Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center
Institute for Advanced Study

Oral History Project
Interview Transcript

History Working Group:
Pascal Marichalar
Interviewed by Linda Arntzenius
July 11, 2018

This interview is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this text in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the Institute for Advanced Study. Please direct inquiries to the Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center (archives@ias.edu).

Institute for Advanced Study
The Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center

Oral History Project Release Form

In exchange for good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which are hereby acknowledged, I (the "Releasor") hereby irrevocably give, donate, assign, transfer and grant to the Institute for Advanced Study (the "Institute") all of my right, title and interest in and to all audio and/or video recordings of the oral history interviews in which I participated, together with all transcripts thereof (collectively, the "Materials"). My gift, donation, assignment, transfer and grant to the Institute includes: (i) title to the Materials, free and clear of all liens, encumbrances and interests of others; (ii) the right to all present and future copyrights, including but not limited to, the exclusive right to make, reproduce, publish (in print, on video and in all other formats) and to otherwise exploit the Materials, excerpts of the Materials and works derived from the Materials; and (iii) the right to use my name and likeness as required by the Institute in connection with its use of the Materials. For the avoidance of doubt, I hereby authorize the Institute to use the Materials (excerpts and derivative works) for any and all commercial, educational, research or other purposes.

Public access to the Materials is subject to the following conditions (please check one):

☒ None.
☐ Closed for 10 years from the date of the interview*; full public access thereafter.
☐ Closed under other conditions as stated below*; otherwise full public access:

_____
_____
_____

*I understand that prior to the date of public access, access to the Materials may be given by the Institute to its staff and to others for the purposes of preserving and cataloguing the Materials.

I acknowledge and agree that this is the entire agreement between the Institute and me respecting the Materials and shall be binding upon my heirs, representatives and assigns. It may be modified only by a writing signed by all parties. This agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of New Jersey and the federal and state courts situated in the State of New Jersey shall have exclusive jurisdictions over disputes between the Institute and me.

Witness:
L.G. Arntzenius
Name of Witness: LINDA ARNTZENIUS

Signature of Releasor
Name of Releasor: Pascal MALICHALAR
Date: July 11 2018

Linda Arntzenius: I will just say for the sake of the recording that I'm here at the Institute for Advanced Study on July the 11th, to interview Pascal Marichalar[1] about his Membership at the Institute, or Visitorship last year, and his participation in the History Working Group.

So, as you know, I'm interested in the History Working Group, and the history of the Institute, of course, but what I would like to start with, is could you tell me something about yourself –where you grew up, what your parents did for a living, and how you came to your specific subject area.

Pascal Marichalar: I was born in Paris. I grew up in the Paris area. My parents, my Dad was trained as a computer engineer, and he worked in this international company for his whole life, which was dealing with the airlines and communications, and they had set up this kind of Internet before the Internet, between airports all around the world. So, so we traveled a lot with him on vacation.

Linda Arntzenius: Have you siblings?

Pascal Marichalar: I have a brother, yes.

Linda Arntzenius: What does he do?

Pascal Marichalar: He's just a little bit younger than me, Olivier. He's currently a PhD student, in history, political science, sociology, working on China, on the cultural revolution.[2] My Mom, she was trained in a fine arts school in Canada; she was born in Canada from Hungarian parents who left Hungary in '56. And then, when I was, like, seven or eight, she decided to become a nurse, so she started training to be a nurse, and she became a nurse.

And so, how did, I choose my studies? I was a good student, I did what good students are supposed to do in France, like, *les classes préparatoires* without really knowing what to do after. I got into this school called *École normale supérieure* which is a school that trains researchers and university professors with very good conditions for your studies. Because you're paid as a civil servant during your studies.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh – so, that's from the age of 18, or younger?

---

[1] Pascal Marichalar, Visitor in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017.

[2] In his review of this transcript, Marichalar added "*I also have a half-brother who's a teenager."*

Pascal Marichalar: I got in there when I was 19, yep. I didn't really know what I wanted to study, and I came to sociology, what we call sociology in France, but which looks a lot like anthropology here. So let's say fieldwork studies in social science. I came to that, because I started doing, field trips. Until then, social sciences for me had been about books, and theories, and I found it a bit boring.

And then, when I realized that it was doing this [indicating the current interview], like going to see people – putting a recorder in front of them and having them tell you their whole life – I found that great. And I did a lot of that, and so, and then, to make a long story short, I started working on occupational health and safety.

Why? Because I wanted to, um, study work, labor – and I had met this great professor, a historian, called Paul-André Rosental[3], who gave a class on these topics, which had very much interested me. I loved the way he talked and what he was writing, so I went to see him. I said, "I would like to work with you." And he said, "Why don't you work on *this*?" Because he was working on –

Linda Arntzenius: What was *this*?

Pascal Marichalar: Occupational medicine, in France, because he was working on the history of it and saying there isn't really any current fieldwork on what's happening today.

So, I ended up doing my PhD on occupational physicians in France – the closest thing in here in the US, would be what we call company doctors – but it's not exactly the same position, because here, companies don't have to take on company doctors but they take them –

Linda Arntzenius: But in France, they do?

Pascal Marichalar: In France, they do, since the Second World War, for a lot of different reasons –

Linda Arntzenius: So, for, for a large – company – what kind of company?

Pascal Marichalar: All companies.

