

REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY: A PROBLEMATIC SHIFT

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The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements. Manuel Castells. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983.

As the introductions to most recent urban sociology books indicate, by the beginning of the 1970s mainstream urban sociology was in crisis. Not only was it unable to clearly define its own subject matter but also, and more important, it was unable to come to grips with the reasons behind the urban conflicts of the period. In reaction both to this theoretical *impasse* and to the political shift to the left in most Western countries, the 1970s witnessed increasing attempts to develop frameworks of explanation based on Marxist perspectives.

Although much of his work on the city is still unavailable in English, the most influential author of this first round of reconceptualization was Henry Lefebvre [5;6;7]. In a sense, Lefebvre's work is at the antipodes of the Chicago school of urban sociology. For Park and Burgess [8] and others the city was, by and large, a self-contained object of study which, as a "self-adjusting ecological mechanism", responded "to the new needs created inside it or induced from the outside" by continuously tending towards harmonious resolution. But as in neoclassical economics, an equilibrium could never actually be achieved because of the continuous addition of new factors (new immigrants, demographic and spatial expansion, and so forth).

For Lefebvre, the city was a ground for social conflicts. In fact, in modern societies, it was the privileged ground for class struggle over the production of (urban) space. Since society is becoming completely urbanized, Lefebvre saw in this new "urban society" the most important arena of contradiction between capital and

the proletariat shifting from the workplace to the city as habitat [7].

In another sense, however, the Chicago school and Lefebvre share the same assumptions. Their conceptualizations of the city are different (natural product vs. historical product of the capitalist mode of production), but for both the city is its own explanation. For the Chicago school the city is an organic entity whose internal dynamics can be explained by looking at the city itself. For Lefebvre the city is an historical product, but now that it has reached a position of dominance and urban society has taken the place of industrial society, the city both explains reality and is the hope and ground for social change. To use a concept dear to Althusser (and to Castells *prima maniera*), although Lefebvre and the Chicago school have opposite interpretations and political positions, both share the same problematic.¹

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Castells' work of the 1970s represents an important break with these previous approaches - a genuine shift in problematic. The elements he analyzes are no different from those of Lefebvre, but the theoretical horizon has been completely altered. The city is no longer both the beginning and the end of the analysis. Instead, since the city itself is what needs to be explained, Castells sees it as both the product of the capitalist mode of production and the result of a theoretical analysis. By inserting the city into the process of production-exchange-consumption, Castells concludes that while production and exchange take place at regional and larger scales, the urban is the spatial scale where the reproduction of the labour force takes place. It does not represent, therefore, the coming of a "new society" (as in Lefebvre), but the growing importance of a different location for class struggle, resulting from the expansion of social conflicts from production to consumption.²

¹Problematic is understood here as the conceptual framework which defines both the form of posing a problem and what is seen as relevant to the problem. According to the "horizon" of the framework, elements are included or excluded and disciplines and theories are shaped. Different political positions are possible, but they are based on different interpretations of the same framework. A change in problematic does not require the introduction of new elements, but does require a reorganization of all the elements of analysis. For both the Chicago school and Lefebvre the theoretical horizon was the city itself: once the modern city appears (either naturally — for the Chicago school, or as a product of the capitalist mode of production — for Lefebvre) it is no longer necessary to "go outside it" in order to find the causes of urban change.

²This does not mean that struggles over consumption issues did not previously exist (it is enough to think of the Glasgow rent strike) but that the

For Castells the development of *collective* consumption is the basic characteristic of the urban. This is a new form of consumption which the classical Marxist division between productive, individual, and luxury consumption did not acknowledge. He defines collective consumption as the socialization, via the state, of goods that in particular social contingencies are not profitable and in which individual capital has no interest in investing. They are, however, goods necessary for the reproduction of the labour force, and the state therefore intervenes to supply them [2]. Thus, for Castells, the modern city is fundamentally the place where capitalist expansion in the sphere of consumption and its dynamics are defined on the basis of the conflict between capital and working class [3]. Using this as a basis, the second focus of Castells' work appears: the increasing importance of urban social movements.

