri community members are. He said that my name is there,” Onanda said. Elisha objected that it must have been a “slip of the tongue for Solomon to quote community members from Sauri on a shame list.” But the damage had been done.

Whether or not a “shame list” ever existed on paper, it existed as a threat in the minds of the community members. “We know. That one is known. If you just talk, then your name will be on the shame list,” Aggrey Ranyondo stated. \textsuperscript{54}

“If our Sauri is a house, what is missing in our house that a good house must have? A table and chairs. That is how we come together and have communion. There is no table and no chairs in our house,” said Roseline Adhiambo in a meeting with the MV Project in 2010.\textsuperscript{55} Roseline’s insight echoes Arendt’s metaphor of the common table of democratic community, the common table that both unites and keeps people separate in their differences. The various anti-dialogical tactics effectively dismantled that common

\textsuperscript{52} Joshua Olunga, conversation with author, November 1, 2009, Sauri sublocation Kenya.

\textsuperscript{53} Hannington Okida, Focus group discussion, January 9, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

\textsuperscript{54} Aggrey Ranyondo, Focus group discussion, January 9, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

\textsuperscript{55} Roseline Adhiambo, Public meeting, November 18, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
table, making it easy for differences to proliferate without a space in which they could be disclosed, shared and navigated. “What else is missing in our house?” Roseline asked the gathered crowd of thirty-three people. “A bed, which means love. We need to love one another. The Bible says, without love, I am nothing. Now this bed should be for all of us to sleep in.”

**The Saga of the Truck**

“I know all of us as community members and the project have diarrhea on the plate. But, the Project has done the most diarrhea-ing. Now who will clean it up?” Martin Onanda asked. By June of 2009, the entangled mess of tensions both between community members themselves and between the community and the MV Project reached a head. As Onanda admitted, both sides had done their share of diarrhea-ing. The new and old executive committees continued to fight. The former actively discouraged people from participating in the project, while the members of the new executive committee continued accusing the former of stealing funds and keeping goods for themselves. The majority of Saurians had withdrawn from interacting with the Project or the warring factions at all, which meant that MV meetings seldom exceeded twenty people. Even the chief’s barazas, which were held once weekly to deal with non-development public issues, had decreased dramatically. “Now, it is not even worth

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going sometimes as no one will be at the meetings,” the Assistant Chief Austin Owino said.57

The new executive committee had begun to push back on the MV Project and its claim that they were “partners” in the development process. They went so far as to draft their own report on the accomplishments and failures of the Millennium Villages Project in Sauri and addressed it to Sachs. The report holds the Project accountable for promises made at the outset. The pre-facing letter reads:

All this time, the community as a friendly partner has always reminded the project team of the development agenda for Sauri, particularly the speech of Prof. Sachs during his visit to Sauri. In that speech, he gave a variety of promises of activities that were going to be undertaken and designed to make Sauri villages universally a millennium model. Reasons for reminders is that five years down the line, the community is still prepared to support an initiative that will make the project a reality. May be the community has been over optimistic.

The report goes on to list specifics of the various MV interventions with itemized complaints, including:

From 2007 to date, maize production has declined due to lack of sufficient inputs…Dairy cows have not been supplied since 2005…quality of fish is poor—they are small even on full growth…Community implements given to individuals who are friendly to staff, making access by others very difficult….14 deep wells were to be constructed—the community is still waiting…Community promised 105 slabs for latrines but materials were brought for only five…Disregard for community leadership…lack of independent evaluation…the community has not been empowered to plan, budget and evaluate the effectiveness of both community and MVP performance.58

57 Austin Owino, interview with author, April 2, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

58 Sauri Millennium Development Group, Memo to Professor Jeffrey Sachs, January 8, 2010.
The committee members tried various ways to convey the memo to Sachs—e-mail, giving a copy of it to the local Project staff, giving a copy to the District Officer to give to Sachs, and finally trying repeatedly to give him the memo directly when he visited in 2010, only to be intercepted and blocked by local staff. “We tried very hard to deliver this to Sachs when he last came to visit. But we could never get close to him. If we come close, someone from the local office pushes us away,” said Aggrey Ranyondo, the secretary of the second executive committee.59

Of all the issues mentioned in the memo, the community vehicle repossession caused the most strife and ripples of conflict. The executive committee included only that issue in the prefacing letter. They wrote:

Further contents of the promises included the delivery of community than for ambulance purposes and business—all services at the disposal of the community. The van was given to the community as promised and repossessed by the project in April 2009 till this day. Any attempts to address this issue with the project has met with a lot of hostility and yet the community continues to lose revenue at a rate of sh. 19,470 per month, while as well, community members suffer lack of transport during emergencies.60

The “van,” actually a white pick-up truck, had been donated by Sachs in the heady excitement of 2005. Since then, despite his intention that the truck work primarily as an ambulance, the truck had been run as a business managed by a transport sub-committee under the first executive committee, generating approximately 20,000 shillings or $250.


60 Sauri Millennium Development Group, Memo to Professor Jeffrey Sachs January 8, 2010.
A year into the tenure of the new committee, the MV Project staff impounded the vehicle citing “mismanagement.” Samuel Ougo explained:

I will give you what has caused so much misunderstanding here. Professor Sachs promised the community that he would bring a pickup, a vehicle, and when he came to the medical center, he presented the vehicle and gave the key to the community….Now when they have a problem with the people, they come and seize that vehicle. They seize it!61

The provision of a vehicle to the community had been central to Sachs’ utopian vision as one of the Big Five solutions in *The End of Poverty*. He wrote:

A village truck could bring in fertilizers, other farm inputs, and modern cooking fuels…take out harvests to the market, transport perishable goods and milk for sale in Kisumu and increase opportunities for off-farm employment for youth. The truck could rush women with childbirth complications and children with acute complications of anemia to the hospital.62

The vision did not consider the everyday messiness of managing one vehicle in a community of more than 5,000 people. How could all these functions be balanced? Whose desires would get priority? Who would decide? How? Ironically, managing such diverse demands to serve a population of over 5,000 with one truck would have required an incredibly well-organized, publicly oriented community. In his ideal vision, Sachs does not consider the difficulty of the day-to-day life of his technical solution. He assumed “the community” would handle the details. Thus, without considering the potential consequences of introducing one highly coveted resource into a community,


Sachs showed up at the Sauri harvest festival of 2005 with a brand new white truck and handed the keys to Mama Monica, who still likes to show a photo of the moment to visitors. That moment would be relived over and over later, in 2009, when the MV Project repossessed the truck. Had it not been a gift to the community? people asked. If it was, how could it be taken back? What right did the community have to the vehicle?