---

[3] Paul-André Rosental is Professor of Contemporary History at Sciences Po and associate researcher at the *Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques* (INED). He specializes in the history and social policy of populations (demography policies, social and sanitary policies), an area in which he directs the research team Esopp. At Sciences Po's Center for European Studies, and in association with the Center for History, he directs the ERC Senior Advanced Grant "From silicosis to silica hazards" (the SILICOSIS project), which combines the disciplines of history, medicine and the social sciences.

Linda Arntzenius: All companies have to have an in-house physician?

Pascal Marichalar: They don't have to have an in-house physician. They can either have an in-house one if they're very large, or, they can contract with a pool, they pool physicians between different companies in a certain area – or in a certain field of work – specialty.

So, I was working on that and so, I discovered a professional world – which is pulled[4] between management and labor all the time. Their mission is supposed to be, helping workers avoid any injury because of their work, but at the same time, if I really started doing my job too well, then, uh, management starts getting stressed about the costs, and the liability. And they are protected by law. It's difficult, for example, to fire them.

Linda Arntzenius: The doctors?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, the doctors. There has to be an independent investigation by the labor inspector. My whole PhD was about that.

And then I came to working with glass workers. That was my project after. I just published a book about that.

Linda Arntzenius: And that was what I saw you being interviewed about [on French television].

Pascal Marichalar: Yes. These are glass workers near Lyon, in the Lyon area, um, who were in a large-scale struggle, mobilization, to try and get their occupational diseases recognized by the state insurance, like workers' compensation. That happens here, too.

They had realized that a lot of them had cancer at young ages, or dying young, and they had established a possible connection with their work, because they did their own study, and they discovered that they had been exposed to tons of products that could give cancer, and situations that could give cancer, also. Extreme heat, shift work, etcetera.

And they were looking for scientists that were willing to work with them on this. They especially wanted physicians. I had told them, I cannot help you on that side, but I can do this kind of oral history – and see if you have archives and write it up.

So, they accepted this. And what interested me a lot was to discover that, in fact, their factory had closed about ten years

[4] In his review of this transcript, Marichalar explained that he used the term "in the sense of 'pulled apart'."

before I came. They had had a very big mobilization against the closing. And it was the same guys that had mobilized against the closing that were mobilized about the working conditions. A lot of people, outside commentators, were saying that this was contradictory, paradoxical, irrational.

Linda Arntzenius: They wanted their jobs.

Pascal Marichalar: And so my work ended up dealing a lot with that, how do you go from defending your job to denouncing the working conditions. Is it a contradiction or not, or is it just because they are in an essentially contradictory position.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay, so what brought you to the Institute last year? That was your first visit, right?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes. What brought me to the Institute was my partner.

Linda Arntzenius: Ah, and that is Céline –

Pascal Marichalar: Céline Bessière[5], yes. Because she was awarded a Membership in the School of Social Science. And so, we decided to come with the whole family, we have two kids.

Linda Arntzenius: Boy, girl?

Pascal Marichalar: Two girls. And, I looked into how I could arrange my own project here. And so, I secured a Fulbright Scholarship in Columbia [University] – with the historian of occupational health, David Rosner[6]. And I had this project of fieldwork in New Jersey about industrial pollution and its effects on the neighboring communities. So, my first project was about the Bayway Refinery, which is the one that you see on the New Jersey Turnpike just south of Newark.

That one – and it was a very, very important refinery in world history, that's where they invented leaded gasoline. Which then took about 60 years to un-lead. So, I got that, and I was not thinking I was going to participate in the Institute's life, so much – because I had my own thing, and because we try, as we're both in social sciences, we try and not mix completely, our work and the rest, because we want to have something to tell each other in the evening – *[Laughter]* And so, we're already a small world in France.

[5] Céline Bessière, Member in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2018.

[6] David Rosner is the Ronald H. Lauterstein Professor of Sociomedical Sciences and professor of history in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Columbia University. He is also Co-Director of the Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine in 2010.

And then Didier Fassin[7] in the School of Social Science told me I could be a Visitor here, so I applied for that. I started coming to seminars, and it was interesting, and in fact, the community life here was very, very lively. We met a lot of people, a lot of friends. I heard that it's not every year the same dynamic.

We had the friends through the kids, friends through the French connection, friends through social science – and the friends, the neighbors living around us –

Linda Arntzenius: You were living in member housing?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes. Which is really great. I mean, a great experience. And so, that's how I got into taking part also here.

Just to compare, when I went to Columbia – it was in the School of Public Health, that's like a big factory, where people are going in, going out, and it's very difficult to speak to people. I had my friends David Rosner, and his colleague, Gerald Markowitz, but apart from that I just met a few people.

Linda Arntzenius: What did you know of the Institute before you came here?

Pascal Marichalar: What did I know? We learned that Celine was accepted in December of the year before –

Linda Arntzenius: December '16.

Pascal Marichalar: No, '15.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, yes, '15, of course.

Pascal Marichalar: Because we came in '16, '17, so December '15. And I must say that I spent a lot of time looking into what is this place exactly, and um, even looking at what does the member housing look like. Especially on the internet. And I read one book, *Who Got Einstein's Office.* You see that book, here, it's very funny. It's mostly about physics and math, but it's anyway, interesting, and you can see already a few of the historical conflicts between faculty – and all.