From the dominant class's point of view, the city is the place where (via state intervention) it is possible to decrease the costs of the reproduction of labour power. For the working class, the city is the place to fight for better housing, health care, environment; in short, against all the shortcuts that capital uses to decrease the cost of reproduction of labour. Urban social movements are "systems of contradictory social practices that question the established order from the view-point of the urban problematic" [2:16].

Castells acknowledges that if at one end of the spectrum there are urban social movements conscious of their class position, at the other end there are "petty bourgeois" movements interested only in changing the model of consumption and the quality of everyday life instead of the relations of production and the system of political domination. For him this is one of the most important characteristics of urban movements:

[They] cross-cut(s) traditional class divisions between manual workers, professional workers and the petty bourgeoisie, for the crisis of collective consumption affects all the popular classes and mobilizes sections of the population that have traditionally remained aloof from the struggle against monopoly capital [9:198].

As Saunders points out, this does not mean that the politicization of urban issues automatically translates into an intensification of class struggle. How urban contradictions and demands of different urban social movements express themselves and relate to one another is, eventually, linked to the presence of an "umbrella" political organization. If such an organization (and

development of Fordism has led to the need to enlarge the market and pay closer attention to the sphere of consumption. As a result, the simple regression of social movements is no longer viable since it would depress the mass market.

Castells obviously has the Communist Party in mind) is absent, urban contradictions and conflicts can only reproduce themselves endlessly [3:272].

The role of political organization is to link contradictions in practice. This means not only bringing together different urban struggles (e.g. housing struggles, education campaigns and so on), but also locating urban struggles as a whole within the wider context of class struggle. A failure to achieve the first will result in the perpetuation of divisions between different groups such that concessions gained by one group will be won at the expense of another, and this can only result in the reproduction of the system rather than an effective challenge to it. A failure to achieve the second will limit any popular movement to reformism [9:197-8].

From this sketch of the "early Castells", two points appear as fundamental: 1) The central role of collective consumption in the "Urban". Within this, the state assumes a fundamental role as supplier of collective goods. 2) The importance of urban social movements in creating and reshaping the "Urban" (as a force opposite to the dynamic of capital). Within them, the necessity for class analysis and class organization becomes essential for urban social movements to be effective (particularly in the long run).

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Castells has now provided us with a new turning point. His latest book, *The City and the Grassroots*, does not openly offer new theoretical frameworks or new problematics. Nor is it intended to. In fact, Castells both rejects the approach of his previous work and denies the usefulness of *a priori* theory building:

[The] theoretical purpose [of this book] is informed by a methodological perspective that is distrustful of former experiences involving the useless construction of abstract grand theories (p. xvii).

However, Castells is not willing to take a fully empiricist stand either. Thus the book has an ambiguous form; in the first chapter Castells supplies a sketch of his theory, but for a full-blown explanation we have to wait until the last chapter, after the case studies have "modified" and "tightened" his argument.

Although the bulk of the book is constituted by the case studies, it is worth while first to look at how this theory is built. As in his previous work, the main focus remains on urban social movements (although the change in the title from social movements to grassroots and the use of words such as "citizens" and "people" in the text are suggestive). Collective consumption, however, is no longer the only theme of these movements. Now we also have urban social mobilization around cultural identity (organ-

ized in a bounded territory) and political organization around the local state as "motors" of urban changes and therefore of urban form. This is already an example of the theory guiding the empirical research. And, in fact, it is on the basis of these three themes that Castells chooses four case studies (p. xix):

- As an example of collective consumption he studies the development of "urban trade-unionism" in the public housing projects of the *Grands Ensembles* in Paris.
- To discuss issues of cultural identity, he looks at the Latino and gay communities of San Francisco.
- To illustrate political mobilization, he introduces the squatter settlements of Latin America.
- The citizen movement in Madrid, finally, is a movement in which all of the above dimensions are interwoven.

