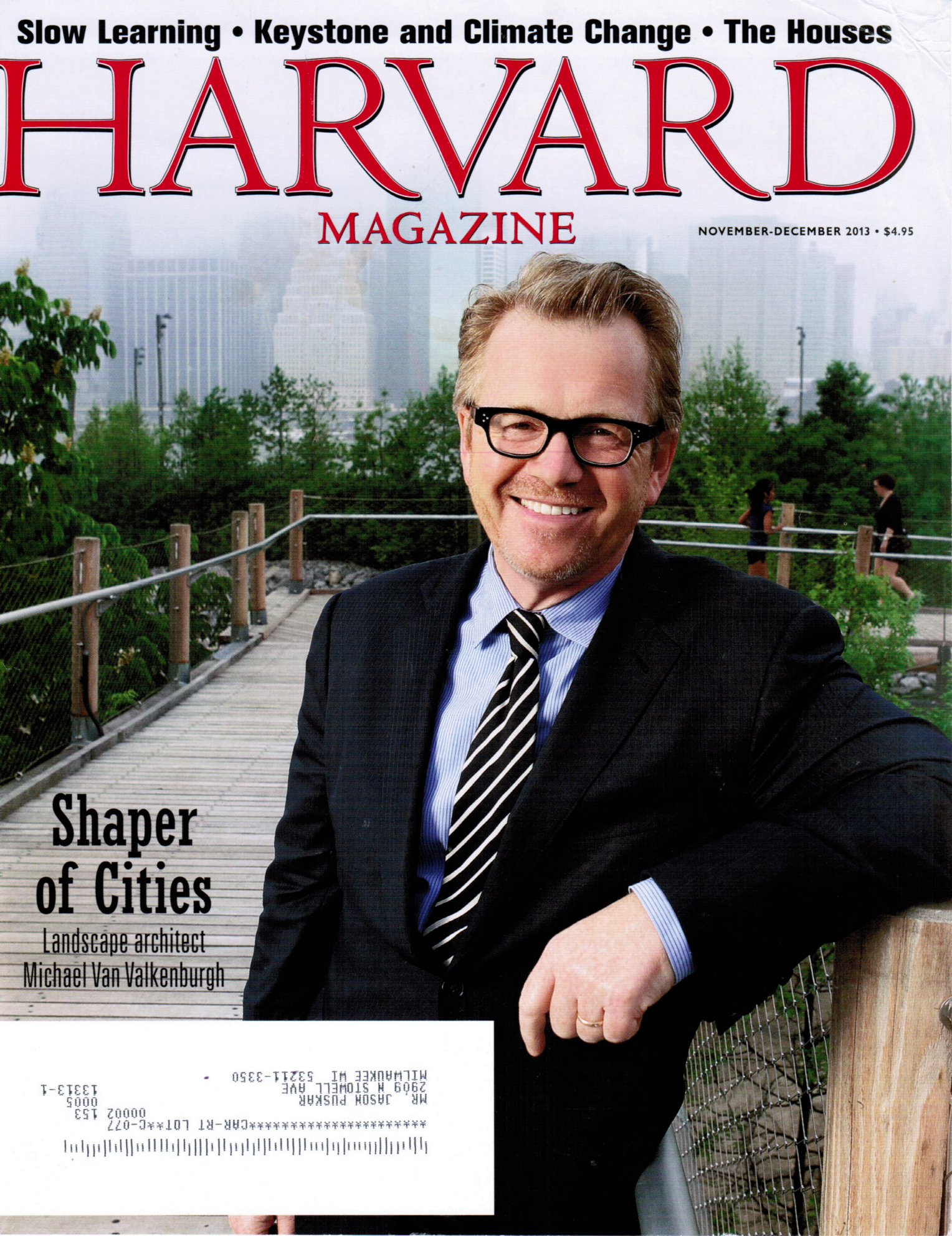**Slow Learning • Keystone and Climate Change • The Houses**

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Markets and the Movie Industry

HISTORIANS often describe Hollywood studios during World War II as crusaders against the Nazi regime and staunch defenders of American democracy. They cite Warner Brothers' *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, made in 1939, and Charlie Chaplin's 1940 film, *The Great Dictator*, as evidence of Hollywood's stand against Hitler.