The first step of owning the car was, not surprisingly, to draft another constitution, this one just for the truck. The first executive committee spent two months putting the constitution together to stipulate that the truck be used, first, as an ambulance and, second, as a source of income. They opened a bank account for the proceeds. In a speech in 2006, Sachs praised “the community” for coming up with such a good system together:

> So, we gave the community a truck… And they wrote a constitution for it because it is going to be for ambulance service. That is the number one priority. That had to be enshrined. If individuals want it for private use, they have to pay according to the system that they have made. The community actually got together to do this. It’s incredible to me.⁶³

For Sachs, then, the village truck confirmed the capacities of the abstract community to work together. In fact, the constitution-drafting happened among the thirty “stakeholders” in the first executive committee without participation or input from the

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wider community. For the majority of people in Sauri, as Helida Lanyo put it, “the truck was just there for the executive committee.”

Between 2005 and 2008, despite the best intentions “enshrined” in the constitution, the vehicle ran as a transport business, not as a public service. “We never had an ambulance that was there for everyone. The executive committee was using the truck as a matatu (a passenger vehicle),” Mary Wasonga explained. Of course, the truck could hardly be available for emergencies if it was moving all around the region to carry out small paid tasks like carrying iron sheets for a house or delivering a group of people to a funeral. The MV Project encouraged the use of the vehicle for profit and often “hired” it to transport goods and facilitators. This latter function would later become another area of contention between community members and the Project, as the majority of the rides given to MV staff would be “paid” with vouchers to be redeemed at a later date. The MV Project never actually paid the debt incurred, which ironically reversed the relationship of unpaid debt discussed in the last chapter.

When the new executive committee came into power in 2008, the old executive committee tried to maintain control of the vehicle by claiming that the transport sub-committee was an independent entity that was not subject to elections. The new executive committee questioned the opaque system of managing the vehicle. They

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64 Helida Lanyo, conversation with author, October 2, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

suggested that most of the money from transport had been pocketed by the committee and wanted to amend the constitution to ensure transparency and distribution of funds. “There were no rules governing and controlling cash realized from the vehicle so as to be distributed evenly in the sublocation for development. Questioning the method brought dispute,” Esau Ogonyo recounted in giving his history of the Millennium Villages Project in Sauri. The disputes escalated as the new executive committee tried to take control of the vehicle against the wishes of the transport sub-committee made up of the members of the old executive committee.

In April, the MV Project coordinator Patrick Mutuo had reached the limit of his tolerance for the squabble. Instead of engaging both sides in dialogue about the situation with the aim of finding a mutually acceptable compromise, he made a unilateral decision to impound the vehicle on the grounds of “mismanagement.” “The project coordinator impounded the vehicle and stored it in the KBC compound [field office] in an immobile state. It pained us to see it sitting there,” Esau recounted. The truck would sit at the Millennium Villages field office near Yala for the next year as a sign of the consequences of dissensus.

Community members insisted that Sachs had given the vehicle as a gift to the community as a whole. As such, the MV Project could not simply repossess the truck at will. “The gift given belongs to the receiver. Otherwise, what is a gift?” Wilson Malasare insisted. “Once a gift is given, it is mine and should not be taken back,” said Angeline
Owuor. In a meeting, the secretary of the executive committee, Paul Shisia, turned to me and said:

Okay, I am just asking you, if you have a pen and you go ahead and give it to me. Do you still have a right on it? So the problem here is, the Millennium Project decided to donate a vehicle to the Sauri community. And, donated in that open field, in fact Professor Sachs came and handed over the vehicle. So, they have no right to take it away.\(^{66}\)

The Project staff countered that they had no contract proving it had been given as a gift. Thus, as they owned the title (the “logbook”), they still owned the vehicle.

The members of the new executive committee felt wrongly accused of mismanaging the vehicle. “It is like they are saying to the community that we are somehow corrupt,” Shisia said.\(^{67}\) Indeed, many people blamed them for the loss of the vehicle. “It is because the new executive committee brought in politics that the van is now gone,” said John Awoch.\(^{68}\)

Mutuo claimed that he would hold the vehicle while an outside auditor audited the van’s accounts. Those aligned with the new executive committee embraced the idea of an audit. In fact, they wanted the entire Millennium Villages Project in Sauri audited as well. “We wanted to audit in full. But before that man [accountant] started the work, he was told by Millennium, we can give you the transport part only. You are not

\(^{66}\) Paul Shisia, public meeting, July 5, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) John Awoch, conversation with author, July 5, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
allowed to audit anything else. And that was the end of it!” Aggrey Ranyondo said.  

“They audit us, but they don’t want to be audited. Why should we not audit them? The money was meant for the Sauri community,” Joyce Mbuya stated. “They have kept none of their promises so we should see where the funds have gone.” Samuel Otoyo further elaborated:

They seize it [the truck] and say that they want to do auditing of the transport. Fine, someone who understands these things should not have a problem with auditing. But they are not auditing other sectors. How do you think people will feel? You pick one vehicle to audit and you are not auditing the money that has gone into education, agriculture, medicine. And when people react by not going to meetings, they say we are not cooperative. They misinterpret.

Otieno Obura, the public accountant from Kisumu hired to do the outside audit, met with the executive committee several times to understand their side of the conflict. With regard to the vehicle, the committee wanted Obura to explore several issues. First, they felt that the MV Project had wrongly taken possession of the vehicle and wanted the accountant to confirm that there had been no mismanagement of funds. Second, they wanted the accountant to confirm who rightfully owned the vehicle. Third, they wanted to confirm the total amount of money that the MV Project owed for the many times they “hired” the vehicle and promised to pay later.

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70 Joyce Mbuya, interview with author, June 20, 2009, Sauri subloccation, Kenya.

While the accountant prepared his report, the MV Project took the extreme step of dismantling the “old structure” of the standing executive committee and implementing a “new structure” in which the Assistant Chief would be in charge of development and the sector committees. “The community requested the auditors to audit the Millennium funds and the way they are used in the Project. So now Millennium has come out with a strategy of saying the assistant chief should head the development committees. It’s like they are not addressing the issue,” Habil Nyahaya said.72 “This new structure that is being introduced is just similar to the government. We have known for a long time that the government structure does not help that person on the ground, which is why Millennium started its community structure. Now they want to take the structure that was abandoned and renew it,” complained Wilson Malasare.73 Joyce Mbuya had strong words about the situation. “We don’t want to be forced and they are forcing this thing on us. Even the committees are threatening to disband and leave MVP if the new structure is implemented,” she said.74

From that point onward, the MV Project refused to work with or recognize the existing executive committee, despite the fact that they had been democratically elected according to the initial constitution drawn up by the MV Project in collaboration with

74 Joyce Mbuya, conversation with author, June 20, 2009, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
community members. “That is the Millennium way. If someone opposes them, they go around looking for some else to work with,” Aggrey Ranyondo explained. “Now, they want to impose a new structure on the community and make it into a bureaucracy without us. The Chief cannot be for the community because he is a watchdog for the government. He must serve the government not the people.”