And so that's what I knew. I mean, I knew that there was Einstein.[8] Einstein was a guy who always interested me. I have an interest in astronomy, astrophysics, like kind of a hobby. I mean, one year

[7] Didier Fassin (1955-), Professor in the School of Social Science, 2009-.

[8] Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Professor in the Schools of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, 1933-1946; Emeritus Professor, 1946-1955.

before coming, I did this diploma, what we call *cours du soir* in France, evening classes for adults, at the *Observatoire de Paris*, the Paris observatory, which was just every week we had three hours where current researchers would tell us about the state of the art in astronomy and astrophysics, and so that was very interesting, and it ended with four days in an observatory in Provence, four nights – watching other galaxies.

But so, I had read a lot about Einstein's theories, trying to understand them, etcetera. I guess, I understand until the Special Relativity, and then the General Relativity starts getting a bit too complex for me. But I didn't know anything about the other side of Einstein – and I discovered that after coming here.

Linda Arntzenius: Was there anything that surprised you about the Institute when you did arrive here?

Pascal Marichalar: Um, a lot of things, but I mean, it's also coming to the United States. It was part of the whole experience – 'cause I didn't know the United States, really. So I told you that my mother is Canadian – so I knew Canada a little bit, Montreal, Ottawa, but the U.S., not really. And um, did anything surprise me? It's difficult to answer, I guess – I mean, I cannot answer that – 'cause everything surprised me.

Linda Arntzenius: Right. It was all new.

Pascal Marichalar: Yes. It was all new. I mean – this is a very special place, and um, I must say what did surprise me was the way this place was different from all the surroundings. We came with the car by Route 1. And Route 1, when you're European, it's like, *this is ugly,* you know, a lot of the United States is like that. I mean, big roads, and strip malls – and all that. And then, all of a sudden, we arrived, through the woods, and there were trees all around, a lot of trees, and I remember we turned on Maxwell Lane, and we got here, and it was like, all this, these meadows – and that day we were a bit scared, 'cause we were thinking, “This looks very quiet.” Very, very quiet. Yes, I can tell you that. When we arrived the first day, we were like, “Wow, this is *very* quiet.”

Linda Arntzenius: Yes, very different. All right, so, let's move to the History Working Group, and the Town Hall meetings. I'm not sure how those two things are related.

Pascal Marichalar: Yes. So, what I remember, because [this] may be not completely accurate. But so, a big event in our year was the election of Donald Trump. There were the three debates, I can start with that – which

we watched in Fuld Hall. They put a screen up, and so, that was, uh, already an interesting moment to watch those debates –

Linda Arntzenius: So, when they put a screen up, this wasn't the Town Hall meeting – this was just to watch the election and the debates before the election?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: And were there a lot of people attending?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Mostly Members?

Pascal Marichalar: Um, Members, faculty –

So, yeah, there were those debates already. And then, the night of the election, I was uh, at our neighbor's place, our Italian neighbors, Roberto Tottoli[9] and Francesca Bellino, and there must have been at least 20, 30 people that went by their place that evening. And uh, the length of the election in this country is something very different from what we know of [in Europe].

Linda Arntzenius: It's a big country, yes –

Pascal Marichalar: It started at 7:30 p.m. and ended at 2:00 a.m. in the morning. And the next day, we were all, um, we all had, *gueule de bois,* as we say in France, a hangover, literally – *[Laughter]* –

Linda Arntzenius: Before you go further – what was the anticipation of the outcome among most of the people watching?

Pascal Marichalar: Well, most of the people thought Hillary Clinton was going to win. And there was a lot of faith in all the statistics and, uh, probabilities off 98 percent and all that – Nate Silver [American statistician], and the *New York Times* arrow, and all that.

Um, there was a, I mean, some of us, anyways, thought, maybe it's not gonna be her, maybe it's gonna be him. But maybe as a way of conjuring the bad faith, or I don't know – because we know, also, I think, in Europe, that things have been going bad politically for the past few years. I learnt in history classes about the 1930s and 1940s what happened, the Second World War, and all of this was

[9] Roberto Tottoli, Member in the School of Historical Studies, 2016-2017.

very far away, but now – everything, it looks very much like the 1930s, and everything can start again.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay. So, was that the feeling?

Pascal Marichalar: I mean, no, but it really came as a surprise. It really came as a surprise. I remember when he [Trump] won Pennsylvania, it was Pennsylvania and North Carolina that there were two moments, at around 9, 9:30 p.m. that it started looking really bad.

And so, there was that. After, I don't really remember. We went to the march in New York City, on the day of – the day after – the inauguration, the Women's March. And that was a great experience.

Linda Arntzenius: Did you have a pink pussy hat?

Pascal Marichalar: I didn't have one, some of them –

Linda Arntzenius: Did your wife?

Pascal Marichalar: No, but our friends had them. We had signs, we had made signs. And the kids had signs.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, my goodness.

Pascal Marichalar: Yeah, it was also interesting culturally. In France, we're very used to demonstrations – and here, not so much. And so, everybody was like, "It's a *huge* demonstration," and we're like, "Well, yeah, not bad. We've had bigger, but it's a good one."