But a new book by historian Ben Urwand, a junior fellow of the Society of Fellows, challenges that interpretation. Based on nearly nine years of archival research in Germany and the United States, the book reveals a surprisingly cooperative relationship between studio executives and German officials throughout the 1930s. *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), details how major studios, seeking to keep the German market open to American films, not only changed their films, but even shelved entire productions at the request of Nazi diplomats. Correspondence between the studios and German government officials in the 1930s frequently contains the term *Zusammenarbeit*—which Urwand translates as "collaboration"—to describe this partnership.

Urwand got his first hint of this arrangement in 2004, when he read an interview with the novelist and screenwriter Budd Schulberg, who mentioned that MGM head Louis B. Mayer made changes to films at the request of the German consul in Los Angeles in the 1930s. "I knew that Hollywood only really started to make anti-Nazi movies in the 1940s," says Urwand, who realized that "if the head of the biggest studio was meeting with a real Nazi," that might explain the dearth of such films earlier. "It surprised me—who would have thought that Louis B. Mayer would meet with a Nazi?—but at the same time, it seemed plausible."

On an early research trip to the German federal archives in Berlin, Urwand found notes on Adolf Hitler's opinions of Hollywood movies, recorded by his adjutants. (A voracious cinephile, the Ger-

A book alleging "collaboration" between Hollywood studios and Hitler's government has generated controversy.

man leader screened one or two movies a night and saw them as a force to shape public opinion.) But details of the meetings between Hollywood and the Nazis were hard to hunt down. At the political archive of the German Foreign Office in Berlin, Urwand found that the only files remaining from the German consul in Los Angeles fit in a shoebox. When he returned to the archive on a later trip, the archivist—slightly exasperated to see him again—suggested that he review the files of other German embassies and consulates. There he found evidence that after the Los Angeles consul's regular meetings with studio heads, he sent reports to Nazi officials in Berlin about the cuts the studios had agreed to make. Berlin would then instruct its diplomats around the world to see the movies in their local theaters to ensure the changes had been made globally.

Why did Hollywood comply? In 1932, six months before Hitler came to power, Germany adopted a law stipulating that any film company caught making anti-German (or later, anti-Nazi) films would be prohibited from doing business in the country. For studio executives who feared losing access to German audiences, it was a powerful threat. Before World War I, Germany had been the second-largest market for U.S. films. By the 1930s, the studios were no longer making money there, but they hoped business would improve in time. Urwand says Hollywood executives also worried that if they left Germany and Hitler started a war, they would be expelled from any countries he invaded. So studio heads, many of whom were Jewish, collectively boycotted a proposed film, *The Mad Dog of Europe*, about the mistreatment of European Jews, and agreed to fire most of their Jewish salesmen in Germany.

Urwand's book sparked controversy even before it was released this fall; in a *New York Times* interview, Thomas Doherty, author of *Hollywood and Hitler: 1933-1939*, called the term "collaboration" in Urwand's title "a slander," for presenting an excessively dark view of business decisions studio executives made in the 1930s. But Urwand stands by his research. "*Collaboration* isn't my word," he says. "It's the word that the studio heads and Nazis used at the time to describe their relationship with each other."