The executive committee continued to meet, in defiance of the “new structure,” despite the fact that the MV Project had begun to collaborate directly with others. “They cannot just chase us away,” said the treasurer Jennifer Wale. According to the committee members, the constitution drawn up with Rafaella, the MV Project expert, at the outset of the Project created an independent body called Sauri Millennium Development Group, which counted everyone in the community as a member. As a formality, back in 2005, the Group had registered with the Kenyan Government as a Community Based Organization. Now, the executive committee used that status to claim that they could not be dissolved randomly by the MV Project. “Sauri MDG is an independent entity and cannot be dissolved by Mutuo without the consent of the community. If the Project changes plans, they must be accountable to the Group, which is all of Sauri,” Aggrey stated.76

In September of 2009, the accountant Otieno Obura released his findings to the MV Project, which would provide the report to the community members at a public baraza on October 2, 2009. First, Obura found that there was no clear evidence indicating that Sachs intended the truck as a gift. He could not reach Sachs to resolve the dispute. However, he did note that the “Management of MVP assured us that the sentiments expressed by members of the community over the ownership of the vehicle had some basis. The management accepted that the vehicle was given to the community and they should own it.”77 In order for the community to repossess the vehicle, he recommended that they organize the Sauri Millennium Development Group as a business with shareholders to divide profits. “All the people from Sauri sublocation are assumed to be members. This makes the group to be more of an amorphous movement with no proper membership,” he wrote. He suggested that the group require registration fees and monthly “subscription” fees “to enable them to share the fruits of the Millennium Village Project.” He also noted that poor communication and participation structures linking the community with the MV Project. He wrote:

Findings:
The members of the community expressed strong sentiments that MVP management is not working as a team... it was alleged that MVP does all decisions and expenditure budgets and the community has no say in all eight sectors of the project. The executive committee were of the view that the vehicle was being used as an excuse to remove them from office because they demanded

77 Otieno Obura, Audit report, September 2, 2009.
that MVP management should work in a participatory manner with the executive office in identification of intervention areas in each sector.

**Recommendations:**
MVP management should work in consultation with the management of the community... The community representatives should be involved in planning, selection and implementation decisions so that the wider community members do not develop a feeling that the MVP management are using divide and rule to deny them the full benefits of the Millennium Village funds.\(^{78}\)

Obura found no evidence of mismanagement of funds on the part of the new executive committee, while noting that no records existed for the activities of the previous committee. He recommended: “The vehicle, which was withdrawn by MVP, should be returned to Sauri MDG since it has been established that there was no accounting problem regarding the usage of the vehicle by the current Group.”\(^{79}\) Finally, he found that the MV Project owed the community 286,000 shillings for hire of the vehicle between September 2006 and December 2008, based on vouchers kept by the driver. Another 124,000 shillings was still in question due to poor record keeping. Both the community and the MV Project management accepted the findings and recommendations.

The matter was not resolved, however. The MV Project used the auditor’s recommendation that the Sauri Millennium Development Group narrow their membership to dues-paying shareholders as a tactic to defer returning the vehicle. “We

\(^{78}\) Ibid.

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
cannot just give the truck to an amorphous body. It has to be run as a business with clear ownership and shareholders,” Dr. Mutuo explained in one of several barazas devoted to the audit and the repossession of the vehicle. Community members protested that every adult in the community was automatically a member and that all should be enjoying the fruits of the MV Project equally. “The van was brought for the whole of Sauri, not for a group,” Leonida Okoth objected.80 “The van is the heart of the community and no one should play with it. The Millennium should return it and give training on managing the van for the benefit of all people of the community,” Pamela Akinyi said in the same meeting.81 Jessica Masira, the deputy team leader responded that “if a house is everybody’s house, then it is in a real sense nobody’s house.”82

The problem, as Jessica and Dr. Mutuo explained it, was that without a structure of shareholders, there would be lack of accountability and a small handful of people could take the profit for themselves. They wanted the Sauri Millennium Development Group to enlist at least a quarter of the 1,200 households (approximately 6,000 people) so that at least 300 households could be sure to benefit from the proceeds from the truck. They had seen, repeatedly, how Saurians tended toward “elite capture,” as Jessica put it. She and the other Project staff wanted a structure that could ensure some kind of

80 Leonida Okoth, public meeting, October 2, 2009, Sauri primary school, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
81 Pamela Okinyi, public meeting, October 2, 2009, Sauri primary school, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
82 Jessica Masira, public meeting, October 2, 2009, Sauri primary school, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
distributed benefit. “We talk about household population so that we try and target a quarter of the total households so we know at least a quarter are benefitting,” she said in a meeting.83 “One thing we want to avoid with this structure we are making is nepotism. Everyone should have an equal chance to be invested. Anyone can be invested and earn some profit from his shares. Those who are not interested will not invest and that will be on them.”

Six months passed after the final audit baraza in October. The members of the executive committee drew up another constitution and began trying to recruit shareholders. By March of 2010, when the MV Project staff met again with the community regarding the vehicle, only 36 people had paid the required 200 shillings to become a stakeholder. The vast majority of people wanted nothing to do with the conflict-ridden issue and had no trust that the funds would be handled fairly. The secretary of the executive committee tried to recruit shareholders for several days, with very little success. “People think we are cheating them for their money. Every time I approach them, they ask me where the vehicle is. They have become doubting Thomases. They can’t see any vehicle so why would they want to become members in it. I think Millennium must have known we could never reach very far,” he said.84

Meanwhile, as the executive committee focused all their energy on the issue of the vehicle, the MV Project created a new leadership committee and nominated Mary Wasonga, a Community Health Worker, to be the new Chairman. As the Project collaborated solely with Wasonga’s team, the executive committee gradually realized that they had been effectively dislodged. “She [Wasonga] has been forced on us to chase us away. They could not even wait for the election in 2011. Now Mary has her people and we have our people,” the chairman of the sidelined committee, Hosea Owiti, said.85 Given that Mama Monica also had her “people” whom she had discouraged from interacting with Millennium after the 2008 elections, by 2010, there were three distinct conflictual factions that had not existed prior to the arrival of Millennium.