The last section of the book is intended to develop on the basis of these empirical findings a further elaboration of Castells' initial assumptions, and, indeed, we find again the same "three basic goals of urban social movements". We also find an elaboration of their characteristics on three different levels; elaboration that, according to Castells, is *based on empirical evidence*:

1. Theoretically, social movements are defined as "urban actors, defined by their goals and their urban condition. . . . They are neither working class movements nor a middle class [sic] movement". They are "multi-class" movements (p. 320).
2. In terms of praxis, social movements need to be conscious of their role as urban social movements. They should be linked to the society via the media, professionals and political parties. But, first of all, they "*must be organizationally and ideologically autonomous of any political party*" (p. 322).
3. Finally, in order to emphasize their importance, Castells depicts a sombre scenario in which, while the "system" has expanded in new directions and at new scales, "the historical actors (social movements, political parties, institutions)" that were supposed to challenge capital have been unable to adjust to its developments. Thus the labour movement "has largely lost its capacity to control the economy"; Marxism and capitalist development have helped each other in destroying cultural identities and in creating a one-dimensional culture; people no longer believe in political parties, and elections have lost their meaning. Urban movements are the only hope left:

They react against the exploitation-alienation-oppression that the city has come to represent. They may be unable to control the international flows of capital, but they can impose conditions on

any multinational wishing to set up in their community. Although not against television networks they do insist that some broadcasts are made in their language at peak-viewing hours. . . . They will support representative democracy, but they go to the city council meeting *en masse*. . . . Thus urban movements do address the real issues of our time, although neither on the scale nor terms adequate to the tasks (p. 330-31).

Hence the importance of urban social movements lies in that, although doomed to failure, they are the only option we have.

The picture that Castells is now offering us is very different indeed from the one presented in *The Urban Question* or *Luttes Urbaines*. The differences are even more striking if we look at some of the case studies. In addition to the four cases already mentioned, Castells also presents an overview of movements of the past, ranging from Communities of Castilla and the Commune of Paris, to the Glasgow rent strike of 1915, the tenants movement in Veracruz, and the revolts of American inner cities of the 1960s. Although Castells recognizes that some of the movements are class based (e.g., the *inquilinos* of Veracruz and the rent strikers of Glasgow), in most cases he is at pains to prove that class divisions are not the cause of the movement.

It would certainly be difficult to show a direct connection between social movement and working class in the study of the gay community of San Francisco or in the Communities of Castilla of the sixteenth century (when a working class in the Marxist sense did not yet exist). But even in the case of the Paris Commune, Castells maintains that the largest part of the *communards* were *journaliers* and construction workers and that the petty bourgeoisie was over-represented among the elected officials (p. 17) and therefore the movement was urban rather than class-based. Similarly, in the *Grands Ensembles* of Paris, Sarcelles is defined as a non-working-class city due to its large middle and lower-middle class population (p. 85). The definition of working class that emerges from these cases is a very narrow one: in the Paris Commune, workers not employed in modern industry are excluded from it; in Sarcelles, clerks and technicians are not workers but "middle class".

There would be room here to discuss class as a Marxist concept (understood in workers' "relationship to the means of production") or as a sociological category (strata of population defined according to their income, technical expertise, and so on) as Castells seems to think they are. Yet what is important is not so much the conceptualization of class that Castells has as the use that he makes of it. Castells does not completely reject the importance of classes. In *some* instances he does call upon class conflicts

as the roots of *some* urban social movements. But by narrowing definition of class to a specific social stratum, he is able to show us that classes and class struggle are only one possible cause of social movements, while other factors (gender, power, cultural relationships) are independent and equally important causes.

As has been pointed out, in his previous work Castells did not believe in a direct and immediate connection between urban issues and class conflicts. He did believe, however, in the possibility and necessity of clarifying the class origin of the issues and connecting them with the class composition of society. Now his position is almost the opposite. Because at the roots of urban issues there are also conflicts that are not class-based, it would be mistaken to force these into a class-based movement; at best an alliance between differently based movements is possible. In brief, Castells now presents us with a new eclectic position that does not contradict any "progressive" position; there are feminist, Marxist, minority issues, all equally valid.

The only problem is that conflicts can also occur between movements, as happened between the Latino and gay communities in San Francisco. In addition, the satisfaction by the state of the demands of one territorially bounded movement can actually be a means, via the well proved tactics of *divide et impera*, to defuse the danger of generalized pressure and, in fact, to maintain the *status quo* (as happened many times in the case of squatter movements). This not only leads to a weakening of the demands but also to the use, by the powers that be, of one movement against another in order to neutralize both.