So, what I remember – but other Members may not tell you the same thing – what I remember is that the thing that sparked the idea of doing something was the [presidential executive order for a] travel ban for the seven Muslim majority countries. At that time, as I was telling you, we had a lot of friends, we did a lot of big dinners, and all. And at one of those big dinners, I remember very well, we were, laughing about a lot of things. And Thomas Dodman[10] started as though he was gonna give a toast. He started saying, "I want to say something..." And we thought he was gonna make a joke, but in fact, it was not a joke. It was, uh, like, *isn't it a bit strange, that we're here, we're having all this good time in this bubble – and all of this is happening? What can we do?* And uh – I mean, I really remember, he sparked that, maybe he won't tell you, because he's modest, he's humble.

[10] Thomas Dodman, Member in the School of Historical Studies, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2018.

But so, I remember one thing, there was this funny skit by Saturday Night Live after the election called “The Bubble.” Which we had watched, thinking of the Institute. It was like a fake commercial: “Do you want to live in a place where Donald Trump was never elected President of the United States? Come live in The Bubble.” It was like a place where everybody eats organic food, and drives little cars, electric cars, and all that in The Bubble. It said, “It's like Brooklyn under a dome.”

But we would speak of the Institute as “The Bubble.” And so that was the time when we started thinking of doing something. I know that somewhere in my computer, I have the – we wrote a letter at one moment to the Director, asking him to organize a Town Hall meeting. I think that was the first step.

Linda Arntzenius: Was that before or after he – because I know Robbert[11] put out a statement about the President's ban. Was your letter before or after the statement?

Pascal Marichalar: I think it was before. I think it was before. Because I think one of the things that we wanted to see is, is the Institute taking action.

Linda Arntzenius: Take some kind of stance –

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, take some stance, some stance on these issues. And also, because, I mean, from that moment on, uh, from that moment already we all knew, vaguely, that the Institute in the '30s had been a refuge for scholars from Europe who either, uh, had had to leave or had chosen to leave what was happening in Europe. And it's in the Town Hall meetings that the idea of a History Working Group emerged.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay. Thank you for that.

Pascal Marichalar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Now, you say, “We.” You mean yourself, Thomas Dodman, Klaus [Oschema][12], a sort of core group?

Pascal Marichalar: Let's say it was, um, “we” as a very wide “we.” But after, the idea was those who can will work on this. I mean, it ended up like this. The names on the papers [in the History Working Group

[11] Robbert Dijkgraaf (1960-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1991-1992; Visitor, 2002; IAS Director and Leon Levy Professor, 2012- .

[12] Klaus Oschema, Member in the School of Historical Studies, 2016-2017.

publication, *A Refuge for Scholars*] are those who were able to put work into this. We didn't all have the same things to do at the same time. A lot of the Members had their books to finish as well as all of this –

Linda Arntzenius: Of course. So, how did you divide up your tasks for, you know, this is a lot of work. I know that Ian [Jauslin][13] produced this [indicating article, "Emmy Noether's Paradise"] – so you had a mathematician – and you did some history, so, was each person assigned [a task], "You do this, you do that?"

Pascal Marichalar: It wasn't really – [like that]. We spoke with Erica Mosner at the archives and she showed us how to use the archives. And we mostly used archives that were already digitized or weren't very difficult for us to – [find]. We didn't have to go through the paper archives. Then it was just, we would meet after dinner, and just speak of what we were interested in, and say, "Okay, well, I can start this, I'll send you a draft," and then it was really, like we're doing now, also. We're doing the same way. Like, who wants and who can do this at this moment.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay. So, what was Robbert's response to your letter?

Pascal Marichalar: Well, I did not, I was not part of the Members who went to Robbert's office, I think. I think there was a meeting, if I remember well. I couldn't that day. But it was a favorable response. There was a Town Hall meeting organized.

Linda Arntzenius: Where was that held? In the dining hall?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, in the dining hall. I remember one tiny anecdote, is that um, so I can tell you two anecdotes, but after, we'll see maybe this will have to be censored – [Laughter]

Linda Arntzenius: That's okay, we can embargo this.

Pascal Marichalar: Well, I don't know if it has to be embargoed.

Linda Arntzenius: Okay.

Pascal Marichalar: One is that, Joan Scott[14] told us that this was the biggest political activity there had been in the Institute since the 1990s when there

[13] Ian Jauslin, Member in the School of Mathematics, 2016-2018.

[14] Joan Wallach Scott (1941-), Member in the School of Social Science, 1978-1979; Professor, 1985-2014; Emeritus Professor, 2014- .

was the whole debate about the schedule of Crossroads nursery school, like, making it [the schedule] wider.

And another thing is that, we felt that there was some kind of apprehension about doing something political here, because, I guess, the question of the donors. And at the same time, Robbert [Dijkgraaf] was editing, I mean, publishing the book—republishing – – the book[15] by Flexner,[16] about the usefulness of useless science, and the whole "Bubble" thing – so, how to put that together with political engagement or whatever, I think that was a bit stressful for some people.

Linda Arntzenius: You mean some of the faculty?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, and the staff, the director's office – and so, when we got the meeting, I remember, there was Chef Michel [Reymond], who was, waiting for us dressed in his uniform with a popcorn machine, handing out popcorn. I remember.

And then, uh, we started seeing a lot of action, and we started seeing not only one, but at least two, statements by the Director. There were meetings about scholars at risk, and there was, um, and so, I think that, and after a while, I mean, we've even seen since then that some of the e-mails that were sent out to encourage donations – used the argument that this place is also a refuge for scholars at risk, etcetera, I mean, which had not been [the case].