The saga of the truck ended on a disappointing note for Saurians. In June 2010, frustrated with their own lack of progress in recruiting the requisite number of shareholders and convinced that the audit report proved that the community as a whole owned the vehicle, the members of the executive committee lodged a legal complaint in court in Kisumu. The MV Project, of course, still held the legal documents for the vehicle and the case was dismissed.

The final showdown happened on November 18, 2010. The MV Project told key leaders to mobilize the community for a meeting at which they would receive free fertilizer. The tactic of saying a meeting was for inputs had been used in the past as a

85 Hosea Owiti, conversation with author, June 10, 2010 Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
way to raise the number of attendees. In January, the MV Project had driven around the community with a loudspeaker mounted on top of a car, announcing that Pedro Sanchez would be at an upcoming baraza when, in fact, he was not in the country. The ruse worked, both in January and in the following November. When people arrived at the event, they found no fertilizer. “This is becoming a practice. They announce for something and something else happens,” commented Paul Shisia on arriving to find that the event was, rather, a celebration to say farewell to Dr. Mutuo, who had been promoted to a position in Nairobi.86

At the farewell, Mary Wasonga, the chairman of the MV-designated executive committee, raised the issue of the van being stationary at the MV Office. When Mutuo stood to give his speech, he arrived quickly at the topic of the truck:

This community truck has brought a lot of politics. Right now I have been taken to court because of that truck and I am the one who bought it and I have the logbook [title]…But you people have taken me to court and it is an causation. You have accused me on my van while I own the logbook?…We have tried to do this and that so we can transfer the ownership to you. How many times have we talked about that. Once, twice, ten times? We have talked about it so many times. You have not done how we agreed, yes or no?87

Hosea Owiti, the chairman of the second, disbanded executive committee stood to respond:


87 Patrick Mutuo, speech at public event, November 18, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
We have done all those things you asked. You wanted us to open a bank account and we have done that. You wanted us to draft some rules and we have also done that. What we did not agree on were the numbers of shareholders necessary to make this a business. Now we are complaining because of your debt. What we want is our money.88

Mutuo responded:

You want the money and we have said that we will give you that money. We will leave it at that. I have been forced to make a decision because we cannot work like this. We will not work like this! The van belongs to the project! As of Monday, you will see it being driven by one of my drivers because we have been trying to solve the matter and it seems unsolvable. That is a decision and I was forced to do that.89

Like a parent taking away a toy, Mutuo ended the saga of the truck and Sauri wound up without an ambulance or a community business. People walked away from the meeting angry and dispirited. “We have truly been defeated,” said Angeline Owegi, shaking her head.

The power imbalance between the MV Project and the community members is striking. At each point that the community members tried to assert some power—writing a report of their own to Sachs or taking the Project to court—the Project staff exercised their greater power to punish the community members: Impounding the vehicle, sideling the executive committee, keeping the vehicle for good. Ultimately, the auditor had perceived the heart of the matter when he wrote that the “community

88 Hosea Owiti, speech at public event, November 18, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.

89 Patrick Mutuo, speech at public event, November 18, 2010, Sauri sublocation, Kenya.
should be involved in planning, selection and implementation decisions so that the wider community members do not develop a feeling that MVP management are using divide and rule.” In none of the many meetings I attended regarding the vehicle controversy did the MV Project as the community members to strategize about how to manage the problem of how the truck could truly benefit the most community members. Mary Wasonga said she would have called for it to be an ambulance alone. Helida Lanyo said that there could be an account managed by the committee for maintaining the vehicle and to save up money to buy an ambulance or build wells. Victor Ochuonyo suggested that the funds that weren’t needed to maintain the vehicle and pay the driver could be managed as a public fund for funerals and other emergencies. Ideas abounded. If receptive space had been opened for public debate, even more ideas might have emerged. But, such dialogue, as Achebe would point out, would have required that Project staff engage with community members as equal human beings with their own knowledge, potential and creativity.

“Community is where community happens,” writes the philosopher Martin Buber. Community cannot be an abstraction taken out of time and the messiness of human context. Community “happens” when people living with each other in dialogue, not just side-by-side, turn to one another in relationship to a common world, the Arendtian table of the in-between. “Community…declares itself primarily in the

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common and active management of what it has in common and without this it cannot exist,” Buber explains.91 Thus, community is not, Buber argues, “a rigid principle but a living form that wants to be shaped in the daily stuff of this earth. Community should not be made into a principle; it should always satisfy a situation rather than an abstraction.”92

The Millennium Villages Project approached and engaged “community” as an abstraction rather than a living, happening activity. If community happens in relationship to management and care for the common, then a project desiring genuine community leadership and participation would need to provide opportunities for community to come into being in relationship to a world held in common. Concretely, that would mean allowing communities space and time to manage collective resources themselves by drawing on their existing capacities while developing new ones.

The truck provides a good example of how the Millennium Villages Project failed to allow community to happen “in the daily stuff of this earth.” The Project delivered the truck as a gift to “the community” in the abstract to be used as both a public good as ambulance and as profit-generating enterprise. The possibility of “common and active management” of something held in common arose at that point. Instead of opening space for democratic dialogue about the use of the vehicle from the start, the Project

91Martin Buber, Paths in Utopia, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 122.
92Ibid., 134.
allowed a small faction to take full control and turn the truck into a business venture alone. The members of the executive committee who took on the management of the vehicle, however, had been well-schooled in the entrepreneurial individualist ethos pervasive throughout the rest of the Project. It is not surprising, given the Project’s emphasis on money-making and “individual development,” that they would turn the truck into an enterprise benefitting a few individuals. When the second executive committee came in and questioned how the truck was managed, another opportunity for dialogue and active public debate about the vehicle’s function arose. Given the opportunity, the community members themselves might have come up with a more democratic structure and would have had to respond to the demands of many, like Mary Wasonga, who felt the vehicle should serve as an ambulance for the public good and not primarily as a business. Instead of opening that space, however, the Project simply confiscated the vehicle, allowing for speculation and resentment to intensify.

No Love

In November of 2009, my research assistants and I called an open public meeting to discuss the major challenges facing the community. Forty-three people showed up—twenty seven women and sixteen men. We arranged the benches in a circle. Then, Joseph facilitated the conversation by asking a simple question. “Of all the problems facing Sauri, which concerns you most?” Sila Wamanga raised his hand and said softly, “The biggest problem is that we do not love each other. I cannot even talk to my neighbor now.” The others nodded in agreement.
“There is no love in this community, that is our greatest problem,” said Arthur Otieno. “There is only war since Millennium came.”

“Waonge hera [we have no love],” said Mathilda Awuor.