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Castells seems to suggest, on the basis of his rejection of "grand theory", that his eclectic approach is the result of empirical observation, deriving from the cases that he has studied. Yet this eclecticism was already present in the three themes that Castells chose at the very beginning. He found issues of cultural identity, political power, and collective consumption at the roots of the movements because he started by assuming that they were there. His case studies were, by and large, selected and analyzed in order to find them. At least implicitly, a guiding theory is always present to direct the questions and to indicate the important elements in the empirical cases. Since there cannot be an "innocent" analysis of case studies, he cannot expect the theory to be simply the result of empirical observation.

Perhaps the reasons for Castells' insistence on culture, class, and power could be found somewhere else. Despite his distrust of grand theory, Castells does offer "a basic framework of. . . [his]

analytical scheme" which was not derived from his empirical studies (p. 305).

At one end of this dialectical model there is the "logic" of capital. By the end of the 1970s, in response to the crisis of its industrial mode of development (a mode of development is a subcategory of a mode of production), the dominant interests of the capitalist mode of production created a two-fold restructuring. This led "on the one hand to political repression and integration . . . and on the other, technological - shifting gears towards new systems of management and new techniques of production" (p. 312). The new system is the informational mode of development, which, if the industrial mode was characterized by economic growth, is oriented towards technological development. The main tendency of the new technology is to remove spatially localized forms from the processes of production and consumption. This tendency, however, is reduced by remnants from the previous mode (fixed assets in large concentrations, interconnections between the two modes, and so on). Furthermore, even the new mode still requires fixed centres where knowledge is produced, information stored, and so forth. Thus, while we still have spatial differentiation, there is also an increasing specialization and hierarchization of space. "The spatial project of the new dominant class tends towards the disconnection between people and spatial form, and therefore between peoples' lives and urban meaning . . . what tends to disappear is the meaning of space for people" (p. 314).

At the other end of the model, there is the reaction by "popular classes and (or) social movements" against this restructuring. They resist urban renewal. They react to the disruption of national cultures and existing productive structures provoked by the penetration of multinationals into new areas by establishing community networks in the cities where they migrate. They seek alternative ways of communication, ignoring the typical one-way system of the mass media. They pressure the state for better collective consumption, they combat segregation, and they try to obtain some bargaining power from the local state.

In Castells' previous analyses collective consumption was the key element linking social movements to the city. Now, however, collective consumption has become only one among several different causes of urban social movements. He needs, therefore, a broader conceptualization of the "urban" in order to justify his claim that all these movements, although rooted in different issues, are specifically urban. Thus, Castells tells us that "any theory of the city must be, at its starting point, a theory of social conflict." But who are the *urban* actors? Who is opposing the forces of the informational mode of development *in the city*?

At the empirical level, we have carefully answered the question in each observed situation. At the theoretical level, however, a major point needs to be made, based on our empirical observation: the movements are urban actors defined by their goals and their urban condition. They are not, then, another form of class struggle, gender struggle, or ethnic struggle (p. 320). . . . The movements are projects of cities, social life, and urban functions and forms . . . emerging from the capacity of the new urban dwellers to produce and control their own environment, space and urban services (p. 322).

Thus we are left with a definition in two stages, neither of which is fully convincing. The first one (which Castells suggests was provided by the empirical evidence, but was actually already present in posing the questions) stresses the heterogeneity of social movements (based on class, gender, ethnicity, culture). Yet, while he describes these elements very carefully, he does not succeed (nor even attempt) in explaining why they are theoretically important and why his analysis is based on them. In the no-longer fashionable Althusserian framework, they are ideological elements - a representation of reality and not the starting point for reality.

The second stage tells us that the "umbrella" that unifies these movements as urban is that these groups propose an alternative city. This is like saying that these movements are urban because they are urban. Castells seems to have come full circle. After having bitterly criticized Lefebvre in *The Urban Question* for substituting the city for the explanation (i.e., for treating the problem and its explanation as identical), he now does the same. In doing so, he establishes a second turning point in his work. The first one, almost ten years ago, opened up a new problematic and new directions for research in urban sociology.³ The present one closes the new directions and looks back to the old problematic. It is to be hoped that this book is a turning point only for Castells.