So, I think one of our goals was to use the accumulated capital of this place, I mean, not the economic capital –

Linda Arntzenius: The prestige –

Pascal Marichalar: But the prestige, yes, the heritage, and yes, the image, and stress some of the good parts of the history of the Institute in order to encourage further action like that of the Institute, but also of other places in the world that could maybe be inspired by that.

So, then we started reading about what happened in the '30s and on, and discovering Einstein's political activity – which is fascinating.

---

[15] *The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge* by Abraham Flexner with a companion essay by Robbert Dijkgraaf, Princeton University Press, 2017; includes Flexner's essay of that title published in the October 1939 issue of Harper's Magazine.

[16] Abraham Flexner (1866-1959), IAS Director, 1930-1939.

Linda Arntzenius: Peter Goddard[17] had a hand in this, is that correct?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: What was his role?

Pascal Marichalar: His role was, I mean, he never, like, sat down with us writing the papers, but it was more like he would tell us, “Oh, there's this document with...” you know, we would meet in the cafeteria, and he would tell us this. And he read some of the drafts, and said, “This is not correct. This is...” So, yes, that was very useful.

Linda Arntzenius: Now, did you learn anything at all during this project of working with the History Working Group that is helpful in your own research, your own work?

Pascal Marichalar: Um, well, I can only say, it's more about what should an intellectual or a scientist do politically, meaning what's his political responsibility in the world? It's more reflecting about that. I don't say that I have applied all the lessons, because it's difficult. On my specific topics, it's quite far away, but maybe on the methods of writing history.

I very much believe that history is not only about establishing facts but it's also about the narrative that is going to connect the facts. And there, we didn't establish any fact. I mean, all the facts were already established by a lot of people. That's also our thing, we don't consider that we're historians of this period – we don't want to. We don't say anything, which is not correct. Of course, we try to be careful – but we don't want to be, like, competitors for those who are the legitimate historians of this period.

It's more about narratives that have maybe not been crafted in this way, usually; that are under the surface, and bringing them back up.

Linda Arntzenius: Right, and spreading the word – and bringing that history to bear on contemporary issues?

Pascal Marichalar: Exactly. It's history for the present. We have absolutely no antiquarian interest in this. It's not just “Oh, this is a funny thing that happened in 1932.” It's fascinating to see how Einstein's political views can have a bearing on current events. And it’s not only

[17] Peter Goddard (1945-), Member in the School of Natural Sciences, 1972-1974; Member in the School of Mathematics, 1988; IAS Director, 2004-2012; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 2012-2016; Emeritus Professor, 2016- .

Einstein, there was a lot of, um, [first faculty of the Institute] like, Veblen[18], Aydelotte[19], yes –

Linda Arntzenius: What do you say to people who might say, “Look, this is the Institute for Advanced Study, your view that it is a bubble is accurate, and it's a bubble, because we are here to advance our particular science, or particular study, and the world of politics has no place in that.” Is that an argument that was presented to you or came up in conversation?

Pascal Marichalar: Um, well, not really. I mean, let's say, of course, it's an argument that we saw in a lot of documents, and so, but at the same time, our work, the minute we started looking into this, we saw that this was not accurate. The Bubble thing, it's not a bubble – there's a tension between the bubble tendency – and the tendency to come into the world. We're not saying that the Institute has to be in the world, because, if it became an Institute for applied study, then it would be something completely different. I know that Flexner's text about the usefulness of useless science is extremely useful for us, in our home countries, home institutions, to just show it [and say] [*miming a conversation with an imaginary colleague*] “Look at this guy.”

He wrote this great text in the '30s, he created the IAS. You know, the IAS, a prestigious thing there—and you always want to imitate the U.S. Well, “Look at what this guy says,” because of course, all of the tendency today is to push towards *applied* research – and um, completely, directly bearing or decided by political, uh –

Linda Arntzenius: Agendas?

Pascal Marichalar: Agendas, yes. One of the documents that we unearthed in the archives—well, unearthed is – it was digitized so there was no more earth left on that paper—was very funny. When Einstein's on the boat coming to the U.S., Flexner tells him, “So, please, you know, do not answer any media inquiry, anything, a low profile, etcetera.” And Einstein starts answering tons of media inquiries from the boat. Then, saying for example that he approves of the Mayor of New York’s decision to ban Nazis from speaking in a public space, whatever. So they got into a big fight from the very moment he set foot in the U.S. Then he [Einstein] realized that Flexner had been answering his mail, and saying, “No, he cannot come.” He cannot. Even to Roosevelt. He cannot come to the White House, he’s very busy.

---

[18] Oswald Veblen (1880-1960), Professor in the School of Mathematics, 1932-1950; Emeritus Professor, 1950-1960.

[19] Frank Aydelotte (1880-1956), IAS Director, 1939-1947.

Linda Arntzenius: All right. Did you encounter any distractions while you were working here? That's probably not an appropriate question to ask you.

Pascal Marichalar: Distractions? Yes. I guess the only distraction was preparing for the return to the real world, which was a bit difficult, because the real world was more difficult, more demanding.

Linda Arntzenius: Well, that leads me to a question about the place in which the Institute sits. When the land was sought for a building for the Institute to take it out of the University, Veblen and others, but primarily Veblen, I think, pushed for land – woodlands so that and others could walk in the woods for reflection, and so forth. The idea has always been that it's a sort of a place apart; apart from the hurly burly of life.