“We are thinking only about poverty as crops and money, but real poverty is when each person can only care for himself and not for others,” said Rachel Buyu.
Conclusion

When Joseph Ogonda became Jeffrey Sachs, his whole body changed. His shoulders, usually slightly hunched and tired, drew back. His neck stretched upward. His back straightened. He raised his chin and looked over the heads of those around him. He waved his arms in exaggerated sweeping gestures. He had borrowed a tattered suit jacket to play the part.

In June 2011, several community members put together a play to tell the history of the Millennium Villages Project in Sauri. The grassy space around our makeshift community hall, an old building at the center of Sauri that had once housed shops, buzzed with excitement. Several widows stood off to the side composing a song and dance together. Joseph Ogonda laughed at himself as he practiced his best Sachs impression. Somewhat surprised by the excitement, my research team and I sat down to watch the play.

The scenes that followed articulated many of the significant contours of the local Millennium Villages Project history in Sauri. While a hypothetical global tourist might anticipate a drama of modernization and prosperity, the twenty-six organic playwrights focused on a decline into division, conflict and resentments. When performing their history of the Millennium Villages, the community members mentioned none of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), none of the widely-celebrated material improvements like computers in schools or bed nets to end malaria. They had another story to tell.

Ogonda-Sachs made his entrance by pretending to drive an invisible car. The widows danced around him, clapping and singing joyfully. He delivered a speech, promising a cow for every family, the end of all diseases, and to make every child fat. The widows ululated and clapped to celebrate each promise. Ogonda-Sachs beamed at the women and waved triumphantly to an invisible crowd beyond them. Then, he drove away in his invisible car.
After Ogonda-Sachs departed triumphantly in his invisible vehicle, the other actors from the community formed a long line to receive fertilizer and seeds one-by-one from a person performing the role of a Millennium Villages Project staff person. With each handout given to a community member, the MV staffer set aside a portion for himself behind his back. The actors then spread out and mimed the gestures of digging, weeding and harvesting their maize. Afterwards, they gathered together for a harvest festival celebrating the first year of bumper crops. They held their invisible produce on display as Ogonda-Sachs arrived again in his invisible car. He and the MV staffer looked at the displays and nodded approval. Several youth actors followed them gesturing as if taking photos, clapping approval at each Ogonda-Sachs’ each move and nodding enthusiastically.

Then, they all “drove” away in their invisible cars as the community members lined up again in front of the MVP developer. However, when all the people lined up, the MV developer chose only a random few to receive fertilizers and seeds, leaving the rest with empty hands. The empty-handed ones tried to protest, but were ignored with a wave of a hand. They went back to their digging with slumped shoulders to signify unhappiness, shaking their heads.

When Sachs-Ogonda came driving up again, only three people met him. The rest ignored him. One widow, Joyce Amolo, had given herself the part of the disgruntled farmer who would try to complain to Sachs. She gestured wildly to capture his attention but, at each point, the MV Project actor blocked her access. Sachs-Ogonda looked at her without acknowledging her antics.

Before Sachs-Ogonda sped away again, he made a grand display of giving the keys to an invisible truck to one of the widows. The gift animated clapping and dancing again. A youth, Fred, took the keys and pretended to drive around happily while the farmers went back to play-digging.
Soon, the MV Project developer was back and they all lined up again. This time, the developer presented them to another actor, informing them that she was a banker and that they must now take loans to buy fertilizer. The banker pretended to take their pictures as each person mimed signing a paper. The actors all went about digging again, but the rain never came. They wandered around with hands outstretched toward the sky to catch a drop, but none came. They had nothing to harvest, which they conveyed with empty hands. The banker soon came back with his paper demanding payment. When the farmer-actors shook their heads and showed him their empty hands, he shrugged. The banker returned with the developer, demanding payment and threatening to take their furniture. The farmers began to run away from him each time he started to approach. Eventually, the actors playing the banker and the developer left the scene, making angry gesticulations. The MV Project developer returned a moment later, demanding the keys to the community truck, which Fred handed over begrudgingly. The actors protested, but the MV developer just shook his head.

The play ended with a brawl with everyone pushing each other—farmer, banker, widow and local developer. In a final comical flourish, Sachs-Ogonda returned to take a bow, beaming, while everyone continued to fight behind him.

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The play levied a strong critique. As portrayed by Oganda, Sachs was utterly unaware of the complexities unfolding under his nose, and never engaged the community members directly. Ogonda-Sachs never relaxed his body language, asked a question or listened to the people whose lives he had hoped to improve. That monological style that the community members enacted in their performance of Sachs’ engagement with them characterizes the “end of poverty” dream itself. When considering the future of the “end of poverty,” we need to keep in mind the powerful image of Ogonda-Sachs smiling to take his bow while the community struggles behind him.
In a 2013 editorial in *The New York Times* celebrating progress toward the “end of poverty,” Jeffrey Sachs quotes a speech made by President John F. Kennedy before the Irish Parliament. “The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics, whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men who can dream of things that never were and ask, why not?” The President said. Sachs obviously counts himself among those visionaries. He praises the World Bank and the United Nations General Assembly for joining him in renewing the “end of poverty” dream for the post-2015 development agenda. In 2013, the World Bank president, Jim Yong Kim, made 2030 the new finish line for eradicating poverty. Similarly, the high-level panel appointed by the UN Secretary General to evaluate the future of the MDG promises stated that the UN should commit to “finishing the job that the MDGs started. Central to this is eradicating extreme poverty from the face of the earth by 2030.”

“Today, more and more people are dreaming of a world free of poverty…As one who wrote in 2005 that ours was the generation that could end extreme poverty, I am pleased


to see this idea take hold at the highest levels,” Sachs writes. He takes self-

![Image](DO_YOU_BELIEVE IN_A_WORLD WITHOUT_POVERTY.png)

Figure 25: New campaign to end poverty (2014)

congratulatory bow.

In 2006, the critical theorist Samir Amin predicted that by 2015 the Millennium Development Goals would long be forgotten along with their version of the “end of poverty.” “I bet that at the end of 2015, no one will propose a balance sheet of the MDGs…which will have been long forgotten,” he wrote. For better or worse, that prophecy has not come true. Already new media campaigns to end poverty by 2030 have begun to appear alongside those UN and World Bank commitments to eradicate poverty by 2030. Sachs himself has begun to advocate for SDGs (Sustainable

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4 Sachs, “The end of poverty soon”

Development Goals)\textsuperscript{6} that are very similar to the current MDGs. And, the Islamic Development Bank has recently allocated $104 million to the Millennium Villages Project to create new Sustainable Village Projects (SVPs), based on the Millennium Village model, in Chad, Mozambique and Sudan while scaling up the existing Millennium Villages in Mali, Senegal and Uganda.\textsuperscript{7} As Sachs senses in his editorial, the push toward the official “end of poverty” shows few signs of slowing down its engines.