³Perhaps for a better understanding of Castells' shift, we should consider the place and time where *The Urban Question* and *The City and the Grassroots* were written. The first book was written in France in a highly politicized environment, when issues of consumption were an important part of generalized increase in class conflict which led to an economic crisis several years later. *The City and the Grassroots* was written in the United States in the absence of genuinely partisan politics during a period of economic restructuring which has shifted the focus of political action from consumption back to production.

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The Manitoba Commercial Freshwater Fishery: An Economic Analysis. Gordon S. Gislason, James A. MacMillan and Jack W. Craven. The University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, 1982; 311 pp.

Gislason, MacMillan and Craven's economic analysis attempts the difficult job of bridging "the gap between economic theory, and actual fishery management in the Manitoba fishery" (p. 3). This attempt to chart a new course begins with some promising perspectives such as a recognition of the empirical unlikelihood of constructing a bio-economic model, the inappropriateness of the concept of common property to Manitoba fisheries, a concern for income distribution over efficiency, and an acknowledgement that "the fisherman . . . has been largely neglected in previous analyses" (p. 4). The authors have written this book for those most directly concerned - government fisheries managers and individual fishermen. It is also suggested that the book deserves attention from those outside Manitoba because of its analysis of a limited entry program (with a non-transferable individual quota), income data on select fisheries, and lastly, the creation of a production function with the development of a theory of the individual fishing firm. For those concerned about the last three issues, and those with a penchant for data, this book is highly recommended.

The content reflects the collective character of the research; the three authors acknowledge the cooperation and data collection of some fifty-odd other individuals. The contents include: an introduction with a short literature summary; an overview of the fishery with a brief history; a description of the freshwater fishery and outline of policy concerns in the mid-1970s; a discussion of the management practices of Lake Winnipeg fishermen; an economic analysis of the fish harvesting sector; a demand analysis of the American market; a socio-economic description of government support to fishermen; a simulation of alternatives to the South Indian Lake fishery; and finally, a discussion of the Manitoba fishery's performance and options. These eight chapters are followed by nine appendices, which provide assorted data and more specialized commentary on models, literature and methodology. The authors deserve credit for splitting the contents into chapters and appendices. This facilitates the effort to direct a comprehensible discussion to policy makers and fishermen. Similarly, the authors do not burden the non-specialist with excessive terminology. For example, when discussing the American market, both the concept of elasticity and the predicted effects of price changes upon demand are carefully explained. The inclusion of

considerable data in the appendices should be appealing to academics with a concern for the economics of resource management. Unfortunately, these data and much of the discussion are dated relative to when the book was published, and a short epilogue could have reflected on the relevance of this research. The concern for readability may also be reflected in the very brief literature summary. Nonetheless, an appendix providing a critical evaluation of fisheries economics with reflections on the general contribution of an economic analysis of the Manitoba fishery would have been welcomed. This would have rounded out the research effort and enhanced the study's appeal as a source for resource studies students - a more likely audience.

Economic history or political economy do not enter into the authors' economic analysis, and this is apparent in the chapter which serves as an overview. The three pages devoted to history are essentially misleading, especially with respect to chronology and causation. The lack of any interest in economic history is also evident from what has been omitted. The implications of the fact that Manitoba's freshwater fish resource was the first prairie industry to be taken over by direct investment by American capital are ignored. The reader will find the discussion on technological changes and the description of the regional fisheries useful.

Chapter three outlines management and harvesting aspects of the Lake Winnipeg fishery and largely serves as background for the subsequent and most important chapter of the study, which develops an economic analysis of the harvesting sector. The authors set out to establish decision-making models for fishermen and to consider economic performance measures for alternate management policies. At the core of chapter four, Gislason *et al.* provide inferential data on various aspects of fishing effort (including data on the effects of gill net characteristics) and explain the rationale of a production function for harvesting. It is not made clear from the discussion of the empirical data how this production function could produce benefits to the fisherman. What emerges is a sophisticated description of the relative validity of different measures of fishing effort. While several regional fisheries are included in the sample, the spatial aspect of harvesting may need more attention in developing a general production function. Clearly, the behaviour of an individual fisherman does not take place in a spatial vacuum. Both productivity and costs have locational and spatial characteristics. In terms of bridging theory and management, the fisherman could benefit from practical insights about spatial costs associated with harvesting.