Pascal Marichalar: Yes.

Linda Arntzenius: Do you think that still applies? Do you think it's still important to have a place that's sort of set apart for an institute such as this?

Pascal Marichalar: So, there are different, many questions. But, one of the projects I would like to carry out, but I don't think it will be possible this month, would be a kind of environmental history of the Institute. Because there would be a connection between [that and] my other work. Because my fieldwork in New Jersey was about some industrial pollution, and in fact, I ended up working on what is called legacy pollution, like the “brown” fields, the fields that are left over when an industry disappears.[20]

So, I went a lot to Trenton, to Newark. So, Trenton is really very close, so Trenton and Newark, for example, they're interesting, both of them. Newark, it was supposed to be – the Institute was supposed to be in Newark first, uh, Newark or South Orange on the Bamberger’s estate.

And I looked through a few of the documents of the archives, and there is this idea that Newark is a commercial and industrial city, that's what Flexner says, and that's not a good place to have scholars. And, if you look at the industrial history, I mean, in the 1930s, Newark was a place with a lot of chimneys, and a lot of smells, and a lot of soot, and waste being spilled into the river, and so, I mean, I can understand, let's say, Veblen’s [thinking]. So, Flexner, what I understood is that he especially came here because of the University.

[20] In his review of the transcript, Marichalar explained that the “brownfields” was introduced by the EPA in the 1980s.

Then there was this conflict between Flexner and Veblen, where Veblen wanted to buy land, and Flexner wanted to keep the money for scholars. This place is beautiful. I just came through the woods this morning to come to our office in the White-Levy room. And this place is beautiful. What I find interesting is that it's cut off from the rest, which is a fairly destroyed environment all around. I went to Trenton quite a lot. Trenton is very close. In Trenton, they have hundreds of contaminated sites, and they don't have the money to clean up, because to clean up, you need gentrification prospects, and there is no such prospect in Trenton. And you need, federal redistribution, but there isn't any money coming anymore. So, it is a bubble, but a beautiful bubble in this contaminated environment.

I think that it's important [that] we realize that when we work here. We have our daughters in summer camps –

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, yes. How old are your children?

Pascal Marichalar: Céline has a daughter, I'm her stepdad, who's 13 – she's doing a theater summer camp – and we have a daughter together who's four, at Crossroads for the summer camp.

And so we know they're having a great time during the day – and we're so quiet there. And it's great. We work. The quality of work that we can do here, what we can concentrate on is perfect. There's absolutely no question about that. It's great. At the same time, I know that as a social scientist, it's very important to not be always disconnected from the world.

And so, I mean, like, Bourdieu,[21] who came here, the French sociologist – came here in 1972, 1973. He was one of the first members of the School of Social Science, like, the first or second year. He was living in a member house underneath ours currently, we learned.

Linda Arntzenius: Auspicious.

Pascal Marichalar: He wrote a book in the 1990s, where there's a whole section about university campuses in America, and about what he calls, "scholastic isolation.[22]" And which is a critique of scholastic isolation. Of this idea that you could have a world completely disconnected from the rest – like – I guess the biggest examples are Yale and New Haven.

---

[21] Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), Member in the School of Social Science, 1972-1973.

[22] The book's title is *Pascalian Meditations.*

Even though I've never been there, I've heard of it. A very, very rich institution in a very poor city and he [Bourdieu] connects the scholastic isolation with the tendency of some social scientists to start doing very grand theories with no more empirical data. And he insists on always going back to the empirical fieldwork.

Linda Arntzenius: To be grounded.

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, be grounded in something. And I was very happy during my year here to be able to take the Dinky and the New Jersey Transit one direction, another direction to go – I would go to the Newark Public Library a lot, to the Trenton Public Library, and meet people there, and just because it gave me another view. Had I been only here, I would have missed a lot about what this place is about. I mean, what this country is about. And so, I think it's important to have both.

Linda Arntzenius: Excellent. All right, my last question, close to my last question, if you had to summarize the Institute for people who don't know what it is, how, how would you describe it, or how *do* you describe it to people?

Pascal Marichalar: In a one-liner: It's a Club Med for academics. So, it's great, beautiful, very comfortable, *and* you can work the whole day. I have a friend who went to a kind of a Club Med village in France last year with his family, but he had to finish a project. He's an astrophysicist and he had to finish a project for the James Webb Space Telescope – and so, he ended up being in the bar of that place for the whole time, on his computer, and so I told him: “You should know there's a place where you won't have to be in the bar, you'll have your office.”

But it will be as pleasant. You know, we usually say, at the end of the academic year, “Oh, the summer, at last, we'll be able to work.”

And this is a place where it's like a summer for the whole year. Where you can just focus on one thing. We watched, with Peter Redfield,[23] an interview of Oppenheimer[24] which he gave in '54, so, a little bit after his famous security clearance hearings, where he says that this is a place where academics cannot have any pretext. I mean, he says that – I don't remember a sentence, it's much better than what I'm saying, but it's something [to the effect] that

[23] Peter Redfield, Member in the School of Social Science, 2016-2017; Visitor, 2018.

[24] J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), IAS Director, 1947-1966; Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, 1966-1967.

some academics usually need to have these excuses to interrupt their work, and here, they have none. So, they have to concentrate.

It can be painful. I mean, there is a bit of pain in it. I remember, I was offered an office as a Visitor, but I asked for a desk in the library when I was here, because I prefer being in a place with other people and with books.