Given this persistence and Sachs’ claim that “more and more people are dreaming of a world free of poverty,” it is time to interrogate the content and application of that dream. In the lead-up to 2015, plenty of panels, consultations and surveys have been performed to evaluate the Millennium Development Goals and determine what new goals should replace them. Summits and conferences have been held on the topic. Policy papers have been written. The UN Development Program even commissioned a study that surveyed one million people about the goals that should follow the MDGs to create “the world we want.”\textsuperscript{8} But, while the MDGs themselves are debated, no one questions


\textsuperscript{8} “A Million Voices: The World we Want,” http://www.worldwewant2015.org/millionvoices [last accessed on April 14, 2014]. Significantly, those one million voices did not include any of the hundreds of thousands of
the end of poverty dream and promise. Why would they? Ending poverty in the
genuine sense of ending hunger, deprivation and precarity is an unobjectionable good.
But, as soon as the dream is actualized in poverty-ending activities, it takes on concrete
life that may not match the dream at all, or may only match its most reductive
possibilities. As we have seen throughout this dissertation, the current dream of the
“end of poverty” is real in the sense that it shapes present practices, discourses, and
choices, has concrete consequences in present lives and does work on present
subjectivities. While I have considered the more concrete dimensions of Millennium
Development throughout this dissertation, I will conclude by considering the “end of
poverty” as an impoverished and impoverishing dream.

The current “end of poverty” dream is impoverished, first, because the term
“poverty” is reduced to the barest definition as absolute poverty, the absolute minimum
necessary to survive. That minimalist definition enables the “optimists,” as Sachs puts it,
to celebrate the statistical decline of “poverty.” Citing the World Bank, Sachs points out
that the number of people living on the purchasing power equivalent of $1.25 a day has
declined in the “developing” world from 34% in 1999 to 21% in 2010. “Even sub-Saharan
Africa, the region with the most recalcitrant poverty, is finally experiencing a notable
voices of people who have experienced the implementation of the “end of poverty” in the Millennium
Villages. Any re-evaluation of Millennium Development should consult these “experts” who have been at
the epicenter of the endeavor for the last ten years.
decline, from 58% in 1999 to 49% in 2010,” Sachs writes. The statistics sound hopeful. “Poverty” is diminishing. But, the statistics of the “optimists” hide harsher, more complicated realities. For example, according to the World Bank, the number of people living on $2 a day has not declined significantly since 1981. As of 2010, 2.4 billion people lived on less than $2 a day compared with 2.5 billion in 1981. Sachs’ statistics also hide increases in relative poverty or inequality (as measured by the Gini coefficient). A recent World Bank working paper states: “While the number of absolutely poor [=less than $1.25] has fallen, the number of relatively poor has changed little since the 1990s, and is higher in 2008 than 1981.” Globally, the richest 85 people own more capital than half of the world’s population put together. According to a 2014 report by OXFAM, “seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years.” In other words, this “end of poverty” dream may

11 Ibid
12 The Gini coefficient measures the distribution of income in a population. A Gini coefficient of 0 means perfect equality. A high Gini coefficient indicates a high level of income inequality or relative poverty where the majority of wealth is held by a minority of the population.
15 Ibid.
succeed in lifting people just above the lowest bar, but it does not end hunger, deep deprivation and precariousness. The daily struggles of those scratching out a living just above the $1.25 threshold get erased and dropped from public debate. By reducing the meaning of “poverty” to the barest minimum threshold beyond which one would simply not be able to play the economic game at all, Jeffrey Sachs and the “optimists” can take a bow for progress toward the “end of poverty” while billions struggle behind them unnoticed. One can only celebrate the decline in absolute poverty as sufficient if one is not one of the billions struggling to survive on whatever paltry amount of money they are able to make.

The “end of poverty” dream is also impoverished because it tends to work at the level of the effects of poverty while leaving the causes untouched. In the hoopla around ending poverty, the serious questions about the systemic production of poverty and inequality in our current political economy go unasked. The causes of poverty and inequality remain untouched by a regime of poverty-fighting that works only on the level of poverty’s effects—malnutrition, death, disease, lack of education—through the stimulation of enterprise. The uneven distribution of global power and wealth, the enduring effects of the history of colonial expropriation, and the continued exploitation of people and natural resources in the Global South by corporations continue unabated and unquestioned. In the context of Sauri, the failure to face deeper causes of poverty
actually led to the naive implementation of the same games of inequalities and structures of debt that perpetuate poverty and impoverishment.

Third, and most egregious of the impoverishments, is the lack of space for dialogue, difference and contingency. The universal set of targets and indicators leave no room for consideration of the human dimensions of the problem or the potential creativity of people working together to address a problem for which the answers have not already been determined and quantified. There is no room for questions, for actually dreaming “things that never were” because the monological solution already exists. There is no space for different communities to determine what the “end of poverty” might mean in different contexts, or how it might be addressed differently in different situations. The MDG version of the “end of poverty” is pre-packaged and universal. It is a dream that is constitutively unreceptive as it is a dream for others rather than a dream that can be dreamt with others as equal interlocutors with their own competing dreams and differences in a complex, dynamic world. As the Sauri experience makes obvious, when the invasion of good intentions leaves no space for genuine dialogue, all those wonderful solutions on paper fall apart in the actual complexity of human lives.

The “end of poverty” dream is also impoverishing in a variety of ways. Many community members were actually poorer than when they the Project began because they had been pulled into debt and dependency on chemical fertilizer, pesticides and hybrid seeds that they had to purchase each season. The use of chemical fertilizer left the
soil impoverished and addicted to chemicals, and that in turn made it difficult to drop out of the cycle of deepening debt if one wanted to achieve a decent harvest. Like the soil, the community members became dependent on outside corporations for their basic survival.

On the level of local implementation, the deafness of the Project to human difference and cultural specificity led to the implementation of a one-size-fits-all version of the “end of poverty.” Because the Project could not see or care for local specificity, they triggered existing fault lines within the community. The “end of poverty” actually left the community impoverished as a community, unable to work together collectively to care for their common world. However imperfect, collective forms of life had sustained the community for generations. Within five years of participating in the MV Project, those forms of life had deteriorated significantly. At the same time, the Project was impoverished because it could not open up to the wealth of knowledge and creativity in the community.