The objective of closing the gap between economic theory and fisheries management makes most progress when the individual

quota for the channel area of Lake Winnipeg fishery is examined. The authors demonstrate that the effect of the quota is to halt fishing before the margin (when incremental daily value equals daily cost of net lifts) has been reached. To close the gap between theory and management, Gislason *et al.* explore alternatives. Clearly, if fishermen were allowed to harvest to the margin they would exceed their individual quotas, and the area quota (based on biological criteria) would be exceeded. The study considers alternatives based on maintaining the area quota while manipulating effort (number of fishermen, amount of gill net, and length of season). The alternative that would seem to satisfy both economic and management imperatives would reduce the number of fishermen by 44 percent, double the amount of gill net and, permit fishing for forty days. (This time period is based upon existing regulations and not the time it takes to fish to the margin.) For the recommended alternative, the authors provide no data to show the point during the season at which daily costs will exceed daily revenue. (Although this was calculated for the 1974 fishery, these results cannot be transferred to the suggested alternative, since a different daily cost structure prevails). This proposed rationalized fishery results in a 78 percent increase in individual yields without changing the total area quota and an increased management net return of 130 percent. The authors note that this alternative management return is comparable to the opportunity cost of the average wage level in the province. They also acknowledge that the increase in benefits is at the expense of the excluded fishermen, although there are no calculations of the additional social costs of this labour displacement.

There are several problems with the management alternative based on labour rationalization. In particular, the authors do not address the question of how a change in fishing intensity (with few fishermen) would affect daily costs. The figure 25 percent is used, but there is no discussion about the physical ability of the fishermen to fish more intensely, although it is commonly held that the effect of regulations is to reduce the efficiency of fishing technology. More important, the economic theory which was used to critique the existing fishery, where the quota ended effort before daily revenues exceeded daily costs, was abandoned. This inconsistent application of theory reduces the credibility of the efficient management alternative. A calculation of the margin of effort and revenue may indicate that the management alternative has recreated another inappropriate mix of labour, gill nets and time with given productivity quota. An economic optimum does not exist, because effort is not being limited by the margin. This would imply another cycle of labour rationalization to achieve the logic of neoclassical theory. Moreover, the question of economic

history appears because in the past the argument that there are too many fishermen chasing too few fish has been used to explain labour rationalization. Apparently, past labour rationalizations have not produced income levels which approximate the provincial average.

The lack of editorial direction reinforces the tendency for this book to read like a series of consultant's studies. The links between chapters and appendices are useful and well developed. Nonetheless, the pointless repetition of facts from chapter to chapter, section headings which do not precisely reflect content, different referencing formats, an aversion to clearly summarize or reflect on findings at the end of chapters, and the lack of conceptual links to discuss the results of the different chapters all suggest that this book was not predicated on any clear research objectives. Instead, the reader gets a chowder of research reports which would have had a better format as a collection of works by different authors.

The final chapter serves less as a conclusion or reflection on theory than as an outlet for some thoughts on the fishery. Additional data are presented to demonstrate that the 1976 Lake Winnipeg fishery could be rationalized in the interests of increased efficiency for the individual producer. The authors show that a reduction of the labour force is more advantageous than an increase in the quota. While the authors make a good case for constructing alternatives, the cost adjustments required for a more intense scale of fishing are hypothetical. It is not indicated whether the hypothetical costs are biased for or against the suggested rationalization. The authors seem to side with the argument for efficiency over income redistribution without resolving the results of the social democratic imperatives for the industry. What Gislason *et al.* have produced is less an economic explanation of this resource than a sophisticated description of certain features of the industry. Perhaps the gap between economic theory and management practices has been narrowed, but without a final discussion outlining the theoretical knowledge gained from this empirical study, it is not certain. The authors make the argument that the fishermen should have more input into fisheries management, and yet the fishermen's economic concern about the cost/price squeeze received only cursory comments. Given this study's lack of relevant economic history or critical political economy (even by refutation), and the fact that it does not clarify its contribution to theory, this study is more of a one-dimensional consultant's report than a scholarly treatment of Manitoba's commercial fishery.

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