And at the end of the year, I had a hard time with the library, going there every day, to the same place, and all that. I think there is a part of the Institute which never changes, or it's just like a very large boat, which is very difficult to steer, I think. That's, maybe, something which if I lived here for a long time, I would not like. I think coming for short periods of time or a year is great.

Linda Arntzenius: So, do you think that's the main attraction for younger scholars? To come here for a shorter period to finish a project, say, or –

Pascal Marichalar: I don't know. For me? I can say so. There was this attraction of this very comfortable setting where there was no work/family conflict. That's important. So, this is important also because we were able to put our daughter, Faial, in the daycare [while her sister Amélina was at school], and we were able to do that, because with all our scholarships and stuff, we had a lot of money, and all this is very expensive.

And so, I think, one of the things the Institute should be thinking of, is subsidizing the daycare more, because I know that a lot of colleagues who have kids, they are put off when they see the cost. And they say, “Wow, that’s per month?” And so, that can be difficult. And there's the question of spouses, which is a very big problem, I think, in this place.

Linda Arntzenius: What do you mean?

Pascal Marichalar: I mean that that there are a lot of spouses that follow their spouse here. People, men or women, but mostly women, because the faculty is very much male and all heterosexual couples, mostly. Let's not get into that.

Linda Arntzenius: That's okay.

Pascal Marichalar: But, I mean, you feel that a lot of the spouses had to, how do you say, *renoncer*, um, renounce prospects and career...

Linda Arntzenius: Make sacrifices?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, make sacrifices, and that's sad. I think there is some sadness about that here, which the activities that are offered to spouses cannot compensate [for]. One of the things that I put in my final report at the end of the year was that instead of offering just, like, arts and crafts, there should be an office space for spouses.

I mean, most of them are writers, academics, publishers, and a common office space, like that would be some –

Linda Arntzenius: Like what you are doing right here [referring to the temporary shared use by the Working History Group of the White-Levy Room].

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, which is great, with a printer – with a coffee machine, with a...

Linda Arntzenius: Spouses do have access to the library, and there is a printer there, and there's scanning and so on.

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, they do, but the library, for example, the library—most people who get into library feel legitimate to get there if they are academics or if they have Visitor status.

If for example, like, we had friends that were publishers, or photographers—not academics in the strict sense of the word. They could profit from this.

Linda Arntzenius: So, your idea would be a dedicated space that would have, um, possibilities for computer and printers and yes –

Pascal Marichalar: Like an office with, I don't know, 10 computers for, like, maybe many more spouses, but they would not be there every day – and they would meet each other.

Linda Arntzenius: That's a very good idea.

Pascal Marichalar: Yes. We were lucky, being both academics and being able to – and also that, uh, Céline got the Membership. And I have a job at the CNRS, the French National Center for Scientific Research, which allows me to travel *easily*, to follow her *easily*. But this is difficult for a lot of people.

So, I think that’s great in the Institute, if the Institute is able to secure that there will be no work/family conflict. Because here, the fact of leaving our kids in summer camps or daycare, and working long hours and all, we don’t feel bad about it. We know they’re having a great time.

And that's something very important. Another thing which I really liked here was, for me, exposure to the academic world of North America. We discovered a lot of things; a lot of things that we didn't know. I was telling you, for example, that I describe myself as a sociologist in France. And getting here, we realized that sociologists don't do the same thing here.

I'm a junior researcher, I'm discovering all this. Here, it's more like anthropologists, that do this kind of fieldwork, or even oral historians, that would be closer. Sociologists [in the United States] would be much more, like, most of them—there are some non-ethnographic sociologists—but most of them will be much more in statistical data. Which we [in France] use too. But even in a positivist view of statistical data, without much critique – it will be like measuring happiness in all countries in the world, and which country is the happiest, which has no scientific basis that I can consider.

Linda Arntzenius: All right. Tell me, is there a question that you expected me to ask you that I haven't asked?

Pascal Marichalar: Uh, maybe, the exhibit. It was something specific. I think my friends will be able to tell you more about it, but it's what I remember.

Linda Arntzenius: Are you going to be doing another one, perhaps?

Pascal Marichalar: Maybe, we'll see, I don't know. I mean, it really depends. So we did it in a very short time. Somebody told us – the idea was for the board of trustees, which was convening. Somebody says maybe we can get an exhibit up before they come. And it was like, in ten days.

And so we worked with Erica Mosner [Archival Assistant], Maria Tuya [Software Support Specialist], mainly, to set this up, and they were – I mean, it was very, very efficient. I would like to say something about that too.

The staff are always very efficient, and doing everything, and then, we wanted to have acknowledgements to Maria Tuya, Erica Mosner in the exhibit – and you could feel that, as this is their job, they're supposed to efface themselves completely. We found that too bad. But we insisted, but we're like, is this gonna cause any problems for them to do that? So, I think also that there should be more recognition of the job that all these support staff are doing, which is very impressive. And not just this tendency to erase their role.

So, yes, we were able, thanks to them, to set up this exhibit very fast, and I mean, like, I never did an exhibit like that, and so Maria was the one who knew how to do panels in color, and uh, everything, and where to print it, etcetera.

So that was nice, a nice experience, to choose which documents would be, like, the most startling at first glance. I don't know what the trustees thought about it, but it was interesting to think – we were very happy when we came here, when we arrived ten days ago, and we saw that that was in Fuld Hall.