Anne Omollo identified a third way that the Project had impoverishing effects—the diminishment of hope. Omollo had been one of the earliest supporters of the Millennium Villages, but quickly became disillusioned. Over dinner one evening, she mentioned that the Project had actually left the community worse off than when the Project began. “We are truly in a worse place now than before the project came,” Omollo
said. “We had so much hope when the Project began. But, now, our lives are just the same as before except we have lost all hope that things can ever be different.”

At the global level, the dream is further impoverishing in the way it works on the public imagination of poverty and its potential end. The promise that we will end poverty with our existing knowledge, technologies and structures of capital diminishes hunger for a better world and drains energy from further attempts to struggle with what ending poverty would entail. The promise that poverty is already being ended by global institutions diminishes the sense of urgency that might otherwise stir more people to think, act, and dream hand in hand with the subjects of poverty. The imagination that the “end of poverty” is just around the corner stultifies the imagination that reaches out in search of alternatives. In the process, our attention is diverted from the endurance of the many forms of poverty that are neglected by the official “end of poverty.” In that sense, I would even suggest that the “end of poverty” in its current iteration is a dream-impoverishing dream.

Sachs and adherents of Millennium Development may “dream of things that never were,” but they bring them back into the horizon of “obvious realities.” Instead, the “things that never were” are shrunk down to basic statistical targets, indicators and narrow, operationalized definitions of ending poverty that fit within the horizons of obvious realities. Sachs, Bono and others conjure the utopian desire for the end of

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16 Anne Omollo, conversation with author, May 24, 2011, Sauri Sublocation.
poverty only to channel it back into the dominant neo-liberal, biopolitical flows of capital, knowledge and power. The current “end of poverty” dream, then, does exactly what Kennedy identified as the ethos of skeptic or cynic—one who stays within “obvious realities.” By that rubric, Jeffrey Sachs and Millennium Developers may be the worst of cynics because they not only stay within the limits of present reality; they also colonize the future by pulling it back into the logic of the present order. Ending poverty comes to mean embracing the key elements of neo-liberalism—privatization, marketization, technologization, debt, individualism, and competition—to get everyone, however minimally, into the economic game.

What alternatives might there be for those who long for an end to the injustice of poverty, hunger and deprivation? The Sauri community members offered a starting point repeatedly in many different ways: They should have asked us. What my experience in Sauri taught me was that any viable alternative would have to begin with a question instead of a pre-defined set of prescriptions, targets, benchmarks and goals. Potential development would have to be foundationally dialogical in the sense elaborated by Martin Buber in his definition of community—“no longer side by side but with one another.” Such work could not happen on the “quick-win” timeframe of rapid interventions. The slow work of building relationships involves engaging in hundreds of conversations, one-on-one and in groups, to understand a community’s aspirations,

sociocultural dynamics and existing fault lines before ever making an intervention. One can object that these practices are impossible within the current development apparatus of efficiency, management, individual empowerment and quantification. Perhaps that would be a point of departure for an institutional conversation: Why aren’t such careful, dialogical practices possible within the current development apparatus? After all, the world still needs those who “dream of things that never were,” even in development.

Receptive, dialogical work would be nothing like the fad of “participatory development” that has swept neo-liberal development institutions since the 1990s. Most “participatory development” projects, including the Millennium Villages Project, nominally involve community members in development activities that are already pre-determined by outside experts. In the current paradigm of “participation,” rural communities or “stakeholders” “plan” development within a narrow bandwidth of possibility already established by outsiders. Participatory development has rightly been critiqued as “the new tyranny” because of the legitimating function it serves while often concealing and reinforcing oppressions and injustices in a variety of ways. As we have seen, a project can claim to be “community-led” to be attractive to donors while instituting forms of “participation” that are reduced to implementation, empty consultation, or assessment. To be truly receptive and dialogical, would-be developers

would have to allow for radical contingency, unexpectedness and flexibility. They would need to actively cultivate the table of the common world, the inter-esse or inter-being, with community members as equal, reciprocal collaborators rather than the horse-rider variety of “partnership.”

Such alternative work would illuminate the need for a significant revision to Kennedy’s dictum. A relationship with others and with the “obvious realities” would be necessary for constituting a good social dream. The world needs people who come together in dialogue with each other and with the “obvious realities” that surround them “to dream things that never were.” The cynic or skeptic, in contrast, is one who sees the “obvious realities” as immutable as well as one who “dreams things that never were” but pulls them back into the given, established order and turns them into innocent, piquant confections that can be easily digested. Such dreams may be “optimistic,” but they certainly are not hopeful. The hopeful dreamer engages the “obvious realities” without looking away from them or resorting to a dream that anaesthetizes and blinds people with empty promises of another world. She bravely faces the living, concrete here-and-now of the present world with all its imperfections, messiness and heartbreaking ugliness in order to change it with others. Instead of contributing to the “end of poverty” by buying a t-shirt, she starts a critical dialogue from which action can emerge. Starting from present lives and conditions instead of ignoring them, the long, hard journey toward ending poverty can begin.
There is tenderness only in the coarsest demand: that none shall go hungry anymore. [...] Perhaps the true society will grow tired of development.... A mankind which no longer knows want will begin to have an inkling of the delusory, futile nature of all the arrangements hitherto made in order to escape want, which used wealth to reproduce want on a larger scale."

Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*\(^9\)