New Yorker film critic David Denby has faulted Urwand for, among other things, failing to acknowledge the prevalence of censorship in 1930s Hollywood; the British and French governments were among the groups pushing for film edits. But Urwand—who writes, "Mexico and Britain, for example, prohibited religious scenes; China prohibited westerns; and Japan excluded all pictures that reflected badly upon royalty, were derogatory to the military, or contained kissing scenes"—argues that the response to the Nazis was different. "It is one thing for Hollywood to be sensitive to the many, varied demands of foreign nations," by cutting religious scenes or kissing, for example. "It is quite another for Hollywood to actively work with the representatives of Nazi Germany so that no films could be made that attacked...the representation of Germany during the First World War and Hitler's persecution of the Jews. The active dealings with Nazi officials impacted the final cut of films as they were screened all around the world."

Commentators have drawn parallels between the Nazi collaboration that Urwand describes and Hollywood's current relationship with China, a burgeoning market for American films. Urwand stresses that "China isn't Nazi Germany," but he acknowledges some potential parallels. "Hollywood is not going to make a strongly anti-Chinese film at this point, just as it didn't make anti-German films when it was trying to preserve its business with Germany." But he also draws an important distinction between the two situations, citing two different 1930s films about fascist dictators on American soil: *Gabriel Over the White House*, which portrays fascism positively; and *It Could Happen Here*, based on the novel by Sinclair Lewis, about the superiority of liberal democracy. *Gabriel* was made, but *It Could Happen Here* was cancelled early in production. In the case of Germany, Urwand says, "The problem was not just that Hollywood wouldn't attack the Nazis, or wouldn't defend the Jews, but that Hollywood wouldn't defend democracy. We're certainly not there with China."

~ERIN O'DONNELL

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DIGITAL NATIVES IN THE WILD

Is There an App for That?

THE LOST GENERATION. The Greatest Generation. Generation X. And now...the App Generation.

"Are kids growing up in the digital age really different?" asks Howard Gardner, Hobbs professor of cognition and education. Six years ago, he and then-student Katie Davis, Ed.D. '11 (now an assistant professor at the University of Washington) set out to explore the question, and in their new book, *The App Generation: How Today's Youth Navigate Identity, Intimacy, and Imagination in a Digital World* (Yale), they argue that the answer is unambiguously yes.

"This is a generation that expects and wants to have applications," says Gardner. Applications, more commonly known as *apps*, are shortcuts designed for accomplishing specific tasks. They're ubiquitous, powerful, and strongly structured, and the authors argue that they're changing the way we think. "Young people growing up in our time are not only immersed in apps," they write, "they've come to think of the world as an ensemble of apps, to see their lives as a string of ordered apps, or perhaps, in many cases, a single, extended, cradle-to-grave app."

The app mindset, they say, motivates youth to seek direct, quick, easy solutions—the kinds of answers an app would provide—and to shy away from questions, whether or large or small, when there's no "app for that." In a wide-ranging cultural critique, the authors identify myriad resulting effects loosely structured around three of the stages of psychosocial development proposed by Gardner's mentor Erik Erikson in 1950—here called *identity*, *intimacy*, and *imagination*.

They investigated the first two themes primarily through interviews with adolescents and focus groups of adults who work with teens. In terms of identity, Gardner and Davis argue that youth today are polished and packaged, in line with the cool, suave look of online profiles. In "Reflecting on Your Life" sessions with Harvard freshmen (see "The Most Important Course," May-June 2011, page 56), Gardner writes, he encountered students "with their lives all mapped out—a super-app." But the external polish often hides deep-seated anxiety, outwardly expressed as a need for approval. In their conversations with camp counselors and teachers, Gardner and Davis were repeatedly told that youth today are risk-averse; the app generation, said one focus group participant, is "scared to death."

In exploring intimacy, Gardner and Davis saw repeated signs of greater isolation. Although social media can enhance friendships and family relationships, digital media can give the impression of closeness while promoting only shallow connections. Online relationships are often conducted at arm's length, allowing youth to avoid the deeper emotional investment and vulnerability of more complicated, in-person relationships. (This emotional distance can also facilitate racist and sexist language that would be unacceptable in person.)

The book's most unexpected results come from its study

Illustration by Pete Ryan