Linda Arntzenius: Yes. So, why were you invited back again this month?

Pascal Marichalar: I don't remember exactly how the idea came, but I think, if I remember well, it was Josie Faass in the Director's Office, who said that, with all that we did, um – I mean, it was kind of a way to pay us back, I think, for what we did, because the Institute, I guess would have really, uh, thought of this as a project where you hired somebody for ten years. Like Beatrice Stern, and then not publish.[25]

But it was also because we had ideas of other projects. So, it's kind of to thank us, and at the same time, it's for us to continue.

Linda Arntzenius: You're meeting a new group, is that correct?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes. We already met a few days ago, this year's group, that have been working on this. We haven't started really working together.

Linda Arntzenius: Is this a kind of a handover, is that what this is?

Pascal Marichalar: Yes, there are people like Ian Jauslin who have been here last year and this year – and Thomas Dodman, who works in New York, who was able to come back, and to speak with Members of this year, before this meeting. We'll see, we have lunch here after, after this interview today.

Linda Arntzenius: Oh, that's right, yes, you do.

Pascal Marichalar: That's our second lunch, and we'll see what we can do together. So, we have these projects for now, one which Peter Redfield and I are working on, have been working on for the past week, which is the Institute and the atomic bomb, and so this was once again a theme which resonated with current events. We didn't know that

[25] A reference to an unpublished manuscript history of the first 25 years of the Institute for Advanced Study by Beatrice M. Stern (1895-1987) which was commissioned by the Institute in 1955.

there was going to be all the hype about North Korea, but the idea was to start with this idea that most of the people, a lot of the people, that have crafted the atomic bomb have a link to the Institute, and then most of these people turned against the atomic bomb very quickly.

And were opposed to it. So, we started looking into this history, so of course it's Einstein – right, so this history is very famous. But there are some things that are not so famous, even in Einstein's case. We found some things that are not in the official narrative.

And then there's Oppenheimer. Also very famous, I mean, there are so many biographies – very interesting guy, so contradictory. We were also discovering things that are not in the official narrative. Peter [Redfield] just the other day, he'll tell you, but he discovered some, in the book by George Dyson[26] about Turing[27] – a lot of data about meetings held in Oppenheimer's office at Fuld Hall, where they were setting up the last details for the H bomb, and all of this is happening in his office.

So, this is really interesting, like the whole thing – of usefulness of useless science, the bubble – you can feel that very big tension after the Second World War around this, around what role should we have in government and so on. Einstein and Oppenheimer are very, very different on this, completely different. And von Neumann[28].

Linda Arntzenius: So, are you turning into a historian? *[Laughter]*

Pascal Marichalar: So that's a link between my other work and this work is that I've been realizing that what I like is history. When I started doing interviews for fieldwork, I realized [that] I prefer the biographical interviews that start really at birth – and I love reading old documents and trying to get a narrative that will be able to connect them all. So, yes, on my last book about glass workers, I wrote, “sociologist and historian.” I know that all my historian colleagues and friends are going to say, “bullshit,” because I don't have the proper credentials and diploma, and all.

But it's also because I realize when you speak to people that are laypeople that are not academics, if you're talking as a sociologist, they think that you're going to do an experiment on them or

[26] George Dyson (1953-), Director's Visitor, 2002-2003.

[27] *Turing's Cathedral: The Origins of the Digital Universe* by George Dyson, Pantheon Books, Random House, New York, 2012.

[28]

something. And if you tell them you're a historian, everybody knows what a historian is. And history? Everybody understands that it's interesting. Even the most conservative, the staunchest conservatives that are against academia and all, they believe in history and traditions. Everybody has an interest in history.

So yes. I would like to, um, you were asking about links between this work and my work?

Linda Arntzenius: Yes.

Pascal Marichalar: Well, I had an idea the other day which was – so, my work on Trenton, Trenton was one of the industrial capitals of the United States until the 1950s. Rubber tires, pottery, steel, and iron. And then, everything left. It all left because they went to the South, where there were no unions, and so they could pay the people, the workers less, etcetera. And one thing that interested me is that, one of the aspects of my fieldwork, I was studying a company that decided to open new factories in Trenton in the 1980s. They opened these new industries, because the land was free – because it was contaminated.

Linda Arntzenius: So, do you think you may come back to [pursue this]?

Pascal Marichalar: To New Jersey? Of course, yes, I would like to continue working on this, and the link is that this company, they started doing tires, they started doing run flat tires for the army, and then there was the first Gulf War, and all of a sudden, there became that huge demand. They had a contract with the U.S. army, and so it's working very well.

Linda Arntzenius: What kind of tires?

Pascal Marichalar: It's called run flat tires – for tires, when you've punctured them, they still run. So, there's a connection between the initial pollution, this historic industry of Trenton, like rubber tires, and the military industrial complex, and studying the military industrial complex through this history of the Institute, I find this very interesting. I would like to be able to draw these connections.

Linda Arntzenius: I wish you the best of luck.

Pascal Marichalar: Thank you very much.

Linda Arntzenius: That sounds fascinating. I hope you come back as a Member and continue this project.

Pascal Marichalar: We hope to come back, too.

Linda Arntzenius: Thank you so much for giving me your time.

Pascal Marichalar: Thank you, Linda.

[End of Audio]