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Appendix A

Foucault synthesizes his larger view of modern history of power in the *Security, Territory, Population* lectures with dimensions like governmentality that are not as fully developed in his extant published work. In STP, he describes modern history as an interplay between three overlapping and dynamic modalities of power and knowledge since the Middle Ages. He refers to these organizing systems or modalities of power as Sovereign-Legal Power, Disciplinary Power, and Security Power. Although he locates the dominance of each of these modalities in relation to historical periods, he clarifies that elements or technologies of any of the three systems are present in some form within any of the others at any given historical moment (STP7). One system does not successively replace other modalities as it rises to the forefront. Rather, they intensify and modify each other with one generally dominating. The first two modalities, sovereign-juridical power and disciplinary power, have received extensive treatment in Foucault’s published work like *Discipline and Punish* and *Birth of the Clinic*. The history of the third form, security power/governmentality, is the focus of the 1978 and 1979 lectures. He gives the example of the different treatment of crime to illustrate: “You are familiar with the first form, which consists in laying down a law and fixing a punishment for the person who breaks it, which is the system of the legal code with a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited…the second mechanism, the law framed by mechanisms of surveillance and correction [is] the disciplinary
mechanism...[while] the third form is not typical of the legal code or the disciplinary
mechanism but of the apparatus of security...which inserts the phenomenon in question,
namely theft, within a series of probable events...[and] establishes an average considered
as optimal on the one hand and, on the other, a bandwidth of the acceptable that must
not be exceeded” (stp6). Despite the apparent linear neatness of the initial scheme,
Foucault makes clear that there is no successive progression. Rather, what changes over
time is the correlation between these interrelated and overlapping modalities of power
(stp8). Ancient forms of power involve and co-evolve with modalities that would appear
“newer” in a simplified linear schema and vice versa. For example, regulatory
legislation characteristic of sovereign-legal power is key to the conduct of ever-
expanding flows of capital and bodies that is characteristic of more contemporary
security power/governmentality. The juridical logic of sovereignty is reactivated in new
ways in relation to the problems and mechanisms of security/governmentality. It is not,
as in the Middle Ages, the predominant or general organizing characteristic of
technologies of power today nor does it determine the correlations between technologies
of power as it would have in the 16th century. Likewise, modalities of power emerge and
evolve within and in relation to others that might seem incongruous as in the case of the
simultaneity of disciplinary power and security power. As most people familiar with his
work know, Foucault used Bentham’s panopticon to illustrate the ordering logic of
disciplinary power with its various apparatuses of exhaustive surveillance and
institutional enclosures of prisons, clinics, schools and poor houses in the 19th century. In the STP lectures, however, Foucault traces the simultaneous emergence in the 18th century of a very different logic of laissez-faire circulation that characterizes security power. Foucault marks the emergence of the mechanisms of security and governmentality with the trend toward the suppression of city walls in the 18th century as a response to diseases related to overcrowding as well as the need to open routes for the undisturbed circulation of goods and people as trade increased. In other words, at the same time that disciplinary mechanisms of enclosure are intensifying in many sectors of society, security power/governmentality as “the conduct of conduct” is already moving in the opposite direction to maximize flows in others.

On the following page, I provide a schematic chart of power modalities.¹

¹ The chart of power modalities is drawn primarily from Foucault’s lectures on January 11 and and January 25, 1978 with some insight drawn from the earlier Discipline and Punish.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing mode of power</th>
<th>Sovereign Power (Also: Legal-Juridical power)</th>
<th>Disciplinary Power</th>
<th>Security Power Biopolitical Governmentality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Classical” System</td>
<td>“Modern” System</td>
<td>“Contemporary” system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of general predominance</td>
<td>16th and 17th Centuries</td>
<td>Established from 18th century forward and dominates broadly throughout 19th century and continues in various forms into the 20th century</td>
<td>Emerges in 18th century, develops and expands in the 19th century and becomes dominate logos of Western power in the late 19th/early 20th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Target of Force</td>
<td>The “People” as king’s body: Sovereignty exercised over a multiplicity of subjects in a territory su</td>
<td>Individuals: Rather than presupposing individuals, disciplinary power individualizes</td>
<td>Population: Security manages a multiplicity as a population, a statistical series of mobile elements/events/accumulating units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic of difference</td>
<td>Binary Distribution</td>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>Bandwidth of the acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good/bad, saved/fallen</td>
<td>Posits the norm as an optimal model then gets people, movements and actions to conform to model</td>
<td>Rationalization and quantification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Normal/Abnormal/Rehabilitating</td>
<td>Case/Risk/Danger/Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatments of Space</td>
<td>Territory</td>
<td>Artificial Enclosure of Space</td>
<td>Milieu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Maitre: Sovereign problem of capitalizing a territory</td>
<td>(prison, clinic, etc.)</td>
<td>(Site of conjunction of series of events among individuals, populations and events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Logic</td>
<td>Sovereignty</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Security/Biopolitical Governmentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Logic</td>
<td>Prohibition</td>
<td>Normalization and Panopticism</td>
<td>“Progressive self-cancellation of phenomena by phenomena themselves”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Do not do X, Y, Z)</td>
<td>Surveillance /Diagnosis/Treatment</td>
<td>Circulation/Calculation/Maximization of Positive, Minimization of risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Codification</td>
<td>Dressage (processes of progressive training and permanent control)</td>
<td>Lets things happen with object of maximizing the positive and minimizing the risky or inconvenient (for the population).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bentham’s panopticon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main consequence of deviation or violation</td>
<td>Public spectacle of Torture/Execution</td>
<td>Enclosure and Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Sanctions on impertinence beyond “bandwidth of the acceptable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power relations</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Centripetal</td>
<td>Centrifugal—constantly widening scope and circuits (s45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Reality</td>
<td>Law+Sovereign operate at the level of the imaginary</td>
<td>Discipline is complementary to reality</td>
<td>Security works within reality by responding to and manipulating given phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique of normalization</td>
<td>Law codifies a norm</td>
<td>Discipline normalizes: Analyzes, breaks down individuals, places, time, movements, actions and operations. Establishes optimal sequences and co-ordinations.</td>
<td>Calculus of probabilities Responsibilization Normation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>Desire of the sovereign it desire that matters and registers in law</td>
<td>Organization and regulation of individual desire</td>
<td>Desires affirmed. Desire is presupposed, self-interest leads to collective interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm example of disease</td>
<td>Legal treatment of leprosy</td>
<td>Disciplinary treatment of madness</td>
<td>Statistical management of smallpox risks, preventative measures and configuration of distribution of cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to Scarcity</td>
<td>Scarcity as bad fortune of a people or sovereign, moral concept of scarcity as punishment for collective evils</td>
<td>Disciplinary policing of grain (st45) Regulatory systems of controls on price, storing and export of grain (both juridical and disciplinary)</td>
<td>Work within fluctuations between scarcity and abundance as given, management of flows of grain. Cancel out the problem of scarcity by working on probabilities and flows of grain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

List of Corporate Partners in the Millennium Villages Project:²

Agrium, Inc.
Airtel
Deutsche Bank AG
Ericsson Mobile
General Electric
GlaxoSmithKline
Goldman Sachs
HSBC Bank
JM Eagle
KPMG International
Lenovo
Merck
Monsanto Company
Nestle
Nike
Novartis
PepsiCo
Pfizer Incorporated
Procter & Gamble
Sony Mobile
Swiss Reinsurance Company
Time Warner
Tommy Hilfiger
Tyson Foods
Yara Fertilizer
Zain

² As per the Millennium Village Project’s own reporting. Available online at:
Works Cited


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Sanchez, Pedro. “The Transformation from Sub-subsistence Farmers into Small-Scale Entrepreneurs,” Powerpoint presentation delivered to the UK Department For International Development (DFID) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on November 2, 2006.


Biography

Lia Haro was born in Columbus, Indiana. She attended Indiana University and received a Bachelor of Arts degree with highest distinction and honors. She received awards from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Social Science Research Council and the Fulbright-Hays to support her dissertation research.